

Family Matters

By: Vaporeon Lugia Krabby

<“How is she?”> inquired Mewtwo as he appeared at the entranceway to the sleeping quarters. A small, pink Pokémon hovered over the sprawling bed, looking worriedly at the bed’s occupant that lay beneath the purple sheets.

“Mew mew, mew,” (No changes, Mewtwo,) Mew said somberly in response. “Mew mew,” (I’m worried,) she paused, constructing her thoughts. “Mew mew mew mew. Mew mew mew mew. Mew mew mew mew, mew mew mew mew.” (Her mind isn’t active. Her soul energy is ill. We kept her alive, but that was it.) Mewtwo walked forward, bending his upper body over the bed to take a look for himself.

<“Sad to say, Mew, but you are right. She has been in that same exact state for the last two months.”>

“Mew, mew mew mew mew mew mew mew mew,” (Yeah, but the first was the worst,) commented Mew as she faced away. “Mew mew mew mew! Mew!” (Mewblade will never wake up! Never!) Mew shouted. There was evident frustration from the state that Mewblade was in, bringing her to cry in grief. Mewtwo gave Mew a glance then returned his eyes to Mewblade. The expression on her face never changed. It was the same expressionless look it had been for weeks. Mewtwo reached out with his paw and passively stroked Mewblade’s cheek to reaffirm that she was indeed alive. The short black fur was rough, but still a bit silky if caressed in the right direction. He wanted her to be okay, yet no change had come to pass with Mewblade’s condition. Mewtwo withdrew his paw.

<“If her condition doesn’t improve, I will bring the end of this existence. It will be better for us all,”> muttered Mewtwo in a solemn tone, seeing that any hopes were becoming more bleak with each passing day. Mew nodded in response, weighed down by the helplessness of the situation. <“We will discuss about this at a later date.”> Mew watched quietly as Mewtwo wrapped his blue energy around his form. A moment later he left with a Teleport, leaving Mew behind to contemplate.

“I’m scared,” a voice whimpered.

“Sweetie. My little boo,” cooed another. “You must be strong. The quicker you can overcome your fears, the faster you can leave and come back home to us.”

“But . . . but it’s dark and I have a terrible feeling about this place . . .” the first voice sounded shaky. “Please, can I go home now?” it continued to whimper. Noises were made as it sunk to what sounded like a hard floor. The second sighed, while patient it realized that there was at least some sense of urgency involved.

“We’re here to guide you. Now stand up.” There was a quiet shuffling as the first rose to their feet. “Good. Walk over to the door, and don’t be scared. You’ve done this many times before. Everything is okay,” the second voice counseled the first. The voice was soft, melodic although authoritative and oddly convincing. “You’re doing just fine, hun,” and then there was an abrupt halt as the second voice lost its focus, turning to the front of the room.

The room was full of large computer modules, people, and all sorts of peripherals for monitoring and observing the goings of everything around. A man in the company issued medical technician uniform had entered in a flustered panic. While he feigned a high level of panic, it was obvious to the owner of the second voice that his worry was greatly over exaggerated.

“Izabelle, take over,” the voice instructed, disgruntled. “Such disturbances do not aid us in progression.” This was said to the general air of the room. With the first being in such a dismal state and then being abandoned, it did not prove helpful. Izabelle reclaimed her seat, knowing that it was up to her to calm her current charge down. It was a skill that only the one whose position she replaced was good at.

“Monsieur Clarkson, what is going on?” the tone of voice dripped. Clarkson was beyond speaking, already in a stutter. Technically he was the superior in some regards, but the cold gaze pierced his mind, made him numb and helpless. “Either answer or I shall implement harsher motivation.”

“Sorry!” he blurted suddenly. The outburst was a sign of weakness, and he quickly tried to reign in his nervousness. “Your master instructed me to get you when you weren’t busy. He needs your help with a business thing of sorts.”

“He wouldn’t send you normally,” was the bland reply, not willing to humor the insolence. An audible gulp emitted from Clarkson’s throat. He had some explaining to do.

“I went to him to tell him about 004.b. He mentioned he wanted to see you about those matters and ones connected with 001.” There was some hesitation as he spoke, regretting his choice of words.

“As he airily told you that he would like to consult with me on such matters, you assumed that he meant now. Anything of such urgency he pages me or sends the appropriate messengers, not one so hapless and pathetic.”

“Sorry,” Clarkson muttered, eyes downcast. The one whom he was talking to strolled past him. His eyes briefly left their shameful gaze to catch the sight of such an assured being. The curve of her body drew his gaze up across her smooth skin, lush lips, to her exotic aquamarine eyes. She saw him sneak the peak. Her voice was perfectly pitched, silky soft yet easily wielded to intimidate and damage those within range.

“Frankly one such as yourself will not last long in this business, and I will have your ignorance escalated to the boss.” She swayed her hips as she headed out the door. Every male, and the odd woman in the room directed their eyes between her hips. “Give me a call if anything alarming happens with DW,” added the effeminate beauty as she left.

She took to her right down the hallway, keeping an even stride. At the intersection a hand reached out to her shoulder, drawing her attention. “Yes, Stanford?” she sighed, demonstrating playful boredom and then continued walking. “What is the current situation?” Stanford matched his gate to hers, keeping in stride. He was tall, well-educated though he masked his assertiveness with deceptive good looks and snappy dressing. Appearance was key to intimidation, and if one could look better then they would feel better, thus making everyone feel worse and more easy to control. He flipped his shades onto the top of his head, knowing that the blank expression it offered would never fool the female.

"I figured that the Clarkson fellow was a nuisance enough to get you outside of that black box the 'spies' faun over. Also, it helps that I am aware of what the boss is in need of," stated Stanford, having chosen the word 'spies' over the more obvious hacker skills that the one group possessed. His female associate branched many collective groups, and when anyone needed her skills, she was there; of course, their boss always had the rights over everyone else. "As you know, we are investigating the video footage of the fight between 001 and 002. There have been several reports prior to that battle of the location of 001. 001 has been identified as a roamer based on what we have observed from various unexplained incidents across the region."

"Namely we have identified her as a killer," she added quietly.

"Yes. We've been linking those incidents to reports collected from the autopsy on 002. Those injuries on what is believed to be 001's victims are consistent with those seen on the videos and during the autopsy," Stanford continued with a nod. The pair stopped at a door leading into one of the smaller conference rooms. "001 has not been spotted in the last three months, and while this is a relief to the members of our group, it adds to the concern of what did happen during those final minutes. It is believed that 001 is either hiding, adopted some sort of stealth or . . ."

". . . is dead," she finished.

"Exactly. We wish to do a full-out inquest into the matter to verify whether or not 001 is indeed alive or not. If possible, we would like to pursue incarceration."

"Ah, so I was right. What he wouldn't do to have that one captured," she said with a wry smile, wrapping her arms around Stanford's shoulders. "Maybe you should consider giving up that cushy executive job of yours and be my little running boy. You would be better than any of the fools around here." Stanford laughed in response.

"Enough flattery. I like my desk job, since it does not involve being under yours." The remark was on equal terms between the pair, small payback for being considered a messenger. Stanford reached his hand to the gold colored doorknob, checking down the hallway as two people walked by, chatting about the superiority of their Pokémon. For a moment their heads turned, catching the alluring form before continuing on their way. As expected, Stanford's companion was not phased from the stares.

"Oh," she pouted, playing on disappointment. "I am always willing to return the favor," she winked, kissing Stanford on the cheek. Stanford chuckled, then opened the door. The two of them resumed a more professional work attitude as they entered the room, Stanford quietly closing the door behind. At the far end of the table was Stanford's boss, the female's master. Her master looked at the pair.

"You're here early, Swadeaqua. Even so, let's get to business."

The Viridian Gym floor. It was a dark place with hard-packed ground, marble support columns, earthy colored walls, and an imposing balcony. The skylight above was the only true source of illumination. Atop the balcony was a human female dressed in uniform. In her left hand was a remote control which sole function involved the Pokémon below. The Pokémon looked up at the woman in subordinateness but its shoulders sagged in defeat.

"Are you going to train or what?" the female, who was named Nichole said with a giddily sadistic tone. The eyes of the Pokémon narrowed more so.

"I hate fighting, ya dig?" the Pokémon was not only male but spoke a diluted version of inner city English. Nichole leaned over the rail, smiling. She was responsible for disciplining 004.b. His name was 'Harddense' but to her he was just another defiant Pokémon in need of breaking. To why she smiled was obvious to anyone who had even minimal exposure to the woman, Nichole enjoyed punishing disobedience.

"Yeah, I do 'dig', but boss' rules." Her finger pressed a button on the remote. A shock collar attached snugly around Harddense's neck responded to the button with a jolt. Harddense shouted in pain, collapsing to the floor as his limbs convulsed from the shock. Nichole continued to watch with little remorse. She knew Harddense would get up; after all, he always did.

"Get up before I decide to have you watch that sweet, little twin of yours deal with her own punishment," threatened Nichole. Of all the things Harddense valued more than the wellbeing of others it was that of his fraternal twin sister.

There had been ideas spreading throughout the facility about the pair. They had an insatiable bond connected on a level both physically and presumably spiritually. To what degree was only apparent to those who worked closely with them. The female was possessive to the extent that at times if she feared even marginally for her brother she would fly into fits of uncontrollable anger. Her fighting skills would become phenomenal at that point; otherwise, she had no fighting abilities whatsoever. Because of her possessive nature she was no longer allowed to be within visible or audible range of Harddense's training and battling.

Harddense on the other hand was docile with a passivist's approach to life. Unlike his sister he took to being protective, often carrying his twin around when she needed it. When his sister was present he would be fearless, strengthened by their bond and willing to guard her if she was scared. Together, the twins would make every effort to spend time with one another, reaffirming their connection as twins.

The more perverse of the staff could easily see the potential of such a nurturing relationship. While the trainers could abuse the power of the female if properly controlled, the breeders of the group saw the potential in possible offspring. Anyone close and more intimately involved with the twins knew that neither option was wise and quickly put an end to such thoughts.

"Get up!" roared Nichole, bending over the balcony rail to vent her anger. Harddense shifted, looking at the gym floor shamefully. While he could not bring himself to hate Nichole, he definitely did not like her. "Well, well, well. He finally moved," sneered Nichole, still leaned over the rail.

"Why bother moving more?" he questioned, shifting to his heels so that way he would be more comfortable. His softly shaped, rust colored eyes met those of Nichole. Harddense's saddened frustration received a look of detest from his trainer.

"We're going to get you moving so we can work on getting some motion into that *lead weight* frame of yours," Nichole cited the problem with Harddense's lack of agility; this one issue a vice for her. Harddense nodded somberly, not disagreeing.

"Will you leave my sister alone if I do train?"

"Duh. You fight and train, and your sister remains unharmed. You should know that by now, metal head." Nichole paused from her insults, trying to come up with some moves. "Let's begin with a few punches to get you started. A good warm up."

"Okay, but you know I only do this for Demisewan."

“I am not doing ‘just fine’, Swadeaqua!” yelled the voice that was originally speaking to Swadeaqua. It was completely oblivious to the fact that Swadeaqua had left. The voice realized that the expected reassuring response did not come through. “Are you there?” it whimpered before sniffing for upwards of a minute.

“Sorry about the pause, Demisewan,” Isabelle said, as the sounds of her adjusting the headset were caught over her microphone. Demisewan knew Isabelle and welcomed her presence.

Demisewan was considered the plain one in contrast to Swadeaqua’s lavish looks. She stood at a comfortable 5’10” but was far more petite in stature, making her come across as cute and innocent. Harddense was her fraternal twin but both lacked physical similarities and even the same parents. Demisewan’s appearance came from her combination of Mew, Mewtwo and Haunter genes. Her colors consisted of a muted purple, with a richer purple for her tail and eyes. Of the things that made her stand-out was her affection for wildly colored stylizing, which she displayed with hot pink lipstick. At least to Demisewan that was what she believed made her shocking. As Demisewan was only a ghost type she demonstrated one perturbed feature, three digit, disembodied paws. The ability to move them as if they were both connected and not from her wrist was often considered spooky. With her height defined by the tips of her long devil horns she looked short, the paws often losing their effect to every other feature. Combined with her adorable Mew feet as well as the large amount of fur, Demisewan was hardly a threat in appearance. The bang-like fur and partial cheek mane mixed with her large, round cat eyes made her more believable to be of her right, young age.

Harddense on the other hand only shared one parent with Demisewan, which was Mewtwo. The other two genetic contributors included Steelix and Scisor, making him the single type of steel. Harddense was an inch taller than Demisewan, though his height was defined by his ears as only the females of the species possessed horns. His body was encased in steel, while his Steelix tail was oxidized iron. At his shoulders two curled spikes furred from them, as well as solitary ones from the back of his heels. His two Mewtwo toes were molded into claws, where as his paws were nothing like that of a Mewtwo. Instead of paws, Harddense had talons that were made up of two clawed fingers and the clawed thumb that would rest comfortably between the middle. The pair were bonded on the notion that they were created and awoken at the same time, agreeing to be considered twins and in turn complimenting each other perfectly.

Demisewan was not as brave as her brother unless he was threatened in which case she became controlling and a danger to anyone who came within range of him. It was arguable that her intelligence rivaled Harddense’s wisdom as neither overemphasized either such trait. Bravery was a trait to Harddense, and while being a ghost could make Demisewan creepy, she herself scared easily.

“Swadeaqua has to deal with some important things,” Isabelle apologized, trying to soothe Demisewan’s shaken nerves. She was clearly not as good as Swadeaqua when it came to being encouraging. Despite the fact her skills paled in comparison to those of Swadeaqua, her job demanded that she should be able to do some coaching.

“See the panel in front of you?” Because of the monitoring equipment back at the headquarters Isabelle was able to observe what Demisewan saw through a well-equipped

headset mounted on Demisewan's head. Demisewan kept her head steady as the camera on her headset focused on the panel, confirming what Isabelle was referencing on the blueprints before her. A small visor covered the Pokémon's eye, also displaying the blueprints. Despite being so far away from the source of information, Demisewan always had access to footage, as well as live two-way voice communication so that way she would never be alone.

"Is this it?" Demisewan's right paw touched the panel, fingers roving over the raised numbers. Isabelle confirmed with what she saw captured from Demisewan's camera.

"Yes that is. We need a code entered so the terminal inside boots." Isabelle flipped through her binder, locating the code that was required. "Enter 8 . . . 5 . . . 5 . . . 2 . . . 4 . . . 9 . . ." With a bit of caution, Demisewan entered in the numbers. A light above the keys changed from red to green, signifying that access was granted. "That was easy." Demisewan was pessimistic.

The female maneuvered to the computer terminal situated at the far side of the room, speedily shoving a diskette into the A:/ of the console. Isabelle was surprised as Demisewan usually waited for commands before executing them. The Pokémon knew the procedure and was anxious to leave.

"Okay. That's good," Isabelle muttered. She took a moment to flip to another page within the binder so she could retrieve various command codes. Clacking sounds could be heard as she looked up at her screen to see that Demisewan had already passed one screen and was currently attempting to bypass a series of secured zones. Despite having only four fingers and two thumbs collectively, she made quick work of her hacking and entered the desired screen. White text screamed down the monitor with the secrets of the company exposed to the offending source. Waiting was not an option for Demisewan since her fears were controlling her and relying on Isabelle's knowledge, while safe, was slow.

"I am in, I think," Demisewan said uncertainly. Isabelle gave a quick glance to confirm what Demisewan was seeing.

"You are in. Run the debugpro.exe and we can get all of that data," instructed Isabelle as she began checking over the rest of the procedures outlined for the current mission. Demisewan whipped through more screens, having little use for the mouse. Her fast fingers prompted the exchange of several files, uploading malware onto the terminal in turn. "Remove the disk."

"Got it," Demisewan announced as she removed the diskette, depositing it in a carrying pouch around her tiny waist. As she walked away the terminal issued a security breach protocol, startling both Demisewan and Isabelle.

"Turn around!" Isabelle shouted to Demisewan in a panic, though the ghost type was fast thinking and had faced the screen. More computer jargon flew across the monitor as the system began initiating its intruder responses. Eyes wide, Demisewan stared on as the monitor explained in great detail of the offense she caused and the following actions.

"Get out of there!" Isabelle yelled, bracing her hands to the desk in front of her as the words 'lockdown' appeared on the screen. Demisewan faced away but stopped as she heard a low hissing noise coming from ceiling. Her eyes turned up, briefly catching a green mist coming from the vents before the lights went out.

“Was that chlorine?” asked someone else in the room as everyone’s attention drew to the emergency.

“I don’t know,” Isabelle said frantically. The emergency lights came on and Demisewan was able to see the fast settling gas flow down the walls and stream from the ceiling.

“Tell her to move!”

“You heard. That stuff can kill you!” Isabelle ordered. Demisewan was completely shaken unable to think straight with the blare from the emergency alarms. “Drop a floor!”

Demisewan started coughing as she said, “Okay.” With minimal effort on her part, Demisewan faded through the floor beneath her. She dropped through the spacers between the two floors of the building, landing unharmed on the cold floor below. Phasing was an ability that came naturally to her despite not actually being deceased in any way. Such a trait made quick escapes easy, the reason why Demisewan had been selected for espionage work. The Pokémon paused to cough.

“We’ll be lucky if she doesn’t die at this rate,” one of the people from the tiny crowd commented arrogantly. Isabelle ignored him and focused on getting Demisewan out of there.

“Demisewan, go down seven floors.” Demisewan was coughing heavily now, the chlorine gas having seared the soft tissue of her lungs. “You have to keep moving. Any longer and those coughs could become really serious.” The view on the monitor shook as Demisewan bobbed her head. She proceeded to perform her phasing technique through the floors. “Justin, we have an emergency.”

“Yeah, yeah. I’m already on it,” said the 34 year old male from his seat. Isabelle could hear him make the arrangements to have the recovery team prepare for a quick pick-up. “Parkade, okay?”

“Do it.” Isabelle was making mental notes to herself of where she was trying to get Demisewan to. “Three rooms forward, one room left,” she said to Demisewan, who had lightened her weight considerably to ease her landing. Another trick of phasing. Taking to her feet, Demisewan went through the rooms.

“Where . . .” Demisewan could not speak as she coughed fitfully, “. . . now?”

“Straight ahead.” Demisewan charged ahead, unaware of where she was but placing her faith in Isabelle. The heedless move sent her straight into an open elevator shaft. Quick-witted as expected in such a situation, Demisewan lunged at the pulley cables and wrapped herself around the closest guideline.

They always do this to me, thought Demisewan. The emergency lights spun in a dizzying cycle of red, reflecting off of Demisewan’s metallic accessories. Everywhere she looked it brought her little comfort.

“Shimmy to the bottom,” sighed Isabelle as she felt a sense of relief. Most of the problems had to be over.

“I hear something,” Demisewan whispered, stopping her descent. A hush filled the room so everyone could hear. In the background of Demisewan’s microphone metal noises and heavy thuds sounded.

“Oh no!” Isabelle clenched her white knuckles into a fist as she listened. Demisewan too came to the realization that she was in more trouble. “Someone, get Swadeaqua!” A person near the back of the crowd ran out of the door. Realizing that the

situation was completely out-of-control, Isabelle hoped to turn to the only one who knew how to remain calm at such times. “Demisewan, listen. Turn invisible and be very quiet.” The camera and gear remained functional as Demisewan used her ghostly powers to force the matter within her body and directly connected to her to become invisible. “Good girl.” Isabelle was tense, praying to herself that Demisewan would not betray her position with a cough.

A thin red beam of light traced its way up the walls of the elevator shaft from its source several floors below. It drifted past Demisewan, the scope unable to catch sight of anything amiss. Demisewan was desperately trying to hold back a cough, stifling it with little snuffle but her agitated lungs gave. The sound of her coughing echoed through the silence.

“Someone is up there,” said a voice.

“Shoot it!” yelled the leading figure of the group. The crowd flinched as they heard several guns chamber via the speakers that someone evidently turned on. Three of the weapons unloaded their casings, the earsplitting sounds amplified in the narrow space. An even more painful sound came from Demisewan.

“Aaahhh!” Demisewan shrieked in pain, her left arm going numb. She had never been hurt before and the feeling ripped through every nerve. Still, Demisewan managed to keep a hold with her paws since they kept their strength no matter the circumstance.

“I heard it. Why isn’t anyone getting a visual?!”

“Now, drop!” hollered Isabelle, bouncing from her chair.

“Kay!” Demisewan pulled back from the cable, throwing her arms and paws back. Aside the invisibility, Demisewan avoided using any other of her ghostly tricks. Demisewan let her full 125 lbs take her down the shaft. Two stories from slapping concrete, she used her failing awareness to phase her weight. Her control stopped a foot above the pavement, followed by her crumpling to the parkade’s floor in meager heap of purple fur.

People dressed in uniform piled out from several unmarked vehicles. Demisewan could identify them as part of Justin’s recovery team, letting herself pass out knowing that they would take her back home. One of the men scooped the small frame into his arms, the bullet wound staining his jacket.

“How does a ghost type get a bullet wound?” one of the men asked as he pointed out the injury.

“We can ask about that later after we get her in the SUV and have a tourniquet put on it,” said another as he waved the men back to the vehicles. The group understood that soon there would be a swarm of all levels of security and law enforcement converging on their location. They had to leave while the opportunity presented itself. Any other time left stalling would possibly cost Demisewan her life.

Someone barged through the conference room doors in a state of disarray. He panted heavily from a lack of physical fitness. “Demisewan is in serious trouble!” he gasped, taking a chance to see the stern expression of his employer. Swadeaqua quietly looked at her master for his thoughts on the matter.

“Swadeaqua, go with Mr. Matthews and deal with this untimely interruption.”

“Right away, sir,” Swadeaqua lowered her head towards him followed by rising from her seat. She resented serving under that man. Swadeaqua was a sophisticated, intelligent leader with strong reasoning skills. If it were not for the fact that everyone’s fear towards her master was so strong, then it would be easy for her to claim dominance. Her master returned to talking to Stanford as Swadeaqua walked out the door, Matthews following behind her.

Swadeaqua could practically feel the panic from Matthews, it was so intense. While she was naturally calm in any situation she was worried for what could have possibly happened. “Is this as serious as I assume?”

“Definitely!” Matthews piped. Any time wasted was now of utmost concern. Swadeaqua took off down the hallway in long strides, carrying her quickly to the monitoring room. She slid a keycard out from a sleeve on her belt and swiped it impatiently through the slot. The door unlocked and Swadeaqua slammed the door open. The crowd scattered to let Swadeaqua pass as she stormed up to Isabelle’s station. She had arrived late, the recovery squad was already at Demisewan’s location and retrieving her. The generally ignored vital monitors all displayed lower signs of life. Swadeaqua raised her voice shrilly.

“What has happened?!”

“The software we downloaded onto their system tripped a highly advanced security system. We did manage to upload some of their data to a diskette and it should be brought back with Demisewan shortly,” was Isabelle’s nervous and weary reply.

“Demisewan does not come out of her assignments unconscious,” Swadeaqua hissed. She had no need to raise her voice to show that she was infuriated.

“We encountered chlorine gas. It was seeping from the air vents.” Swadeaqua was paying more attention to what Isabelle was expressing physically rather than verbally. There was a retention of information from the way she drew herself in at the end of the statement.

“Continue.” Isabelle looked up but felt unable to appease the flat, opaque face of Swadeaqua. There was no way to bluff her, so she proceeded on nervously.

“Everything went dark and the emergency lights came on. Of course there were alarms and the gas. We brought Demisewan to the elevator and the gas was just too much for her,” lied Isabelle as she whipped through the last few words.

“What screw up are you hiding from me?” Swadeaqua’s eyes looked down at Isabelle, forcing the woman into a further state of inferiority and powerlessness.

“A special ops unit found Demisewan,” exasperated Isabelle in defeat. “We tried to get her out but they shot into the shaft and struck her arm. We managed to get her out of there without any further discovery.” With her head hung Isabelle fully expected to be made an example of. Swadeaqua took a step back and turned to the general direction of the assembly.

“I am appalled at your reactions, lack of conscience thought, lack of *any* intelligent reasoning. You were presented with a change of plans and froze. Now I am not putting the blame on all of you, but definitely for some.” Heads remained down. “A discussion time will be arranged so that way you will all be prepared in case another incident as such should occur.” There was little else to add thus Swadeaqua took her leave. A whispered bit of undermining carried to her ears.

“For a Pokémon, we should be mastering her.” It took minimal effort for Swadeaqua to recognize the voice and place it to one of the young men. Her body pivoted to face him, and he knew he was in trouble.

“So, Mr. Lewis,” she began, the words hardly passing across her lips and already Lewis was in shivers. “You believe a sentient Pocket Monster can not so as much as share the same opportunities or career as you do?” The man was quiet, unsure of what to say since Swadeaqua had the capacity to warp words. “Well?”

“It just came out. I didn’t mean it,” Lewis murmured with his head to the floor.

“If it happens again I will have you sent to the disciplinary officer. And I *do* mean it.” Swadeaqua haughtily left the room knowing that time was short and the meeting needed to be postponed. Despite the rush she still had the time to dash into the bathroom.

Swadeaqua slammed the door behind her and braced her paws over the counter. What Lewis said had really bit into her. She knew she was a Pokémon and hated to be reminded of it despite the fact her reflection was unable to fib. Her eyes gazed at the mirror, briefly seeing if her aquamarine lipstick was smeared. It matched her pale aquamarine skin, where her eyes and tail were identical to her lipstick in color. On her back were two sets of fins with membranes of the darker color. This same detail was added to a single row of fins on the back of her second neck. At the top of her head she had long horns that curled forward. Swadeaqua’s appearance lived up to her dragon and psychic types, even her 8’3” height was because of the dragon within her. While her large breasts and entire lack of a nose are traits to which humans prefer, she could not escape facts. There was no ability for her to be in both worlds with the way she thought contrasting the ways in which she looked. She could be anywhere she wanted with anyone but truly alone in the same regard.

Swadeaqua sighed quietly to herself then returning her mind to her duties. There was a meeting to cancel and an injured Demisewan to see to.

Mewblade lay in the bed in an unchanging vegetable state. No one was around, at least no one that should have been there. An eight year old girl with blonde hair peered in through the archway, scoping the area for any security. In her arms she cradled an Abra and on her head rested an Eevee. The coast was clear and she moved her way into the room.

<“She is still in a coma,”> spoke the Abra in a widespread telepathy.

“I know,” murmured the girl in a soft voice.

<“Do you want to stay?”> asked the Pokémon, looking up through slitted eyes.

The girl nodded saying, “Yes, Abbott,” in her continuing soft voice.

“Eeeveee eve evee eeve, eee eee eve.” (Every time we come here you act so sad.) The Eevee bounced onto the bed, turning around to face her owner. She could empathize with the girl’s bitterness yet always avoided expressing in preference for her natural cynicism. “Eevee, eee evee eeve eeve eve. Eevee eve eeve evvve evee?” (Coline, you really didn’t know her. So why do you keep coming back?) Her eyes darted away then she returned her gaze to Coline’s face. “Eeveee eeve eee eve evve eve eee eee.” (You shouldn’t invest so much time into this.) The Eevee looked behind her to what might as well be a corpse. Mewblade did not move, she did not breath. The fact that she had a pulse was about the only reason anyone could even assume she was alive.

“She’s not dead! Mewblade is not dead!” Coline bawled. The Abra was not entirely startled by the outburst. It would have been more predictable to him but he did not know what went through Coline’s mind, just as he did not know what would go on in Eevee’s. Despite the innate skill of mind reading that came naturally to his species, their minds were relatively impenetrable. He Teleported to the bed to have an easy vantage.

<“Eevee did not mean to use past tense, Coline,”> he said from the edge of the bed. Eevee sat next to him as they both looked up at Coline in worry.

“It’s not that. She just, Eevee . . . She just shouldn’t be acting like Mewblade’s dead.” Eevee drooped her ears at the sight of Coline’s tears. She was arrogant but did not aim to make Coline cry. Eevee just simply lacked the spirit of Coline, by now being defeated by the lack of response from the Mewthree. Abbott casually watched Coline walk past, having an idea what was going to transpire. He shuffled closer to Coline as she grabbed onto Mewblade’s shoulder.

“Mewblade, I want you to wake up!” Coline ordered stubbornly. “Please, wake up!” Her hands shook Mewblade’s shoulder.

<“Stop it!”> Abbott had gripped his tiny claws into Coline’s arm, urging her to quit her actions. Abras are normally sedate creatures but as Abbott was special then he tended to break the rules of his fellows.

“She’s done sleeping,” Coline retorted.

<“Mewtwo explained this to you before and it seems like you have already forgotten.”>

“Eee, eevee eeve eee?” (Oh, what did he say?) Eevee said with a big roll of her eyes. Abbott was less receptive to Eevee’s emotions than Coline and did not gather that it was sarcasm.

<“If you wake someone in a coma, they could be severely mentally damaged. You could possibly kill them.”> Abbott looked up as Coline began a mocking stance, imitating Mewtwo as if he were addressing the three.

“Mewblade injured her body, mind and soul to the point of death. Breathing on her could kill her. We must take all precautions to ensure her safety and well-being. That includes not going near her.” Eevee giggled wildly as Coline proceed to flap her hands, lip-syncing them to her speech. Coline proved she knew.

“Eeevee eeve eeve eee eeve eeve eeve eee evvvee eevee,” (Mewtwo could bore her to death with what he talks about,) added Eevee. She quickly spilled onto the floor, racing off into the main room. “Evee eevee eevee eee. Eevee!” (I’m taking the throne chair. Night!) Coline smiled to herself, enjoy the support of her friend. “Eeeeeee! Eve eee evvveee!” (Ooh! The cushion is so comfy!) Coline and Abbott laughed at Eevee’s joyous idiocy from the other room, content she could make the situation light.

<“Pokéball,”> Abbott requested, preferring to sleep in there rather than the open.

“Here you go,” Coline replied, having retrieved the ball from her bag. She recalled Abbott before putting it back into the green backpack. Tiredness was already setting in and a light snooze could not hurt. Effortlessly, Coline fell asleep at the end of the bed, emotionally drained and in need of a nap.

Swadeaqua rapped lightly on the door of the conference room to announce her return before entering. Her master and Stanford were looking over several papers though were fixated on her upon entry.

“Did you manage to take care of the problem?”

“As much of it as possible,” she replied to her master’s question. “Sir, may I request a postponement of the meeting?” Swadeaqua was naturally reluctant to voice her emotional needs and often used a whimsical air when approaching it. Such a request had to be further explained. “004.a was injured during the reconnaissance at the Biotech Research Facility. While I have been told her injuries are not serious, Demisewan is still my sister and as family I should be there. It would help for me to have a personal scope of the damage to assess how to avoid such incidents in the future.”

“Giovanni, sir,” Stanford addressed Swadeaqua’s master by his first name, a privilege that was not allowed for Swadeaqua. “004.b is in training and it is unnecessary punishment to have him barred from visiting 004.a.”

“Fine, fine. Go!” Giovanni snarled, irritated with the whole organization. “We will continue this when there are no disturbances.” Swadeaqua and Stanford waited on instructions for their dismissal. “You can leave.” Stanford made a nod of his head but Swadeaqua was made to do more as she was no equal in Giovanni’s eyes.

“Thank you, master,” she bowed her head, lowering her eyes. Giovanni did not even hide his pride. The sneer plastered across his face made Swadeaqua scream inside. One day, she vowed, she would be the one grinding his face into the floor.

Swadeaqua repressed her emotions and appeared calm as she opened the door and walked into the hall. A small click from behind queued that Stanford had left the room as well.

“Since you suggested to relieve Haddense of his training, you may as well gather him,” Swadeaqua spoke with an unwavering voice; though, on the inside she was furious, feeling alone with no one to talk to. Stanford glanced over the rim of his shades, unable to see anything past the reassured visage of Swadeaqua’s demeanor. Best way for her to voice her needs was to ask.

“Anything else?” he smirked, hinting to a nature of Swadeaqua that everyone knew but dare not address to her personally. It was a need she constantly expressed but somehow it seemed so easily misplaced. Her eyes playfully gazed at the ceiling before flashing a seductive smile in Stanford’s direction. To some she was more ready to play games with, and they with her. Stanford made the offer and she figured she would humor it in one way or another.

“If you’re so willing to please me, then would you mind grabbing the level sixty-three Arcanine that is in Shane Docks’ care? I would like him in his Pokéball, on my dresser, sometime before this evening. Think you can manage?” she leaned in, her lips teasing around Stanford’s ear.

“I think I can manage,” Stanford smirked smugly. “Just as long as I don’t have to explain why Docks’ Arcanine is so tired tomorrow morning,” he added with a chuckle, walking away. Swadeaqua returned to business, something that actually involved her family for once.

Harddense collapsed to the gym floor in a muted heap. His day had consisted of intense amounts of training and seemingly endless battles against throngs of Pokémon trainers. It was not that he was too exhausted by the fighting. Physically he had great stamina, but mentally he was drained.

“Get up!” Nichole roared from on high, looking ever more authoritative in her sharp gym representative outfit. Giovanni rarely battled his opponents over the Earth Badge and instead chose those who were training the most elite of Pokémon. The Viridian Gym was renowned for powerful Pokémon and many trainers often saved the gym for when they were more prepared. Being able to fight against experienced trainers was a privilege that was taken very seriously. Harddense had little appreciation for it since he was doing all the fighting while Nichole was doing all the barking.

“I feel like a train wreck,” Harddense huffed as he shifted his body, moving it into a weak stance. With his hung head he barely could see the horrified expression of the trainer at the other end of the gym. The boy had never heard an English speaking Pokémon, let alone witness a Pokémon that could take such a heavy barrage of attacks. On the field with Harddense was an exhausted Typhlosion. It too could not understand why the steel type was even standing after what was being thrown at him.

“Typhlosion, use Fire Spin then jump and hit it with a Flamethrower!” ordered the boy, his index finger pointed at Harddense.

“Ty!” (Okay!) Typhlosion pepped, lacking its necessary enthusiasm.

“Uh-oh,” gasped Nichole as she winced at the thought. The reality was that Harddense was slow and incapable of dodging. If the Fire Spin hit then he would overheat, possibly passing out and facing dangerous injury.

Harddense’s eyes were wide, practically paralyzed as he heard the commands. In a stressful situation involving himself he often froze. *What do I do?* Nichole was not psychic but she provided her guidance.

“Sand Attack, you dummy!”

“Way up,” Harddense responded, curling his tail up on the ground. The dogged running of the Typhlosion made it easy to predict its next move. His tail brought up the grit from the floor, sweeping the debris into the Typhlosion’s eyes.

“Ty! Typhlosion,” (Ow! My eyes,) wailed the fire type as it shook its head back and forth. The stinging forced its red eyes shut, tearing up painfully.

“Typhlosion, move away!” the trainer shouted. He was wary with the increasing sneer on Nichole’s face making him nervous. “Use Flamethrower!”

Harddense gasped as the Typhlosion faced his general direction, followed by even more of a correction because of Harddense’s noise.

“Duck!” Nichole called out clearly, refusing to let Harddense or any Pokémon she trained, to lose. Harddense dropped his body to the floor, the Flamethrower only catching the slight raise of his tail. He peeked through his talons as the heat overhead waned.

“Take it out with a Slash.” Nichole was calmer with her instructions this time. The Sand Attack had seriously impaired the Typhlosion’s ability to see.

Stanford walked up behind Nichole, tapping her lightly on the shoulder. She glanced behind herself, uttering a few words of displeasure to his visit. “Get lost,” she growled. Stanford kept a straight face. Nichole was a trainer, not an executive and had no authority to insult him. To some their passions overrode things such as common courtesy.

“How’s he doing?” Stanford looked over the woman’s shoulder to watch as Harddense returned to his feet.

“Fine. Go!” Nichole hissed back at Stanford. The trainer on the floor was puzzled but knew he had to help his Pokémon win.

“Run towards my voice,” he said, aware that a Slash would win Nichole the match. The Typhlosion started to jog towards its master.

“I’m busy.” Nichole shoved Stanford in the chest, making him step aside. “Tackle, Slash!” she called, leaning over the balcony and glowering at Harddense. Harddense nodded his head before running after the Typhlosion. He was at the right distance to lunge and threw his body forward, knocking the Typhlosion down with his heavy weight. The nearly flameless back hardly caused Harddense to flinch as he proceeded with the Slash, leaning his upper body back and swiping his two talons across its spine. The Typhlosion screamed, terrified and unable to understand how much damage it just suffered from.

“My Typhlosion!” wailed the trainer as he watched his Pokémon collapse to the ground, still trying to squirm its way towards the human. He disregarded that Harddense was close and ran to the Typhlosion’s aid. Harddense stayed beside it, biting his bottom lip in mental anguish.

“I win!” Nichole cried out in glee as she jumped about in celebration.

“I’m calling it a day for 004.b,” Stanford spoke quietly. Nichole stopped her victory performance.

“Why?” She briefly glanced at the field. Harddense was staring at the Typhlosion, unable to take his eyes off of it. She could hardly believe his shock was any reason to take him out of battling. Harddense was sympathetic to his opponents and found that hurting them, especially critically, would leave him emotionally numb. He was still fighting fit and only needed a bit of rest. Nichole needed an actual reason from Stanford.

Harddense on the other hand badly wanted to be away from the gym floor. He could not believe what he had done. The Typhlosion was almost dead, the Slash had to have cut more than just muscle. With all the blood he could not see why the Pokémon was still alive, taking the blame for it.

“Please,” he whispered. The boy looked at him mixed between hating Nichole for calling such a move, and for Harddense executing it. “You have to take your Typhlo away from here. I don’t want it to die. Please . . .” Harddense was distraught, unable to tear his eyes from the gash.

Nichole heard Harddense’s voice, calmly raising the remote in her hand. “He’s not suppose to be talking.” Stanford raised his eyebrow, not knowing what the remote was for. He looked over the rail curiously. A gentle compress of the button cleared any misconceptions of the remote’s functionality.

“Ahh!” Harddense cried, sliding himself back so he would not accidentally catch the duo in the shock. Doubts about who to blame all went to Nichole upon witnessing the treatment.

“You cruel woman! How could you do that to your own Pokémon?!” The boy stood up, recalling his Pokémon. Pokémon bled less while they were stored in Pokéballs and were easier to transport without further injury.

“That Pokémon should know better not to associate with the opposition,” she snorted. Harddense glared up at her bitterly, resenting her.

“Just go . . .” Harddense muttered, not even facing the boy. The trainer looked down at the steel type, unable to do a thing for the demoralized creature. “I’m sorry,” Harddense furthered his apology.

“I should be the one who’s sorry,” the trainer said, packing his Pokéball away. He was unable to leave, wanting to do something for Harddense.

“No talking,” Nichole barked, her giddy trigger finger slamming down on the button. Harddense did not scream.

“You can’t do anything. Go.” Harddense told the trainer. The kid nodded, packing up his stuff. He ran out of the large double doors devastated this his Typhlosion was so badly injured and that he could do nothing for the abuse of the Pokémon he had fought.

“Give me that,” Stanford ordered and ripped the remote control from Nichole’s grasp, thus stopping the painful spasms that ravaged Harddense’s body. He gave in to the convulsions once the slam of the door finished echoing throughout the gym.

“Fine then,” Nichole snarled at Stanford, treating him just as badly as if he were Harddense. “Harddense will listen to me, remote or not.” She leaned over the rail to give her orders. “Stand up!” Harddense tried his best but did not even make it to the fetal position.

Stanford sidled up next to Nichole, looking at the same display. Team Rocket Pokémon trainers were callous people whose jobs had them dealing with raising and training. The lack of nurturing emotions they had returned equally emotionless and hardened behaviors from their Pokémon. The process was harsh and Harddense was considered fortunate since his training involved less abuse than most.

Stanford did not train Pokémon. His position made him responsible for the organization of Pokémon capture events. Then again, Swadeaqua stated blandly at one point that Stanford’s position was to boss everyone else. An executive’s job. In their conversations she went further to explain how his job affected large collectives of the organization. It showed some sign from her that she was thankful she was sentient and domesticated enough not to be put in the same place.

Executives held a big influence when it came to the Pokémon training since they consistently demanded better Pokémon; Giovanni being the most demanding. If it were not for him and his constant spending, there would not be some of the cruel innovations that existed today. ‘Break them, train them,’ was a common quote and in turn the Pokémon that Stanford had planned for capture would be starved, beaten, trained to the brink of exhaustion. If they could find no use out on the field, or on the gym floor, then those Pokémon would be used for scientific experimentation. The list of atrocities that the organization would perform on Pokémon was so lengthy that it was a wonder of how anyone could come up with all of them. The shock collar around Harddense’s neck was one example of the technical advances of torture that was designed to control the unruly monsters. It was somewhat disheartening that these innocent creatures became the broken, bloodthirsty machines because of Stanford’s own actions. But seeing as it was his job, he had little care beyond wondering how he would feel if he was the one wearing the collar.

“004.b is done battling for today,” Stanford announced while watching Harddense struggle to his feet for who knows what time that day. “I’m keeping this,” Stanford added as he waved the remote before depositing it in his breast pocket.

"I have a responsibility to train him for Giovanni!" Nichole protested, her hand to her chest in sincerity.

"Boss' orders."

Nichole stuttered, trying to deny the statement. For her, Harddense's training was of the utmost importance, but if what Stanford was saying was true, then she could not deny the order and had to accept it. "You owe me," she snarled, turning away in a huff.

"I owe you nothing," Stanford said. His gaze fell on Harddense who was standing. Either Nichole scared him that much, or Harddense was that much of a challenge to keep down. The brown eyes were uncertain of what was going on. Having scientists and executives around was not uncommon but they rarely arrived unannounced as Stanford had.

"Whatcha' doin'?" Harddense asked wearily. Nichole balled her fist and without any word took off out the balcony entrance. This display bothered Harddense.

"You get the rest of the day off," Stanford said, finding it a bit weird to be talking to the Pokémon in the first place.

"Really?" Harddense perked up then started to wonder why he was being awarded such a freedom. "Why?" He watched as Stanford made his way down the step ladder on the side of the balcony. Only once he was within arm's length did he answer the question.

"It was Swadeaqua's suggestion." Harddense knew that meant he was not being assigned to some sort of special training. Swadeaqua would never do that to him.

"You mean . . .?" Harddense started off in a tangent, not letting Stanford get in the real reason. "I'm on dat! She's da bomb. A rockin' piece o' phat shiat." Stanford had to admit, sometimes it helped *not* to understand Pokémon. Then again, not like he could really understand him anyway. "Shez pimpin' hawt 'n . . . Oww!" Harddense finished with a yelp, Stanford removing his finger from the remote control. In the end, it still had its uses. Harddense returned quickly to reality, dislodged from his strange fantasies. He acknowledged that Swadeaqua was his sister but idolized her to great lengths at times. To some, his expressions were only mild compared to others.

"Are you done romanticizing over your incest fantasies?" Stanford asked with a dry tone in his voice. Harddense stared at him blankly, not knowing what one of the words meant. Somehow it figured that while one of the Mewthrees was over-strung sexually, the other two had no idea what the word entailed. "Nevermind what I said. 004.a . . ." Harddense's face dropped, his heart apparently shattered. Any news was never good news for him, and his devastation brought out his desperate side.

"Demisewan!" he grabbed at Stanford's suit jacket. "What happened to my twin?!" Harddense hollered, his face streaked with tears. He covered them with his talons, expecting the worst. Stanford rolled his eyes, having forgotten that the pair were inseparable and even the mildest sign of trouble would send them into either rage or despair.

"She just took a small injury, or so I've heard. Nothing to get worked up about," Stanford said with a brush of his jacket.

"How does a ghost type get an injury?" Apparently Nichole had never really left and was looming over the edge of the balcony.

"I wouldn't know the answer to that," Stanford replied, irritated with just about everything by now. "She should be in the usual room," Stanford told Harddense. He

knew the room, it was the medical room that was used to do check-ups on the Mewthrees specifically.

“Oh! That room!” Harddense exclaimed. “Thanks S-man,” he waved then hurtled down the nearest hallway. Nichole could not help but think she had never seen him move that fast. Stanford put that past him. He had to go and collect an Arcanine for Swadeaqua, and after seeing Harddense, he could easily understand why she would need it.

It was dark and warm. A rhythmic beep was heard in the background. A figure lay upon one of the several beds in a light sleep, starting to come aware to its surroundings.

“Mmm,” Demisewan groaned as her eyes opened slowly. Harddense and Swadeaqua were hovering by her bedside. The scientists that administered care had left all but one. Doctor West leaned forward removing the oxygen mask from Demisewan’s face before retreating to the back of the medical room. Demisewan looked at her family with a weary smile. Swadeaqua showed relief in return. Harddense on the other hand was much more emotional.

“You’re okay!” he cried, hugging his sister tightly in his arms. Demisewan gasped, Harddense relaxed his grip. “Sorry,” he apologized as he moved his right talon away from the Demisewan’s bandaged injury. “What up?” he asked playfully.

“Drop the slang,” Demisewan spoke although rather quietly.

“Okay,” Harddense muttered, his vocal patterns very plain now that he was not speaking like some human from the ghetto. Harddense continued to cuddle his sister.

“Doctor West says you’ll be fine. I’ll keep you from being sent out on missions for a couple days to allow you to recuperate,” informed Swadeaqua with a warm smile. She had a fondness for very few things and Demisewan just happened to be one exception. As for Harddense, he was her brother but she could not stand how he acted towards her. Currently he was civil because of the need to guard and protect his twin.

“I’m glad you’re okay. I was so scared,” Harddense mumbled, starting to nuzzle Demisewan’s cheek. Swadeaqua briefly fixed the bang-like fur on the top of Demisewan’s head before standing back. Harddense began to tickle his twin.

“Eee. Heeheehee. Stop!” Demisewan laughed helplessly, her lungs aching from the inconsistency in breath. Harddense did as he was told, going back to cuddling.

Neither Demisewan or Harddense noticed Swadeaqua’s scrutinizing stare. She was envious of their intimacy, something Swadeaqua would never likely possess. That was the reason she wanted the Arcanine, it was obedient and not yet derived of feeling. At that moment she needed the closeness, a false sense of bonding; otherwise, she would have chosen a Pokémon or a human with better stamina.

“They are so cruel to put you through all those missions,” Harddense spoke quietly to his twin, his voice snapping Swadeaqua out of her thinking. She was a piteously jealous creature, trying to do absolutely everything to slate her need for something more. Because of her lack of wisdom, Swadeaqua did not have the ability to find her true emotional needs, all she knew was what could keep her sane. She had very little spare time to devote to her thoughts. Harddense had no idea he had disturbed the small oasis of Swadeaqua’s mind.

“So what happened?” Demisewan kept a straight face, but was already crying. She owed Harddense the answer.

“Alarms went off when I tripped their system.” Harddense’s attention was undivided. “And the gas came from the vents, burning my lungs. I was told to run into the elevator . . .” She stopped as broken sobs escaped her.

“Shh, it’s okay,” Harddense cooed, warmly taking his sister to his chest. “You’re safe now.” Swadeaqua was touched by Harddense’s loyalty.

“ . . . And they . . . These humans . . . they . . . they shot me!” Demisewan wailed and then broke down into full-blown sobbing. Harddense took a seat on the bed and began to rock Demisewan back and forth.

“You poor thing,” Swadeaqua said, being sincere but coming across as little cold. Harddense and Demisewan looked up at the much taller dragon type Mewthree. Both were a little confused as Swadeaqua leaned forward to hug them.

“Let her rest,” Swadeaqua advised Harddense, he nodded dumbly. Demisewan was brushing the tears away from her eyes. “And you, my dear, get some sleep.” Demisewan would have protested, the dull ache from her lungs hushing her. Swadeaqua used a Sweet Kiss with tender care, instantly sending Demisewan into deep slumber. She eased her little sister to the mattress. Harddense blinked at Swadeaqua, wondering what to do. “You can stay with Demisewan or go to your room.” She stood tall, arms folded beneath her breasts.

“I’ll stay,” Harddense then completely ignored Swadeaqua altogether, his focus on his beloved twin. Swadeaqua looked into the back of the room, peering into the darkness. She spoke nothing as her body summoned Doctor West to her. It was a commanding summons, not a flirtatious summons. Doctor West was not paying attention to the Mewthrees until he found himself subconsciously stepping into Swadeaqua’s reach.

“Yes, Swadeaqua?” Doctor West looked about curiously, glancing at the sleeping Demisewan, the concerned Harddense, then fixating his eyes back on the sexy Swadeaqua. Doctor West was the leading mind for the Project 10.a Intensity team and created the three Mewthrees present in the room, as well as two others. He had a fondness for all five members of the species when given the opportunity to interact with them. In a way they were like his children. Doctor West and his team grew them with loving care and wished the best for them. They were to be the perfect team, if Giovanni had had his way, if 001 was not so grossly independent. So much waste.

Swadeaqua, Harddense, and Demisewan were told everything about their ‘psychopathic’ sister; although, Swadeaqua knew what was true. The team of scientists had very little influence outside of the laboratories. They tested, did checkups, nursed their injuries and designed many of the devices meant for the Mewthrees. Most of the time the Mewthrees were influenced by nonfactual people. If 001’s creation had gone as planned, nothing bad would be said of her. Now there were rumors about her whereabouts, if she was really alive. Swadeaqua was gradually being assigned the task of dealing with 001 and at that moment she was taking charge.

“Make certain she receives the *best* medical attention,” Swadeaqua told Doctor West. He nodded towards her humbly.

“You all will always receive the very best,” he assured her, he had a slight smile of pride in his eyes. In his mind he was judging their characteristics, comparing the dreams to the realities. Swadeaqua was as pretty, seductive, whimsical, linguistic, formal, informative and guiding as she was designed to be. The faults as Doctor West could only

speculate were Swadeaqua's vain, lustful, spiteful, jealous nature. Those were as skeptical as Swadeaqua's possible self-esteem issues. Harddense was protective, kind, honest, and obedient up to a point. Despite his good physical state and ability to use attacks, he lacked aggression and assertiveness in his fighting. Demisewan was basically flawless except for two things, her crazed revenge sprees and the fact that she could only harness attacks while in that state. These were the current Mewthrees that Doctor West and his team were working with. The other two, Doctor West had little exposure to.

Vicebane was known as 002 to the scientists, and to the Mewthrees, 'that brother of ours that lost his life to our sister'. The scientists had preferred Vicebane to be a dominant ghost type rather than a dominant poison type, but they could not complain. Vicebane's behavior was everything Giovanni wanted. It was a shame that all the money and effort that went into creating 002 was an utter waste. He lived out of his tank for two weeks before he was cleaved in half. Complete waste. All the money that went into his now useless armor, into the protective coating for his exposed skeleton was gone. If she had not killed him . . . 001, Mewblade.

Rumored to be possessed by demons, a monster that defied death, the advocate of the devil. The Team Rocket members throughout the organization had numerous stories to tell and titles to give, Hell Spawn, Lady Death, Shadow Mew. If the scientists never had let Mewblade live past the early stages of her creation there would be no problems. Mewblade was as deadly, powerful, and skilled as she was suppose to be; yet, she still managed to surpass the expectations of Doctor West's team. Her personality was a massive failure; stubborn, reckless, emotionally unstable, hostile and non-submissive, and she was a bigger bane than Vicebane. And to keep Mewblade alive as she grew . . . Was it four or five times she had to have open-heart surgery? Was it three weeks with Mewblade on a ventilator? His team flat-out struggled to give Mewblade the precious gift of life, yet Swadeaqua still assumed that Doctor West and his team would not do their very best to aid the Mewthrees. He was rather insulted.

"Demisewan will be up about and singing her R&B by tomorrow morning," reassured Doctor West for the second time. Swadeaqua believed his statement and left for the door with some resolute sense of determination.

Mewtwo appeared in the dimly lit front room of Mewblade's home. There were foreign presences in the bedroom and Mewtwo was nearly in a cold sweat of dread as he treaded slowly towards the it. There could be harmful Pokémon in the room. Wait, a human and Pokémon, even worse. He cautiously peered into the room, ready to disable some arrogant trainer.

<"Coline and Eevee,"> remarked Mewtwo, no longer fearful for his daughter's safety. He sighed lightly as he walked up to the bed and looked at the pair. Eevee had gone over to Coline after she fell into a slumber; that, Mewtwo did not know but could see the pair, near collapsed next to Mewblade. Their breathing was deep and peaceful. This was not the first time they had been caught snoozing next to the incapacitated Mewblade, or the first time Mewtwo would have to wake them up.

Mewtwo gently clasped the shoulders of Mewblade's Chosen, shaking Coline just as gently. <"Come on, Coline, you have to go back to that brother of yours."> Mewtwo

was trying to be compassionate, but it was hard. The first time he yelled at Coline, making her cry.

“Eee, eevee,” (Hi, Mewtwo,) Eevee muttered dryly as she stood up, shaking her mane. “Eeve eeevvvee eevee eeve eeve?” (Has Mewblade gotten any better?) she inquired then suddenly leapt on Coline’s still sleeping head. “Eeve eve!” (Get up!) Eevee yelled. Coline sat up with a start, Eevee falling off and rolling to the foot of the bed.

“What?” Coline looked around, seeing Mewtwo. “How’s Mewblade?” Her legs swung around to dangle over the edge of the bed. There was eagerness in her eyes, although the way Mewtwo shifted with her gaze nearly brought fourth her tears. “Oh . . . so she isn’t better . . .”

“Eeve eeevee eeve eeeve eeve, eevee?” (It means she isn’t any worse, right, Mewtwo?)

Mewtwo’s expression lacked the clenched jaw, meaning the news was no different. <“There has been no changes,”> was his monotone response. He adapted the air of seriousness that he usually had. Coline knew what was coming. <“You shouldn’t be here disrupting Mewblade. Mewblade injured her body, mind and soul to the point of near death. Breathing on her could kill her.”> Coline was right, the same old, same old. She showed little interest but Mewtwo continued to press the matter. <“She needs to be kept stable so she doesn’t get any worse. You being here makes it very hard to do that.”> Mewtwo saw how Coline was making an effort to avoid listening to him. <“Listen to me,”> Mewtwo ordered, using Psychic to force Coline to at least face him. Coline was a little alarmed but not afraid of the psychic Legendary Pokémon who could effortlessly emancipate her if he chose to do so. <“Mewblade means a lot to both of us. We both want what is best for her, so please try for her.”>

“Okay,” Coline mumbled. Mewtwo released the girl from the Psychic hold. “I just miss her.” Eevee licked Coline’s hand reassuringly.

“I know, Mew and myself do too,” Mewtwo glanced at the skylight. That was when he heard whimpering, he looked at Eevee inquisitively.

“Eeve? Eevee eevee,” (What? It isn’t me,) Eevee looked back at Mewtwo with an injured expression. She was quiet and there were still the strange whimpering noises. Coline crawled over to the head of the bed to look at Mewblade.

“Eevee, Mewtwo!” Coline exclaimed unable to contain her excitement. “I think Mewblade’s waking up!” Mewtwo looked over not quite believing.

“Evvee eve,” (No way,) Eevee said, equally dismissive. The two Pokémon peered at Mewblade though not for very long since she sat upright with a jerk before they could have a close examination. With the sitting up came a bone chilling shriek which turned into an agonizing scream.

Coline covered her ears and started to say, “Mewblade, it’s okay,” and would have said more if she was not so confused. Mewblade’s eyes were closed, which was odd. “Mewblade!” Coline yelled very loudly, her voice barely cresting that of her friend. She looked at Mewtwo helplessly, realizing Mewblade was not responsive to her.

<Mewblade!> Mewtwo roared right into his daughter’s head. She made no response to him either, still screaming at a blood-curdling pitch. Mewtwo motioned for Coline to follow him to the outside of Mewblade’s cave. Her and Eevee followed without question.

Outside in the stillness of the evening sky they could communicate, not to mention hear themselves think. Eevee was shivering from fright and Coline seemed lost and scared. Even Mewtwo was shaken.

“What happened?” Coline begged Mewtwo for some insight. Eevee was so startled that she could hardly care for an answer just so long as Mewblade’s screaming stopped. “We didn’t hurt her, did we?”

<“No.”> When Mewtwo spoke into Mewblade’s mind it was comparable to talking into a vacuum. The reason why sound did not register in space was because there were no particles for the sound waves to bounce off. While a person’s thoughts were not the same; if there was nothing there to pick up the sound then no one in turn would hear it. Mewblade’s mind was absent from her brain. The screaming might have been an expulsion from wherever Mewblade’s mind was. Mewtwo shuddered causing Coline to worry more. If Mewblade was screaming that badly, then what was really going on? She described the resurrection process to be beyond comprehension. Coline could see Mewtwo’s shoulders visibly sag, he felt that helpless. The stretches of his imagination were not helping as to why Mewblade was so vocal. It was his fault for stabilizing her after the incident with Moltres. Any suffering caused would be coincidentally on his part.

“Eevee?” (Mewtwo?) Eevee ventured, causing him to look down at the furball.

<“I was thinking. Sorry.”>

“Eevee,” (It’s okay,) Eevee said with a frown.

“What were you thinking about?” Coline of course was concerned, although Mewtwo seemed to always worry a lot. Mewtwo gave a mental sigh as he tried to think of how to explain his thoughts.

<“When I shouted into Mewblade’s head it was like shouting into air. There was no response besides emptiness.”> Mewtwo was gesticulating vaguely with his paws, trying to get his point across to Coline and Eevee. Eevee showed the greater understanding, nodding as she listened. Coline was puzzled.

“Eevee eevee eevee eevee,” (I understand what you mean,) Eevee muttered quietly.

“But I don’t!” Coline protested. “Are you saying Mewblade’s mind is dead?!” Awkward choice of words.

<“Not quite like that. She’s in a coma but no coma patient alive has had a reaction like hers,”> Mewtwo nodded his head towards the entrance. <“For now I can’t do anything but hope that Mewblade’s screaming doesn’t cause her any harm.”> Eevee looked up with an appalled expression.

“Eevee? Eevee eevee eevee eevee?” (Her? What about me and my ears?) demanded the furry Pokémon.

“Eevee!” Coline scolded her friend.

<“Your ears are not what is important at the moment.”> Eevee’s ears sagged in response.

It had been about an hour that Coline, Eevee and Mewtwo had spent outside. Coline and Eevee were seated, Eevee sprawled in Coline’s arms. Both were tired and depressed. Mewtwo stood over them, arms crossed in front of his chest as he stargazed. He was thinking, something not uncommon until the usual culprit disturbed his thoughts.

“Mew, mew,” (Hello, Mewtwo,) Mew chirped as she approached Mewtwo from behind. Coline and Eevee glanced up, blinking at Mew. <“Hello, Coline and Eevee,”> she continued her greeting in telepathy. Mew’s expression became drastically grave, she knew what was wrong inside the cave and in need of knowing. “Mew mew mew mew mew mew, mew?” (What happened to her, Mewtwo?) Her eyes showed years, the six hundred of her Legendary life as she demanded with teary blue eyes for answers. “Mew mew mew,” (Please tell me,) she pleaded, shaking her head slightly. Coline had learned to understand Mew but did not go through the effort of translating, she was too glum to try. Mewtwo took Mew’s plea as a mother’s plea, the need to know what was wrong with her young. Then again, Mew was the only Legendary whose duties centered around love and protection. Mewtwo understood, he was concerned too.

<“I wish I knew. She just sat up and started screaming. If it doesn’t stop soon, this screaming could cause problems.”> Coline gave a coughing sob. <“For now all we can do is wait,”> Mewtwo said in a weary tone as Mew nodded her head solemnly. The quiet of the evening became predominant as the Pokémon and the human contemplated unseemly horrors and disastrous results for Mewblade.

Coline finally nodded off with Eevee a close second as fatigue gripped them. Neither Mew or Mewtwo needed sleep, sleep being more or less a mechanism to avoid boredom. In Mewblade’s case, sleep or to be specific, comatose, was a survival mechanism. It was used for some stability to allow recovery. Mew made a bubble, flopping on it. Herself and Mewtwo exchanged glances, something happened, they could feel it.

Mew’s bubble popped, and she flew towards the entranceway in alarm. “Mew!” (Mewblade!) Mew hollered, this jarred Coline and Eevee awake from their short nap. Eevee was up, tugging on the hem of Coline’s pant leg.

“Eevveee evvvee. Eeevee!” (Something’s wrong. Move!) growled Eevee as she paused to see if Coline would do anything; she did. Coline jumped with a start, running in after Mew with Eevee in her arms. Mewtwo followed close after them.

The group piled into the bedroom prepared for the worst and almost ironically surprised by the sight. Mewblade was slouched, tears going unchecked down her face as she whimpered.

“Eevveee?” (Mewblade?) questioned Eevee. She squirmed from Coline’s arms and leapt onto the bed. “Eeve eevve?” (You okay?) Mewblade made no response. Out of curiosity Mew floated up to look into Mewblade eyes. Lights on, but nobody home.

<“She’s still out,”> Mew muttered in telepathy.

<“At least it’s better than screaming,”> said Mewtwo with a dry tone. Coline’s shoulders sagged as she listened then without warning hopped onto the bed.

“Mewblade, it’s okay now,” Coline began, barely understandable with her grief. Mewblade continued to be oblivious to the outside world. “Stop crying, please? You’re safe now . . .” Coline’s bottom lip quivered as she continued to receive the oppressive silence from her friend. By now Coline was crying freely. “Oh Mewblade!” she wailed, flinging herself into Mewblade’s chest, clutching tightly. The Pokémon watched sympathetically at Coline’s display. “Mewblade . . .” Mewtwo was about to reach forward for Coline when he heard a small whimpering reply.

“I’m . . . awake, Coline . . . the nightmare, it’s over.”

“Good morning, sir,” Swadeaqua bowed her head to Giovanni, ignoring the other executives as she took her seat in the conference room. After her late night rendezvous, Swadeaqua seemed quite refreshed and serene. She had spent the better part of the morning ‘talking’ to the espionage team. The group was very demoralized by Swadeaqua’s battering, how she prodded every small flaw. She possessed the ability to make people shake in terror, break down in tears, everyone except Giovanni. Swadeaqua delivered a cold gaze across the table at her master. He noticed and before even opening the meeting, he would assert his dominance over the rowdy Mewthree.

“You are to greet me properly,” he smiled poisonously at Swadeaqua. The various eleven executives watched with interest as Swadeaqua narrowed her aqua eyes, rising from her seat. This was incredibly humiliating. Swadeaqua pulled a humbled smile, even though Giovanni knew she was faking.

“Yes, master. I am truly sorry for addressing you inaccurately.” Swadeaqua had made the most perfect bow before standing upright. She waited patiently to be given a seat. It fooled everyone else in the room, making them believe that Swadeaqua was genuine with her feelings.

“You may sit,” Giovanni gestured. As Swadeaqua sat he gave a smug smile to his assembled executives. “Never undermine my authority or you will be humiliated just as this self proclaimed human over here.” Swadeaqua’s good mood was gone. She would have lunged at the arrogant male with her nails if it were not for the fire arms and powerful Pokémon present in the room. Stanford offered no comfort for Swadeaqua, making the poor thing feel alone, again. “Now on to the day’s agenda,” began Giovanni, as if Swadeaqua’s integrity meant nothing. She stared at the cherry stained oak table, burning with anger.

If I were alone in the same room with him I would cause him every imaginable torment that he would beg for death, then I will be the superior. Swadeaqua kept her thoughts to herself as she continued to sulk. The debating had begun without much contribution from Swadeaqua; besides, it was primarily budget information at the moment. She listened placidly as monsieur Dublaire discussed the Team Rocket black market and the net value of goods traded with other illicit organizations. The, ‘tenfold increase since the second quarter,’ went over Swadeaqua’s head. All this financial mumbo-jumbo was not in Swadeaqua’s department until Project 10.a Intensity came up in the conversation. It was more financial information, but this time it involved the Mewthrees.

“We would have to reclaim Mewblade to make up for the loss of Vicebane,” assessed Dublaire, his eyes wandering to Swadeaqua, everyone followed. Swadeaqua knew what was coming, knowing that she could restore her pride and dignity. “Any ideas?” This was more to Swadeaqua.

“Obvious exploitation and capture,” she stated matter-of-factly, dismissing the fact that they were almost blaming the Mewthrees as a collective when it was Vicebane’s own faults that lead to his death.

“Capture?! Are you mad?!” Mr. Ali rose from his seat. “She’s likely the deadliest Pokémon in existence.” His words were emphasized with the beating of his fist at every syllable. He specialized in resources. Stanford, who sat diagonally from Ali, was not as

convinced. Undermining Swadeaqua's intelligence was a poor idea, and he believed something could be made of her statement.

"It's called 'strategy'. We knew how to bait her the first time, the second should be even easier since we could execute a better course of action."

"It's not the bait, it's her," Ali continued his protest. Felisha Datona, the woman responsible for the human aspect of Team Rocket training was nodding gravely in agreement. Conrad, likely the most cruelest person there, also was in agreement with Ali and Datona. He controlled how the Pokémon were treated, his appearances were that of his position, hard and cold.

"Mewblade is an untrained killing machine. Numbers can not overwhelm her, and Datona can agree with me, nothing is adequate in facing her combatively." As it stood, the main speakers were divided on the issue and the pro-capture group had no strong argument. Giovanni listened to his executives as they assaulted one another with even harsher verbal comebacks. Swadeaqua knew of an idea, calmly presenting it.

"Then how about considering a Mewthree arsenal?" she suggested, head resting on her clasped paws. Conrad immediately scoffed at the thought.

"Demisewan and Harddense can't fight. You've seen them in battle. I'd have better luck with a Magikarp." The response was instantaneous for Swadeaqua.

"Oh, really? I have a proposal that you all may find intriguing." A catty smile swept across her face. There was a dramatic pause.

"Goddamn it, Swadeaqua. Tell us!" demanded one of the executives. Swadeaqua had her audience.

"Having me coordinate my siblings in a battle against my sister." Somehow that came across as a joke to the others. Swadeaqua specifically loathed demoting herself to a fighting role. The humans were skeptical, questioning the concept.

"You're not thinking of fighting yourself, eh, Swade?" Stanford had an anxious smile, trying not to imagine what Swadeaqua said. She gave no reply because she knew she had said all that was needed. Stanford clutched the table in anger, shouting at the Mewthree. "What in hell are you thinking?! You aren't a fighting Pokémon!"

"Have you gone mad like . . . her?" dripped the voice of Datona. The bantering continued until Giovanni raised his hand for silence. He was aware of Swadeaqua's nature and capabilities.

"Quit your bickering, all of you." Everyone silenced themselves. "Swadeaqua, you got the reaction you wanted, now inform us further." Swadeaqua smirked then addressed the small assembly.

"004.a and 004.b listen to me completely without question. It is too complicated to have a trainer on the field since Mewblade would go for that weakness."

"What makes you better?" interrupted Conrad with a snarl.

"I don't freeze in intense situations. I can resist what would be fatal damage to a human; as well, I can defend myself. I may not be a fighter of the norm, but I do have my abilities. You all should know very well of how effective those are." Swadeaqua had a knowing smile. Conrad and Stamford exchanged glances.

"But you act too human," Conrad said with a dismissive wave.

"See the thing is, so does Mewblade. If you watched the footage it is obvious. That Pokémon is easily manipulated by pride. She does everything alone. In fact, the only reason why 002 lost was his homicidal spree; he had no focus. 001 has an incredible list

of weaknesses. A blind fighter, limited strategist, easily manipulated, compulsive, objective driven, emotional. Mewblade does not relate on a mental level to Pokémon. She also does not fight with or against groups. With little effort I could beat down Mewblade mentally, keep Harddense as the defense, and Demisewan as a light offense. She can't win because of her fighting nature."

Jaws were opened in wonderment of how Swadeaqua knew, most anyway. Stanford was distressed about the whole idea, he never thought she would agree. Giovanni was relatively pleased. Despite Swadeaqua's own sense of humanity she was recognizing herself as a prominent Pokémon.

"Any objections that are *not* based on personal quarrels?" Giovanni asked. There was a shake of heads. "Good. Now that we have our attacking volunteers we will have to find 001 and bring her to us." Giovanni jabbed his finger at the desk. Everything was going as planned. By the end of the year he would have 001 in his grasp.

Harddense was face down on his bed, spared from training for the day because of Swadeaqua's demand. He had barely slept a wink all night. All the thoughts that ran through his head were of his sister. There was a tiny click at the door, Harddense glanced up from his pillow. He expected someone like Nicole to barge in, but the slow creak of the door was that of only one being.

"Demisewan?" Harddense sat upright, facing the door as Demisewan shuffled in.

"Hey, bro," she smiled slightly, whispering a bit.

"Demisewan!" Harddense jumped from the bed with surprising agility for a steel Pokémon. "I'm so glad to see you," he nearly wept after gingerly clasping his twin to his chest. "I couldn't sleep, kept thinking about what it would be like to lose you," Harddense spoke quietly, head nuzzled in Demisewan's bangs. "I'm so glad to see you," he repeated. Demisewan was passively listening to her brother's heartbeat. He had been petrified that he might have lost her. The fact was simple to Demisewan, she was a ghost type and would not be dying anytime soon.

"Calm down," Demisewan chided lightly. Harddense's heartbeat was faster than usual but quickly returned to normal. "I missed you too, but I'm not getting worried sick over it," scolded Demisewan, stepping back from Harddense. She was smiling a white smile, showing off her small, sharp teeth. Harddense returned the smile, hugging his twin and giving her nuzzles and Eskimo kisses. The two stopped after several minutes of comforting each other. Demisewan piped in. "Want to find Swadeaqua?"

"Yes!" Harddense said excitedly, grabbing Demisewan's right paw and dragging her towards the door.

"Hehe, slow down!" Demisewan giggled. Harddense was not going to slow down but improvised by picking up his twin and carrying her.

<"Hello, child."> Ho-oh trotted into Mewblade's bedroom, managing to maintain an amazing amount of grace despite having small legs. It stopped at the foot of the bed looking at Mewblade curiously. The Mewthree was propped up in bed, eyes open and glaring at Ho-oh. <"You have a duty to do,"> it told her which received an alarmingly negative response.

“Go to hell, buzzard,” she snapped loudly at the bird. Mewblade did not move besides her gradually narrowing eyes. There was a look of surprise from Ho-oh. Swearing was not a Legendary trait. Zapdos would curse on occasion, but for Mewblade to do it was completely out-of-character. And for Mewblade to be so vocally hostile, it was shockingly abnormal. Ho-oh said nothing, staring back at Mewblade with hurt, concerned eyes.

“You set me up!” Mewblade hollered at Ho-oh, then clutched her paws to her head, wrenching. Her face showed the transpire of anger, sorrow and abandonment. Before long Mewblade launched back in to anger, screaming, “You knew what it would do to me! You deceptive, manipulative, bird! How could you do that?! I wish I never agreed with you. I wish I died!!!” Mewblade whimpered then immediately threw her arms and head into her lap. Ho-oh was unmoving, waiting for Mewblade to unload all of her grief on it. It was unresponsive, letting Mewblade run the course of her sorrows.

Mewblade sat up slowly, back to her conspiring mood. “I left the gym, because I knew I would be used, then you came and I am still used,” she spoke darkly, her tone never rising or dropping. Confrontational still, Mewblade returned to yelling at Ho-oh. “That is it! I’m done! I will not be used anymore!” Mewblade’s tail came out from under the sheets, the longest tail blade pressed firmly against her neck. “Let’s see what you would do without me.” Her face was wet with tears, yet her eyes were stern as she tested Ho-oh for a response.

<“Is it really worth it?”> Ho-oh asked with a calm voice. It was keeping an even pitch since any sudden movements or sounds could be the final push for Mewblade.

“Am I worth it at all for you to give me respect? This . . . it is better than being here with you, your lies, and everything else I have to deal with,” Mewblade murmured, her blade unwavering.

<“You likely know how death treats you. Life, for you, is always more concrete than death.”>

“I would not hurt anymore . . .” Mewblade’s eyes lowered.

<“But then you would lose what you already have.”>

“Such as?” Mewblade growled, the blade cutting skin. Ho-oh cringed and quickly tried the only reason worth trying.

<“You have family and friends. A little girl who’s your Chosen. Every spare moment she had, she was by your side. Coline was wishing and hoping. She spent evenings talking to you despite the fact that you could not hear. You’re living for that little girl. Don’t you remember last night how she was pleading for you to be okay? Are you that selfish that you would kill yourself despite having someone as special as her?”> Mewblade listened, not a muscle twitching. Ho-oh could not tell if it was getting through to her. Mewblade lowered her blade and Recovered the small injury. She swiftly moved out of the bed, psychically making it. Mewblade remained quiet and expressionless for some time. Ho-oh inquisitively tilted its head.

“No, I am not that selfish,” she paused, looking at Ho-oh. “I am not looking forward to resurrecting the dead again.” Her eyes wandered to the wall where she stared off into the distance. Resurrecting was generally not that bad except in the last instance, in which case Mewblade was afraid she may repeat. What had truly happened was distant, the memories of it were quite blurry.

Mewblade was pacing around lightly, her body unaffected by the months of inactivity. She was very solemn as far as Ho-oh could tell. The outburst earlier would probably be forgotten by Mewblade as she would be redefining herself. At the present time she would have to learn to deal with whatever it was that had happened to her, only if she could remember past the final stages of the resurrection with Moltres. Trying to remember and not were bothering her just as much as the thought of being so misinformed by her guardian. The thoughts of resurrecting made her wary of their consequences. The truth of the matter was that she had agreed to Ho-oh, unwittingly volunteering to her duties. Blame could be given to Ho-oh for evading the obvious; though, it was not fairly placed.

<“You do have an innocent to help, child,”> Ho-oh said quietly. It walked over and brushed a feather across her cheek. <“I’m sorry I can’t make the transition easy for you. It’s your duty and it can’t be avoided.”> Mewblade nodded bitterly in agreement. This was her life, for however long it would be. <“Come on, I shall take you to the innocent,”> Ho-oh said, then used Teleport on its self and Mewblade.

<“We’re here,”> announced Ho-oh. Its wing was around Mewblade’s back. Mewblade looked sickened and nearly passed out. She stumbled forward, her paw bracing against cold steel as she desperately tried to stop her breathing. <“Mewblade?”>

“Remind me to never allow you to Teleport me,” gasped Mewblade. She finally stopped breathing, much to her relief. Mewblade took sight of where she was and jumped away from her support. She had to admit that she was gradually adapting her awareness, by late afternoon Mewblade would know all that was going on. Currently she had braced her paw against a morgue body cabinet and just found out.

The room was brightly lit with fluorescent lights that shone down on a white linoleum floor, and upon a white ceiling. There was one bare wall, evidently the shortest wall, which had a windowless door. Along the other walls were metal doors, part of a large string of cabinetry. There were lots of them, each with tiny slots for paper cards.

Mirdoff Astle, Chris Collsen, Irena Slovaski, Mewblade read absently. Usaku Hoshi, Kathline Natterson, Michael Fernando . . .

<“You’ll be wanting Michael,”> Ho-oh said as it looked over Mewblade’s shoulder. Mewblade shrugged lightly, the name being rather meaningless to her.

“I’ll get to him in a bit,” Mewblade muttered as she looked down the row. *Ching Wu . . .*

<“Mewblade, stop stalling.”> Mewblade sighed reluctantly and opened the cabinet, pulling out the body. The body was about three days dead, very cold and gray in color. She really did not want to deal with it, and her disgruntled look towards Ho-oh made it obvious.

Michael was it was in his mid-thirties, which surprised Mewblade. Purity became near to impossible to attain during adult hood. Many factors attributed to this, the most common one being that most humans lost their naivety when they aged. Another common factor was that most humans had a tendency to stray from their common morals, unlike Pokémon, which had a harder time at being negatively influenced. For a human to remain pure was admirable, but also questionable to whether or not they enjoyed their lives.

Mewblade removed the sheet and was being quite professional about her duties. Most bodies placed in a morgue were removed of all articles, including clothes. The fact

that he was human and naked did not bother Mewblade, especially considering this would be the first human she would resurrect. Humans are different than Pokémon, and in turn she did not know how much different the process would be. Ho-oh observed Mewblade as she touched the corpse and recovered a long gash across the abdomen. Once done, Mewblade froze. She was visibly fearful of going through the rest of the process. Ho-oh butted its plumed head against Mewblade's shoulder.

<“Try to relax. I'll meet you in the trance.”> Ho-oh continued to watch Mewblade as she persisted to hesitate. <“Child, before someone comes.”>

“Fine, fine!” Mewblade snarled and dropped right into the trance.

Ho-oh was beside Mewblade in an instant and with Mewblade's awareness still lacking she took the opportunity to ask, “Why was there such a diversity of dead people in the morgue?” Mewblade could not ignore why people died and knew something went terribly wrong recently.

<“You're a good observer,”> commented Ho-oh as it looked out into the darkness of the trance. It proceeded to answer Mewblade. <“It was an international archaeologist expedition in Hoenn.”> Hoenn was the continent alienated from Kanto and Johto. Mewblade knew of it but cared little for that particular continent. Sometimes her duties did take her there but all the other Legendaries preferred to avoid it, saying how bizarre the other Hoenn Legendaries were. <“They were excavating some ruins when an accident occurred. It may have been caused by an outside force as the humans have found nothing to justify it. As you can judge, Michael was the only one with qualities that could be saved . . .”> Mewblade looked down at the blackness beneath her feet.

“Because fate says it is not his time and he is destined for more,” Mewblade spoke, her voice heavy. “There is just no logic behind all of this,” she snarled as she stomped off to look for the human in the darkness.

Michael was easy to find. He was standing, looking around in a white golf shirt and beige khakis, seemingly a little lost. Mewblade approached him from behind with Ho-oh at her side. She stepped into Michael's range timidly, he quickly noticing the Mewthree.

“Hey!” he greeted her. His native language was not English, but that was what Mewblade was hearing and she was fine with it. “You're quite an interesting Pokémon. Come here, I won't hurt you.”

Ho-oh was just out of Michael's sensory range and was smiling broadly. It very well knew Mewblade disliked being treated like a stupid animal. Mewblade approached the human and stopped beside him, glancing at him over her shoulder. “You are dead, Michael.” Proving that she was not stupid and far more aware than he was.

“I . . . I . . . m-m . . . dead?!” he stammered, looking in bewilderment at his hands. The bluntness was astoundingly harsh from Mewblade, making it obvious that the place he was lost in was out of Michael's understanding. He stared pleadingly at the talking Pokémon, wanting answers. Ho-oh was appalled that Mewblade told him that.

<Don't tell him that!> Ho-oh thought to Mewblade privately to avoid discovery. The human was thoroughly grieved by the news, choosing to stare at his hands, his dead, shaking hands.

“No . . . I had too much to live for!” he broke down and wept into his palms. Mewblade looked down, almost marveled at how distressed Michael was, a smirk

showing. Ho-oh had enough and risked its presence as it stepped within the range of Michael.

<“Little one, you’re pushing my tolerance level,”> Ho-oh warned. Michael looked up in surprise, wondering what was happening now. <“Stop stalling by playing with his emotions.”> Ho-oh was standing over Michael, nearly glaring down at Mewblade. Mewblade glared back, then turned her head towards Michael.

“You know I do not want to,” Mewblade said this to Ho-oh. With that she blatantly disrespected Michael. The resurrection process caused Mewblade a great deal of anxiety and she would do anything not to do it at the moment. Ho-oh brought its head down so Michael would not have to strain his neck to face it.

<“I am sorry, Michael. Mewblade is here to give you life but has had a bad experience.”> Not all that comforting.

“Bad as in . . .?” asked Michael warily.

“As in everything goes dandy for the being I am resurrecting but I nearly get killed in the process.” Michael blinked at Mewblade.

“Then why are you here?”

“I have to do this, no other reason. Now stand up, I may as well get this over with.” Mewblade crossed her arms disdainfully. Michael rose to his feet, waiting for further instruction. Mewblade grabbed his hand and barked, “Do not move,” at him. There was a timid nod from the human. Ho-oh stepped back as Mewblade brought her blue and purple auras out for her to use at her disposal. Ho-oh proceeded to move further away until it was lost in the blackness. Mewblade had little appreciation for spectators.

“Do not do a thing,” Mewblade added to her additional warning, this received a dumb nod from Michael. She reluctantly began the resurrection, sinking deep into the trance.

Last phase, Mewblade gasped mentally.

~Why do you continue this torment when your aggressor is so close?~

~There is no worth in the human.~

Chaos was being particularly cruel this time, trying to throw Mewblade back into her nightmares. Mewblade was enraged towards the energy, nearly stopping the resurrection process just to shout at it. It tantalized her with things she seemed to have forgotten, Mewblade somehow realized that they were meant to be that way. In turn Mewblade felt both tempted and distressed by the energy as it closed its grip around her mind and soul. Shrugging off the energy was proving to be quite tasking. Chaos was being a particular nuisance, but there also happened to be another problem; humans were far more observant than Pokémon.

Michael was looking at Mewblade critically. He could see the brief flicks of emotion that passed across her face. “Why don’t you stop? Rest a bit,” Michael urged.

“Huh?” Mewblade turned her face towards Michael. She was not in the atrocious pain that she had feared, it was Chaos that was inhibiting.

“Looks like you need rest,” Michael repeated. Mewblade shook her head, she would finish this.

~Yes, give in to the inevitable,~ Chaos jibbed in thousands of voices.

“Shut up!” Mewblade yelled aloud at the energy, causing it to back away.

Michael blinked in surprise rather hesitant to hold Mewblade’s paw. “Sorry, something

was talking to me,” Mewblade apologized, leaving Michael to think that the bird he saw earlier was bothering Mewblade. “I am nearly done.” Mewblade regained her focus, progressing to the last stage. With a burst of energy Mewblade finished the resurrection.

Mewblade came to in the whitewashed morgue, hissing at first at the brightness, then because of the pain and the lingering Chaos. There were images left behind in her head that she did not understand, that made her wonder if what she had seen was real. They were presented as fact. As she had no recollection of her coma, she could not really tell if it was the truth. Whether real or not, the very thought that they might be disturbed her. Chaos had a strange way of working and left the very mystery for Mewblade to discover on her own. The fact that Mewblade had very little to base her thoughts on made Mewblade presume that it was most likely a lie.

Ho-oh witnessed Mewblade dropping to the floor in a heap, crying to herself. It spoke nothing to her and focused on Michael instead. Michael had sat upright, wondering why he was only sporting a sheet and a tag around his big toe. He scrambled out of the body drawer, making use of the linen for a sarong. Once done, he was at Mewblade’s side, rubbing her back and gently hushing her.

“Shh. It’s okay, it’s okay,” he coaxed her. His accent was quite noticeable and noticeably Italian. Mewblade detested the human’s general fondness but had little concentration to shove him away. She uttered a low growl, causing Michael to cease his acts of concern. His eyes wandered to the metal doors, he saw the labels. Mewblade heard him say something in his native tongue, followed by the list of names she read earlier. He wept quietly to himself, distracting Mewblade from her own grief. She lacked the state to stand but spoke to him anyway.

“You all died in a cave in incident.” Ho-oh bobbed its plumed head in agreement. “You were the only one that death would let me bring back.” She was speaking the truth but not highlighting the other information available. The human was the only pure hearted member of the team worth saving. On a given whim Mewblade could probably bring back the others; though it was neither necessary or functional.

“I knew them. We worked together . . . It’s not fair that I’m the one who survived.”

“Life is never fair,” Mewblade snapped suddenly. “Good things fail, the bad ones win. Consider yourself lucky. You have a greater purpose and can live it.” Mewblade stood up stiffly, brushing her eyes. Michael was quiet and grieving. Ho-oh continued to stand there, ready to berate Mewblade if she behaved wrongly. Mewblade timidly hugged the man in order to comfort him. The loss of a loved one, a friend, or the reality that life had made a cruel judgment was very hard to deal with for anyone. A little comfort was a great way to brighten a person’s spirit. “I’m going to brainwash you so you forget our encounter,” Mewblade spoke quietly.

“But why?” Michael protested. He had met such a marvelous Pokémon and she was going to erase the memory. Mewblade made a gesture to Ho-oh who left in a brief flash. Mewblade knocked Michael out with her mind, picking him up and placing him on the table just as she heard footsteps heading towards the room. Mewblade swiftly swiped Michael’s memory then jarred him awake. With speedy responsiveness, Mewblade concealed herself with a Barrier so that way she could not be seen in the room. Michael sat up, looking around in puzzlement.

<You're a man of great things, Michael. Live life,> whispered Mewblade directly into his head to give him the deception that his survival was of heavenly divination. The coroner walked in and yelped, crashing into the door.

"What in the name of sweet Jesus!?" he hollered. Michael shrugged, equally confused. Mewblade smirked then left without a trace.

Swadeaqua was highly aggravated to put it bluntly. Every aspect of herself had been humiliated, leaving her to stew in her own thoughts. Her paw grabbed at the door of her room, a key card ready to be swiped so she could enter.

"Hi!" The voice causing Swadeaqua to nearly jump. She calmly turned around to face Harddense with Demisewan in his arms. Adaptable as ever, Swadeaqua showed a look of pleasant surprise.

"Oh, Demisewan, Harddense. It's great to see you both. You're looking better," Swadeaqua smiled, patting her sister on the head. Harddense shifted his load, allowing for Demisewan to stand on her own.

"Can we hang out with you?" Harddense asked eagerly, Swadeaqua immediately delivering her glare. The eagerness he exuded quite bothered her.

"I do need to talk to you both, but I'd rather in some place other than my facilities." Swadeaqua was unwilling to let anyone in her private quarters unless on one issue. The first time her siblings were invited they spent most of it questioning every possible item in the room. The armoire drew the most attention. In the end though, Swadeaqua's room was always left undisturbed, so it gave the opportunity for her brother and sister to join her in a long, uninterrupted conversation; just as long as the twins were not distracted by the things Swadeaqua owned.

Swadeaqua let out a sigh, the twins looked up at her for her insight. "Fine, come in but don't touch anything," Swadeaqua said while opening the door. She led the twins into her humble abode.

The Viridian Gym had several levels allowing everything from offices, to training facilities, to housing accommodations. Most of these areas were underground and off-limits, secretly constructed without the knowledge of any Pokémon officiates. Swadeaqua was privy to having such posh accommodations; with an open floor plan and a postmodern industrial design. Whatever she asked for she got, in which case Swadeaqua's room was decked out with large leather furniture, a mass of electronics, all in cool colors of white, ice blue, and steel. Demisewan and Harddense had the basic Team Rocket accommodations, which made them a tinge jealous of the treatment Swadeaqua received.

Demisewan went straight for one of the kitchen table chairs where as Harddense went straight for the armoire, much to Swadeaqua's annoyance. Harddense peered at the strange display case, curious of its contents.

"What are these?"

"Things you wouldn't understand." Swadeaqua had stepped between Harddense and the armoire. "Now go sit down," she ordered, her body still blocking the view. Swadeaqua was in no mood to explain the uses for the various sexual paraphernalia she kept on display. Because Harddense and Demisewan were so ignorant it was even more

daunting considering that she would also have to explain the embarrassing ‘birds and the bees’ topic to them. In the end, it was better to keep them guessing.

Harddense took his place at the table, a little disappointed. He shrugged towards Demisewan since she had asked the last time they were in the room and received no answer as well. Swadeaqua was milling about in the kitchen.

“I had a meeting with the executives today.” She retrieved several drinks from the fridge. “We came up with an idea to capture Mewblade.” Swadeaqua placed a glass of root beer in front of Harddense and a cherry soda in front of Demisewan. She kept a chilled cappuccino for herself, although the drinks were really intended as a distraction for the pair. Demisewan sipped at her beverage while Harddense gave an empty look to his full glass. Both of them were anxious to hear the apparent news of their infamous older sister. “We discussed about plans to capture Mewblade and whether she exists or not. It is easier for me to tell you the guidelines to the plan first. We select a date for the capture, which at the moment is undisclosed and to be further discussed. The more concrete part of the plan is how to entice Mewblade to come to us. This will be done in several steps, the first by baiting a Legendary Pokémon like Zapdos or Suicune, but more preferably Moltres. Moltres is associated with Indigo Plateau, the flame of the bird is used to light the giant chalice. One of the Rockets will tamper with the flame causing Moltres to arrive at the stadium in Indigo Plateau. Moltres will then be attacked.” Harddense finished his root beer, gazing over the rim of his glass in need of an explanation. Demisewan too was puzzled. “Mewblade attacks and kills anyone who harms or outwardly inflicts some sort of discomfort to a Legendary Pokémon. Vicebane used a similar plan to attract the Legendary Birds and Mewblade during his encounter with them. It is guaranteed to work. Mewblade will arrive at the stadium to aid Moltres and we will be there to take out Mewblade.”

“Question,” Demisewan raised her paw. “Is it we, as in Team Rocket, or we, as in us?” she signaled to the Mewthrees at the table.

“We, as in us three,” Swadeaqua mimicked Demisewan’s signal. Harddense dropped his glass to the floor, the glass shards strewn across.

“We’re facing her!?!” Harddense jumped out of his seat, horrified at the thought. Demisewan reached out towards her twin, taking his talon in her paw then gave him a comforting smile. She whipped her face over to challenge the apparent idiot who thought of such a stunt.

“Who came up with that idea?”

“Actually, I did,” Swadeaqua spoke with high confidence. Harddense and Demisewan stared at Swadeaqua, disbelieving. “I know, it seems crazy, but I have a plan and it should work. Sit down,” she gestured to Harddense who shakily took his seat. “I have studied the tapes and files of Mewblade. The plan for us is to focus entirely on weakening Mewblade to the point of unconsciousness. This will be done by having Demisewan work as a light offense, as well as a distraction. Harddense, you are a defensive type and will be used for my protection against blows from Mewblade.” The doubting look from Harddense made him quizzical about such a decision. As expected, Swadeaqua was willing to enlighten him since the concept of being struck by Mewblade seemed like a death sentence. “Your defensive potential should be able to take mild damage from the equivalent of a fatal strike. While you may think that is dangerous, rest assured your defensive potential is extremely high just as much as her damage grade.

You two should be matched. You will also be effective at restraining,” then with a little smirk she added, “so you’ll actually be useful, for once.”

“And if you are there then what will you be doing?” asked Demisewan.

“Acting as your trainer and as an inhibitor for Mewblade. I will be picking shots at Mewblade, but not too much because we can’t risk killing her. For such a fight I will be using my voice as a weapon, to both intimidate and demoralize in a ruse to win her to our side. From this day forward, most of our time will be devoted towards the moment in which we face our sister. We will be training together while other parties will be seeing that Mewblade is still alive and active. Yes, Harddense?” Harddense had a talon raised.

“Uh, can’t she like still kill us, ya know?” he gesticulated vaguely in hopes to get his point across. Demisewan bobbed her head.

“Yeah, she’s dangerous!”

“You two are very unlikely to die because of Mewblade’s blades or energy attacks. I can resist her energy attacks but the physical ones I can not, that is why I want to enlist you,” she looked at Harddense, “as my bodyguard when I need it. We can practice our coordination against different types of attacks and strategies. Even groups in case Mewblade creates an alliance with Moltres or Mewtwo for instance.”

Demisewan shifted uneasily in her seat, briefly touching her injury as it twanged from imaginary pain. She was safe as long as she kept focused. The real fear was for Swadeaqua who had never fought a real battle in her life. Demisewan brought this thought forward. “We saw her die twice in those tapes. She just has to be dead.”

“How did you get those?” Swadeaqua asked cordially, hiding her surprise.

“Doctor West did,” supplemented Harddense in place of his twin.

So they might possibly know more than just the rumors the Team Rockets have been circulating. Swadeaqua was one of the few who studied the tapes that were used to collect data on the fight between Mewblade and Vicebane. The problem with the tapes was that some cameras had been blown during the battle. The rest of the cameras were affected by a great deal of static that until recently had been challenging to visually decipher. What annoyed Swadeaqua the most was the obvious use of widespread telepathy amongst the Legendary Pokémon. Widespread telepathy was comparable to audible speech, where general, direct telepathy was only heard in a person’s thoughts and thus was not recordable. While it was convenient that they were using widespread telepathy; it was not like the Legendaries were shouting. At best Swadeaqua could catch jumbled whispers of conversation. Most often she was forced to read lips and expressions. The human, Coline, was her best outlet with her strong emotional displays in addition to a loud voice. It was unfortunate that she appeared during the return of Mewblade and not before, but without her the whole incident following the battle would be absolutely senseless. Everything seemed to be going that way when it came to Mewblade.

Something about the way the general assembly responded to Mewblade’s apparent death was misplaced. The trainer named Ash gave rise to the theory that all was not a complete loss, that in fact Mewblade was more likely to have been critically injured, even comatose, but not dead. Many a researcher had made similar assumptions that Mewblade was not truly gone; yet none were too sure. For Swadeaqua she had a tendency to drift away from the blatancy in the tapes, humoring her own curiosities. Of the most curious to her was an instance where Mewblade was giving an explanation to

Coline. The question poised by Coline was, ‘What’s so funny?’ after the Legendaries began laughing. Mewblade was whispering and her head was half turned in the video, but the best way to know one’s enemies was to have them tell so themselves. Swadeaqua was so focused at this point trying to figure out what was said that she ignored Demisewan and Harddense completely.

Something odd about having a friend . . . Swadeaqua puzzled.

“Swadeaqua?” Demisewan screwed up her face in concern.

“Wow, she’s really thinking,” added Harddense.

I think I have the words. Who is she speaking for? Come on. I can do this. I’ve seen that video a million times, I know what I’ve seen. Her mind began to piece together the rest of the video. *No way . . . It explains what startled Vicebane earlier.* Swadeaqua realized Mewblade’s response to Coline’s question, being, ‘It is rather odd for a Legendary Pokémon to have a friend,’ while speaking for herself.

“Swadeaqua!” Demisewan yelled impatiently.

“Yes, sorry,” Swadeaqua gave her head a shake.

“You really zoned out,” remarked Harddense, worried about his idol.

“Have they been working you too hard? Not enough sleep, maybe?” Demisewan frowned, her head tilted to the right.

“I have a feeling our dear sister is alive and well. I was thinking of ways to justify it.” Inside her devious brain Swadeaqua was doing back flips about her discovery. *A Legendary in our ranks, right under our very noses! Not even Giovanni realizes what he let get away. Being that she is what she is, then she may pose a greater threat than those stupid rumors that have been circulating. Indeed that now I know, I shall not make light of this.* Swadeaqua was fascinated with the concept, almost awed. With such a simple statement it easily explained every strange happening that had been witnessed during the taping. *What would it be like to be around something that can wield such power, knowledge and divine beauty? Such a delicate balance between a fragile spirit and a being of insurmountable greatness. To be merely in the presence of must be breathtaking,* Swadeaqua mused, daydreaming to herself, trying not to make it obvious as Harddense casually offered his thoughts.

“Then I guess that means our training won’t be worthless,” Harddense pointed out optimistically. Swadeaqua nodded her head to the side, ready to enjoy her next remark.

“You sound too happy for someone who will be doing hard battling for several weeks,” sneered the dragon type Mewthree.

“Ohh . . .” Harddense groaned, now exceedingly miserable. One thing was wrong, and then when it is presumed to be better, another thing goes wrong. Demisewan gave him a sympathetic pat on the shoulder.

“I’ll have training schedule set up, making use of the small practice gym and the actual gym during the evenings. You two can be off to your rooms,” Swadeaqua dismissed the pair. As the door closed Swadeaqua leaned over the table to check her glassware. “My poor glass . . .”

<“Hello, Mewblade.”>

Mewblade was slumped in her throne chair, not willing to turn her head to address her guest. “Hello, Mewtwo,” was her toneless response to her father. “What do you

want?" Mewtwo walked to the left of the throne chair. Mewblade shifted her head, her face unable to mask her humor. "What are you wearing?" Mewtwo was wearing a short, brown poncho with either a very bulky turtleneck or a folded hood. It looked rather ridiculous on him.

<"This?"> Mewtwo asked innocently, tugging gently on his poncho. <"It's to keep me warm as I wander.">

He just thinks it looks good, Mewblade mused, having seen through the lame excuse. "I may have been in a coma, but that does not mean my IQ has dropped. With your psychic energy, mind over matter should be easy. When you get a chill it will be when the whole world freezes over. Take that stupid outfit off."

Mewtwo crossed his arms indignantly, saying, <"No.">

"It is coming off," Mewblade threatened, adding to her threat as she rose to her feet. Mewtwo stepped back slightly. He knew Mewblade was up to something as she approached him.

<"I won't let you. You can't intimidate me into doing what you want."> Mewtwo continued to keep his arms crossed, glaring back at Mewblade. She chuckled then pounced on him with surprising agility, knocking him to the ground. Using two Metal Claws she proceeded to rip the poncho to shreds. Mewblade grinned victoriously, happy to have ruined Mewtwo's only possession.

"You should consider getting yourself something like a territory or a treasure that represents you better. You are a powerful, Legendary Pokémon and do not need a piece of fabric to make yourself look or act mysterious," advised Mewblade as she continued to keep Mewtwo pinned beneath her. Mewtwo was so flabbergasted that Mewblade had actually done that. The fact that she had moved so quickly ended up drawing his attention first.

<"Wait, how were you able to move like that?"> He watched as Mewblade took herself off of him. For a moment she was considering her answer, feeling somewhat playful.

"I am very resilient; besides, a Legendary Pokémon can handle hundreds of years of hibernation. And in addition, I am better than you are," Mewblade smirked down towards Mewtwo, artfully removing the Metal Claws from her paws. "Knocking you over is not very challenging. You forgot after all that time with me being in a coma that I am not that slow." Calling Mewtwo powerful then bowling him over did not exactly instill the fact that he was indeed powerful. "Why are you here?" And then as predictable as expected it was straight to business. Mewtwo delayed his answer until he was fully standing. He had to face the reality that his poncho was beyond repair. While he thought of getting another one, there also posed the risk that Mewblade may rip him apart along with. Mewtwo brushed his upper body to remove any stray fibers. The delay was bound to irritate Mewblade at some point.

<"I came to see how you were doing."> Mewblade pursed her lips, trying not to lash out at Mewtwo for initiating small talk. Mewtwo seemed to be on Mewblade's foul side today, quickly hurrying his observation. <"It is a relief to see that you are in good physical health. I assume that mentally you are okay since you have been somewhat . . . energetic."> Mewtwo could not think of a better word for 'destructive' without insulting her more. Considering Mewblade's general purpose of existence, destructive was exactly

how she should be. Mewblade eyes became downcast, as if acknowledging what Mewtwo felt.

“I do not think I am okay,” Mewblade spoke slowly, hesitant to divulge sensitive information to Mewtwo. While she trusted him to a greater degree than some, she was still unwilling to place her faith in others but figured since Mewtwo was there for her whenever she seemed to need it, she would offer the information to him anyway. “When Ho-oh appeared I could not help but displace my misery on it for everything it put me through. I was mad at Ho-oh for letting me know what I am and placing me in a position that I find to be so compromising. I am used and it hurts me to be this tool for whatever purpose I can not understand.” Mewblade motioned her arms, signing to the vastness around her. Mewtwo had heard this before from a time when Mewblade was explaining how much the resurrection harmed her. “I did not want to go through another resurrection and wanted to make my escape. I thought, ‘what if I could die? Then I would see how Ho-oh would do without me,’ and threatened to kill myself.” This is when destructive came back into the conversation, not a force used by Mewblade for the purpose of harming others, but one on herself. Mewtwo was stunned and caught unprepared by another one of Mewblade’s catastrophic emotional outbursts. He was her father and tried to be reasonable but his disappointment in how unappreciative she was towards her own life brought out his own anger.

“How could you think such a thing?! After all you put us through to keep you alive. And the first thing you think to do is kill yourself?!?” Mewtwo snarled down at Mewblade, appalled, angry and disappointed in his daughter’s reasoning. He could not think of where he went wrong, all the advice he had given. She was loved. What more could Mewblade need than that?

“I’m sorry!” Mewblade hollered at him, expecting support from Mewtwo. “I just don’t want to do this anymore!” Every word was spoken with a torrent of bitter emotion. Mewtwo was still. The coma meant nothing when it came to time, offering no distance between the present and Moltres’ resurrection. To go through a seemingly endless cycle of suffering, instructed to do so on the apparent whim of the universe is a life without motivation.

“I’m sorry . . .” whimpered Mewblade, slumping to the floor. Mewtwo was staring at the sight beneath his feet.

“What stopped you from doing it?” he ventured, unsure of the reason that kept Mewblade alive. She was still here, and usually quite hard to deter once her mind was set. Mewblade gave a weak smirk to Mewtwo.

“It would be selfish of me to take myself away from Coline. She is my strength, my heart, my soul, my very reason for living. Ho-oh could probably care less about whether I die or not, Coline would be heartbroken.” Mewblade had a distant smile. “As a Decider of Fate I am presented with the meaning to my life. I fear that kind of knowledge, thus I choose to reject that knowledge. Coline is my Chosen, thus my meaning to life.” Mewblade scoffed at the thought that Mewtwo believed that she would die that easily. “I will not give up that easily,” she smirked. “After all, who else would keep you from wearing those awful things.” Mewblade got up, trying to be optimistic but still rather sullen. Mewtwo could see that the coma had taken a psychological toll on Mewblade. He worried and wanted her to stay safe. Such a thought was merely a fleeting wish as Mewblade and her title carried the most grief out of anything alive. The most he

could offer was to be there for her, yet not so long ago he had betrayed her with stern words.

<“I know. For what I said, I am sorry. You ask for support, and I want you to know that I am willing to be that support for you, just as much as your mother, Coline, Eevee and really any other Legendary. It takes a lot of strength to be who you are, and I realize it is a struggle for you. Come to us if you need it. We can not take losing you again.”> Mewtwo kept a steady gaze with Mewblade, reinstating the fact that he did appreciate her existence just as much as Mewblade did not appreciate her own. Mewblade broke the gaze, her head turned to her shoulder.

“I just hate all this nonsense. I can not get out of this while I am still alive,” exasperated Mewblade. At this point she was figuring some of it had to involve karma. Then again, Mewtwo killed many an innocent himself and was left to wander about aimlessly. *There is simply no logic in the universe.*

<“I’m certain Coline will be a great coping mechanism for you now that you have her.”> Mewblade tilted her head in agreement to Mewtwo’s suggestion. <“By the way, you woke up screaming terribly. Was that caused by anything?”> This was given some thought by Mewblade before she responded.

“Yes and no. I think I remember some things but they are too vague for me to grasp.” Mewblade was not aware that she woke up shrieking. Since Mewtwo could not lie very easily then she was not going to question his statement. For all she knew it could be a preference for her to wake up in such a manner. “So after you barged into my personal life, made me breakdown and make a fool of myself, you were supposed to inform me of the reason why you were here.” Mewblade rested her paws on her hips, taking a demanding stance. Mewtwo had to agree that he had done enough damage and owed Mewblade some sort of explanation as to why he was there in the first place. As he began to explain Mewblade walked over to one of her couches, lounging across it. It allowed her an excusable reason to disengage from Mewtwo's eye contact.

<“The point of my visit, aside checking up on you, was to tell you that Mew or Moltres will be coming to talk to you later today or tomorrow about a ceremony at Indigo Plateau.”>

“Ceremony?” Being Decider of Fate did not offer Mewblade much insight into the rituals among the Legendary Pokémon.

<“I’m almost as lost as you are,”> Mewtwo confessed. <“Both you and I are going to be introduced so that way the Legendaries familiarize themselves with us. It involves a certain procedure but Mew did not go into details.”> Mewblade rolled over onto her side so that way she could see Mewtwo more clearly.

“They are probably reworking the laws to accommodate us,” Mewblade voiced her idea.

<“Don’t you do that?”>

“I just enforce them.” The pair were silent for a moment before Mewblade gave a growl. “I am hoping this is not a social event. I can hardly stand your questions.” Mewtwo did not even want to imagine.

<“Actually,”> Mewtwo began almost with a warning tone, <“Mew mentioned about you bringing Coline.”> Mewblade looked intrigued, shifting her position for the second time.

“So why my Chosen?”

<“I would assume your insatiable bond.”> Mewtwo had a knowing smirk, which was received placidly. <“I was told it was just Coline. Mew explained that your Chosen should be present as she is very involved with you and supportive of the Legendary cause. These humans that the others have interacted with do not hold as special a place as Coline does with you.”> Such a bond was obvious, even so early on in their relationship. Mewblade and Coline were polar dependent on each other, making one another.

“Then what about Moltres? Why is she being involved?” After the less than warm reception from Moltres during the resurrection, Mewblade was convinced that Moltres was still harboring a dislike towards her.

<“She likes you,”> shrugged Mewtwo passively. <“Whether Mew or Moltres, one of the two will also take you to the ceremony that is within one week, at noon on Indigo Plateau.”>

“At this point I would almost not be surprised if we would have to do a dance or wear ridiculous outfits.” The details of what was needed and who would be present at the ceremony made even some things seem plausible.

<“I would have worn my cloak if you hadn’t destroyed it,”> grumbled Mewtwo, arms folded across his chest pointedly. Mewblade grinned cheekily.

“I spared you from your fashionable indignity. You should be thankful.” Of course Mewtwo was far from appreciative. He was ready to depart, no longer in the need of Mewblade’s snarky remarks.

<“I shouldn’t spend any more time with Mewblade, The Legendary Clothing Destroyer,”> he muttered, while readying a Teleport. Mewblade gave him a wave with her paw, a smirk on her face. Once alone, she sat upright to think over what she was told.

Everyone had expected Mewblade to change although she was as predictable as she had been before she was incapacitated. Minus the exception of Mewblade’s reluctance to resurrect, she felt she had changed very little. Around her everyone else had, whether building friendships or embracing freedom, they seemed different to her. Then again, maybe it was she herself that had changed the most.

“That is why I believe Mewblade is still alive,” Swadeaqua finished, having outlined her observations to Giovanni, the executives, and the recent inclusion of Doctor West. They unanimously supported the given facts and the plan that was to follow. The chosen course of action that was given by Swadeaqua to Harddense and Demisewan would be followed-through by the executives of Team Rocket. Mewblade was alive and would have to be drawn out, making the reality of fighting her quite a probability. Swadeaqua had made it clear that she and her siblings would be capable to handle the battle with their older sister, as long as the executives were willing to offer the support and the training necessary to deal with her.

“I’ll have Harddense’s training schedule altered to work with yours. If you really want to go through with this he will need a lot of training to catch up.” Conrad entered the information into his mobile device, briefly glancing at Datona’s to make sure that their schedules were not clashing. “You do realize this will put a great strain on our resources, don’t you?” Datona pursed her lips as she too realized that this would put a strain on the grunts that would be participating.

“You will make the necessary accommodations for this capture,” Giovanni instructed as he was more than willing to put the money into the capture event. There would be no objections towards his decision, thus the changes were made.

“This fiscal year will be taking quite a hit from this,” grumbled Dublaire who took to writing it down in a traditional notebook.

“Stanford, we are talking about Moltres here. Do our Rockets have the right Pokémon to deal with such a thing?” Conrad addressed Stanford, noting that most capture events were indeed Stanford’s responsibility. Ali knew that the necessary Pokémon and equipment was not prepared for a Legendary Pokémon, but gave no comment.

With a smug smile Stanford shot back with his answer. “Yes, in fact I already came up with a strategy that will work excellently against Moltres. I have it under control. Ali knows the Pokémon we need and the traps.”

Meanwhile, when all this was going on, Doctor West was praying that the executives were cowardly enough to reconsider going after 001. While Mewblade was hopelessly flawed, she was also the least studied amongst the five Mewthrees. Capturing her would be a challenge in of itself, where actually restraining her would take a considerable amount of effort. Most of Team Rocket assumed that the current measures to hold ordinary Pokémon would be acceptable, although Mewblade was not ordinary and far more dangerous. Doctor West did have the blueprints for Mewtwo’s original armor and Vicebane’s armor, both of which were effective at focusing and suppressing auras. At least his team had some excuse to be busy for the next couple of months, though he would rather see Mewblade free from the clutches of Team Rocket. His feelings were not shared by the executives, who were enticed by the idea of a challenge.

“Then it is settled,” spoke Giovanni as he interrupted the conversations. The room became quiet at Giovanni’s address. “You have until late November to prepare. Commence 001-Mewblade Recapture. You’re dismissed.” Based on discussions, Moltres would be weaker during the fall and winter seasons in the Kanto region. One less struggle was always good for Team Rocket, whose motto was to do anything to gain the upper hand. The executives understood the substantiality of the task at hand, leaving in single file to conspire.

Giovanni could catch the glimpse of Swadeaqua as she closed the door behind herself, her eyes displaying her pride before betraying a look of unease that came with her inability to master the man she so despised. She did well this time, knowing that Giovanni’s silence was grand praise. With a poker face he stared back, Swadeaqua giving her small, almost non-existent smile of gratitude, then left the conference room.

Stanford was waiting for her outside the door, hands in his pockets. He quietly watched her as she pressed her paws against the door to close it. “That’s probably the happiest you’ll ever see him.”

“When we actually capture Mewblade I swear it would break his face,” Swadeaqua smirked at the thought, remaining confident in herself. Mewblade was not such a thing to fear anymore now that she knew at least one of her sister’s secrets.

“That would be a sight,” commented Stanford. “What are you doing?” Swadeaqua’s expression had turned to an inviting lustiness. Her paws teased with the smart tie so neatly pressed against Stanford’s chest. It was devious of her not to answer.

“Are you busy?” she said, still using her clumsy fingers to play with the knot. Stanford clasped Swadeaqua’s paws in his hands then guided her down another hallway.

Although it was frowned upon to have any romantic involvement in Team Rocket, Swadeaqua openly showed her affections, often breaching protocol. Once she was set on something, changing her mind was difficult. Stanford figured it was best not to have it done right in front of the room in which the boss was situated.

“Then would you mind keeping me company for a little while?” It was not an unusual request from Swadeaqua, one she had asked from Stanford on more than an occasion. There was not a hint of manipulation in her voice since she knew Stanford liked her and was willing to help her out with most of her needs; whether business, emergencies, or carnal pleasures.

Relationships between Pokémon and people was strictly taboo in all walks of society. Being that Swadeaqua thought she was neither made it all the more difficult for her to find someone to bond with. Morals never hindered her selection because she rarely used them to begin with. All she wanted was support and praise for her recent achievement. Stanford was willing to share in the joys and pains of her life, but unable to express it to Swadeaqua. It was not as if she would comprehend it anyway. Despite having such an extensive vocabulary and a refined, empathetic mind, Swadeaqua did not understand the meaning of love.

“Well?” asked Swadeaqua, barely giving Stanford any time to respond as she forced her lips on his. The answer was ‘Yes’. She pulled away with a glorious smile. Stanford’s expression was a little dazed.

“If you knew my answer already you shouldn’t have asked,” he spoke, still dazed. Even though Swadeaqua was practically on the verge of reading minds with her empathy alone, she still enjoyed in her games.

“Stop fussing with the tie and come with me.” Swadeaqua grabbed his arm and yanked him towards her facilities. “It would help if you took it off for me instead.” Stanford shook his head with a smile.

“Any other requests I should fulfill before we get there?”

“None of them are appropriate to do in the hallway.”

“Mew! Mew!” (Hello! Hello!) Mew called aloud, entering Mewblade’s domain; a hyper ball of energy disturbing the oppressive atmosphere. She paused in the main room hovering, looking about. Her greeting was going unanswered. “Mew!” (Mewblade!) Mew squeaked loudly.

“I am younger than you and I have more patience,” Mewblade commented, walking out of the master bedroom. “Hard to believe you are my mother.” She stopped in front of Mew with her trademark smirk. Mew only giggled, somehow immune to the insult. A playful somersault supported the fact that she let the insult pass her by.

“Mew mew mew mew mew mew.” (It’s so nice to see you up.) Mew rose to meet Mewblade’s nose, giving a gentle tap of affection. The inane giggling continued on as Mewblade attempted to ignore it.

“It is nice to see you too. Mewtwo said you were supposed to talk to me about the ceremony?” Mewblade made sure to get right to the point, otherwise Mew would start inquiring about how she was feeling. Mew realized that Mewblade was purposely directing the conversation. She knew better than to pry, since Mewblade would likely withdraw.

“Mew mew?” (The ceremony?) Mew tilted her head. “Mew mew mew,” (It’s pretty basic,) she started. “Mew mew mew mew mew mew mew mew, mew mew. Mew mew mew mew mew mew. Mew mew mew mew. Mew mew mew mew. Mew mew mew mew mew mew mew mew mew mew,” (You will be introduced to the other Legendary Pokémon, then to you. Together we will undergo an aura cleansing. It allows the Legendaries to harmonize. We all definitely need it. Then we make an agreement to accept you among us as a new Legendary,) she pulled away with another giggle. “Mew, mew?” (Easy, huh?)

“It is on Indigo Plateau at noon, correct?” Mewblade asked, shifting her weight slightly. Mew displayed her disappointment prior to answering. The evasiveness was bothersome, though she still tried to respect Mewblade’s need for privacy.

“Mew mew mew,” (Yes it is,) replied the pink Pokémon. Again Mewblade got in another question. If she continued drilling Mew for answers then she would never have any way of asking her for personal insight.

“Why is it so important that I bring Coline?” Mewblade did not want to compromise Coline’s safety, finding that to be of the utmost importance. Even though Mewblade hardly knew Coline, the girl was still her Chosen and she meant almost everything to her, especially now that her life was valued by it.

“Mew mew mew mew mew mew mew mew mew.” (Because we believe it would be important for you to have Coline there to support you.) Mew opened her mouth and was swiftly silenced as Mewblade raised her paw with a smirk. “Mew?” (Yes?)

“Should I bring anything?”

“Mew, mew mew mew,” (Nope, just yourself and Coline,) Mew said with a frown.

“Does the cleansing hurt?” She was not afraid of the other Legendaries. Her concern was based on the grounds that she was very sensitive to auras, especially Ho-oh’s. Mew did not understand Mewblade’s question entirely as she did not really comprehend the problem. Ho-oh was conscientious about Mewblade’s aura condition, where highly positive auras conflicted with Mewblade’s rather dark nature. It was not type that defined this, where many a dark type are positive individuals; it was based on the fact that Mewblade’s soul itself held some negative aspects.

“Mew mew mew mew mew. Mew, mew mew mew. Mew mew mew mew.” (Every new Legendary goes through this. I did, so will Mewtwo and you. It shouldn’t hurt at all.) Mew gave a reassuring pat on Mewblade’s shoulder, adding a smile afterwards.

“Well, I am going back to the bedroom. I will see you at the ceremony,” Mewblade announced, dismissing Mew as she turned away. Mew could hardly take the airy dismissal, she fiddled with her tiny fingers, moping over how quickly Mewblade had wanted to get rid of her. With cheerful optimism, Mew knew that Mewblade would be more open to talking after a bit of recuperation.

“Mew mew mew mew!” (See you next week!) Mew squeaked as she made her way out. “Mew mew mew, mew mew mew mew mew.” (Almost forgot, Moltres will be picking you up.)

Mewblade was inside her bedroom, head blade resting dully against the wall. She scowled as she sensed Mew leave in a Teleport. It was easier to say, harder to do. There

was only so much Mewblade could ask of herself, and getting better, whatever that may have meant, just did not seem to be one of them.

“Sometimes doing things that distracts you helps you forget about the things that bother you.” It was the day of the Cleansing Ceremony. Coline and Eevee had arrived at Mewblade’s home early, all three waiting for Moltres’ arrival. Currently, Mewblade was more nervous about the microphone she was holding in her paw than the thought of Moltres and the ceremony. She cast a doubting eye at her Chosen, not believing that the choice of distraction was any better than being miserable.

Mewblade had made some rather unnecessary accommodations to bring the family karaoke machine into her home. Things like running water and electricity were not applicable to Mewblade until the recent addition of several mortals in her space. Since Mewblade was often bored, renovating her cave was not an entirely unwelcome idea; however, she had not expected to do adjustments. With Coline and Eevee likely to visit as often as they could get away with, such changes would have to be made. So far Mewblade had done minimal solar paneling and wiring. Coline began tuning the karaoke system to the right settings. An annoying speaker noise sounded, dissipating within a couple seconds, proving that the old heap was still working.

Coline and Eevee talked very little about their home life. As Mewblade ended up unwittingly finding out, no one would notice the absence of the large accessory, showing how little the family cared. Dan was Coline’s only true support. Her older brother chose to more or less run away from home in pursuit of the trainer dream, dragging Coline along with. Sadly such a decision was better for Coline than staying with her alcoholic, emotionally distant mother, or her father who was nowhere to be seen. Eevee was not much older than Coline, having been the family pet. Eevee’s tongue-in-cheek sense of humor and confrontational wit proved that she was not immune to the effects of a broken home. Coline had developed a wise mind and deep understanding of the human psyche. Dan’s involvement in her life allowed her some education, though Coline was a naturally smart girl and caught on quickly to anything. She was not harmed by her family’s strife, learning patience where most would have given up.

With everything changing around her, Mewblade had a hard time grasping what was going on. For her, trying to figure out how Coline and Eevee remained positive individuals was too complicated to place into a thought. After a while it was easier for her brain to shut down rather than attempt to solve anything. She could not stay focused, her mind constantly wandering into the nightmarish realm. There were so many of them and every one just out of reach. Trying to find meaning in them was useless.

“Eeevee eee eeeve eee eve eve eeevee,” (Looks like someone took a walk in la-la land again,) observed Eevee from her post on the bed. Coline looked back over her shoulder, also catching the rather empty expression on Mewblade’s visage. Mewblade attempted to feign awareness but was caught in the act.

“I am sorry about that,” Mewblade muttered, sounding almost as distant as she had looked. Coline quickly finished with her adjustments then made her way over to Mewblade. She patted Mewblade’s free paw comfortingly, knowing exactly where Mewblade’s mind had been.

“You shouldn’t apologize for something you didn’t do,” Coline said with a sympathetic smile. Eevee nodded her head in agreement and tapped her microphone on.

“Eeeve eeeveeee eeve eeve eeve eeveeee eee eeevvee eevee,” (Unless you back out on this then you have a lot of apologizing to do,) Eevee gave her playful warning as she rolled her microphone back and forth between her paws.

“I will give it a try . . . but don’t blame me for sounding awful.” Mewblade turned on her microphone, dreading what she was about to go through. Mewblade’s voice was true to her gender, only sounding slightly female over that of an androgynous voice. A harsh, butch voice such as Mewblade’s did not resonate pleasantly. The pair of Chosen would not hold her make against her. They understood that the beauty that defined Mewblade would never be that of a melodic songstress.

“But you will sound awful if you don’t know the lyrics,” Coline pointed out the obvious lack of Mewblade’s pop-culture knowledge. “You said you could mind read.” Having Mewblade clumsily recite lyrics off a screen was going to make her feel incompetent. Giving her a little confidence was never a bad idea. Somehow Mewblade expected to be reading off the screen in a haphazard, imbecilic fashion, taking to Coline’s statement with additional confusion.

“. . . Yes?” came Mewblade’s hesitant reply, afraid of where this conversation was going.

“Eeeveeee! Eevee eevee eeeve eeeve eeve eevee eve eeevvee eeeveeee!” (Oh yeah! All she would have to do is read our minds and then she would instantly know the song!) exclaimed Eevee at the notion that Mewblade would not be excluded. The two of them looked at Mewblade for approval, both expecting Mewblade to be keen about the idea. Neither of them were concerned about the invasion of privacy that Mewblade was more than unwilling to perform. She respected Coline and Eevee as individuals, finding that she could trust them more than enough not to read their minds. With that notion, she made up an excuse.

“Still, it would be better if I learned like everyone else rather than having them learn for me,” muttered the Mewthree.

“It’s only a song.” Coline was trying to offer a compromise. “Nothing wrong with that. Besides, I won’t mind if you poke around,” she added with a smile. Mewblade realized that she would obviously have to do this at some point, otherwise stalling would award her with two pleading children who would not let up. It was a losing situation for her.

“Okay, but only because you offered,” Mewblade spoke quietly having accepted the defeat. Her mind ventured into that of Coline’s, snatching several songs for use. Coline was open to her, allowing her mental defenses to be passable. If Coline was less than assured in Mewblade’s presence, there would have been some sort of block. Mewblade did not realize this as she normally would gauge a person’s mental capacity based on any headaches she may have received. “Got them,” announced Mewblade, having only taken the songs specifically. Coline was surprised that she did not notice a thing and could not help remarking on it.

“Wow, I didn’t even notice. You must be really good at it!” she said in awe.

“Eee eeevve eeveeee eeve eeevvveeee eevee eeve eee eeve eee.” (I thought it would feel like fingers clawing at my brain,) remarked the little, brown Pokémon. Mewblade gave her head a shake, disagreeing.

“Mind reading is my strongest skill. I am basically omnipotent because of it,” Mewblade smirked, practically bragging as she spoke. She also quickly made it known that her vocabulary was far higher than that of the eight year old.

“Omnipotent?” Coline blinked, head tilted to the side. Eevee did not even bother speaking, she just stared.

“Omnipotent. It means a god-like way of understanding everything that goes on. Mind you, I can not track everything about the billions of lives on this planet. I know who lives, dies and breaks laws because that is the most mental capacity I can afford.” It was still impressive to Coline, who remained silently awed.

“Eevve eevvee,” (I knew that,) Eevee said smugly. Mewblade smirked, the furthest she would go with sarcasm.

“The only time anyone notices my mind reading is if they are noticeably psychic. Both the person I am mind reading and I develop headaches if they are particularly powerful.” Mewblade glanced down at her microphone, smiling lightly. “Speaking of headaches, care to listen to my awful attempt at singing?” Mewblade reached over and patted Coline on the head, almost thankful that she was about to be put through the sick torture that was karaoke.

“Totally!” Coline giggled, pressing ‘play’ on the system. She ran over to the bed, bounding onto it. Mewblade was a little nervous but felt supported by her friends in this strange endeavor. All three of them inhaled, anticipating the first line and breaking out into a catchy pop tune. Mewblade had to admit that despite sounding as awful as she did, she was having fun. There was something free and spirited about the activity, Mewblade unable to hide her smile.

“Eevee eee eevvee!” (Look at that!) Eevee exclaimed giddily during a break in the song. “Eve eevve evvee!” (She actually smiled!) She received a playful yet dirty glare from Mewblade. Coline, Eevee, and Mewblade looked at each other critically then burst out howling in laughter.

Moltres landed on the cliff outside Mewblade’s home. She folded her wings against her back, observing the view of the Ellix Forest below. As Mewblade’s purpose did not clash with the resident Legendary of Ellix Forest, both could remain in close proximity of each other. Celebi predominantly guarded the forest, nurturing all the plant life that was present. While her title claimed that she was the ‘Guardian of Forests and Time’ she was considerably weak, often escaping into the timeline and manipulating it so that way the problem could be rectified in a safer period. Mewblade had little reason to associate with her, finding that the runaway mentality made them less than acquaintances. Celebi’s timid nature kept her from visiting at all, whereas Mewtwo, Mew and Moltres made large, and often risky sacrifices to visit from afar.

The Titan of Fire poked her head into the doorway, having come to retrieve Mewblade and her Chosen. She had been informed by Mewtwo and Mew individually that Mewblade was in a foul mood, also that her profound amnesia left Mewblade believing that Moltres still held a grudge towards her. The audible singing drifted to her ears, allowing her to make out the voice of Mewblade clearly. It was hard to convince her that singing represented an upset Pokémon, giving Moltres a greater feeling of ease. The way in which her and Mewblade parted in the resurrection still left her shaken, making

Moltres feel that she was the one to take blame for putting Mewblade into the coma. She made her way towards the back room with quiet treading.

Upon getting closer Moltres could clearly distinguish the three voices in the musical uproar. Moltres peered into the room, somehow unnoticed by Mewblade especially. Mewblade's mind was wired to hone in on any Legendary present in the world; yet, she did not seem to notice the Legendary standing in her halls. It was not hard to imagine why as Moltres continued to observe. On the bed with Eevee was Coline and Mewblade, with Mewblade hoisting Coline in her arms. At this point Moltres was wondering if Mew and Mewtwo had made her believe an incredible ruse. There with her Chosen, Mewblade was laughing and singing, happier than anyone could imagine. It was getting late and Moltres knew she would have to interrupt them, feeling a tinge guilty that she would be disrupting Mewblade's good time.

"Errkreee ahhreeee?" (Can I join too?) she caroled, presenting herself in the archway. This completely startled Mewblade, almost making her lose her grip on Coline. The music continued to run though the singing had stopped. Coline and Eevee were only slightly unnerved by Moltres' abrupt appearance, having expected the bird. Those two aside, Mewblade was almost murderous with her gaze. Moltres decided to use her telepathy, making use of the aura print that she had left behind.

<"Or not, either or,"> she said with a shrug and a smile, trying to avoid the killer stare. Coline could tell that Mewblade was embarrassed for being caught, her heavy blushing only slightly visible beneath the black fur. With all the pressure of trying to prove that she was responsible, the discovery felt like a major setback. There was a subtle click as the karaoke machine turned off, showing that Mewblade was hardly convinced.

"Mewblade," Coline whispered to her friend. Mewblade diverted her gaze, no longer displaying the frustration but the shame instead. It was at that moment that Mewblade wished she could disassociate from the world. She gently stepped off of the bed, placing Coline on the edge of it. There was no point in her addressing her superior with a girl in her hold. "There is nothing to be ashamed about. You were having fun." Coline reassuringly touched Mewblade's paw, smiling as she did. Having fun or acting silly was excusable as long as no one suffered or felt left out. Mewblade could not see it that way.

"How much did you witness?" Mewblade mumbled to Moltres, head lowered in what had been a drawn-out display of personal catastrophe. Moltres was aware that Mewblade had a lot of pride, finding that her participation in a karaoke to only add to her integrity, not diminish it.

<"Not that much; besides, it didn't look that bad!"> she exclaimed with a flap of her wings. <"As your Chosen said, it is really nothing to be ashamed about. It is such a great relief to see you in good spirits, far better than the coma you were in, and the state you were in before that."> Mewblade gave an exasperated look over her shoulder, realizing that the only person who was making a big deal about it was her. Everyone wanted her to be happy, and if it involved her caterwauling to pointless songs by long gone icons, then no one would oppose.

"It is better," Mewblade winced, still finding the concept painful to own up to.

"Eveee evvvee eee!" (Of course it is!) reaffirmed Eevee, defending the right for everyone to have fun. A happy Mewblade, while a strange sight was a welcomed one.

<“It’s nice to know you can be something other than a miserable Gloom,”> Moltres chirped spiritedly, embracing Mewblade in the friendly fire of her wings. Like Mewblade’s blades, Moltres’ fire would not burn those she trusted. Mewblade was in a state of shock, unable to understand why Moltres would hug her in the first place. While Moltres was adamant about Mewblade being her friend, the feelings were not mutual.

“What are you doing?!” she hissed, trying to stay calm so her blades would not scorch Moltres’ flesh. The seething from Mewblade was not expected, making Moltres assume that Mewblade either literally did not know what a hug was, or her Legendary instincts were that high.

<“It’s a hug, a sign of camaraderie.”> Moltres went on her first theory because she knew that Mewblade was very young. She removed her wings from Mewblade to make her feel comfortable.

“I know what a hug is!” growled Mewblade. “Stop acting like you know me.” From Moltres there came the most exaggerated pout Mewblade had ever witnessed. The bird definitely had a sense of wit to her, adding a pathetically sad twitter along with. Moltres had been with Mewblade in her less than shining resurrection and in her home when Mewblade was unaware of it, thus the reason why Moltres’ aura was so well established. Evidently Moltres knew a lot more about her than Mewblade was really willing to think about.

“I’m sorry. It is very new to me and I need time to think about it,” apologized Mewblade. The goofy creature instantly became herself again, momentarily sharing a wink with Coline and Eevee. They stifled their giggles.

<“And because I know you then I will escort you and your Chosen,”> Moltres smiled at the two, <“since somebody doesn’t know how to talk to people.”> Mewblade was not even going to argue that statement, she knew her social skills were lacking. Considering Moltres was as talkative as she was, it would save Mewblade from reintroducing herself.

“I had something planned but it looks like we might be late,” Mewblade turned her head to Coline and Eevee, making a few steps past Moltres. “Let’s go,” she commanded. <Moltres, we will be flying,> she told the Pokémon privately. Moltres gave a brief nod, doing a hop before starting into a trot and flapping out of the entranceway.

<“I’ll see you in the skies!”> she called as the others stopped on the outcropping to Mewblade’s home, it acting as a natural balcony above the hundred foot drop. Mewblade smirked as she watched Moltres spin and dive nearby. She walked towards the edge, pausing for a moment to speak to Coline and Eevee.

“Wait there,” she instructed, then walked off the edge.

“Mewblade!” Coline screamed in horror, dropping to her knees.

“Eee evvee evvvee eee . . .” (I can’t believe she did that . . .) Eevee muttered in absolute disbelief.

“You really think I would do that?” Coline and Eevee’s heads shot up, surprised and delighted. There was Mewblade, hovering several feet from the edge with a playful smirk on her face, her blue aura lightly flickering. Moltres did not share in the fear that Coline and Eevee had experienced since she had witnessed the planned act. “I would never want to leave you, Coline, Eevee.”

“Never do that again!” Coline yelled, crying tears of joy but not liking that she was tricked in such a terrible way. Mewblade was still smirking as she listened to her Chosen express how much she truly loved her. “I hate you!”

“I love you too,” was Mewblade’s playfully loving reply. Coline sniffled, brushing her eyes with the back of her hand. “Come here,” Mewblade gestured to the air in front of her body.

“Eevee evvee evve?!” (Are you mad?!) Eevee questioned shrilly.

“No,” Mewblade smirked, finding that she was enjoying this game. “Come here,” she repeated for a second time. Coline and Eevee exchanged hesitant glances with Coline responding sheepishly.

“But we can’t fly,” Coline mumbled, her gaze falling on the edge of the outcrop.

“I can bring back the dead. Do you honestly believe that something as simple as overcoming gravity is beyond my abilities?” Mewblade added with a chuckle afterwards.

“Eve evvee eeve evvee eeveevve,” (You could have fooled me earlier,) muttered Eevee with a dry tone, reflecting on Mewblade’s previous stunt. Mewblade was still smirking, waiting patiently for the pair to take the leap of faith. Moltres observed curiously, intrigued by Mewblade’s way of encouraging her Chosen to trust her.

Coline rose to her feet, shoulders back, taking in a deep breath before throwing herself forward. After a moment her eyes opened to witness that she had not fallen but was flying! Mewblade had placed some of her aura around Coline enabling the girl to have unrestricted mobility. Coline turned to Eevee gaily.

“I’m flying, Eevee. I’m flying!” she giggled ecstatically. Coline did a somersault, dazzled by the feeling. “You have to try it!” In the short span of a day Eevee had insulted Mewblade multiple times. There were not many reasons why Mewblade should *not* drop her.

“Evve evve evve, evvee. Eeeevve evvee.” (I’m fine here, thanks. I like my ground.) Eevee looked at the space hesitantly then took painfully delicate steps forward. Time was running out and Mewblade no longer had the patience to deal with the unwilling Eevee. Using her energy, Mewblade wrapped it around the Pokémon and moved her as she saw fit.

“Eee!” (Hey!) Eevee screamed in terror as she found herself over the edge with nothing but a long drop beneath. She proceeded to shriek, briefly quieting herself to give herself a breather before starting up again. The other girls were laughing at the hysterical Eevee, enjoying this whole situation immensely.

“Just follow Moltres and I and we will lead you to Indigo Plateau. And try to keep up,” she said as Eevee quickly grasped flight and shot ahead. “But don’t speed ahead!” Mewblade shouted, Eevee instantly stopping herself. The speed in which Mewblade flew was entirely based on her aura, which meant that since Coline and Eevee were tapped into her power source they could perform her mach 3 speeds.

“Eevee,” (Sorry,) Eevee’s voice came from a distance. Moltres led the troupe, setting the pace as they were limited by her flight speed. Mewblade was entertained by Coline and Eevee’s own delight when it came to the flying, making the travel time seem short-lived. Flying was such a cheap way to keep them entertained that she was considering trying it more often. Despite the fact it was a fun and a worthy distraction, the flying was a time waster since Coline and Eevee were rookies with their sense of

aerial direction and constant urge to play around. It was without fail that Mewblade was late for everything.

<“And here is the star of the show.”> There was no need to introduce Mewblade, everyone knew who she was.

<“Moltres, can you flap any slower?”>

<“Sorry, but we had a couple fledglings learning to leave the nest for the first time,”> Moltres apologized as she stepped down from the sky. She gave a low hiss to Zapdos, emphasizing that insulting her was not a good idea. She trotted over to stand between Lugia and Zapdos. Mewblade glanced down, not liking the set up already. All the Legendaries from Johto and Kanto were in attendance, Celebi and Lugia being the only two she had not met. They were standing in a wide circle, ready to begin. Raikou moved his head up to look at Mewblade.

<“Care to join us?”> he said with an encouraging smile. Mewblade nodded her head, landing in the center, her arms spread out.

“Down you go,” she smirked as Coline and Eevee dropped from the sky and into her arms.

“Omph!” Coline exhaled then fussed with Eevee in her arms. Coline looked around at the Legendaries, seemingly unfazed. Eevee was equally calm, which perplexed Mewblade. Because of Coline’s serene air about herself, Mewblade was rather unwilling to put Coline down due to the security.

“You can put me down.” Many a thing made Mewblade anxious, especially when it involved a conjunction between her pride and presentation. “Are you okay?” frowned Coline, having felt Mewblade’s tension. Moltres returned her eyes to Mewblade after a private discussion with Lugia. A small headshake from Eevee signaled that the pair had everything taken care of.

“It is the anxiety again,” Mewblade whispered quietly into Coline’s ear. Telepathy always made for private conversation, but the intimacy of a whispering voice in the ear of another was far more personal.

“Don’t worry. No one is here to hurt you,” Coline assured Mewblade, giving her a quick kiss on the cheek before parting Mewblade’s company. The other Legendaries, with the exception of Zapdos, had fond smiles for Mewblade and her Chosen. The little girl assumed that she should make her way to circle, the grasp of Mewblade’s paw on her shoulder halting her. Ho-oh had left its spot between Lugia and Entei, standing before Mewblade. The great bird rarely ever appeared to others, Mewblade being one of the few in whose presence it graced frequently.

<“Greetings, Mewblade.”> As it addressed Mewblade it too would address her Chosen. Mewblade could not help with the scornful remark in her head, since Ho-oh consistently greeted her as ‘little one’ or ‘child’. While it was common courtesy to acknowledge one’s elders with favor, Mewblade hardly bat an eyelash. <“Greetings, Chosen Coline and Chosen Eevee,”> it spoke to them in hopes that they would be a little bit more responsive than their role model.

“Hello,” Coline smiled with a deep and gracious curtsy. This behavior pleased the bird, it turning to Eevee to watch her.

“Eevee!” (Hi!) Eevee squeaked, nervous by the sheer size of Ho-oh. Her bow was jumpy yet humbled. Following Ho-oh’s welcome there was a procession of greetings from the rest of Legendaries. Zapdos and Mewblade were caught in a staring competition, naturally spiteful towards one another. Despite the hostility Zapdos managed to welcome the Mewthree, following an icy slap from Articuno.

<“We must keep things on schedule as we all have responsibilities that we must attend to,”> stated Ho-oh, highlighting that Mewblade’s lateness had put them all behind. A Legendary could remain from their territory for quite some time, though a mass exodus could cause a quicker upset. Mewblade proceeded to ignore Ho-oh, shifting her gaze to meet Mewtwo’s. Neither of them were looking forward to this, whatever the Cleansing Ceremony may be. Ho-oh’s ability to perceive all allowed it to answer their question without having to be asked. <“The Cleansing Ceremony is done to create a balance between the Legendaries. Upon the introduction of a new member, whether a replacement or a new species, the Cleansing Ceremony must be performed. Doing so allows us to harmonize as a whole rather than just as a single entity. Through this there is equality as we represent the key elements of existence. Whether life,”> Ho-oh subtly gestured in Mew’s direction, <“or death,”> Ho-oh summed with a finishing gesture towards Mewblade. Stating that Mewblade was associated with the negative aspect of the spectrum brought shame to her. <“Please join Mew,”> Ho-oh instructed Coline and Eevee, adding a gentle nudge with its feathers.

“Okay,” Coline said, accepting the instruction. “See you, Mewblade,” added Coline with a farewell wave. Mewblade hated to be alone in the center with Ho-oh, giving a timid raise of her paw as a farewell. Coline bounded over to Mew, Eevee having been placed on the ground and chasing afterwards.

<“Mewtwo, please join the company of Mewblade.”> Mewtwo did as he was told by Ho-oh, approaching the center where Mewblade and Ho-oh stood. They both remained in mild confusion, not liking to be called out.

<Nervous?> Mewtwo asked with a casual tone upon joining his daughter.

<Somewhat.> Mewblade caught a glimpse of Mewtwo, seeing that he was indeed uncomfortable. <I do not know what to expect.> Ho-oh left the middle and returned to its place among the Legendaries, standing to strict attention. Everyone listened for the details about the cleansing.

<“We are to let our auras mingle, our unity between our power. All of our auras with yours,”> with this Ho-oh’s golden aura of intense purity came alight.

<What’s wrong with you?> Mewtwo could see Mewblade’s upper lip rise at the edges. He did not understand what was said or done that might have aggravated her.

<Ho-oh’s aura hurts me.> Mewblade clenched her jaw, forcing herself to keep a straight face. Her eyes briefly darted to see Mewtwo’s face, and to see if he understood what she was about to go through.

<We have to do this. The process should not be that long,> surmised Mewtwo as he let his aura flare. The other Legendaries imitated, the spectacular colors of their varied auras a dazzling display. Mewblade was the last to bring forth her aura. As she carried three auras then it was more challenging to bring all of them forward in a controlled manner; especially when her purple aura was the most volatile. Indigo was the combination between her controlled blue aura and her powerful purple aura, being the choice she selected for the cleansing.

The process of cleansing was very simple; Mewtwo and Mewtwo would bring the energies of their auras to the other Legendaries, and they in turn would bring theirs to the pair of clones. Any filth that came with their lack of innocence for not being true to the Legendary directive, would be removed with the aid of the auras. The other aspects of the cleansing included the ability for the other Legendaries to find one another easily, and it also included a rather spiritual understand of one another's purpose.

Ho-oh's aura stung as expected but Mewblade was determined to not let it get to her. She could handle pain and the purity of the aura was not the worst Mewblade had known. Already she was starting to hallucinate, the blobby apparitions of the Legendaries' forms appearing in her vision. Seeing things she did not understand bothered her, since she did not grasp the meaning or the reason to why they happened. Shutting her eyes to the sight was her best solution.

Something isn't right about this, Mewblade grimaced, frustrated that none of them knew what she saw. Coline and Eevee were quite entertained with the sight until Eevee looked up at her trainer with worry.

"Eeeveee eevvvee. Eevee eeevvveee eveee eve." (Mewblade's unhappy. That shouldn't be happening.) She looked on for an opinion from Coline who was wondering if she should break formation.

Mewblade was struggling, the only two noticing were her Chosen. *Stop*, Mewblade whimpered in her mind. *Stop . . .* Her eyes snapped wide open, staring down at the grass in terror. Her mind was going. She could feel the edges of her sanity being torn away with this process. Eevee risked breaking formation, making a run for it.

"Eevee!" Coline yelled, tackling her own Pokémon onto the ground. Mewtwo became aware of the scuffle, his view blocked by . . .

<Mewblade . . .?> Mewtwo gawked, seeing his daughter wide-eyed and shaking, her paws pressed tightly against her temples. He watched her silently mouth the words 'stop' over and over, oblivious to what she was actually doing. This was not right. The cleansing was not suppose to hurt her.

Stop. Please. Don't do this to me. Not here. Please not here! Mewblade was pleading with her mind to offer her some grace, anything to stop what she most dread. Mewtwo could understand why no one else noticed aside Coline and Eevee, they had their eyes closed, intently focused. Mewblade had not kept her aura back to mask her own distress but at this point the ones who knew wanted this process to end. None of them had a clue about what to do and stared helplessly as Mewblade's turmoil mounted.

Mewblade stopped focusing on the cleansing, her aura dropping from detection. There was no way to force it back now. No matter how much she wanted to pretend, her memories were surfacing and the floodgates holding them back would not last much longer. Her body wrenched, a cacophony of sounds racing through her mind in the endless squabble that was only discernable from worse to worst.

Ho-oh was quick to notice the lack of Mewblade's participation, with the assorted psychics second to realize it. They watched, seeing Mewblade in a state of disarray, tears flowing down her face unimpeded.

It was useless fighting her nightmares. Mewblade could not erase her own mind nor could she deny it any longer. The amnesia she had was for her own convenience, something her sub-conscience had made to protect her. Whatever protection Mewblade's

forgetfulness had given her was swiftly gone as the last strand of her ignorance shred itself.

Mewtwo, Coline and Eevee had just relived Mewblade's awakening with a shriek so catastrophically anguished it momentarily deafened them. None of them could even bring themselves to move or watch as Mewblade became emotionally crippled, falling onto her knees, face hard against the earth as she let it hear exactly how terrible her nightmares were.

"Mew mew mew mew!?" (What have I done!?) Mew howled, her cries nowhere near matching Mewblade's.

<"Mewblade!!!"> Moltres called to alarm, fire fast in speed as she stood over her friend of ill fate.

<"This is the best cleansing ever!"> Zapdos cackled in sinister delight. Articuno whapped her icy wings at him, knocking the Zapdos onto his front, with Moltres scorching his beak with a blast of heated scorn upon hitting dirt. The bird did not hide her affections, grieving tears staying on her warm feathers.

<"Don't you even start!"> she snarled at Zapdos with little care if she had to kill him for it if he did. Celebi and the Legendary Dogs hardly made a comment, and were completely unable to as the continuing chaos brought out an unlikely reaction from Lugia.

"Gggrrrrreeee!?" he screeched at Ho-oh, the silver bird snapping his fanged beak at the bird of gold. As it translated, "How could you?!" He continued to hammer across his opinion, using his large body to be confrontational. "She's not like us!" Ho-oh was keeping itself engaged with Lugia, obviously using private telepathy since it found that the topic about Mewblade should be kept between themselves. Lugia growled, still using his native mix of bird and porpoise to communicate. "Do not shut them out of this again, Ho-oh!" he warned.

Moltres was infuriated with Ho-oh, her body shivering with anger. It was useless to oppose Ho-oh's standpoint. She clenched her jaw, head jerking away. <"Lugia, it's pointless to argue with it,"> she said aloud, upturning her beak from Ho-oh, snubbing it.

<"What's going on?"> Entei pleaded for some insight from anyone. The sagest of them were too preoccupied with each other. Lugia, the one and half million year old Titan of the Sea and the presumably four and a half billion year old Ho-oh were engaged in a private conversation, with Ho-oh trying to ease Lugia's temperament. Articuno was keeping Zapdos' mouth shut, mostly trying to save his life from the fire-headed Moltres. Zapdos had a type advantage over Articuno but the position he was in did not allow him to use it well. Those loyal to Mewblade were busy and the other two Legendary Dogs were of no help.

<Is this normal?> Celebi inquired with a blink of her blue eyes. Entei, Raikou and Suicune mulled over for a moment before Raikou answered.

<With Mewblade, I'm starting to think it's a guarantee.>

<"Mewblade, calm down,"> Mewtwo said, trying to console his daughter. Coline and Eevee were standing over her, with Moltres standing guard over the situation. Mewblade's mother was living in her own night terror, blaming herself endlessly for what was going on.

“Grr!” Mewblade snarled at him. “Keep your claws off of me!!!”

“Don’t!” Coline cried out in a panic, yanking Mewtwo’s paw away as Mewblade nearly dismembered him.

“Eevee eevvvee eevee evve . . .” (She almost took your arm off . . .) Eevee stated, watching Mewblade go into an even more defensive fetal position. There was a lot of sharp diamond faces staring back at her. Mewblade made it clear with her body that she did not want to be touched, not like anyone was willing to at this point anyway.

<“Why did it have to be me . . .?”> Moltres mourned, the flames flying off her head as she shook it back and forth. Mewtwo was too fixated with the thought that he was a second away from having no paw. He had no claws, so why would Mewblade make such a remark? Eevee looked over at Moltres, thinking the bird had forgotten who was suffering at the moment.

“Eevve eeve,” (You’re fine,) she said with a roll of her eyes.

<“Yes, I know,”> Moltres began candidly. <“But don’t any of you see what happened?”> She looked around to the assembly to test if anyone was catching on to her observation. Mew immediately transitioned from crying to bawling.

“Poor Mewblade,” frowned Coline with an equally heavy heart. Mewtwo had a knot in his throat, he too understanding what Moltres was hinting on.

<“What happened,”> Moltres went on, fighting through her sadness, <“was that Mewblade was tortured, and she only remembers now.”>

“Mew, mew mew mew mew.” (No, you can’t be right.) Mew adamantly denied any construct of the sort. The Legendary Dogs were attentive, trying to gather as much information as possible, listening to snippets of the conversation as it went. Lugia stopped berating Ho-oh, looking on with an ageless weary. Moltres shared in his pain, their little secret between each other, their shared failure for promises they could not keep.

<“My life was not worth fighting for,”> she cried, the fire of her wings evaporating her sorrows as she covered her face with them.

<“Nonsense!”> Suicune barked at Moltres forcefully. <“All of it is nonsense.”>

<“Do you think she hurts for nothing?!”> screeched Moltres, her flames intense around her body. Lugia had a knowledge of the process of resurrection and offered his wisdom to the water type.

<“Life and death hurt on equal levels. There is nothing that can hurt a living being more than either. Soul to the living has something to do with this otherwise she would not be stricken so.”> Mewtwo agreed with Lugia, he remembered everything Mewblade told him, adding to Lugia’s thoughts.

<“The third part, Mewblade faces the after life,”> Mewtwo stated matter-of-factly. <“But that could mean anything, any time. She takes a minute to resurrect, during the process who knows . . . hours?”> Instantly the Legendary Birds and Eevee began recollecting the time frame of how long it took. <“It could have been forever, it could have been a minute. We don’t know how long or what exactly goes on.”> Mewtwo was about to continue further with his thesis when a sinister laugh caused him to lose his train of thought. Mewblade was laughing.

There was a distinct perversion to the laughter, as if something in Mewblade was completely gone. None of them truly understood fear though the Mewthree had them

believing. The laugh was hardly normal, even less so as Mewblade spoke in a vile yet sickeningly whimsical voice.

“Almost three months,” she twittered, raising her head. Coline, who was wholly supportive of Mewblade, found herself staring into the eyes of madness. “Really? Do you all live in your damn little fantasy world?” Mewblade chortled, finding it funny. Not a single Legendary was secure at the moment, all for the exception of Ho-oh. “Oh, do not act so appalled. You are all a bunch of prudes to find a bit of bad language to be so wrong,” Mewblade continued to go on, her voice a delightful coo. She uncurled her body, lying with her legs sprawled out behind her and her paws resting beneath her chin. A fiendish grin was plastered across her muzzle, not making light of the fact that this Pokémon was so dangerous. Every passing moment of the deranged behavior brought an even greater unease to the group as a whole. The serial killer of them had lost her mind.

“It does not matter how long, or how often,” continued the Mewthree, seemingly still entertained. “It becomes routine. Like waking up in the morning only with searing pain and missing intestine,” she said with a sickly sweet smile. Coline and Eevee were very receptive to Mewblade’s feelings but currently they could not make heads or tails as Mewblade continued to ramble on. “I know none of you understand what it feels like to have a soul. You are not aware of it. It is just this thing. Just a little hourglass that marks when your life gets yanked out from under your feet. The soul is so precious. If any of you were smart enough you would know that.” Mewblade had a passive, dreamy smile. “How someone can hurt that is really fascinating . . . Heh, soul to the living,” she snorted with quiet reflection, “rips one soul from the dead and places me as the stand-in.” Her voice shot into an ear piercing roar. “And leaves me there for the mortal time of three fucking months!!!” There was dead silence in the air, just waiting for her to start up again. “A soul, the true defining aspect of who you are, everything you ever dreamed of being; and one of you god damn shit heads thought it would be a *great* idea to have *my* essence, *my* existence violated, tortured, desecrated.” Mewblade had started crying, her bottom lip quivering. “I can take the pain, the crap load of no appreciation, the scorn of being whatever the hell I am to you. Chaos, death, I can handle that. What I can not handle . . . What I can not handle,” she muttered, “is one of you would be so arrogant to place me through that!” she threw back her body, a sob escaping from between her fingers as she came to grips with what had happened to her. All she did then was cry.

The Legendaries could not even use words to describe how stunned they were. Crying Mewblade was more predictable than screaming Mewblade, and a lot nicer than raving Mewblade, giving Coline the confidence to be close to her. Eevee was more reluctant but came to Mewblade once Coline’s hug was accepted. Most amnesia sufferers who recover with a sudden flood of information generally respond as Mewblade did, though not as viciously hostile. For Mewblade and everyone else around, they had to accept that what she remembered would now be a constant reality.

Coline tried to hug Mewblade as tightly as possible to stop her from shaking. The child was in tears herself, devastated for what Mewblade must have felt. Behind her, Moltres was casting a blaming eye on Mew. While Coline had wished for Mewblade to be okay, Mew was the one who provided the solution. Mew had not expected that her intervention had unwittingly trapped Mewblade in what she could only presume was a terrible limbo. Mew and Mewtwo combined had only successfully stabilized the body, where all of Mewblade’s mind and almost the entirety of her soul had remained

disconnected. Together it ended up somewhere, and that somewhere had not been pleasant.

“Mew . . .” (Mewblade . . .) Mewblade glanced to her mother after being addressed by name. “Mew mew mew.” (I did it.) Mewblade’s face had fallen unbelieving that it was her genetic mother that did that to her. Of all the kindness in the world it was hard to imagine that the source could do something so painful.

“Why?” Mewblade spoke with heavy sorrow, her world already distraught without having to believe that the fault was that of her mother’s. “Do you not understand that death works differently than life . . .?” She took a deep breath, the prelude to more yelling. “I thought you were suppose to be wise!” Mewblade bellowed, the tears becoming fresh. “I told you not to do anything! And you disobeyed me? What is it that you don’t get?! Your wisdom does not work in death. You are life! What drove you to think that what you were doing was okay!?!”

“Me,” Coline remarked meekly. Mewtwo’s aura was already charged, ready to protect Coline from the Legendary she loved. There was a long stare towards Coline. Here Mewblade was, being told by Ho-oh and telling it that Coline was her life, and now she was regretting the very life she had. This was too much for Mewblade. She did not want to be there.

“Coline . . .” Mewblade sobbed, so struck down by devastation. Even the very thing she cared for had betrayed her. Considering Mewblade had almost hurt him, it made Mewtwo unwilling to admit that he had done any wrong. Mew had asked for his help, dragging him into the mess in the first place. This was something he would stay out of.

Mewblade pulled her body away from her Chosen, Coline feeling her fingers slip away from the warm fur. Coline slumped back onto her heels, wracked with her own feelings of guilt. Mewblade made no eye contact with the human, disassociating from everything that caused her pain. Celebi covered her eyes, shaking her head while the Legendary Dogs could only offer their sympathy to Coline. A Chosen, even one so mistakingly intentioned should not be blamed for caring efforts.

“Bii bii bii bii bii bii bii bii bii bii!” (You can’t be mad at them because they wanted you to be okay!) Celebi protested, buzzing about angrily not understanding why this Legendary in particular was so irrational. Mewblade hung her head, shoulders sagging. She detested Mew for letting herself be swayed by an eight year old. Coline was her Chosen and merely a child, so she could not put the same blame on someone so naïve. It brought the pair a high level of misunderstanding, especially where the gift that Coline had offered had accidentally been a tainted prize. Right now a gift as such was overshadowed by what it took to keep it.

<“And this will be the last time, any time you threaten to kill yourself,”> Mewtwo warned, his aura still on active display. It seemed like one of those moments in which she would mention it. Mewblade chuckled out of hidden irony.

“Mewtwo,” she frowned sadly, finally willing to view the face of another. “I am afraid of death.” Mewblade brought her aura to the open, the flickering of it was disjointed. “I want to get this over with as soon as possible,” she snarled at the Legendaries, most unwilling to accept her now.

<“Then we shall continue,”> Ho-oh announced breezily, caring little for what had transpired. Moltres and Lugia drew their beaks back, a low hiss uttering from the depths

of their throats, a sign of displeasure towards Ho-oh. They made their way to their places, leaving Mewtwo alone with the erratic Mewblade in the center of the circle.

The rest of the Cleansing Ceremony proceeded without conflict. Mewblade had become silenced and numb, too lost in thought to make any comment. Mewblade's loyalists dwelled in their own way, primarily remorseful. Most of the Legendaries offered their own comfort to Mewblade, using private telepathy. Getting something more than, 'It's okay,' was a proven challenge. Zapdos downright praised her for being such an upset to the rest although the response was still relatively the same. No one could make her talk.

<Moltres and I are sorry that we could not protect you,> Lugia said quietly, a random statement given all that had happened. She hardly listened to what he said, the response unchanged.

<It's okay,> she muttered, there being no virility in her telepathy.

As soon as Ho-oh announced the finale of the Cleansing Ceremony Mewblade left, barely letting it finish the closing sentence. There was no one there that could help but wonder what it took to bring her down. Mewblade was well aware of the means, her reward for helping the innocent regain a second chance. Being alive meant she escaped, proving she had fear and a will but the inability to tell anyone how much she suffered. It could have been pride; but frankly, even she herself wish she did not know.

"Demisewan, at the back."

"On it!"

Giovanni was watching with his Persian up on the inner balcony of the Viridian Gym as the Mewthrees stood on the field, a near wild Gyarados in the center of the gym. Stanford, Nichole and Doctor West were there as well, each for their own reasons. The Pokémon belonged to Stanford, but his main concern was for Swadeaqua. Nichole was critically observing how Harddense handled without her. Doctor West was mostly keeping tabs on how well the three performed from a medical perspective. He had never seen them all in combat together, taking the opportunity to gather data. A couple of the professional Team Rocket Pokémon wranglers were at the walls surrounding the indoor field, also keeping an eye on things. They needed this situation to be as controlled as possible; otherwise, the Gyarados could pose a large risk to the participants.

Swadeaqua was using Calm Mind on herself, the faintness of her green aura barely showing. A Roar from the Gyarados was unable to intimidate the assurance Swadeaqua had for herself. At her side, Harddense was visibly shaken by the fearsome bellow.

"Harddense, pull yourself together," Swadeaqua ordered over her headset, registering across both of Demisewan and Harddense's sets. The device was a primitive version of Demisewan's complex spy interface system. It looped around the left horns of the girls, and the ear of their brother. Some brief stuttering was returned to the sisters.

"B-but . . ." began Harddense, completely cinched up. Swadeaqua offered no encouragement or direction as she scoffed at his incompetence.

"Ugh, you're impossible . . . Demisewan! On that head!"

“Righty-o!” responded Demisewan with apt enthusiasm, only to jump onto the tail and have the dragon Tail Whip her to the nearest wall. Demisewan’s yelp echoed loudly, causing Harddense to cry out for his twin.

“Demisewan!” The Gyarados went for the most distracted of its opposition, aiming its giant maw at Harddense. To see the intention of the Gyarados was not hard for Swadeaqua. Even so, she had no time to instruct Harddense to use a Defense Curl. Whether or not anyone believed Swadeaqua was capable of damage was quickly proven wrong. She worked her lungs and used Hyper Voice, projecting a sound wave at the monster. Not only did the loudness cause it to draw back, the force managed to push its head even further away. Demisewan was close by, and Swadeaqua gave her directions.

“Demisewan, Hi-Jump Kick.” Demisewan heard, going through with the command. She ran towards her opponent before springing into the air, phasing at push off to give her abnormally light body an added boost of speed. Upon meeting the giant head she brought some of her physical state back into her legs, piling them into the side of the Gyarados’ face. It fell away from the blow, testimony to Demisewan’s own strength. Demisewan remained in the air, levitating due to her ghostly absence of weight. Though relatively incomprehensible to the humans, the Mewthrees understood that the Gyarados’ growls were telling of an unhappy Pokémon. That was when a glow started to emanate from its mouth.

Nichole quietly cursed, making a groan of, “Hyper Beam,” identifying the next attack. Swadeaqua saw it too, along with the intended target.

“Harddense, get in front of me and use Iron Defense.” Harddense thudded over, his speed already decreasing. Iron Defense allowed him to repair the dents in his armor primarily because it thickened his shell in the process. While it limited his mobility it greatly increased his defensive potential. Standing in ready, Harddense was prepared as the Gyarados whipped its cavernous mouth towards them, letting loose with the beam. The attack hit dead on, but Harddense was next to unbreakable. Despite his resilience, the blast managed to throw him off his footing, sending him into Swadeaqua.

“Omph!” Swadeaqua exhaled as her heavy-metal brother collided into her body, sending them both to the floor. “Get off!” shrieked Swadeaqua, trying to move her brother off of her who had the dexterity comparable to a turtle. During this Demisewan had been floating nervously in one spot. She became witness to the Gyarados’ movements, all of which it was directing towards her immobile family. It was her responsibility to play as a decoy in moments like these.

“Hey! Ugly!” she called, letting the Gyarados see her before vanishing. Ghost abilities frightened most Pokémon because the Pokémon that utilized them were often of the matching type. Very few enjoyed such encounters since the invulnerability was insurmountable in most cases. “Boo!” Demisewan shouted, appearing before its eyes with a startling Astonish. A clever backflip took advantage of the Gyarados’ bewilderment. The indignity of being caught off-guard sent the Pokémon into a temper tantrum, bringing with it Dragon Rage. Demisewan lost her concentration due to the strike and hit the floor hard.

By now Swadeaqua was standing. The effects of her Calm Mind were wearing off, making her judgment untrustworthy. This was demonstrated with her arrogant Swagger, coupled with a Taunt. She proceeded to insult the dragon in its own language. Neither Demisewan or Harddense understood languages to the degree in which

Swadeaqua did. From what Harddense could tell was that the behavior was making the Gyarados madder.

“Yo, Swade . . . don’t tick it off,” Harddense warned his older sibling. Swadeaqua countered, dismissing Harddense’s views as mere paranoia.

“I’m weakening it.” She then tried to stare the beast down, forcing across as many dominating emotions as she could muster. It Roared at her and she did the same back but it was clear to the spectators that Swadeaqua had no idea what she was doing. The Gyarados overpowered her with its own anger and hostility, the cause of poorly planned move sets designed to only confuse and enrage it. Swadeaqua collapsed from the strain of trying to control something that could not be reasoned with. Without commands, Harddense was helpless even though he was close. Demisewan was further away but managed to cover the distance at a speed that hardly made her visible.

“No!” Demisewan hollered at the Gyarados, practically flying in with teeth and nails, doing whatever she could to take the dragon’s attention away from Swadeaqua. It took Demisewan for a ride, trying to dislodge her from its back as she clung for dear life. Harddense’s Body Slam was ineffective, the opponent simply sweeping him with its tail. He toppled in the general area of Swadeaqua, Demisewan joining him as she too was thrown into the direction of her fellows. Already another Hyper Beam was waiting in the wings. The attack power of Gyarados was currently at a very high level, making Swadeaqua, Demisewan and Harddense realize that they were in serious trouble.

“Return!” The Gyarados was sucked up in a red beam of light. Stanford held the Pokéball, calling the Gyarados off as he was its current master. His expression was stern as he robotically stashed the Pokéball in an inside pocket, his focus directed to the sorry display on the field below. Beside him, Giovanni was sorely displeased by the efforts shown from the better half of Project 10.a Intensity. Doctor West shared a similar level of disappointment that Stanford felt, whereas Nichole was smug about how poorly Swadeaqua had commandeered her brother and sister. To have them lose so badly was unexpected, although every person present knew that the three lacked the fighting prowess of Vicebane or the deadliness of Mewblade.

Swadeaqua rose to her feet, mentally drained and physically sore from the endeavor. Ashamed about her performance, she was unable to face Giovanni. Demisewan was up, the only one who fared well throughout the fight. She followed instructions, looked after her team, and could think for herself. Harddense likely fared the worst, being so easily intimidated. Without strong direction he caved under the strain of trying to strategize. Instead of supporting Harddense, Swadeaqua had ignored him, a large fault on her part.

“I am disappointed in you all,” Giovanni’s voice sounded out across the gym. He approached the balcony railing, glowering down at mostly Swadeaqua. Swadeaqua could feel his stare on the top of her skull. “You are Project 10.a Intensity, designer Pokémon, made to be the most specialized, most advanced in the world. The three of you together *should* have been able to face that Gyarados with ease.” Harddense visibly displayed his shame, head hung down, body drawn in tightly. Bored, Demisewan took to looking around, disrespectful to Giovanni since she was not paying attention to what he was saying. No one could see Swadeaqua’s eyes, but the aquamarine which usually held a sense of whimsical mystery were full of doubt and detest. She had failed in front of the one person she wish she had not.

“Swadeaqua,” Giovanni barked her name, completely intolerant. Swadeaqua shifted her gaze upwards.

“Yes, sir?” she replied, softening her expression as her gaze met her master’s. Even a clueless idiot knew what was to follow.

“You are the one who I had the highest expectations for and you failed to meet them on any level,” stated Giovanni in his blunt, authoritative manner. Where Giovanni came down on the Mewthrees, his Persian expressed its own insults in a way that was suited to its snobbish demeanor.

Swadeaqua ignored the cat and answered with a, “Yes, sir,” feeling subservient as she did. This was the lowest she had ever felt.

“Sir,” Stanford said, bringing Giovanni’s attention to him instead. It was out of order to interrupt but he felt the need to defend the Mewthrees. “Neither Swadeaqua or Demisewan were previously trained for battling. We should treat this as an exhibition match. Now we know where they stand and can have them trained appropriately to develop their skills.” Giovanni was expressionless, quietly contemplating. He nodded thoughtfully, coming to the consideration that the three Mewthrees beneath him were designed less for battling than the absent members of the species. The fact that they even survived at all against such a high-level opponent was commendable. Still, it remained that they had failed. Giovanni’s mouth opened slowly to speak and was quickly muted by Demisewan.

“Swadeaqua didn’t do that bad, so don’t you go blaming her and the rest of us as well,” said Demisewan, her defiant eyes absolutely undeterred. Harddense stared at his twin, unbelieving that she would show such defiance to the one person who consequently decided their worth, and thus their existence.

“Demisewan,” he gave a whispered hiss, but it was barely heard. Demisewan was in an aggressive state, willing to fight everything and anything in order to protect her siblings. Giovanni was the least amused by the ghost type’s behavior. Unlike with Swadeaqua, Giovanni never interacted with the other Mewthrees, and was irritated that Demisewan would present such behavior. His voice was aided with his posture, looking more imposing.

“You will *not* defy your creator and *your* master.” Giovanni’s voice was forthright, completely no-nonsense sounding as he talked to the infuriating ball of fluff beneath him. She was not mad enough for her aura to show; which, like her potential rage was an intense red. Demisewan’s normal aura was gray with white and black flecks; very visible to psychics although unnoticeable to Demisewan.

Demisewan leapt into the air, then completely disabled her weight so that she could hover in front of Giovanni. “You are not my master if you threaten my family,” Demisewan growled through her teeth. Giovanni knew better than to enrage Demisewan further, as he was one of the people who received the reports about how uncontrollable she could be. He simply waved a decorated hand before speaking.

“You assumed your family would be in trouble when I am only performing a damage control procedure. You can go down now,” he said with another wave. Demisewan still appeared to be fuming upon settling back onto the ground floor, putting an end to the confrontation. She stepped into position between the rest of her kin.

Harddense moved close to his twin to support her, briefly whispering, “You’ve got to be careful. That man can un-create you.”

"I know," Demisewan whispered in reply. The thought of dying did not sink into her mind. She was a ghost type and no one was sure if she could actually die, or become a literal ghost. It made her fearless to her own mortality.

"Arrange for training for all three whenever possible. I expect their skills to be adequate enough to succeed against Mewblade." Giovanni's personnel nodded their heads at the information, he continued on as he spoke to the Mewthrees. "You three will be expected to train and continue with your previous duties as normal." Harddense looked objectional since this meant training on top of the training he did that was associated with gym battling. Giovanni smirked coldly, having seen the unhappiness on Harddense's face. Demisewan patted her twin's shoulder, and raised her voice to speak for him.

"And what happens if we don't meet that standard?" she ventured. Swadeaqua knew, reason why she was so silent.

"Then you risk your life and that of your fellow Mewthrees to Mewblade." The room became an eerie quiet. This was no game. If Harddense, Demisewan or Swadeaqua did not train, their chances of dying became higher. Demisewan started up in a whimper.

"What if we aren't ready?"

"You have no choice but to be ready," Giovanni spoke, stern as ever. Harddense hung his head bitterly, while Demisewan turned to Swadeaqua, flustered.

"Why did you agree to this?!" Demisewan snarled, her paw subconsciously digging into Harddense's shoulder. Swadeaqua glanced over with her eyes, though unable to respond as Giovanni spoke yet again.

"You can bicker on your own time." Giovanni stood back from the rail. "This assembly is dismissed. We will reassemble for further review later." Without further word, he turned his back and left. His Persian stretched, yawning as it did before toddling after its master. Demisewan was looking about, feeling helpless.

"Demisewan?" Harddense ventured. Wordlessly, she flung herself into his arms, sobbing into his metal chest. Swadeaqua watched dejectedly. There was no one there to comfort her, making her snap the twins apart.

"Come on. Let's go," interrupted the female, imposing herself between them. A snuffle and a nod was the most she could get out of Demisewan. Harddense was more responsive because he was trying to be the pillar of strength that Demisewan needed.

"Sure thing, Swade." Harddense turned to the youngest sister. "Cheer up, DW. We'll train extra hard just for ya," he winked.

"Eee!" Demisewan squealed, racing ahead, chased after by her tickling twin. "No tickling!" she giggled down the hallway. Swadeaqua had to marvel at the pair's coping skills, where everything she tried made her feel empty.

It had been weeks since the unfortunate event on Indigo Plateau. The dwellings of Mewblade's cave had been uninhabited for just as long. Anyone seeking her had great difficulty locating her aura, the most obvious signature for detection. Often they appeared in the last place she was, finding the residual energy that Mewblade would purposely blow off so that way it was easier for her disguise her normally prominent energy load.

Moltres had been assigned to find Mewblade today, choosing to start off with her residence for any sign of change. There had to be some sort of protection around the

place as dust never collected, but the fact remained, she had not been there in a while. No one knew where to look. Mewblade did not let anyone know about her hobbies, making tracking her quite a task. Moltres sighed, stirring her mind with ideas of where her friend may be. It was useless to try and find her through unconventional methods. With nothing to go on, she decided on leaving, flapping off into the sky for a casual fly around the expanse of Mewblade's territory. Something quickly caught her attention and she directed herself towards the upper part of the mountain.

Loud, alternating slams echoed off the surrounding rock and overhang, all the while accompanied by bitter sobs. Mewblade's fist powered into the rock face for yet another uncountable time. Her fist drew back, bruised and bloodied. She did not even look at the rock in front of her, so crumbled and dented with impressions. Mewblade must have been at it for weeks. With a mutter and a fresh set of tears she drew back her fist and proceeded to pummel away at the rocky surface. Only after her flesh became raw to the bone did she cease.

Mewblade leaned her body against the wall, uncaring about the blood that was escaping. Even though her eyes were open they were empty, an obvious sign that mentally she was unwell. To be away from others meant that Mewblade was away from hard questions. Answering them brought dread, where avoiding them allowed her to focus on more important things, such as her self-mutilation which she did as a form of masochistic escapism. As soon as a negative thought and the opportunity would arise, Mewblade would seek out her personal infliction. The choices had been divided between what she was doing now, and resurrecting. After everything she loathed about the effects, it would be a joke, to her family to consider that she sought it for release. It had reached the point of addiction, so much that she cared nothing for those that she brought back, only for her selfish need to forget.

There were no resources offered to Mewblade now that Coline brought her distrust, her parents bringing her resentment. She was not mortal, making human coping mechanisms unattainable. Though she had not tried she knew that she could not sleep to escape, drink to inebriation; toke, snort, or inject into a state of giddy delirium. Her body would refuse even the most basic of medicines, the things which would have saved her life when she once killed herself for the sake of duty.

The subtle use of a Recover healed the battering damage along her paws. Despite the fact she felt she needed to medicate through pain, Mewblade remained true to her fears, not willing to lose her life. Hurting herself was a distraction. Mewblade winced, her memories of being trapped in the coma surfacing. She had gone long enough without beating herself into an emulsified pulp, returning to punch the rock with renewed fists.

Moltres chased her senses, hoping that the small flicker of an aura was Mewblade's. She soared high above on lofty thermals, overlooking the scene below. There was a sight beneath her that she had been searching weeks for, yet as she drew in closer it was less than a welcome. Her keen eyes could easily distinguish the activity, causing her to cringe. Moltres had an inner debate on whether she should or should not make an approach. After a bit of hesitation she veered towards the Mewthree, almost certain her welcome was not desired as a cold stare followed her down.

“What do you want?” barked Mewblade, unable to hide her displeasure. As an afterthought she smashed her fist hard into the rock, making a point that Moltres was not wanted. A lot of rock in that area was brown but the unusual red tint, coupled with Mewblade’s actions made Moltres realize the seriousness of Mewblade’s condition. There was already new blood staining her paws, her expression cold and unconcerned.

<“Is this what you’ve been doing for so long?”> Moltres looked Mewblade up and down for some semblance of humanity. Everyone who had sought her had wondered what they would expect, as well as what to say upon seeing her. There was so much relief to know that her friend was alive but the state in which she found her was not ideal.

“I am alive if that makes you happy,” Mewblade growled, already irritable, a Teleport in preparation.

<“Please don’t leave yet, Mewblade,”> Moltres pleaded knowing that as soon as Mewblade left, she would not be able to trace her. The request was considered with Mewblade dismantling her Teleport. Moltres sighed bitterly not knowing where to start. If she said the wrong thing then Mewblade would flee. <“We’ve been looking all over for you, wondering what was wrong, if you were okay,”> she trailed on a little. <“None of us know why you’re avoiding us like this, when you should know better that you can’t do everything by yourself.”>

“Do not lecture me,” Mewblade growled in a continuing state of aggression.

<“We’re just worried. I mean, with you doing these mindless acts. What am I supposed to be doing?”> Mewblade’s face was slapped with tearful indignation, her aura already up. It had come out wrong, leaving Moltres unable to apologize.

“You do not get it!” Mewblade snapped at Moltres, her Teleport initiated. Moltres could not risk losing her now. A twister of fire surrounded the pair in an impenetrable shield against other energies. Together they were trapped in the Fire Spin until Moltres would call it off. Moltres was tense, unsure if the glare from Mewblade was a precursor to her death.

<“You are going to stop running away from us,”> Moltres said, putting pressure on Mewblade with the intensity of her fire. The partial steel type was naturally uncomfortable around fire because of how metal retains heat, allowing it to absorb and transfer heat quickly. It was possible for a steel type to roast from the inside out before ever melting.

“Looks like I can not run away now,” remarked Mewblade. The Fire Spin that surrounded them was making her just as nervous as Moltres’ impending questions. Using her eyes she made certain to let Moltres know exactly how much spite she felt. Glaring was not going to dissuade Moltres.

<“You must understand that what happened to you on part of us was unintentional. We did not want to hurt you. Your life was just too precious to waste, and it is unbearable without you.”> Mewblade watched as Moltres was crying, not for herself but for Mewblade. <“How can we help you if you keep running away from us?”>

“If you have not noticed, I have been running away to keep all of you from asking me questions. I can not forget what happened if you are here,” a low growl came from the back of Mewblade’s throat.

<“You hurt yourself when I’m not here!”> exclaimed Moltres, trying to make Mewblade grasp the somehow distant idea that she was causing herself more problems

than anyone else. <“I can’t even understand why you’re hurting yourself in the first place.”>

Mewblade was already in a snarl, saying, “And I do not understand why you even bother with me,” with a less than amused tone.

<“Because I want to help you!”>

“Really?” Mewblade retorted, her arms crossed beneath her breast plate. “You are conspiring with Lugia since both of you obviously have some amount of inside information that no one else knows. I trust you less than the things that hurt me,”

Mewblade added with an additional snarl. Considering the state that Mewblade was in during the ceremony, Moltres was startled that Mewblade noticed. “You are the one who trapped us both here, and you know what my duties are,” she warned.

<“I am not conspiring! We all have alternative duties, and one of them was to protect you! And I completely failed at that because look at you now!”> Moltres said with outstretched wings. <“You trust me less than the beings who did unspeakable things to you, when I would never dream of betraying the Decider of Fate!”> Mewblade took a step back, realizing Moltres was telling her the truth.

“But at least they were predictable!”

<“And predictability wins your trust?”> Moltres shook her head in disappointment. <“Fine then. Answer me this. Who do you trust more? Me, the Moltres who knows and likes you a lot; or them, the beings who liked you when you were hurting?”>

“Do not start . . .” Mewblade cautioned, almost willing to go to extremes to quiet Moltres, though the punishment of death was making her hold herself back. Moltres was going to play hard on Mewblade.

<“Maybe Mew is worse to be around than someone who beats you. Or how about Mewtwo? I’m pretty sure that he respects you as his daughter, and would never touch you like you were not. Then there is Coline . . .”>

“Stop!” Mewblade screamed at her. “I am not listening to this!”

<“I know you’re hurt by what happened. We do not want to see you go through something like that again. I can go on forever, just as long as you continue to run. But if you want to believe that hurting yourself helps you more than the support of those who care, then go.”> The Fire Spin disappeared leaving Mewblade open to escape. Moltres was somewhat expecting her to run, but Mewblade was still standing there. <“Go on. Now is your chance to run away.”> Mewblade cast her gaze distantly off towards the horizon.

“I already did. I would not be here otherwise,” she replied with a deeply sad smirk, eyes closing. Mewblade rubbed the back of her paws, healing the injuries as she did. “Mew disrespected my judgment, but the rest of you should not be blamed for what happened.” Mewblade looked up at the happy face of Moltres, who was ecstatic to have persuaded Mewblade.

<“I will visit often, I promise! We all will. We won’t ask any questions. Anything to make you happy and to keep you away from such a dirty habit.”> There were weeks worth of blood on the rocks, a disgusting testimony to one’s attempt at avoiding the obvious. Moltres brought herself to look upon Mewblade once more.

“As long as you breaking promises is not a habit.”

<“Of course not. I promise on my honor as the Titan of Fire that I am worth my words,”> she smiled with her eyes, a wing tip across her heart. <“You can also visit me whenever you need it; though, you may have to deal with Zapdos’ squawking,”> she laughed at her joke, Mewblade forcing herself to smirk. <“Please,”> she murmured, her wings embracing Mewblade’s left paw, <“I would give my life for your happiness. Call on me.”> The Mewthree had heard this before from Mewtwo, although she had ignored the offer. While Mewblade could accept Moltres’ visits and her help when there, she was not willing to go crying to the bird every instant she encountered grievances.

“I will.” Mewblade and Moltres turned away from the rock face to talk about aimless wonders, distracting Mewblade in a way that was not racked with her own self administered punishment. Any further erosion done on the rock face would be up to mother nature to perform.

Mewblade knew it would be one of those days as she appeared in a barren rental suite. She walked around, casually assessing what the crime scene was composed of. Mentally she noted that the entrance door frame was jarred, a crowbar allowing for forced entry. Padding into the center of what was the living room it became obvious to why Mewblade was there. A heavy sigh hit the air as she continued to observe the scene, becoming bitter as the minutes passed.

With moderate caution Mewblade walked around and over the blood spray, coming closer to the thing she was suppose to save. There was one spent shell casing on the floor that was unloaded to the victim’s chest. No one would have heard it, the new condominium complex across the street was having its support pylons constructed, drowning out any shooting or screams. Sometimes luck worked for the accused in ways that most would not consider.

Mewblade knelt next to the body, her paw brushing hair away from the victim’s face. Fate never made it clear why she had to come to the fallen, as it was always her intuition that guided her. The glazed eyes stared back at her, pleading for grace. It was moments like these that resurrecting became too personal, forcing Mewblade to suppress her own feelings. The girl reminded her of Coline, two years older and with brown hair and eyes, but still sweet, innocent, and undeserving of the cruelties of man. Mewblade called forth her energy and used it to Recover the injuries.

The injuries were relatively simple aside the torn tissues in the left lung and heart. Bruising was an easy fix, so were minor lacerations. Mewblade finished quickly with relatively little energy lost. It had been hard for her to learn to reconnect with the victims, finding that part of the process to be the most challenging. Not so long ago Mewblade was using the resurrection process as a way to medicate her needs. Any addiction was always a hard habit to break, especially considering that this one was unavoidable. The obligation to the victim’s well-being was overrode by Mewblade’s need to forget. None of those that she saved had yet to notice that her concerns were not for them but for herself. She was pretty confident as she took herself into the trance that this human would be no different.

Coline appeared in the middle of the living room, Eevee in her arms and her Abra, Abbott at her feet. They had just missed Mewblade by a couple of seconds.

“Eevee eee eve eee eevvee eee,” (Looks like we just missed her,) Eevee pointed out.

“No problem,” Coline replied as she put Eevee down then proceeded to rummage through her backpack. “She’ll be out in a minute.” She withdrew a blanket from her backpack and gave it a flick. It was intended for the girl that Mewblade was taking care of since the girl’s clothes were nowhere in sight. Abbott glanced at the lone clock on the wall, counting the passing seconds. Eevee was watching Coline, who was gingerly wrapping the blanket around the girl’s shoulders. She then sat on her heels, quite use to the scenario she was experiencing. They waited patiently for the seconds to pass, while in the trance, Mewblade was doing the same.

As usual, Mewblade found the innocent with no problems. Currently she was pacing around the lone spotlight that illuminated the person that she came for. Unlike all those she had saved before, the girl appeared as she was right before her final breaths, shot up, naked and with every injury present. Mewblade had been suspicious, considering certain trauma could have easily destroyed the girl’s purity. Sexual trauma was a particularly testy issue, on part because virginity was a cultural phenomenon that recognized the virtues of devoting one’s body to a higher cause. Such a thing was not the fault of the girl but could easily make a person untrustworthy of people, reducing their pure intentions and in turn the traits that were required for person to be saved. The human obviously had such a strong hold of herself and to such an extent that she remained unfazed by what her aggressor had done. Usually Mewblade’s control was absolute, making her charges think and look in a way that does not complicate anyone. Because the human before her showed her inflictions it meant that not only was her will strong, but was possibly the condition of a hidden ability as well. The girl’s gaze turned to Mewblade.

“I know you’re there. You can stop spying.” Mewblade was shocked. She was out of range to be spotted and had made no attempt at betraying her whereabouts. It was useless to hide from something that knew she was there, forcing Mewblade out of the shadows and into the light.

“Hello, Emma,” Mewblade greeted the girl by name. Emma did not seem to care much about how Mewblade looked, where the majority of humans found her to be stunning. The girl’s critical stare was focused on Mewblade’s face, like she was trying to bore into Mewblade’s skull. Mewblade ignored the chilling stare and continued to approach Emma. “I’m here to . . .”

“I know why you’re here,” Emma interrupted with a growl, shifting into a crouched position. “You’re here because it’s your job.” Mewblade stood at a distance that allowed neither her or Emma to crane their necks. This was starting to go very wrong, very fast. “You want to care about saving me, but you just can’t.” The pitch of Emma’s voice was rising and becoming shrill. “You want to help yourself by using my situation and if you do the job and get that satisfaction, then that is all that matters to you.”

Mewblade was hiding her bewilderment. Emma knew everything that no one close to her did; Mewblade could not fathom how. *This has to be a coincidence. A lack of trust after what her predator did to her*, she thought, trying not to jump to conclusions. Emma gave a thoughtful tilt of her head.

“What he did has nothing to do with you,” she said suddenly. Mewblade had not felt Emma prying in her mind, making it hard to guess how Emma was doing this. The

one-sided guessing game bothered Mewblade, frustrating her and making her feel exposed. "I know how you feel. You don't want your loved ones to know about your habits; otherwise, they'll worry." Emma frowned slightly, not as confrontational. Mewblade's frown on the other hand was that of dread, Emma surmising what Mewblade had guessed. "I can feel the emotions of others." Acknowledging the significance of all that Emma could perceive brought Mewblade away from her selfishness. Emma was not a normal human, but a psychic one with the power of empathy.

An empath is a person who can understand the emotional condition of people, sometimes to levels where they can communicate on feelings alone. It is where words hold little significance, the tone of voice and the intentions behind it the focus of the empath. Emma had to be highly skilled as she could go as far as reading the subconscious emotions of those she was in the presence of. Mewblade became horrified almost instantly at the notion that Emma was indeed such a type of psychic. Normally this would not bother Mewblade but the implications the resurrection had on her could possibly transfer to Emma, inflicting the human with all its excruciating effects. This was no longer about her, as long as Emma remained ever aware of Mewblade's state then she ran the risk of being seriously harmed. Mewblade ventured a question, hoping beyond hope that Emma's empathy was controllable.

"Can you turn it off?" Emma shook her head. "Do you internalize what others feel?" Emma looked thoughtful for a moment, then nodded her head. Indeed it was a bad day. The blank space had some sort of perceivable floor, noticeable as Mewblade slammed her fists upon it in outrage. It was her duty to resurrect the selected dead and no matter the excuse she had to do it. Had she known of Emma's cursed skill, Mewblade would have probably forced herself into a temporary hibernation to avoid the three day window of opportunity that she was given for all her resurrection victims. Then again, if she did not do it either Ho-oh would make her or Mewblade would possibly become more insane from trying to resist the pull. Whether she wanted to or not, the situation was unavoidable. Emma shuffled up to Mewblade, hands touching Mewblade's upper arms.

"It'll be okay. I can handle it." Mewblade gave a doubtful shake of her head, knowing that Emma could not quite grasp the seriousness of the problem.

"No, no. You can not handle it, Emma," she said, looking straight at the girl. "I can not handle what it does to me, and I am considered the most capable. Your only edge over every other human is your ability to feel. Here, in this place, that ability puts you at such a disadvantage. I know you can understand my concern." Emma was somber as she spoke.

"But you have to anyway," she said quietly. The extremes that Mewblade was describing with her emotions, while easy to register, were so immense that Emma could not perceive the physical end.

"But I do not want to put you through that!" Mewblade protested. "I am not able to even erase the horror from your mind. Eventually you will decipher the emotions and it will come back to you . . ." Mewblade bowed her head, upset that this process had failed her. Erasing minds merely blocked information, but Emma read minds on the emotional level, and that allowed her to evade any potential blocks in her mind. Emma was considering the other options she could hear from Mewblade's inner thoughts.

"You know someone who can," said Emma, her gaze looking gently upon Mewblade's face. Mewblade caught on quickly to whom she spoke of.

“Yes, Ho-oh. I am not on good terms with it but Ho-oh would help you, if not for my interest then definitely for yours.” It offered some relief, meaning Mewblade could essentially wreak havoc on Emma’s mental state, having Ho-oh to rectify any mistakes. This notion was only mildly calming since the actual resurrection would have to begin before anything was fixed. Coupling the three stages; soul to body, soul to mind, and soul to the living, on top of Mewblade’s condition, would be beyond any human’s tolerance level. Precautionary measures could be nothing more than explanations and warnings. Emma gripped onto Mewblade’s left paw, putting on a brave smile to signify her willingness to do this alongside Mewblade.

“Just do what you normally do,” she added supportively.

“Let me explain it to you before we start.” Mewblade embraced Emma in a hug, holding her firmly. She could not afford any less of a grip; otherwise, Emma would balk at the first stage. “There are three stages that bring the soul back to life. The first one involves pain, and not a mild pain either.” Mewblade was straight with her words. “Your death does not compare to it. At the second stage there is Chaos; a living energy that does anything unpredictable. Lastly,” Emma could sense Mewblade’s fears about the finale, “the afterlife reminds me why death should never be cheated.” Emma hummed quietly, her sign of understanding. Despite the fact she was empathetic, Mewblade had her doubts about how much Emma really understood. She took in a long pause prior to starting, very hesitant about what was to transpire. “I will start now.” The preparations were over, leaving Mewblade to start the process with a burst of energy.

Manipulating the churn of energy, Mewblade directed Emma’s soul to her body. Within an instance the pain came, tearing into Mewblade’s soul energy with little mercy. Inside, she was screaming; but yet the surface was calm, a serene expression masking any turmoil. Emma could see past the deception, not being fooled by the dual reality that Mewblade commanded in the blackness. As prominent as Mewblade’s will was, there was no way to hide from Emma’s perception.

One would believe on their ability to see that Mewblade was a relaxed and determined Pokémon, seemingly in control. But beneath her skin there was the other side of Mewblade which struggled against the unforeseen; forces so complex that Emma only now comprehended what a mess she had placed herself in. To see was one thing, but to *feel* as Emma did was entirely different. Her inexperience with her own abilities forced Emma to internalize Mewblade’s pain as hers. She was only human in contrast to the powers of the Decider of Fate.

Mewblade could sense Emma jerk violently in her arms before the well expected scream escaped her mouth. The Mewthree winced, disliking the height of the pitch. Little could be done at the time to help the girl. Finishing the resurrection as fast as possible was of the highest priority, followed by seeking Ho-oh for help once it was over.

Mewblade looked down at the shivering child, crushed to know that Emma’s suffering was caused directly by her own. There had been more than one occasion where Mewblade had wished someone else could take on her role instead, but in a moment of reflection she would not even wish something so barbaric onto even those she most despised.

“I am sorry,” Mewblade muttered, trying to keep her grief from being a distraction. As sincere as the statement was, Emma was empathetically blinded by the extent of the first phase’s effects. Anything Mewblade said had no meaning. Mewblade

guided her energy into the second phase, Emma momentarily grasping that there was more to come. Her uncontrollable whimpering only increased Mewblade's need to go faster.

"It has to happen," Mewblade reminded Emma, trying to keep her focus, especially when the given part of the process incurred the greatest emotional strain. As expected, Chaos entered Mewblade's thoughts, though highly intrigued by the new plaything Mewblade had found. With almost childish sadism it brought to attention all the issues that Mewblade buried deep in herself, so that in turn her suffering would further aggravate Emma.

~To confide in others with one's deepest truths is a show of trust,~ Chaos stated, amused with itself. The images it played to Mewblade were of disturbing actuality, giving Emma every insight into how evil one being could be to another. Even though the look was subtle, Emma made it known that she understood how decimated Mewblade was on the inside.

Quit it, Mewblade hissed, hoping that Chaos had some decency to not only respect Emma's innocence but her dignity as well. *You are going to destroy her!*

~It is you who causes her to suffer.~

But you are the one who is bringing it up! Mewblade yelled at the nuisance, trying to stay in control for Emma's sake. Chaos responded in a stream of garbled mockery, enjoying itself thoroughly.

~She hears all from you yet you hear nothing,~ snickered Chaos, Mewblade only understanding what it meant upon looking down at Emma. Somehow Emma was comprehensible, despite being in such a condition. Chaos had distracted Mewblade to such a length that she failed to notice what was being said by the girl. Using the opportunity, Emma expressed her needs to Mewblade while she was paying attention.

"Let me go . . ." she whimpered again, making it as clear as possible.

"Just a little bit longer," Mewblade mumbled, preparing for the last part of the process.

"No!" Emma thrashed her head, raising her voice to the point of being deafening.

"It's only . . ."

"Let me go!" Mewblade dug her fingers into Emma's shoulders and felt the girl try to pull away, yelling at Mewblade at the top of her lungs.

"Emma. Please . . ." The Legendary tried to reason. Chaos was silent, casually observing to see if it was possible to talk through Emma's situation.

"No more," Emma pleaded and cried, her hands braced in front of her body. Mewblade could feel the pressure against her chest as Emma pressed against it. The process had gone on long enough, and if only Emma was willing to stay still then she would not have to put up with it for much longer.

Mewblade needed a proper embrace on the girl to stop her from squirming but instead of restraining the girl, she shrieked, "No more!!!" shoving her petite frame away from that of Mewblade's.

"Ugh!!!" groaned Mewblade, feeling the metaphysical bond sever. Emma could be heard collapsing a few feet away, unable to scramble any further. Mewblade was wishing she even had that much mobility, the sudden separation forcing her subconscious into the open and thus immobilizing Mewblade completely.

The break between the perceived selves of Mewblade and Emma jarred Mewblade so much so that she lost her command over the space, proving that the bond was essential. In turn the space no longer obeyed, exposing the parts of the process that remained unknown to those she saved. Mewblade was unable to move, crippled by the pain and cautious of Chaos' presence which had appeared in the space. It should have stayed in her mind, but it was there for both the girls to see.

Emma turned her head to her shoulder, glimpsing what could be described as the pinnacle of madness. She set off screaming, unable to face such an incorporeal terror. Chaos' laughter boomed in the emptiness, delighted by the human's fear as it began babbling about whatever would make Emma scream more. Mewblade could cause Chaos to listen to her to some degree, and ordered for its attention.

"Chaos!" she directed her voice to it. The energy usually silenced itself once Mewblade made it clear that she would no longer play its game. "Your business is with me! Don't you dare make a mockery out of this! Now leave her alone!" Mewblade roared, asserting her strength as she rose to her feet. The effort to even whisper was too much; still, she would make the point that she was not one to cross. Chaos obliged and quieted down, retreating to the deepest recesses of Mewblade's mind. Mewblade fell to her knees, sweat dripping down her face, just relieved to have taken care of the Chaos problem. As for the other problem, at least it had no capacity to cause harm.

Emma was a shivering wreck, paralyzed by her fears. Chaos had done its damage, not through corruption but through its ability to be everything and nothing. In simple contexts, it overwhelmed Emma with its vast knowledge. In between the moments of grotesque nausea, agony and so on, Mewblade could tell that Emma was suffering just as much as she was. Not suppressing the problem had escalated Mewblade's condition to levels that were worse than when Mewblade and Emma were connected. For either of them to cope it required there to be contact. Realizing this, Mewblade pushed herself up and lunged at the girl in what was a momentary lack of judgment. Emma had the senses to understand the action, scampering to her feet, tripping and stumbling before Mewblade brought her back down.

The pair fell to the proverbial floor, Mewblade over top with Emma pinned beneath. The sobbing Emma made Mewblade regret what she had done, the position instilling memories of acts done upon them both. In the rush to come up with a quick solution Mewblade had negated Emma's worth and further complicated the situation.

"I'm sorry," Mewblade winced, blinking away her tears. Inside she was cursing herself for her own stupidity, displaying her worthlessness as she crawled away to huddle elsewhere.

"You should go back," Emma murmured, a selfless investment in Mewblade's well-being. True regret was a strong, yet humble emotion, briefly breaking through Emma's delirium and allowing her a small sense of reasoning. There unfortunately was a snag to her reasoning.

"There is only one way to leave." Mewblade saw Emma reel at even the notion that the only way out was through Mewblade's well practiced method of torture. "I can not force you," Mewblade said compassionately, though failing to give her voice much meaning. She was just starting to manage her suffering but unable to suppress to the normal capacity. "You have to be willing in order for this to work." Even without words, the answer from Emma was a clear, 'No'. Mewblade sighed, not wanting to explain

herself because it took most of her concentration to do it without screaming in pain. “It does get worse before it gets better, but as long as we are apart then everything you are feeling will stay the way it is.” Mewblade did not want to wait on Emma’s indecisiveness, although she had little option but to do so. “Tell me when you are ready,” she said then curled up to suffer by herself. The decision was left to Emma; now, or later.

“Eee eevvee,” (Sixty seconds,) announced Eevee. “Eee eeve?” (Sixty-one?) she said with a puzzled expression. Coline was not particularly insightful, already in hysterics.

“What if she . . .” Coline trailed off sadly. The process of resurrecting was very consistent outside of the trance. With minimal exception, it would take Mewblade roughly a minute in real time to complete a single resurrection. Unless a complication occurred there was no reason for the external process to be any different. Being fast made little difference to the observers. Mewblade could take days to perform the resurrection and yet on the physical plane it would still only be a minute.

<“She seems fine to me,”> Abbott spoke with a quiet telepathy. From what he could sense, Mewblade was doing okay. There was absolutely nothing to worry about. Although Abbott’s knowledge was helpful, Coline still dreaded the possible consequences that came with the delay.

Time drew on for what seemed like an eternity, with Emma holding both herself and Mewblade in the hellish experience. The girl’s courage started to build as she became increasingly exhausted with her state of being. Staving off the process because of a single phase no longer seemed worth it. Emma made a small stir, the most she could manage. Finally, to Mewblade’s great relief, Emma was willing to give the process another go.

“I’m ready,” Emma said though broken with her delivery. The long wait had proven itself to be tasking for Mewblade, and she in turn was almost exuberant to actually continue her work. She expressed her jubilation with an eager embrace around the girl. The contact gave Mewblade an easy hold of herself. She was in control once again.

“Once you have accepted I can not let you go,” Mewblade warned, restraining the girl with her arms and tail. Emma remained undeceived by Mewblade’s forefront.

“You can stop hiding.”

“You know just about everything about me. All I am doing is trying to function so I can take you out of here and get you the help you need.” Mewblade gave a kiss to the top of Emma’s sweat soaked hair, reaffirming that she was doing everything she could. “I am doing all of this because I care about you and want to help you.”

There was no longer a sick, self-medicating desire that Mewblade could feel towards resurrecting. Every innocent was someone with thoughts and feelings, who was victimized. Life was a gift to them, not something to be abused. She understood that now. Just as she herself wished to be treated with dignity and respect, so did those that she came to save. To use the innocents as Mewblade had been doing was making them a victim to her own desires. Medicating to that thought alone did not allow her to escape the fact that she was using people in a way that those in her coma had used her. Acceptance was a greater weapon than Mewblade’s own disservice to herself, because denial and forgetfulness only made her abusers that much stronger.

“You’re welcome,” Emma laughed hoarsely, having accomplished the challenge of making Mewblade come to terms with her own humanity. Mewblade was calm when she was able to handle her problems correctly, and as Emma’s empathy was affected by Mewblade’s state then she too was somewhat coherent and relaxed. Under the earlier circumstances, Emma was too far gone for her mentality to be salvaged, relying entirely on Mewblade for support. “You better not forget me before I forget you,” Emma warned, smiling through her agony. At the end of this, Emma would not remember death, Mewblade or a single harm caused upon her. Anything she could say would have to be said right away, as it would not be long before her memories of the last few hours would leave forever.

“You know it’s *stupid* to hurt yourself and using people to help you do that. It’s terrible . . .” Emma’s thoughts were being mostly kept in-check by Mewblade. She could not quite cave to her mental incapacities, and was relatively comprehensible with her delivery as she went on. “. . . That your life sucks that much, but you better let those close to you know it, or you’re going to get some evil person using it against you in ways you won’t like. And start smiling! You should be happy it was me who found out first. If you hadn’t met me you’d still be ‘enjoying’ this!” Mewblade pulled a small smile, amused that Emma’s condition had improved substantially. After the hours of waiting, Mewblade’s will had won over Emma’s, proving that Emma was willing to put all her trust into the Mewthree, and that Mewblade was truly the master of her skills. Consequently, breaking Emma’s spirit beyond conventional repair also played a major role in the allowances of Mewblade’s command over the process. This was something Mewblade would not relish in. They both suffered terribly to a process that was considered to be something not even a masochistic idiot could enjoy.

“You are right. It is stupid. I am stupid for thinking destroying myself is a good idea.” Mewblade hung her head, accepting her stupidity. “I will try to work up the nerve to tell them.”

“Stop being a scaredy pansy then. Get this done and go talk to them,” Emma scolded, jabbing a finger between Mewblade’s ribs. Mewblade grabbed Emma’s hand, clutching it tightly.

“After I get you all the help you need,” Mewblade said, as she could live with her problems, but not if she left Emma damaged. “Be brave for me.” Her energy flung itself into the space, directing Emma’s soul to the living and into the finale. She screamed out to the very universe to honor her efforts, that the Decider of Fate would not be denied from her duties. After everything the pair had gone through, at least the challenge of overcoming death had reached its conclusion.

Coline and her two Pokémon smiled in delight, seeing Emma stir first. Eevee was ready to assault Mewblade with her sarcasm but was interrupted. Emma came to with choking, strangled gasps, drowning in her mind. The Pokémon stood aback, keeping their statements to themselves as they watched. The girl jerked up, scrambling to grasp something that was not there before sinking back onto the bloodied carpet, eyes rolling deep into the recesses of her skull. Mewblade was out of the trance not much more than a second later.

<“We’ve got company,”> Abbott warned of an impending danger that was on the edge of his senses. Mewblade, Coline and Eevee paid him no mind.

“Hang in there,” Mewblade spoke to Emma, struggling with the aftereffects. She forced psychic energy into Emma’s brain and thus causing Emma to lose complete consciousness. To do any action that involved the use of Mewblade’s powers so soon after a resurrection was not something done by her. There were simply too many distractions following that it was easier to opt to do nothing and recover, rather than push the barriers of tolerance and risk the addition of more grievances.

“Eve . . .” (Err . . .) began Eevee before deciding that insulting Mewblade was not a wise idea.

“Mewblade, what happened?” Coline ventured forth with her words of concern. The chance for an answer passed as Abbott was no longer able to silence himself.

<“We have a problem!”> Abbott shouted urgently into the minds of those around him. A panicky Abra was likely to Teleport whenever encroaching danger presented itself, but as he was Coline’s Pokémon, he was not allowed to unless commanded. His trainer listened quietly to any break in between the construction noises. Footsteps were making their way up to the door, stopping at the entrance. Coline gasped in surprise and quickly covered her mouth. The door swung open, the prying person aware that someone was inside.

“What the hell?” The man stared at the sight in front of him, his grip tightening around his black sports bag and handgun.

Eevee was on her best guard, growling in hopes that it would scare the human into leaving. Mewblade would be doing the same it was not for her current condition. She identified the man as Emma’s killer, likely returning because of paranoia so he could cover his crimes. There was very little logic to him about why Mewblade, her Chosen and Coline’s assorted Pokémon were in the apartment; though the facts that remained was that the four of them were witnesses, and that it would not be the only thing he would kill today.

“Eevee, stay back!” Coline was aware of the man’s intentions, subduing Eevee so that he would be harder to provoke.

“What are you doing here?” the man questioned. He was in his early 20’s, deemed to be reckless and immoral. The bag was dropped, the handgun in ready, being casually pointed at Coline’s head. It was acceptable to assume that Pokémon were generally the responsibility of the human they were in association with. When multiple species are present, the likelihood of those Pokémon belonging to a person increased. Normally this would have been true, except that the man was unaware that the tall, black Pokémon was a Legendary, meaning that all normal postulation lacked basis. The blonde girl was there only because of her association with Mewblade. Such a mistake was understandable but the man was quite assured that the leader was Coline.

Coline shrugged, unsure of how to explain that she was there to surprise Mewblade. An answer of that nature would only confuse the man further, leading to pointless reason. The man gestured with his gun, urging the girl to go on with an explanation. Abbott was motionless, where Eevee was trying to rein herself in. Neither of them had the skill sets to deal with a person who carried a loaded weapon. Mewblade was easily capable, though not at the moment. Emma’s resurrection had a heavier toll than most, leaving Mewblade with only the capacity to glare. The man’s roving eyes were a sure sign of sickening intentions. When he realized that Coline would not answer, he escalated his threats.

"I can always make you," he sneered, his stride bringing him closer to the girl. "You can scream just as she did." Mewblade was seething from the inside out. This man was every evil that Mewblade loathed in humans. Whatever it took, she would not let him do to Coline what he had done to Emma.

"You will *not* lay a finger on my Chosen!" Mewblade snapped at him, surprising the man. Talking Pokémon were mythical rumors to him, something not to be taken seriously. The sight of the gun remained pointed at Coline.

"Call it off," he told her with a stony voice. Coline could grasp that he was serious although she was incapable of actually controlling Mewblade, who was behind her growling menacingly. Her behavior merely agitated the man further. "I said, 'Call it off,' or you're dead!" the man shouted. Mewblade's stubbornness was a poor mix with the male's inability to rationalize. His nerves finally got to him in a way that the hostages had expected but not wished for. The trigger went back with a single shot.

". . . the fuck?" The bullet was suspended in midair by an eerie purple aura. The man focused his gaze to Mewblade, whose eyes were washed with the same mysterious glow. Mewblade was straining herself to perform, having used a minor amount of Foresight to predict the flight and speed of the bullet, coupling that with Psychic; which together gave her the split-second reaction time to actually catch the projectile.

"And I told you to leave her alone!" she snarled, crumpling the bullet in the process. The human watched the remainder of the metal drop in a shape that did not resemble what it had been moments before.

Often it would take a human only a little while to recognize that the supernatural displays from a psychic Pokémon were a testimony to power. He only grasped this when he lost control of his body and the barrel of the gun became lodged down his throat. Instinctively, he grappled for the handle, relieved yet horrified that while his hands could tug at the handgun he was still unable to pull it out. The man felt pathetically hopeless, his life now at the mercy of Mewblade's intent.

"That is what it feels like to be a victim," began Mewblade, dark in her address towards him. He was listening, though so focused on his situation that the words were not well absorbed. "Try to run, try to fight and no matter how hard you work at either, you come up as the loser in the end."

Coline and her Pokémon were seeing the side of Mewblade that most living things greatly feared. When Mewblade was the self-appointed Upholder of Pokémon Law she was tasteless in her amusement of hunting lawbreakers and the slayings that followed. They had been her toys to do with as she pleased and dispose of in a fashion that was quick and grotesque. As her role evolved into the Decider of Fate the act of killing lost its thrills with the deep understanding of what it meant to be alive. Despite the fact that the man before her was visibly suffering, believing that he was enduring the act of torture, Mewblade was making it clear that she was just merely sending him a message.

"You do not deserve to live," she told him, the first person she conspired to end that would know exactly what she thought of their behavior. "Your kind lives off the pain and suffering of others!" Mewblade yelled at him as he shook in fear, not wanting to die especially with the way the psychic creature was treating him. "You all go through life truly unpunished for your deeds. Your kind cheats and steals, lies and depraves, rapes and kills!" She left a small interlude for silence, letting the man understand what she was

telling him. "You break families apart, leaving behind broken dreams, bitter hearts, empty souls." Mewblade stopped talking as the man trashed about, hands clambering over the gun to see if there was a way to wrench it from the psychic grasp. In any moment he knew that the telltale click sounding his demise would echo throughout his head. His arms stiffened as Mewblade spread her hold into the limbs. All he could do now was listen to her explain to him why he was undeserving of existence.

"You are a coward. You prey on the weak to make yourself feel superior." The man felt his fingers wrap around the grip of the gun. "A coward will run from their crimes, fearing retribution. Some go as far as they can, and some will kill themselves, unable to face their wrongs." Mewblade continued to speak, bringing his index finger through the eye of the trigger. "Of course if I shot you then I would be at fault. A coward kills, and killing a coward makes me no better than you." The gun was shoved to the back of his throat, jammed upwards so the aim would be to the back of the head. "But, you are a sick example of the ills of humanity. A cowardly scavenger. You would have taken the body and ran; instead, you are caught and you have only one option. A coward runs," the man's eyes went wide, understanding clearly what Mewblade meant, "or he kills himself," then there was a click.

Coline and her Pokémon stared in horror at what appeared to be the dumping ground for an apparent suicide. All of them were young and previously unexposed to the concept of murder. While Eevee had died previously, and Coline was the witness to several deceased; the brutal act of destruction was unnerving. As Mewblade's Chosen, Coline expected this sort of behavior. Mewblade's duties required that she supervise grisly crime scenes, in addition to making them herself. This death was considered wasteful since the human had done no wrong towards the Legendary directive; though Mewblade considered an attack on her Chosen as an attack on herself, thus choosing to act as she did. Diplomacy was a lost art to the Mewthree. Rather than negotiate a compromise Mewblade would take the most immediate course of action, resulting in her trademark resolution of death. Coline was appreciative of Mewblade's efforts, yet Eevee found it to be literal overkill.

"Eevee . . ." (Mewblade . . .) murmured Eevee, sounding appalled. "Eevee eve evvvee?" (Why did you do it?) she questioned the Legendary, looking back at her. Mewblade was incapable of speaking, struggling to stop panting from her overexertion. She let gravity bring her body down to the carpet, allowing a momentary reprieve for her to recover. Coline rubbed Mewblade's paw, offering her support.

"Because," Mewblade began with a whisper, "I could not live with myself if he hurt you," she smiled wearily then returned her head to rest on the floor and its assorted bloodstains.

"Thank you for saving us." Mewblade looked up at Coline who was giving her gratitude with a smile. Coline's eyes became downcast as Mewblade apologized for exposing the child to such gruesome violence.

"I am sorry for that, Coline."

"Eevee?! Eevveee eevve eee eve eevve evvee eee!" (Sorry?! You should've let me have the piece of him!)

<"I believe what she means is that she is thankful for not having to fight him herself,"> Abbott reiterated with his own humorous observation.

Eevee scoffed at the Abra, “Eevvee evve eevee eevee.” (I still could’ve taken him.) Coline ruffled Eevee’s tiny bangs, proud that she displayed such confidence.

“Maybe next time.” Though Eevee’s stance on how to deal with the situation was comical, Mewblade lacked the necessary pep to engage the Eevee. Her Chosen was receptive to Mewblade’s condition, comforting her as best as possible. Coline looped her arms around Mewblade’s neck in a gentle hold.

“We were afraid we might have lost you too,” she spoke sadly. Mewblade looked at the girl quizzically, unaware that the resurrection had taken her more time in the physical world. Coline elaborated, saying, “You took longer than usual.” Mewblade bobbed her head in comprehension.

“That was because there was a complication with Emma.” The purple eyes of Mewblade trailed down to look at the unconscious frame below her. She returned her gaze to Coline. “When I am ready we will have to deal with it.”

“Okay,” Coline said. “But don’t push yourself,” she added in a worried, nagging tone. Mewblade smiled slightly, aware of Coline’s concern.

“I won’t. We have time,” Mewblade assured her, calming down now that Coline had offered her forgiveness. She quietly mused over the promise she had given Emma. When the time was right and her whole family was present, Mewblade would discuss her inner turmoil. Explaining it once, letting it out and airing all of her grievances in one fell swoop was the most she would consider. To do it any more than that was just adding to her natural reluctance to even admit she had problems. Foremost, she would have to deal with Emma’s condition before dealing with her own.

Mewblade, Coline and Eevee were standing patiently in a small clearing within the expanse of Ellix Forest. In her arms Mewblade carried the bundle of misery; the soul she had unwillingly inflicted with immense suffering. Emma remained unconscious, which was for the best. For her to be awake benefited nobody. The tensing of Mewblade’s body signaled that their guest had arrived. It made itself visible to them as it drifted beneath the canopy.

<“Greetings, Mewblade and her Chosen,”> Ho-oh said, forever humble. The Legendary touched to the ground before speaking further. <“Is this why you summoned me?”> It looked at the sorry little bundle grasped firmly in Mewblade’s arms. Mewblade bowed her head, acknowledging both the reason for contacting the bird, as well as her inability to resolve the problem. Her eyes remained averted as she spoke.

“Yes. Emma is an empathetic psychic. She picked up on everything during the resurrection. I could not protect her,” Mewblade confessed, her eyes low. Coline and Eevee watched her from behind, the façade of adulthood that Mewblade was artificially bestowed in shambles. With her bowed head and lowered shoulders, huddled over the form of a life far more insignificant than her own; it made Mewblade appear so defenseless and childlike even though she shouldered the responsibilities of those millennia older than herself.

“She suffered because of me, and now I can do nothing for her.” Mewblade looked up at the bird pleadingly, desperate to shoulder her burden onto her guardian. “Please, help her.” Hopefully the bird had some sympathy for the situation, something which Mewblade knew was not always a guarantee. It was not right to punish a child for

the fault of Mewblade. As she resented Ho-oh, it was easy to second-guess whether or not Ho-oh would offer grace to the hostile Mewthree.

Ho-oh understood that its purpose here was not for Mewblade, but for that of Emma. It outstretched its wings to take the girl. <“I shall take her.”> Her lack of trust made Mewblade hesitate for a second to release Emma to Ho-oh’s control.

There are no alternatives, Mewblade reminded herself, placing the girl in the bird’s feathery hold. Ho-oh smiled down upon Emma, willing to care for the innocent child.

<“My abilities have the allowance to heal your woes as well, Decider of Fate,”> Ho-oh said all too casually. It continued to smile towards Emma, unobservant of Mewblade’s reaction. Ho-oh’s offer was possible, but not something Mewblade had considered that she could ask for herself.

Many Pokémon had abilities that were either specialized to their species or an individual. A large portion of the Legendaries had what was considered ‘unique’ abilities, including Mew, Lugia and Ho-oh. One of Ho-oh’s abilities was Sacred Fire; a pure, cleansing flame that could dissipate the negativity of another’s psyche. The extent to which it could purify was limited, mostly due to the fact that some individuals are so decidedly set on being as they are. Because Emma was willing and in need of spiritual cleansing it was likely she would be completely cured with the Sacred Fire. The same could be done for Mewblade if she agreed, but she hesitated to jump at what should have been considered as a godsend.

“Eevee eevvee eve evve eee,” (You should go for it,) Eevee urged as Mewblade looked behind herself in search of advice. Coline pursed her lips together, regretting the decision that Mewblade was about to make. As her Chosen, Coline understood Mewblade’s stance and would support her no matter the circumstance. Her approval was signified with a bitter nod to let Mewblade know that while she agreed, she made it clear that the decision was challenging to stand by.

“I can not believe I am going to say this . . . but I must refuse your offer.” Mewblade’s stern expression was unmatched by those around her. Ho-oh’s face gave little light to its surprise where Eevee’s was evident.

<“I must ask you to justify your reasoning,”> Ho-oh said, silently appalled that Mewblade would reject its services.

“What happened to me was indescribable and I wish it never happened, but failing to acknowledge it made me a terrible living being.” Mewblade’s eyes were downcast. “I know now what I did not know then, is that I am as vulnerable as anyone else. That is invaluable information to a Legendary.” Her head turned away in grief. “But I believe I could have learned that some other way.” She was in tears, not wanting to pass on the opportunity though feeling as if she had to. “I *hate* what they did to me.”

By now Coline was at Mewblade’s side, hugging her thigh tightly. She did not want Mewblade to feel alone in her choice. Mewblade smiled weakly upon her Chosen then inhaled sharply.

“I have spent enough time running away from my problems. All it has done is alienate me from everyone who cares and those I am suppose to save. My Chosen, my parents and my friends have all expressed their support for me. Besides, my forgetfulness does not help them heal, nor does it stop those who victimized me from remembering. That sort of naivety does not teach me to cope with the reality that I went through and

everyone else would remember but me.” Mewblade was firm with her position on the subject. While being cleansed of her nightmares had been all but a dream, Mewblade understood the value of her experiences. This was a topic that was unlikely to be revisited despite Ho-oh’s outward concern.

<“I shall respect your decision although my offer will remain open for you should you change your mind,”> said Ho-oh. <“As the purity of Sacred Fire is intense, I recommend that you leave.”> Mewblade nodded her head in response, understandingly uneasy around Ho-oh’s abilities. <“Your Chosen may stay to ensure that the process runs smoothly, and of Emma’s safe return.”> Mewblade turned to speak, although caught off-guard.

“That is fine with me,” Mewblade replied before continuing to leave the clearing. Ho-oh knew Mewblade did not trust it, period. She could not help wincing at the notion. There were things that the bird did that Mewblade questioned. Mewblade’s faith in it was as limited as, what she believed, was Ho-oh’s limited faith in her.

Ho-oh’s distrust was true to Mewblade’s perception. It watched as Mewblade and her Chosen said their goodbyes before Mewblade parted with a Teleport. To judge Mewblade’s state of mental well-being had its difficulties, yet it was easy to guess that her sanity was sliding. If by some chance Coline’s life came to an unfortunate end then there was no telling the toll that it would have on Mewblade. The most dreaded of the factors was the extent in which Mewblade could kill. Ho-oh could only hope that situation would never have to be addressed, but Mewblade’s failure to recognize such a vital vulnerability made it worry. With Emma in its wings, Ho-oh knew Mewblade had some respect for life, at least for the time being.

The youngest members of Project 10.a Intensity stood to attention in the center of the gym. On the balcony a crowd of executives hovered over the small assembly on the bottom level. Several trainers that had been working directly with the Mewthrees were pressed against the walls.

Stanford stepped up to the balcony rail, Pokéball in hand. Harddense and Demisewan braced in anticipation of the monster about to be unleashed. Swadeaqua was emanating a calm aura. The twins watched as Stanford brought back his arm and pitched the Pokéball out towards the middle of the field shouting, “Go Steelix!” as he did. From it a giant, segmented metal snake spilled forth. The Pokémon bellowed its challenge to the trio, Swadeaqua more than welcomed it, Taunting the monster into attacking her.

“Harddense!” Swadeaqua snapped at her brother. Harddense braced himself in front of Swadeaqua, holding a defensive pose. “Iron Defense.” The Steelix hurled itself towards the pair, Harddense bracing for the blow. He was prepared for the strike, the Iron Defense greatly increasing his weight and his overall defense through the thickening of his exoskeleton. There was not much that could force him over.

“Grr . . .” Harddense growled as the two steel types impacted. In such a small space there was little room for a creature so large to gain momentum, yet it still remained that the Steelix was bigger than its distant cousin beneath it. Harddense’s foot claws dug into the ground in what was proving to be a struggle to keep the monster back.

“Slam, Iron Tail,” Swadeaqua barked. Harddense shoved his body against the Steelix’s broad head then threw his weight into his signature oxidized Steelix tail. The

Steelix roared back, moving its upper half away. Harddense dropped his additional defense and weight, having accomplished a decent assault.

“Good job,” Swadeaqua praised Harddense, boosting his confidence; she then proceeded to instruct Demisewan, who had been positioned elsewhere on the field. “Tickle it.”

“Okay,” confirmed Demisewan over her headset. Demisewan needed little guidance in how she should approach her opponent, demonstrated as she entered the combat as a silent apparition.

The Steelix rose again, still drawn to Swadeaqua. The combination of her Attract and Taunt enticed the Pokémon to direct its torso towards Swadeaqua. It gave a low growl then balked as it felt fingers dance between its separate parts. Demisewan was giddily Tickling it from afar with her disembodied paws. Out of distress, the Steelix began to roll over and slam into the floor, trying to dislodge whatever it was that was causing it such discomfort. The frenzied behavior was unnerving Harddense.

After many weeks of extensive training, Swadeaqua knew that the strength of any team was the sum of all its participants. She focused her thoughts between herself and the twins, igniting her green aura. A wave of ease washed over them, signs of a Calm Mind. Demisewan benefited little from the psychic move but her brother became increasingly relaxed. It would be hard to distract the three as long as Swadeaqua remembered to support her siblings equally.

The Steelix whipped around to face Swadeaqua with a maddened gaze in its eyes, from its mouth it howled with an ungodly sound, unaware that Demisewan was the source of the Tickling. Having predicted this, Swadeaqua stepped past Harddense, deflecting the sound with a Screech. A low reverberation went throughout the room as the sound waves collided. The Steelix looked indignant and muttered to itself which only Swadeaqua fully understood. Swadeaqua smirked then swung out her hips with an exaggerated Swagger. “Harddense,” Swadeaqua whispered, “be ready.” She sent the beast into spirals of fury upon the use of her Taunt. “Submission.” As the Steelix lunged Harddense grabbed part of it before sending the Pokémon in the opposite direction, barely missing the invisible Demisewan. It was expected that she be aware enough to avoid accidental injury and nimbly dodged out of the way.

“Pound some fighting moves into it,” Swadeaqua told her little sister, assured that she would receive the message. Demisewan ran back to meet the agitated Steelix.

“Hello!” Demisewan giggled, confusing the Steelix. She appeared suddenly in front of its snout, startling the steel type. Its wide eyes of surprise made for the perfect opportunity for Demisewan to dig her fingers in. The Steelix Roared in protest but Swadeaqua’s use of Calm Mind left Demisewan unshaken. With the Steelix’s mouth agape Demisewan could not help but sight it as rude, offering to close it with a kicking roundhouse. While it dazedly tried to regain focus, Demisewan attempted to knock further sense into it and Hi-Jump Kicked the Steelix’s chin. The springy muscles in Demisewan’s legs could create a lot of force when coupled with her abilities of weightlessness. Evidently it was more than enough for the Steelix, causing it to back down.

“Come here,” Swadeaqua called to Demisewan who in turn bounded over. The Steelix was hardly in good shape anymore considering its head had taken most of the beatings. The leader made a gesture for Harddense and Demisewan to stand down as she

approached the steel snake. It Glared at her intimidatingly but she remained unfazed. Her demeanor emitted both a level of sensuality and serenity, a sign of her abilities to control and manipulate those in her presence. A soft melody lazily drifted through the air, making the Steelix dozy. The melody ceased as Swadeaqua spoke to the Steelix in its own language.

“You poor thing, taken from your home and brought here,” she cooed. “No doubt you were very afraid,” she continued. The Steelix nodded in a daze, bringing down its head in admission. “We only want to talk to you and tell you everything will be okay. We do not wish to fight you.” As she was coaxing the creature, Swadeaqua used her paws to rub the soft spots along its head. The interaction further lulled the Steelix into a state of passive submission, unable to resist the soothing sounds of Swadeaqua’s voice. It gave a murmur as a reply. “Rest easy. Through us you will become a strong, fearless Pokémon,” she smiled then touched her lips to the Steelix’s head. She took her paws away as the head drooped into slumber. With something as simple as a Sweet Kiss, the fight was over.

Swadeaqua turned around triumphantly to face Giovanni. Stanford was beside him recalling the Steelix. Giovanni carefully chose how he should acknowledge the accomplishment, choosing to clap rather dryly; this brought out an exuberant applause from the spectators, who commended the Mewthrees’ performance. Harddense and Demisewan flashed proud smiles to each other, whereas Swadeaqua smirked smugly. Giovanni waited for the noise to die down before speaking.

“You did better than your first time. The display shown today proves that you live up to the expectations of your species.” The praise was great considering Giovanni rarely offered it in the first place. “Keep up the intensity and it will not be long before we have Mewblade,” he stated, making clear of the goal that was set before them all. Since there was no need to criticize a lack of function he left promptly, a simple gesture that perpetuated his satisfaction. Swadeaqua was gloating with one of the humans, leaving only Demisewan to notice the wariness in Harddense’s eyes.

“You okay? You seem tense,” she pointed out. Harddense pursed his lips then turned his gaze to his twin.

“I keep gettin’ this bad . . . vibe?” His face contorted into worry. “Like, did we do enough?” He looked lost, in search of answers. Demisewan gripped his shoulder firmly.

“Don’t worry.” Demisewan’s hot pink lips touched Harddense’s cheek. “Nothing bad will happen. You’ll see,” she smiled in comfort. Harddense smiled weakly, still doubtful. The feeling of dread would not dissipate even with Demisewan’s encouragement. The worst fear to him was if they really were ready to face Mewblade.

“Places, Rockets. Proceed as rehearsed,” called a male voice over the central Indigo Stadium loudspeaker. As instructions were issued the most elite of Team Rocket’s trainers, capturers, and coordinators milled about in anticipation. *“Do not release your Pokémon until told.”*

Swadeaqua looked out from the shadows of the Elite Four entrance and onto the grassy plain. The November air was warm due to the presence of Moltres’ flame; the mechanism that would lure the Titan of Fire. Good weather was favorable as the Mewthrees could be hampered by unpleasant temperatures or nasty conditions.

Swadeaqua's cool gaze turned towards the shade. Demisewan was quietly adjusting her headset on her left horn. Harddense seemed a bit anxious as he leaned up against the wall in quiet contemplation.

"Fire bearers, move out. Everyone else, stand-by," echoed the loudspeaker voice throughout the stadium.

"How are you holding up?" an individual voice asked over the Mewthrees' headsets.

Back at the Team Rocket headquarters, beneath the Viridian Gym, a collection of management and executives hovered around the many control consoles. Seated at the consoles were the people who worked directly with Demisewan. Isabelle was flipping through the security cameras until the most closely positioned camera to the Mewthrees came up on her screen. Justin leaned over Isabelle's shoulder and pressed a button on the motherboard. "I want to hear Demisewan." Isabelle and him exchanged proud smiles. Stanford was leaned back against the wall, moral support for Swadeaqua. While Harddense was considered to be mostly a tool, Nichole was secretly crossing her fingers for him. Demisewan answered first.

"I'm a bit nervous," she confessed. Swadeaqua smiled calmly towards her sister, speaking second.

"I am holding up quite well." Harddense was not used to being asked how he was feeling and instead remained quiet. Isabelle prodded him for reply.

"Harddense, come in with your answer, please." She could see him visibly hesitate on her monitor. He took in a deep breath before responding.

"Same way I usually feel," he muttered in discontent. This was more or less part of an automated response to his trainers. *"I don't want t'be 'ere,"* winced Harddense, instinctively bracing for the anticipated surge of electricity.

"Harddense, we understand your anxiety. You should be feeling better once you're in action." Isabelle sat back in her chair watching Harddense nod in compliance. He was so accustomed to harsh discipline that without it he was almost clueless.

"Kay," he said after a moment of hesitation.

"If anything happens, keep us posted. We will stay in regular contact," Isabelle reassured the three then ended the connection.

"Weird that a Mewthree would be so nervous about fighting," Justin remarked as he paced around. Doctor West was also pacing the room, theorizing the results of the upcoming battle. He chimed in from his eavesdropping.

"Because 004.b had a programming error that makes him decidedly passive. Granted, he can fight but as you'll see soon enough his passion comes from his ability to defend." Those managing the situation around the Mewthrees, and those currently with little to do were listening curiously. "You're right though about the fighting. No other Pokémon species thrives so intensely on stressful situations as a Mewthree does. They are made to be flawless in design, making this fight a source of invaluable knowledge."

Justin looked over and added, "In the end you really never did figure out what Mewblade was for." Doctor West nodded with his arms folded.

"Precisely. What better way to find out than through this?"

"Roger that," one of the contacts said, talking to someone on his end of the intercom. "We have light."

The Mewthrees glanced outside the entranceway to see a plume of fire rise from the stadium's giant chalice. The air became almost balmy with the full introduction of Moltres' flame.

"Hold positions. Wait for further instructions," instructed the voice.

"We'll have to wait for Mewblade," Swadeaqua mulled aloud. "Just hold on for a bit longer and be thankful that we're not fighting Moltres."

"Oh yeah! Totally," Harddense bobbed his head, citing the potentially high risk for mortality that fire attacks had on him. Putting it that way, fighting Mewblade seemed grand. First they would have to wait for Moltres, then if that pulled through then it would not be long before Mewblade would take the bait and finally grace her estranged siblings with her presence.

"Objective One has been spotted," announced the voice over the speakers. The Rockets on the field prepared themselves, knowing that 'Objective One' was Moltres. *"Arm your Pokéballs."* There was an instantaneous sound of Pokéballs expanding from their compact states into their active states. The excitement before the battle was alive in almost everyone. The Mewthrees were less thrilled, since this was a job that took their lives into account. *"Party leaders, resume control."* The speaker noise ended, and with that the field leaders began their orders, most cautioning about the early release of Pokémon.

"Kkreee!!!" Eyes drifted upward as Moltres' call rang out over Indigo Plateau. The Titan of Fire drifted down from the sky, scowling at the humans before her. Even though her aura was spread around almost the entirety of the plateau she refused to address the delinquents in their own language. "Who of you dared to defile my flame?!" she screeched at the humans in her native tongue, not amused.

"Release your Pokémon!" yelled one of the leaders, the others following suit. Suddenly there was a variety of rock, water and electric types on the field, as well as Pokémon that could perform abilities that would either aid their comrades, or hinder Moltres. Moltres looked out in shock, knowing that they had lured her with the misuse of her flame. How they knew of her flame and how they acquired it, she could not fathom. All she knew was that she had to protect the integrity of her flame while maintaining a winning situation for herself.

"For the summer and the warmth that nurtures life, either return the flame or perish beneath it," Moltres delivered her challenge. The Team Rocket Pokémon; either abused or corrupt, made no response to her. "Then you leave me no option but to defend the honor of the flame!" Moltres landed on the grass, whipping her head back and unleashing the fire that made it unquestionable of her position as a Legend.

The Pokémon diverted and deflected the heat, almost mindlessly meeting the call to battle. Moltres intended to hold her own even though the swarm would undoubtedly drain her, bringing about inevitable capture. Like all Legendaries, their pride refused to let them become slaves to the humans, intensifying Moltres' fire and subsequent desperation.

Mewblade was livid, racing from her bedroom to the main room in a fury. She had sensed Moltres' dilemma, and unlike some cases where the Legendaries were allowed to deal with their situations on their own, this one required Mewblade's intervention.

Mewblade forced her energy into the blank screen before her, allowing her to view the battle from an external perspective. She plunked herself down on her throne to observe the scene. Her critical eyes narrowed, seeing that Moltres was grossly outnumbered and fading fast, thinking, *How can Moltres fall for such a cheap trick again?* as the fight went on. Moltres would fight to exhaustion, leaving Mewblade wondering if she should go against her usual methods and save the bird rather than wait for her to fall. Damaging Moltres' pride was hardly an argument when weighed against her possible death.

"Mew mew mew mew?!" (You're still here?!) Mewblade whipped around, rising from her chair to instantly lash out at the newcomer.

"And why are *you* here?!" she snapped at her mother. Mew's usual sea blue eyes were cloudy. She snapped back uncharacteristically.

"Mew mew mew mew mew mew mew mew!" (Because your friend is in trouble and you should be helping her!) Mewtwo sighed mentally as he listened, not knowing why Mew bothered since it would only irk Mewblade. As predicted, the Mewthree countered with her own logic.

"The last time I tried to help her I killed her instead," she growled, bringing herself into a defensive stance. "If I had not killed her I would not have had to deal with all the problems in my life. I am better off being here," Mewblade remarked as she pointed a finger down at the floor. Mew was intense and inhaled sharply, starting her rebuttal.

"Mew mew . . ." (Stop blaming . . .) Mewtwo's paw covered her mouth, shushing the creature. Mew bowed her head submissively, letting Mewtwo speak for her instead.

<"Would you be able to deal with the guilt of accidentally shooting her again over that of willingly letting her fight to her death?"> Mewtwo spoke calmly to her, using simple reasoning. <"We want to help her as much as we know you do. Mew and I are offering our services, and even though you refuse them over and over again we want what is best for you, and now, Moltres."> Mew nodded somberly, agreeing with Mewtwo's viewpoint even though Mew was keeping her head turned away from the conversation. <"You owe her an apology for shunning someone who was only trying to help."> Mewtwo was stern in the quiet way that was only his. As part of what Emma told her, Mewblade knew that she had to forgive Mew eventually. Mew looked up at Mewblade, hoping that her daughter would welcome her back into her life. Mewblade's lies were pathetic, and the grimace on her face made it evident that she was struggling with letting go.

"Mew . . ." she whispered, then paused for a moments hesitation. "Come here." Mew perked up and flew to Mewblade's neck, arms wrapped around it. The tip of Mew's muzzle nuzzled up against Mewblade's chin. Mewblade gingerly patted the Mew's back. "Sorry, Mew."

"Mew mew mew mew mew," (I am glad to put that behind us,) she smiled with grateful relief. Mewblade was still distraught by what Mew's actions had caused her to go through, though her mother's support and acceptance was crucial. After all, she was

her genetic mother and moms do usually know what is best for their young. While the cooperation was mandatory, so was saving the bird.

"I have to. I would not be able to stand working with you otherwise; but, if we wait any longer all of this means nothing." Mewblade could sense Moltres' distress in her thoughts, knowing that her energy was running low and her health was fairing even worse. They hardly had a few minutes left before Moltres would become either unconscious or dead.

<"We need your Teleport,"> Mewtwo said, understanding of Mewblade's concern. He knew that Mew's use of the ability was faster and more energy efficient than that of himself and Mewblade. It was one of the few ways to guarantee a speedy arrival that would also not leave them vulnerable.

"Mew mew mew," (Done and done,) Mew squeaked, swiftly readying a Teleport for herself and the clones. In a flash of pink the group was whisked to the developed portion of Indigo Plateau.

"Eeearr!" Moltres screeched in pain as rubble fell on her, dousing part of her wing and bruising it. She beat her wings, bringing in more oxygen to reignite her flames. The Fire Spin protecting her flared with the vigorous flapping then parted way as it ran out of fuel, making room for a barrage of water attacks. Moltres let out another anguished cry before countering with an intense heat of white fire. The tactic proved useful as all the water sent in her direction evaporated instantly, unable to withstand the high temperature. Moltres herself was incapable of continuing the display for long. The sheer amount of energy it took to keep her flames stoked exhausted her, causing her flames to become even weaker than when she started. One powerful blast could kill her; a weak one would knock her out and make her obtainable.

A Blastoise from behind Moltres pressurized its water cannons, readying to shoot. Moltres turned, willing to face it head on. Among the Team Rocket grunts she could hear the call to strike. The Blastoise complied with a bellow, shooting a burst of water. The bird braced in dreadful anticipation.

"That's enough!" growled a harsh, feminine voice as a Barrier threw itself in front of Moltres, parting the water harmlessly. Moltres looked over her shoulder, visibly relieved. Mewblade stood ahead of Mew and Mewtwo, her eyes lessening their purple glow as the Barrier dropped.

<What took you so long?> Moltres asked, having half expected for Mewblade to arrive sooner. Mewblade addressed the Team Rockets while still keeping a private conversation with Moltres.

<I was not sure if you would want my help or not,> she said to Moltres. To the Rockets she spoke aloud. "This battle goes on no further. Either you stop now and leave, or face the consequences." She joined Moltres by her side in order to dissuade anyone from further attacking her.

<I knew you would, just glad that Mew and Mewtwo brought you here sooner,> Moltres said to the little family, citing her gratitude. As she was talking there was the sound of mocking laughter and pessimistic conversation. Mewblade started using her Recover to heal and refresh Moltres, trying to ignore them. As she could assume, the Rockets did not take what she said all too seriously. Jeers turned into applause as bodies

parted down the center of the field. The Legendaries knew that what they were to expect had completely changed.

"Swadeaqua, Mewblade has arrived," Izabelle said over the headset. *"Good luck, all of you. Fight hard."*

"Roger," Swadeaqua replied, looking to the twins as Izabelle cut out. "Let's move." Harddense bobbed his head while Demisewan verbally responded.

"Right!" she said perkily, falling into step behind Swadeaqua. With a confident stride, Swadeaqua led the Mewthrees onto the field; this to resounding applause as the Rockets and their Pokémon parted ways for the three united members of Project 10.a Intensity. Swadeaqua strutted confidently down the aisle with Demisewan and Harddense flanking her sides. As the last few people and their Pokémon stepped aside, Swadeaqua could finally see the most elusive of their species.

"Greetings, Mewblade."

Mewblade was slack-jawed as the aqua Pokémon addressed her by name. Mewtwo spoke first of all the Legendaries, barely audible.

<There's more . . .?>

<Apparently.> Mew was awed by what she was seeing. Standing among all of Team Rocket's best were the three remaining Mewthrees of Project 10.a Intensity. The leader was tall, aquamarine in color, and obviously female. To her right was a smaller, purple female. The Mewthree was obviously alive, although the disembodied paws made it questionable. To the far left was a steel type, likely a male because of the wide shoulders and generally more masculine features. Mewblade gave a sideways glance at the new Mewthrees, uncertain of what to think of this. Swadeaqua smiled in a perceived genuine fashion to the small Legendary militia, feigning a feeling of ease.

Swadeaqua had not seen the glow that discerned Legendary Pokémon from the rest when she was viewing the tapes, but in the flesh that glow was visible. If Swadeaqua had seen this earlier, she would have known what Mewblade was without having to read lips. Even though it was obvious that they were outclassed, the notion did not phase her.

"My name is Swadeaqua," Swadeaqua said, introducing herself. She gestured as she introduced the twins. "This is Demisewan. And this here is Harddense." Neither made any eye contact, doing as they were told. Mewblade looked ever more puzzled among a lot of other emotions that Swadeaqua could pick up with her ability to empathize. Mewblade's face was ageless, unable to contour with wear no matter what she most often expressed; though, in her eyes everything was obvious. Somehow, Swadeaqua found her captivating; yet work was work. "As you may have guessed, we are Mewthrees. But this meeting is not by chance. We lured Moltres here as a ploy to bring you to us," Swadeaqua began to smirk, her paw itching to draw her .45 magnum. "As we understand you will only fight what hinders you. You won't be fighting these lackeys." Moltres was so ashamed to have fallen for such a ruse, then alarmed.

<Mewblade!> she screeched as Mewblade caught on as well, parting Moltres' company.

"You're mine!" Swadeaqua quickly withdrew her gun, something she had been practicing intensely, and unloaded a shell. Mewblade bolted to her right but Swadeaqua predicted so, the bullet lodging into Mewblade's right shoulder.

“Argh!” Mewblade snarled, whipping around to glare her sister down. Swadeaqua holstered her gun, then rested a paw above it, not even remotely intimidated.

“Mother and father can fight these if they want,” she thumbed to the crowd behind her, “but seeing as I have exclusively injured you, we three are to engage in combat with you. Demisewan and Harddense are the Pokémon I choose to use.” Mewblade delayed a response, looking over her bloody shoulder to her genetic parents.

<We can take care of Team Rocket,> Mewtwo assured with a smirk, blue aura deep in his eyes. Moltres was swiftly airborne, providing her say.

<Just take care of yourself. You don’t know what they can do.> In the back, Mew’s aura doused her.

<Trust me, we’ve got it covered,> Mew said while her body changed, Transforming it into an ancient Pokémon, Kabutops. The rocky shell with sickle arms looked menacing. Mew was generally considered to be a playfully passive Pokémon but also known to be the most adaptive creature in the entire Pokémon World. If a fight was what they wanted, then it was a fight they would surely get. <Water in the hole!> Mew leapt into the air, landing amongst the center of bodies, sending them flying with waves of water and back swipes. Moltres flew in afterwards with a cackle.

<Try to give them a chance,> Mewtwo muttered as he walked past the assorted Mewthrees. Demisewan watched him pass, captivated by the immense power that brushed by her shoulder. She was a partial clone of that thing, and could only dream to one day be as powerful. It was hard to believe he was a reality in the first place, just as Harddense was dreading the fact that Mewblade was real; whereas, Swadeaqua was apparently relishing everything else.

Before long Mewblade found herself alone, removed from the haphazard fray. She remained still, her first injury hardly amusing her. Granted, she could listen to Mewtwo and *not* kill her brother and sisters, but as far as she was concerned they were all another Vicebane.

“Fine, I will take you on,” Mewblade said coldly. She flicked her arms to assure herself that the bullet had done minimal damage. The pain was not acute enough to make a Recover practical, the same for the blood loss. She would heal it later.

“Demisewan, get moving,” Swadeaqua whispered over her headset. Demisewan hardly gave a nod as she began to make a wide circle. Because of the Legendaries’ push against the Team Rockets half of the field was already free, giving Demisewan a wide berth.

Mewblade took a step forward, tail swinging in an aggressive arc. She stopped almost hesitantly to look at the empty bleachers with quiet consideration, as if expecting to see something. Swadeaqua was aware that there were no spectators to this battle, the first sign that her expectations of Mewblade were misled. Mewblade snapped back into focus, a flash of purple in her eyes, a sign of preparation. Metal Claws raced down her lower arms, ending three inches past her fingertips, barely finished forming before she hurled herself at the nearest target, Swadeaqua.

“Harddense,” Swadeaqua was calm with her instruction, Harddense knew what was required of him.

Mewblade hardly tried when she set aside to kill things, partially because few beings could resist even her slight attempts at lethal damage. When Harddense stepped in to block, she was not entirely surprised he could stop her claws. The front was blatantly

predictable and the attack granted less damage than her blades would. Mewblade retreated slightly, only to have her attention drawn away by Demisewan's wandering paw.

It was a given that being the Decider of Fate opened Mewblade's mind to stranger constructs, but the disembodied paws of her ghostly sister were definitely among the list of the strange and the macabre. Demisewan withdrew her paw with Mewblade following close after.

Mewblade was keeping her weight and agility at a moderate level, making Demisewan seem abnormally fast by comparison. Mewblade pivoted, swiping with her left paw. Ducking under Mewblade's arms with her unimpressive 5'10" height, Demisewan easily evaded the attack. Mewblade was a little jaded but barely deterred by the setback. She did a small step then added backspin into her swipe. This was even easier to dodge as Demisewan tiptoed out of Mewblade's trajectory.

Swadeaqua and Harddense were watching from a distance as Mewblade and Demisewan made deductions of how to exactly deal with one another. Evidently having a lack-a-daisy approach to fighting was not benefiting Mewblade at all. From what Mewblade could currently observe, Swadeaqua commanded, Harddense was a rather impervious blocker, and Demisewan could at least move. How dangerous any of them really were, Mewblade could only guess; although, with Swadeaqua's show of marksmanship, she was guessing not much.

Mewblade forced psychic energy through her body, visibly decreasing her muscle mass with the added increase of mobility. Swadeaqua looked upon her quietly, noting that the physical change was Agility and that Mewblade was intending to go about a slicing offense, which was more favorable to that state.

"*She's using Agility,*" Swadeaqua's voice said over Demisewan's headset. "*Watch out for erratic tail swings.*" Somehow the thought of being chopped to bits at the keen edge of her sister's blades was not a delightful mental image. Swadeaqua's constant application of Calm Mind left everyone feeling at ease, overriding most of Demisewan's nervousness.

"Eep!" Demisewan yelped as she jumped back from a swing aimed at her belly.

"Focus, Demisewan!" Swadeaqua barked, hands on her hips.

"I am!" Demisewan protested, skipping backwards to avoid one swing after another.

Mewblade narrowed her eyes slightly, then moved past Demisewan, intending to circle her with her bladed tail. As she drew in, Demisewan did an effortless handspring over Mewblade's serrated appendage. Mewblade came out of her motion, surprised by Demisewan's dexterity. Any psychic would have chosen to use a defensive shield or an evasive move such as Fly or Teleport; leaving Mewblade to surmise that Demisewan was not psychic at all, but was either a dark or ghost type. Having any type advantage was always a plus. With Demisewan being of such a small stature, her being a fighting type was less than likely, much to Mewblade's relief.

Mewblade kept the Metal Claws active, alternating between them and her blades. The nimbleness of Demisewan was starting to become frustrating, even as Mewblade was putting constantly larger amounts of energy into her Agility. Demisewan was acrobatic in her avoidance, jumping, ducking, and on occasion cartwheeling out of harms way.

Mewblade finally reached her body's maximum allowance for the Agility, from there she could disable her Agility, or use Bulk Up to negate it.

In a given skill, a Pokémon can only use an ability a certain amount of times until their body is incapable of performing it. Trainers often give numbers to skills, called 'PP' or 'Pokémon Power' to define how often a single move can be used. As Mewblade's proverbial PP was defined by her energy, a lot of her skills could be used obsessively. One example was her current use of Metal Claws, which allowed her to wear them for long stretches at a time, rather than seconds. Of the extensive skill set that Mewblade possessed, only her resurrection ability was limited to a few uses. So far, ten resurrections was the most Mewblade could allow herself to perform within a short period of time; although, she would rather it be none. Over abusing Agility on the other hand was fine by her, especially if it made Demisewan struggle.

Demisewan squealed as a blade nearly nicked her horns. Mewblade's attacks were still relatively slow but her overall speed and the time she took between attacks had become far faster. Instead of idling and waiting for a blow, Demisewan found herself moving constantly. It was a marvel to see how much control Mewblade had over her body, and as the Agility had gone up, so had her grace and in essence, her beauty. While her body was softer with less masculine lines, her blades remained sharp.

"Is that all you . . ." Demisewan started saying as she twirled, "got?" Mewblade was hoping she could have killed Demisewan before the overconfident, mocking part of combat happened. The confidence would make it easier to end Demisewan, although at the same time she could only take so many insults. Demisewan skipped off a ways. "Catch me," Demisewan giggled, teasing her sister.

She has to be insane, thought Mewblade as she followed suit. Anything with even the smallest amount of sense would not want Mewblade to come barreling after them, let alone invite it.

Coline Teleported into the stands with the aid of Abbott. Eevee was cautiously perched upon Coline's shoulder looking at the activity on the field below.

"Eee! Eevee eeeee!" (Woah! Look at that!) Eevee said, drawing attention to Mewblade's current situation. At the moment Mewblade was chasing after the swift moving Demisewan with little chance of actually catching the svelte creature. With the aid of her Abra, Coline knew that Mewblade was located in the human populated region of Indigo Plateau; what she did not know was that Mewblade was currently engaged in combat with what looked like to be members of her species. Eevee made her astute observation, saying, "Eevvee evvve eee eee." (Those look like Mewthrees.)

<"I believe you are right,"> Abbott replied as he peered through the slits of his eyes. He could feel Coline's arms tense around his frame, the sign of her concern for Mewblade's predicament.

"Oh, Mewblade . . ." Coline frowned, her heart going out to her friend. Such a sight was almost unbearable, to see one being of a species pit against three more of their own. The odds were stacked against Mewblade and Coline could easily feel how uncomfortable she currently was. From what she could see with the straggling Team Rocket grunts, this whole setup must have been a plan to somehow hinder Mewblade. There just had to be some way to turn the situation around and keep the other people

involved in this scheme away from the fight. Coline began rummaging in her backpack in search for something useful.

“Eee? Eevee evvee evveeeee?” (Coline? What are you doing?) she questioned the girl as she brought out five Pokéballs.

“Helping.” Coline threw the Pokéballs onto the row of seats in front of her. “Everybody, go!” Out from the Pokéballs emerged the five Pokémon that her brother Dan had helped her catch. Among them there was a Hoppip, Marril, Growlithe, Chinchou, and a Sandshrew. The Pokémon greeted Coline enthusiastically, more than eager and ready to assist her in whatever she needed. “Hello, Hopscotch, Maps, Riley, Chinsey, Sandy,” Coline spoke to them by name. She leaned forward as her Pokémon gathered to receive instructions. Eevee joined the five, prepared for combat. “We have to keep the evil people out of the stadium and away from Mewblade. Are you with me?” Her Pokémon cheered in response, wholeheartedly supportive of Coline’s cause. Eevee was the most responsive of them all, also having the strongest connection to Coline and Mewblade.

Unlike all of Coline’s seven assorted Pokémon, Eevee was the only Pokémon that was originally designated as the family pet. At the same time, Eevees as a whole were the only Pokémon that directly reflected the nature of their masters through their many evolutions. Even though Eevee was a confrontational and rude personality, she reflected her master’s stubbornness and will. Coline’s remaining Pokémon were a sign of Coline’s ability to be balanced and open-minded, as all of their types and associated strategies varied greatly. As the types in Coline’s team were well represented, it would be up to Coline and Eevee to decide whether Eevee should evolve to either best represent the team or either of their whims if desired. For the time being, Coline was happy with the way her Pokémon were, and even more overjoyed with their passion for helping Mewblade.

“Okay then, go get ‘em!” Coline shouted with enthusiasm, directing her Pokémon in the direction of a hapless Rocket. The man was hardly paying attention to the girl until he was swarmed by the childishly giddy group of young Pokémon, sending him running out of the stadium exit in a flustered panic. The group giggled and ran after, happy to play tag with the baddies.

“Missed me!” teased Demisewan while she spun and danced around her sister. Mewblade caught herself from her own flying fist. As Demisewan twirled past, Mewblade wrenched the entirety of her body, bringing her leg up. Her thigh soared over Demisewan’s head as she ducked beneath. “Ooh. Missed me again, sis,” she giggled before giving herself some berth between herself and the deadly Mewthree. Mewblade hunted her down, putting speed into her strides. She out-paced her sister, bringing her tail down in hopes her blades would sweep everything below Demisewan’s knees.

“Nuh-uh,” Demisewan smirked as she did a tuck-jump. Mewblade skidded to face Demisewan, more than slightly miffed. She analyzed the situation, knowing that her strikes were forced. Instead of depending on how hard she could swing, Mewblade would have to rely on deft flicks and backslashes; otherwise, this fight may as well go on forever. Subtle movements were not her preference but there was little recourse when it came to engaging Demisewan combatively.

Mewblade ran into Demisewan's comfort zone, letting her energy flow into her movements. While Mewblade was defined as a partial steel type, her duties accurately represented her psychic type; whereas her dark type was shown prominently with her viewpoint to the world around her. Being known as a dark type did not mean a Pokémon with that type was evil, just mysterious and unpredictable. Along with her secrets she quelled inside, Mewblade's body moved with the same alluring mystery.

"Watch out. She's acting on her dark type traits," Swadeaqua cautioned from a distance. Harddense was holding a rather relaxed guard within reach of his older sister. He was feeling nervous as he watched Demisewan evade blow after killer blow, stuck watching his twin a safe distance away. Although Harddense did believe in Demisewan's strengths, he loved her and did not want to see her hurt.

Demisewan was keeping herself in check, being wary as the diamond tip blades tried to tickle her fur. Mewblade moved seductively, her blades teasing her opponent with their dangerous curves. The twenty blades had the capacity to be dull, as well as extremely sharp. Over-excessive force had little practicality, especially when the keen edge of her blades were almost always met with little resistance. Force was an expression of Mewblade's motivation to end things quickly, a reflection of her drive. No drive meant failure, and Mewblade refused to fail out of the fear for it.

The living ghost was barely catching sight of Mewblade's tail as she stepped around her. Whenever she saw an opening, Mewblade was there, constantly penning her in. The brief distraction of a Team Rocket panicking about Coline's arsenal of Pokémon caused Demisewan to lose some of her focus, a costly mistake as instant death careened towards her neck.

"Demisewan!" Harddense cried out, already in mid-motion. Swadeaqua directed her eyes towards Harddense.

"She's got it covered," she told him sternly, her eyes locking him to his place.

What?! Mewblade gaped in horror, a gasp escaping from her lips. Her longest tail blade had sailed through Demisewan's neck. Instead of leaving Demisewan headless with her decapitated body on the ground, Demisewan was standing with a cheeky grin across her face.

"Tee-hee," she giggled. "That tickled." Demisewan sauntered backwards, enjoying the stunned look on her eldest sister's face. With a paw raised, she amusingly stated a fact. "You can't hurt a ghost," she then gave a playful smirk before disappearing into thin air.

Mewblade growled, no longer amused by this game. While she had a vague idea of where Demisewan was, a ghost type almost always had the upper-hand over a psychic type. At least Mewblade did not have to guess what type Demisewan was anymore.

"You're going to have to try harder," a voice whispered teasingly into Mewblade's ear. Mewblade lashed out but struck nothing.

The inability to properly disable the ghostly Pokémon was bringing Mewblade a heightened level of paranoia. *There has to be a way*, she prayed, eyes closed. Demoralizing the enemy could easily win her the advantage, that is if she knew the angle in which to approach the matter. The best way to bring Demisewan's morality down was to kill the source of her bravado, and that source was the Mewthrees' leader, Swadeaqua.

The twenty blades along Mewblade's spine jutted to face Swadeaqua. The aquamarine beauty smirked, curious of Mewblade's increasing wariness and confident because of it.

"Go ahead, sister. I will not make it so easy," she sneered. Mewblade met her challenge blindly, charging forward at the very thing she was willing to blame for this entire incident.

"Rrr!" Mewblade leapt high into the air, well above Swadeaqua's 8'3" height. Swadeaqua was calm, though she had not expected to see Mewblade's Aerial Ace move. Mewblade had the assumption that Harddense blocked on a horizontal plane, thus making her believe that an airborne attack was choice.

Mewblade dropped from the sky, body twisting so that every last sharp surface would whirlwind into the dragon Mewthree. Swadeaqua tilted her head up and gave a piercing Glare. Mewblade's momentum stopped as her impervious concentration failed her entirely.

"Demisewan!" Swadeaqua called. In the middle of her fall, an invisible foot ended-up catching Mewblade in her side. Mewblade was sent careening into the ground, her blades stopping her from completing a saving log roll.

Groaning, Mewblade lifted her body up. She could likely go on forever about how much she despised fighting related moves as the vibrations from the multiple impacts still continued to shiver throughout her skeleton. Mewblade gave a poisonous glare to Swadeaqua as she rose, but unlike Swadeaqua's, Mewblade's did nothing. With a sudden burst of energy she was gone, moving as a blur.

"Floor her," Swadeaqua said tonelessly. Mewblade had figured she could whip past Harddense and that Demisewan was not quick enough to contend with her, but her assumptions were quickly contested.

An apparition jabbed its fingers into Mewblade's eyes, causing Mewblade to lose her momentum yet again. As her speed decreased another force came into play, ripping into her tail and throwing her part way across the field. In mere seconds Mewblade had her weaknesses used against her, leaving her face down in the dirt, twice!

Mewblade blinked heavily to clear her vision of its colored spots, disliking the fact that she was on the ground in the first place. If she had been Vicebane in such a situation, then the ground was about the most ideal place Mewblade could be; but since she was not her brother she was finding herself to be severely hindered.

"Keep it going. She's weak lying there." Mewblade heard Swadeaqua and immediately scrambled.

"Argh!" came the yelp of Mewblade as a Low Kick knocked her over for the third time. She responded to her assailant with a flaring of her aura, hoping it would hurt anything within its range.

"May I remind you that your psychic abilities are useless here?" Swadeaqua smirked, Taunting from afar.

"I'll show you!" Mewblade snarled, bringing herself up to a standing position, upon which she proceeded to fling her aura towards Swadeaqua. Harddense was near and simply took the hit. He gave himself a shake, completely unharmed.

"Attack her," Swadeaqua ordered then pulled an almost ridiculous display of cheerleading. "Go team!" she gave an enthused victory Howl, spurring on Demisewan and Harddense's will to fight.

Mewblade was unsure of herself and began to pace around Swadeaqua. It was not long before she felt small fingers prodding into the torn flesh of her tail. She responded by pitching her body, no longer paying attention to anything aside the invading touch.

“Fight like a Mewthree!” demanded Mewblade, challenging Demisewan to confront her.

“Make me,” laughed the air, then it Slapped her.

“You little . . .” Mewblade began, but before she could finish she was backhanded yet again. She spun around madly, trying to catch sight of her twat of a sister.

“Mewblade, I suggest you pay attention,” jibbed Swadeaqua. Mewblade turned around only slightly, questioning to herself as to why Swadeaqua would say that. Somehow Harddense had snuck up on her while Demisewan was making a mockery of her dignity.

“Crush it!” Swadeaqua bellowed with such aggression.

Mewblade cried out inaudibly as Harddense’s Metal Claws sunk into Mewblade’s upper arms, doing exactly as Swadeaqua had instructed. The titanium in her body resisted breaking under the crushing force but steel and titanium are of equal strength and Harddense’s talons were made for grip. “Ah. Ahh!” Mewblade screamed, tears stinging her face due to the white-hot pain she was feeling in her skeleton.

The waves of emotion from Mewblade were intoxicating to Swadeaqua. Her fingers drew across her lips, slowly exciting herself. “Tickle her a bit,” suggested Swadeaqua with a gleeful twitter. Demisewan did not question the nature behind the order and proceeded with the attack as instructed.

With a startled cry, Mewblade quickly responded to the feeling of fingers ravaging her body. She pitched and squirmed, trying to break free of the twins’ combined onslaught. *Cut him. Please!* Mewblade screamed in her head with the full length of her tail wrapped around Harddense’s body. Despite the desperation, her blades failed to taste even a drop of blood. His hold was far too firm and painful to allow Mewblade an escape, and his skin too tough. Even without the restricting grip, Demisewan’s dexterous fingers were doing their fair share. Mewblade was in a state of hyperventilation, her body tiring fast because of the pair’s efforts.

“Stop!” Mewblade pleaded with a muffled gasp. She just had to break free from this. Her tail blades were bitterly ineffective. She knew that there had to be another way to escape. Though Mewblade’s cries were alluring to Swadeaqua, she was still able to observe Mewblade’s plan of action.

“Defense!”

“Hmm?” Harddense thickened his skin just as Mewblade’s metal covered tail careened into Harddense’s back. Mewblade instantly felt her brother release his grip on her shoulders. She took full advantage of the opportunity, racing away so she could quickly prepare a Shadow Ball. The ball of energy was chunked in what appeared to be a random direction.

“Yeep!” Mewblade’s terrible accuracy had finally struck a target. Demisewan flickered back into sight, shaking her tail out. The attack did not hurt her too much since the Shadow Ball was small. While it may not have done much damage it had managed to disrupt the energy she used for her ghost abilities. Mewblade was glad to have struck Demisewan successfully, but had less positive results from Harddense.

Even though Mewblade's Iron Tail had forced Harddense to lose his grip, he was comparatively unscathed in contrast to Demisewan; only slightly numbed from the blow. Mewblade on the other hand was losing blood and her physical tiredness was adding to her overall distress. Swadeaqua could easily visualize the scope of the damage on two of her siblings, but was less certain about Demisewan.

"Demisewan, report."

"The Shadow Ball spooked me a little," Demisewan spoke up. "I'm having trouble using my ghost moves right now," she added sheepishly.

Swadeaqua nodded and replied with an, "Okay." Her use of Calm Mind on Demisewan would keep her from worrying about her vulnerabilities.

Mewblade straightened up upon sensing the use of psychic energy. She had been engrossed in Recovering the damage done to her frame. Multiple bones in her arms and shoulders had been compressed and shattered thanks to her brother. Harddense had Crushed her so much that her upper body was essentially immobile, forcing her to rely on her psychic energy to make her arms move. At the moment she was more concerned about her own functionality ahead of Demisewan's.

Still watching from afar, Swadeaqua could see that Mewblade had finished her Recover without healing her multiple gashes. *Why would she avoid using a full Recover?* Swadeaqua pondered, perplexed by Mewblade's decision to leave her open sores untreated. *She has to have some reason to justify it.* The look of cautious anxiety on Mewblade's face said all. In Mewblade's mind she could not risk wasting her energy even though she had more than enough to deal with her siblings. Such a thought was produced out of sheer paranoia brought on by a bad experience. This was something Swadeaqua knew for certain. What she wanted to know was what could inflict such a strong, proud creature with a high level of fear. It may not have been the Mewblade that Swadeaqua had expected but this tantalizing version of her made Swadeaqua want to know more. Her intrigue continued to peek as Mewblade's emotions made the air thick with intensity.

Mewblade was determined to show the Mewthrees what she could do with her body, bringing energy into her muscle fibers to increase their size and strength. Within moments she no longer presented herself as feminine and deadly, having practically transgendered into something masculine and brutish. Harddense and Demisewan stared agape, wondering if their apparent sister was more of an apparent something else.

The vibrant purple eyes were cold as they turned on Harddense. The steel type flinched, the serial gaze catching him off guard. If the strange look she gave was not enough, Harddense was looking upon a near ton of titanium and muscle that was more than ready to pulverize him.

Swadeaqua tried to calm Harddense down with some astute coaching. "She's going to fight you fist to fist. Keep your weight low and you will move faster." She spoke to Demisewan next. "Stay back." Demisewan was not going to argue against that order.

Mewblade stomped towards Harddense, her body was heavy but blissfully functional. To resort to using Bulk Up was a choice that Mewblade was reluctant to make, even though she had now pushed it to its absolute brink. Such a move cut into her swiftness, evident as she broke out into a lumbering trot. Harddense waited for her from where he stood.

"Don't let her strike."

“Right!” Harddense shouted, motivated by the needs of his closest sisters. Mewblade tried to take him by surprise and wailed her fist at Harddense’s face. He turned his head away, missing the blatantly overpowered punch. Mewblade would have hurt herself horribly if she hit with all the muscle packed behind her fist throws. Harddense did not want to test his body’s own resistance, unwilling to chance it.

Mewblade and Harddense suffered equally from physical attacks. Metal has a higher frequency than bone; which, when struck causes painful reverberations and resulting tissue damage. Harder strikes could compress the metal, leaving permanent damage. Harddense would be worse off since while Mewblade’s bruises were visible to the eye, Harddense’s were exclusively internal.

Harddense ducked his head, Mewblade missing him as she stumbled past. It was a given fact that he could not dodge well and was pretending he was Demisewan in order to inspire his evasiveness. Mewblade brought her thigh up to knee Harddense in the gut. Harddense exhaled, winded by the blow then retaliated by clamping his sharp talons down onto Mewblade’s muscle bound thigh.

“Grmmm! . . .” Mewblade bit her lip. She stepped back with a small limp. The wound was not deep enough for it to be a major concern. Harddense frowned as his eyes roved Mewblade’s body. His talon marks were hardly significant when compared to his sister’s mass. Standing next to her he looked diminutive in contrast.

“Try some throws on her.”

“Throws?” Harddense was not blind. Mewblade was double his weight normally, at the current time she was over triple that. Harddense knew how much he could bench and it definitely was not *that* much. Mewblade smirked snidely, agreeing with her brother. She was more than willing to throw her own weight around and sent herself at him.

“Submission!” Harddense heard, responding by grabbing Mewblade’s left wrist and flinging her. Mewblade simply spun away before regaining her footing. She brought herself to face him once more, ready to pound Harddense. Harddense locked a talon on Mewblade’s upper arm, then grabbed her elbow before using her own momentum to flip her onto her back.

Mewblade remembered seeing Harddense then somehow the sky. It was all too fast. She groaned as she came to the realization that Harddense had used Submission on her, and that her back really hurt.

“Wait for her to get up,” said Swadeaqua. She was keeping a watchful eye on Demisewan, who was almost back to normal.

Mewblade pushed off the ground with her arms, making an impressive landing on her feet. A tremor rippled through the ground, the first audible sign of her weight. Harddense dared to look Mewblade in the eyes, and wishing he had not. The look in her eyes was not a look he wanted to have directed towards him.

The Decider of Fate stormed up to her mortal lesser. Once she was within arm’s reach she simply stopped moving entirely. Harddense was confused since Mewblade only seemed to move in conjunction with an attack.

“You okay?” Harddense voiced his concern, still caring of his opponents. Mewblade flashed a smirk, balling her fingers together.

“Watch out!” Swadeaqua cried urgently but was not fast enough. Mewblade’s fist connected with Harddense’s face, crushing most of it.

“Harddense!” Demisewan hollered her twin’s name. A red glow surrounded her body. “You bitch!” she screeched. Mewblade was not expecting such a strong reaction from Demisewan, or the tearing of her razor-like fingernails into her flesh.

Mewblade drew air into her lungs with a painful hiss. Demisewan retracted her paws upon catching sight of Harddense. Harddense removed his right talon away from his face to reveal that his face was unharmed. Using a combination of Iron Defense and Harden he managed to plump up the metal in his face, essentially his version of Mewblade’s Recover. Demisewan was instantly relieved at the sight.

“Oh, Harddense,” she sighed happily.

“I’m okay. Kinda’ dizzy,” Harddense smiled slightly with an added rub along his forehead. Mewblade just gawked. Aside the likely concussion that she presumed he suffered from, Harddense was completely unharmed. She on the other hand had almost liquefied every bit of soft tissue in her paw.

That’s it! she snarled, hell-bent on causing Harddense permanent injury.

“Yes. Yes!” Swadeaqua cheered in a conniving tone. “I would love to see more of those flying fists of yours,” she clapped giddily, adding a little giggle to her Encore. To Harddense she gave him whispered instructions. “Show her how well you can block.” This was going to hurt Harddense but as long as he could enhance his outer shell, most of the damage he could take was repairable.

Mewblade drove her fists home, focusing on Harddense’s upper torso. Any exposed flesh she honed in on. Their metal skeletons clanged against each other, Mewblade’s bruised fists against Harddense’s metal-clad arms. He blocked each swing with relative ease. Every strike forced him to build up his defenses until there was no longer any depressions.

Mewblade sloughed off her excess muscle mass, throwing back her body as she did. When the weight left her she threw her body forward, the sudden speed increase being startling. Steel and diamond clashed. Mewblade was almost assured that she had the victory.

“... How?” Mewblade jumped back. Harddense still had his arms above his head. Mewblade could not believe it. She thought the first few times that he had blocked her successfully was because of her own inability to face her siblings with courage; yet Harddense was not even scratched.

“Heh. I’m super steel-a-fied, baby,” Harddense smirked proudly, beating a metal fist against his chest. “You can’t hurt ‘dis,” he added with a confident wink. Mewblade completely ignored the fact that she was just called ‘baby’ over the horror that he was impervious to her blades.

“You should have been dead!” Mewblade yelled at him in childish frustration, not sure of where she should go from there.

“Nah-nah! You suck!” Demisewan laughed mockingly from behind.

“And you,” Mewblade snapped, “just take a hit!” Mewblade shot after Demisewan, unable to hit her with the three Shadow Balls she had unleashed. Mewblade pursued Demisewan relentlessly with no return for her efforts. She eventually ended up in the center of the field, feeling worn with little recourse.

“Had enough?” Mewblade straightened herself, eyes rather diverted. She gave Swadeaqua little credit for being there. Every time Mewblade got close to attacking her, Demisewan and Harddense pulled her away. Swadeaqua was aware of Mewblade’s

current mentality and thought Tormenting her was justified. Her sister was quite demoralized by now that she would be easy prey to her whims.

“How sad is it that the first of our kind; by far the most experienced and world wise, is so easily brought down by her three youngest siblings?” Swadeaqua said with a sneer, seeing Mewblade visibly hating herself for her own shortcomings. Being the eldest was not nearly as degrading a comparison as to what Swadeaqua tossed out next. “To think that the very Legendary that you are can not even hold a flame to the likes of us.” Mewblade stiffened under Swadeaqua’s gaze.

She knows?! she thought, visibly worried that Swadeaqua, and possibly the entirety of Team Rocket knew. Demisewan and Harddense were speechless, staring out at Mewblade, unable to believe what Swadeaqua said. She had never spoke to them about what she knew involving Mewblade’s status. Even though they had been mastering the fight, their opponent was apparently a Pokémon that surpassed rank, rarity and the mortal constructs of reality. Even at the Team Rocket Headquarters, the disbelief continued.

“What!?!” Nichole screeched as she spewed her cola. “Did I hear that right?!” she further exclaimed. Everyone within earshot gave a demanding look to Doctor West, who was innocently pondering the hypothesis. This was the first time he had heard of such a concept in regards to Mewblade.

“That would reasonably explain all that my team has observed,” he murmured. Izabelle, who normally did not partake in guessing games decided to open the two-way voice communication.

“Swadeaqua, please verify your previous statement. Over.” The collective of humans gathered around the speakers to listen to Swadeaqua’s response.

“I believe I am not mistaken,” Swadeaqua replied to Izabelle across her headset. She would have to make Mewblade acknowledge her Legendary status. “Does being a Legendary Pokémon give you a reason to be engaged in combat with us now?” Mewblade did not respond to the question. “Answer, Mewblade!” Swadeaqua Roared, forcing Mewblade to respond.

“Yes . . .” she said with a quiet murmur, causing all those who were listening to gasp for their own individual reasons.

“My,” Swadeaqua began with a smirk, “the things that you are, the secrets that you hold. Such a marvel of human ingenuity.” Swadeaqua became caught up in the moment as she began to pick Mewblade apart. “Oh, the life you must lead. A thing of power and privilege, that you all too willingly take on as your yoke and shackles. It is quite a shame that you would rather horde that secret all for yourself. Why detest being what you are? Was the thought of exploitation so loathsome that it drove you from the gym?”

“Even if it was, why would it matter to you?” snarled Mewblade, her lips curled. Swadeaqua shrugged, smiling somewhat whimsically.

“I just find it strange that *my* big sister would run away because she is afraid of surrendering control. Obedience and servitude can not possibly destroy who you are.” Swadeaqua could not wait to see the reaction that her statement would give.

Mewblade did not have control in her life and never would no matter what option she could have taken. Where she resented the thought of serving to Giovanni, she had

willingly given up most of her freedom to her position as Decider of Fate. How Swadeaqua even dared to bring into question of Mewblade's decision that day was beyond heartless.

If I had not left the gym. If I had not . . . Mewblade shook her head violently, dispelling the thoughts. *It had to happen . . .* Her eyes shot up to look at Swadeaqua, infuriated by her sister's ignorance. She was a Legendary who was bound by responsibility since creation. There was no such thing as choice and the decision she had made; while the worst thing she had ever agreed to was by far the most righteous.

"You do not have any idea what I went through to be what I am!" Mewblade shouted at Swadeaqua, lashing out at her verbally. This was just where Swadeaqua wanted her; a completely emotionally exposed Mewblade.

"Being a Legendary is my obligation, my reason for being. I am held against my will, by laws, by force! I break and am broken because of what my duties instruct. I have no reason to be anything else than what I am!" Mewblade was angry, hurt by what she was, but there was no choice. Even when Ho-oh let her choose she never truly had options or a reason to say, 'no'. "How dare you bring my decisions into question when there were none in the first place!?" Mewblade screamed at Swadeaqua loudly, her body shaking with every bit of pained emotion that she held in. Mewblade caught herself shivering and hugged herself tightly to still her body.

The defenses were down. Swadeaqua could finally play with Mewblade any way she wanted. She started off with a little Swagger, a technique that confused most Pokémon because of its sexuality and general misplacement on the battlefield. Mewblade tried to bring her mind back to reality, unable to focus because of Swadeaqua's sultry motions. With a considerable amount of pain, Mewblade dug her fingers into her bloodied arms in order to ground herself.

"I am sorry for not being perceptive to your pain, Mewblade," Swadeaqua said with a genuine looking frown, but deceptive the whole time. "You really have hurt a lot, haven't you," she pouted adoringly, trying to give off the feeling that she was truly a concerned sister. Mewblade nodded her head weakly to Swadeaqua's comment.

Swadeaqua got closer to Mewblade with Harddense and Demisewan getting closer still. The seductress continued her sly art of manipulation, feigning every bit of concern for her fallen sister. "Tricking Moltres and you to come here was wrong of us, but we had no way of contacting you, and you're much too hard to reason with normally," Swadeaqua said, making a face of remorse. "We really would love to have you back. Seeing as you're a strong, independent Mewthree, I know we can not expect you to accept such an offer with haste," Swadeaqua said, laying on the Charm with passionate intensity. "We are all worn from fighting. We should discuss our future together before it's taken away forever. Don't you agree?"

Mewblade glanced upwards, subconsciously moved by Swadeaqua's proposal. "I suppose so," she said, the words slipping out without her being aware of them.

"That's wonderful," Swadeaqua chimed, clasping her paws together.

Coline returned to the stands with her seven escorts. Her eyes went wide and she leaned over the guard rails, ready to shout encouragement.

"Eevee!" (Coline!) Eevee whispered in a warning tone, despite the fact she was just as worried as her master. Coline held back but was frustrated that she could not

vocally support Mewblade. If she got involved then Mewblade would further scold her for risking her life in a combat situation. She had done it once already and she did not want to put Mewblade through such grief for a second time.

Mewblade was in the center of the field, looking weak and disheveled, standing before Swadeaqua. Her arms were slick with blood, primarily because of the force Mewblade had been applying to them. Around her she was surrounded by the other two Mewthrees, appearing to be considering mercy from the tall female of the group.

“Look at her, Eevee. She looks so hurt.”

“Eevee evvee. Eevee evvee.” (I know. I know.) Eevee’s frown matched that of Coline’s. Their stoic gazes peeked with curiosity due to movement on the other side of the stadium.

Mewtwo padded along quickly among the stands, stopping to view the disturbing entertainment. Even from a distance it was evident that he was hoping for a better outcome than this. Moltres drifted above, watching with her keen eyes as Mew discreetly entered, taking company with Mewtwo. Their child, their friend, they could easily see her grief. All of them wondered what else they had miss, besides Mewblade’s terrible losses. Coline and her Pokémon were strictly forbidden to intervene, where the other Legendaries knew that they would have to wait for Mewblade to fall unconscious before they could consider charging in to save her.

Swadeaqua went on like Mewblade’s comrades were not even there. If Mewblade did side with the rest of her species, then she was even less concerned. But for now, she knew, as did everyone else, that Mewblade fought alone.

“We offer you sanctuary at the Viridian Gym. A place free of responsibility and persecution. You can be safe with us, with no fear of what the future holds. The scientists, Doctor West, they can help you escape your birthright.” Mewblade was quiet, seeming to be listening. Swadeaqua took a risk and embraced Mewblade carefully. Mewblade twitched a little, resenting the touch. She persisted since the closeness would likely break Mewblade further.

“What do you say?” Swadeaqua asked curtly.

“I . . . I can’t.” Mewblade abruptly broke down into despair. Swadeaqua was uncertain by Mewblade’s sudden reluctance, but comforted her anyway.

“Let it out,” she shushed, her lips softly grazing Mewblade’s ear. Gingerly, she patted Mewblade’s back. Swadeaqua could not believe she was actually holding a Legendary, let alone it letting her. This powerful yet broken Pokémon, the mystery she had been forced to investigate since day one, was so painfully close. It was all she knew, and in some sense, Mewblade was all she wanted to know. There was still one question on Swadeaqua’s mind though, *Who?*

“Is there a reason?” she whispered, a paw daring to rub between two of the blades on Mewblade’s back.

“I can not face it. The gym . . .” Swadeaqua listened, so close to knowing one of Mewblade’s most darkest secrets. “It is so painful.” The Legendaries, Coline and her Pokémon were on edge. Mewblade was being forced to confide in someone she hardly knew, against her will.

“It’s okay. Demisewan, Harddense and I will do whatever we can to accommodate you,” Swadeaqua coaxingly spoke, adding a tight hug for extra reassurance. “We are family, willing to share your burden, protect you from harm . . .”
“. . . *Love you unconditionally.*”

Mewblade’s eyes went wide. Swadeaqua realized that she had said triggered a repressed memory in Mewblade’s head. If she did not give herself distance now, then Swadeaqua would become an easy target for Mewblade.

“Don’t touch me!” Mewblade growled, breaking away from Swadeaqua.

“You first!” Swadeaqua shot back, flexing her lung power with a highly concentrated version of Hyper Voice.

Mewblade was sent flying because of the powerful sound wave, slamming into the stadium walls. She let out a cry before slumping to the ground. Mewtwo, Mew and Moltres were ready to descend onto the rest of the Mewthrees. Harddense was close to Swadeaqua, acting as the loyal bodyguard. He looked up at his idol, also wondering if Swadeaqua had put Mewblade out.

“Is she . . .?”

“Shh,” Swadeaqua hushed Harddense, forcing him to watch instead. Mewblade rose with a demonic air, rising to her feet without the aid of appendages. The fight was nowhere near over; although for Swadeaqua, the fight to get an answer was finished. *I know who!* she giggled to herself, delighted that Mewblade’s current reactive state had given her the answer she so desired. Harddense and Demisewan were more concerned with the progressively creepier onset of Mewblade’s current state.

Mewblade’s eyes were dark, her face grave. There was not a part of her that remain uninjured, and she seemed to not really care either way. Her eyes flashed purple with the signature of her power aura. The deadly gaze bore down on Swadeaqua, half of the inspiration for her next feat.

Mewblade gave a hardened battle cry, an announcement of her fight against her own oppression. Upon command the marrow in Mewblade’s bones liquefied, racing up through her body. The pain was horrendous as it traveled with the pulverized contents of her now hollow bones. During the moment when everything become unbearable her back split open, the marrow bursting forth and solidifying into 20’ of angelic Steel Wings. The blood that slicked them was brought back into the giant gashes before she closed the exit wounds with a Recover. Mewblade gave the feathers a quick flick to make certain that their make was good. In a way she was proud, but for her to learn such a costly skill was just a reminder that she had learned it so she would not have to put up with worse.

“Hey!” Harddense grumbled, a touch jealous. “How come I can’t do that?”

“Because,” Swadeaqua replied, sounding a little distant, “you never had to fight for it like she did.” Swadeaqua activated the two-way on her headset, contacting the humans in the control room. “Since when did Mewblade have Steel Wing in her move set?”

Doctor West was at the panel, stunned that his first experiment had learned a move that his team thoroughly believed she was not capable of. He tried to come up with a reason but realized that Mewblade had simply done something that was not expected of her.

“*I wouldn’t deny the possibilities,*” Doctor West said into Swadeaqua’s headset.
“*Mewblade has always been able to alter her blades, which is made out of the same*

material as the rest of her skeleton. That is not the first move she learned which was not foreseen. With her some things will be unexpected."

"I figured as much," Swadeaqua replied, aware that Mewblade's resurrection ability was definitely a shocker. She cut out with Doctor West, playing the defense now that Mewblade meant business. Mewblade flared her wings in an awestricken display of bladed beauty, all the more intimidating with the determined glower.

"Watch out. She aims to kill," Swadeaqua yelled, realizing the seriousness of the situation. Mewblade gave her little time to prepare for the next wave of attacks, only enough for Swadeaqua to fearfully withdraw her magnum.

Dutiful as ever, Demisewan brought herself within the nearly 20' of Mewblade's newfound attack radius. Mewblade whipped her body, pirouetting, with her wings ready to rip Demisewan to shreds. Demisewan ducked but found herself compromised. Even with a moderate turn, Mewblade's bladed tail and wings covered a great deal of vertical area. Demisewan yelped as she panicked, unable to evade at all. She forced herself to phase and turn invisible, waiting for Mewblade to stop moving.

Mewblade whirlwind to a stop, glancing coldly over her shoulder. Her eyes gave a small, blue glow, evidence that she was using her psychic abilities to 'see' Demisewan.

"Keep moving!" Swadeaqua ordered. Mewblade jutted her wings behind her, having a good idea of where Demisewan stood. Demisewan screamed, terrified. She dropped her invisibility and took off. There was another source of movement which Mewblade quickly focused on. Harddense was more prepared than Demisewan but barely. "Defense Curl!"

Harddense brought his arms and tail up into a tight guard as Mewblade rapidly dragged the hundreds of feathers swiftly across Harddense's body. He braced stiffly, the force almost knocking him over.

"You'll have to get closer. Force your way in." Harddense heard, finding the thought to be potentially suicidal. With wings spread open, Mewblade willingly invited the steel type into her comfort zone. "Take it," Swadeaqua commanded. Harddense was rather hesitant to walk into the arms of the apparent angel of death, but strove in bravely anyway to meet her challenge.

Unprovoked, Harddense hollered as he swung at Mewblade. Mewblade smirked, hugging her wings around her body. He was starting to get an idea of how hard Mewblade was going to make this for him and shook out his talon before making another strike. "You will not hurt this," she said, blocking each strike with an alternating sweep of her wings. As the feathers had no pain receptors, they could essentially take beatings all day. Harddense had no idea how irritating his strategy was to others until he was on the receiving end.

Mewblade threw her wings wide, letting Harddense have an easy opportunity to strike. "Pull back! Pull back!" Swadeaqua hollered, seeing through Mewblade's rouse. She took to alarm, not giving Harddense the chance to defend himself. She grabbed his lower arm, pulling him into her breast plate. Being in close contact with the raw power of a Legendary was amazing. Harddense was almost appreciative, even if it was for only a second. What Team Rocket was doing to the Legendaries was wrong, but he had to fend his sisters, and himself.

Within the following few seconds, as Swadeaqua's words hung in the air, Mewblade used her wings to split her and Harddense apart. Moments later she threw her wings wide, flinging Harddense across part of the stadium.

Harddense crashed to the ground, rolling back and forth in a daze. Demisewan launched at Mewblade in a fit, only to have Mewblade sweep her with a fan of her titanium wings. The ghost collapsed a ways away, also unable to gather her thoughts enough to stand. Swadeaqua looked between the twins, alone in this fight. Without them to battle for her, it would be Swadeaqua's will against Mewblade's.

Mewblade barely gave notice to the fallen brother and sister, so intently focused on Swadeaqua instead. Believing this to be her last charge, Mewblade moved towards Swadeaqua. Once Mewblade was in adequate range, Swadeaqua made sure to display who had the upper-hand. Her aquamarine eyes became fixated with the ever most piercing Glare. Mewblade could feel her body lose control, her subconscious forcing her into motionless.

I . . . I can not move! her mind screamed out to her in horror. Mewblade tried pulling at her muscles, both with her mind and the use of her psychic energy. Even with her considerable amount of mental and physical prowess, Mewblade's muscles remained defiant. *Move!!!* she bellowed in her head. Swadeaqua's Glare was perfectly executed. Mewblade's own subconscious was so paralyzed with fear that no matter how much Mewblade willed herself, her muscles only gave her enough mobility to stand and express how disturbed she was by her current circumstance.

"So . . ." Swadeaqua began, holstering her magnum since Mewblade was no longer a threat. All she could do was watch as Swadeaqua Swaggered closer, the dragon Pokémon enjoying Mewblade's struggle against her own psychological binds. "You finally showed me what became of such an elusive creature. The proud, the powerful . . . The perpetually inundated," she smirked knowingly, rubbing Mewblade's tortured servitude in her face. She brought her arms beneath her chest, emphasizing her feminine lines. "It must be such a grievance to admit what you've been through in order to be a Legendary and keep face; but," Swadeaqua started to speak loudly enough for Mewblade's supporters to hear, "you can not hide those facts from me." They all knew in their own ways what Mewblade had been through, although unlike Swadeaqua, they were unwilling to ask to what extent.

"You don't know anything!" Mewblade snarled, gnashing her teeth, somewhat unaware that her family and friends were watching.

Swadeaqua chortled dryly, amused by Mewblade's antagonism. "Do you really believe I am that dull?" she smiled cattily, then strutted up to Mewblade. Swadeaqua forcefully grabbed Mewblade's chin, forcing the Mewthree to look upon her face. "I know what happened to you. It has been as plain as day to see since we started this little charade," she spoke, teasing the words so she could watch Mewblade emote to her. "To break something like you, a Legendary no less, takes a mastery only that those who are willing to risk their lives would possess." Swadeaqua paused, inches away from the sparkly purple eyes that could easily captivate her. "It took me a while to figure out who he was. That moment when you used Steel Wing made it very clear. You hated the representation of me so much that you were desperate enough to risk your life for that move." Mewblade brought her eyes down, not liking what she was being forced to listen

to. Swadeaqua forced her head up higher, refusing to let Mewblade disengage from the conversation.

“Stop talking,” Mewblade growled, not wanting to hear anything else Swadeaqua had to say.

“Why should I? I am sure everyone would love to know,” she sneered, almost maniacally. “To know the one who took you. Know who made you his.” Mewblade was mortified. “You became his concubine. And this,” Swadeaqua traced a finger over the titanium down, “is how you rejected his advances.” She tilted her head thoughtfully, pouting disappointedly. “Isn’t it strange that the one who was suppose to be mine chose you instead?”

Mewblade was grimacing with nightmarish dread, hoping beyond hope, for her own sense of dignity that Swadeaqua was pulling every single word from her rear end. There were no facts to prove if she was right or wrong, but Mewblade knew her inability to lie left her open to guesses as Swadeaqua’s words continued to dance around her mind.

“Only he could be so cruel. Dangerous. It is part of his allure that you could obviously not embrace. The same reason why you can not embrace the notion of returning to the gym with us. It is because it reminds you that he was once there too.” Mewblade remained straight-faced, refusing to let her emotions give anything away. Swadeaqua was amused by Mewblade’s attempts to conceal what she thought was obvious. There was little Mewblade could do to stop Swadeaqua from speaking, and was stuck watching as Swadeaqua leaned in closer. “As for his name,” she whispered seductively, letting the secret remain between the two, “it’s Vicebane.” Swadeaqua pulled away to watch Mewblade break.

A single emotion, a word, a thought, none of it could express the way Mewblade felt inside. The suicidal sacrifice of her well-being for Moltres’ had not insured her protection from the evils that her duties brought, it simply flung Mewblade further into them. Far away from her powers and the security that the waking world offered, Mewblade was free game to anything even remotely corrupt. She had fought desperately to resurface from her coma, hoping to have escaped everything that it was, now to only have Swadeaqua drudge it up.

“How dare you . . .” Mewblade choked, her voice suppressed. She refused to acknowledge even the concept of Vicebane. He was the Mewthree whose only purpose for existence was the derivative of a shallow inferiority complex, manifested in the relentless form of jealousy. Being the ‘all-powerful’ Legendary of the family made her powers that much more desirable to Vicebane. Vicebane made certain that Mewblade paid for her gift, and she definitely had. Mewblade could not speak for the mental state in regards to the rest of the family, but was becoming convinced that most of them transcended their own levels of evil. Unlike Vicebane, Swadeaqua was after a different aspect of her big sister.

“He never would have liked you anyway,” Mewblade muttered, aware of Vicebane’s limited tastes for the flesh. How anyone could actually want him was beyond her level of understanding.

“You see, Mewblade,” Swadeaqua started with a frown, “he would have just been another one of my toys.” She appeared almost sorrowful, reflecting on how lonely she was among the hordes of people who adored her. There was no one who knew her that she believed understood who she was. And for Swadeaqua to expose her loneliness to

anyone but herself was something she could not bear to do. Even she could admit that everyone around her she simply used for physical comfort, and nothing more. Mewblade on the other hand was different. While she had pride she understood what it was like to be lost and lonely, on the edge of nothing with not a soul to turn to. Swadeaqua's paws held tightly to Mewblade's cheeks, forcing Mewblade to once again hold a gaze with the enticing female.

"There is no emotional connection with something so driven. The same goes for those who I control." Swadeaqua thoughtfully caressed along Mewblade's peculiarly androgynous jaw-line. Mewblade's standpoint as a gender identified asexual made it somewhat challenging to discern what gender she most closely represented. Still, she was a fascinating piece of work and Swadeaqua was close and comfortable enough to marvel. "Such a bitter, controlling Mewthree like myself is more willing to share their frustrations rather than make one crucial connection with another living being. Something that we both have quite in common. It is also the reason why I am unable to deny your statement, for how could he love something that returns none?" Swadeaqua let her paws wander to Mewblade's waist, which was considerably narrow compared to that of her ample hips.

"What are you doing?" Mewblade warned her sister cautiously, trying to correct Swadeaqua's misplaced gestures. The Mewthrees had varying sexual preferences, with the eldest two siblings both decidedly uninterested, though both knowledgeable, and the other three being straight. Swadeaqua so happened to be the only one who was openly incestuous, something which Mewblade was starting to figure out was being directed towards her. After a few seconds of Swadeaqua's browsing, Mewblade realized that her warning had merely been shrugged off.

"Don't . . ." Mewblade whimpered, unbelieving of what she was about to go through. Swadeaqua ignored the plea as she continued her venture to Mewblade's breast plate. Mewtwo and Mew were shocked and disgusted, unable to do much for Mewblade since both Demisewan and Harddense were carefully guarding the exterior of the field. Moltres too, was unable to offer her support. The proximity between Mewblade and Swadeaqua did not allow her to attack.

"You have already had such a rough life, using all of your negative experiences to define who you are," Swadeaqua was fixated with tracing her paws wherever she wished, knowing that she could soon claim Mewblade as her own. The beautiful curves and the toned physique practically begged for Swadeaqua to explore them. "How he treated you was not that of someone who understands you. I can show you things he never could. Pleasurable, fulfilling things." Both of her paws had made their way to Mewblade's face, quickly becoming slick with tears. Their racing pulses could be felt by one another. One was because of sickened anxiety, the other from passionate lust. "We would not have to be alone, hiding ourselves from the world. Everything, we could share, and embrace it all."

"Please . . . no . . ." Mewblade repeated over and over, her loss of motor control becoming significant as Swadeaqua began to add seduction moves on top of the unrelenting paralysis.

Attract worked on Pokémon of the opposite gender. In Swadeaqua's case, it worked on males of any species. Being half female as Mewblade was made the use of Attract a poor move to utilize; although, Swadeaqua may as well have been considered the Legendary of manipulation. She simply controlled anything she wanted. The Attract

was lowering Mewblade's mental awareness severely, even if she only wanted to strangle the Mewthree on her own intestines. Swadeaqua's aching needs for attention were impossible to resist.

Swadeaqua held Mewblade's head firmly, the twins figuring that the battle was almost over. Mewblade had the same realization. There was a chance that if Swadeaqua did kiss her, that she would use Sweet Kiss and consequently send her into slumber. Mewblade tried her best to move, but her brain was becoming hazy and her thoughts too foggy to speak.

"You will understand in time about how much you've missed in life, because of your duties and rules." Swadeaqua let her paws drop. Mewblade was her pawn, only able to do or say anything if Swadeaqua instructed her to do so. "I want you to come home with me. To love you and appreciate you like how a Legendary deserves to be," Swadeaqua murmured softly, her voice only audible to Mewblade. She ran her fingers over her blades, the edges dulling to the touch despite Mewblade's unwillingness. Generally a dull blade was a sign that Mewblade was acceptant of someone, but not this time. Swadeaqua had all of her. "You and I, together," Swadeaqua cooed, unconcerned by her sister's reluctance. "We can have everything we ever wanted and be happy in utopian bliss." She tilted her head rather teasingly, then proceeded on with an innocent smile. "Will you accept me?"

Mewblade hardly had the frame of mind to do anything, being forced to say, "Yes," since that was all the give Swadeaqua would let her have. Somewhere inside she was screaming and thrashing, yet none of it came out.

Swadeaqua was delighted, her smile full of love and compassion before it changed into a selfish nastiness comprised of her perpetuating lust. She angled Mewblade's chin up, leaning in closer. Swadeaqua teased herself, slowly drawing her painted lips across Mewblade's still tearful cheek. This excited her immensely, to have Mewblade under such control and to play with her on a whim. Inside Mewblade was cursing herself for being unable to defy Swadeaqua when she could defy death. The worst part of being controlled was when no one thought you were.

Swadeaqua brushed her lips softly against the dark, eternally youthful lips of Mewblade's. A gentle peck. She brought a thumb to Mewblade's mouth, gently peeling the top and bottom apart. Bite was a move in Mewblade's attack list, and the sharp titanium of her enamel was not too inviting when she intended to use it. As Swadeaqua expected, Mewblade could still do nothing and continued. She returned to Mewblade's muzzle with deliberate intensity, bringing the pair into a deep kiss. Swadeaqua prolonged the use of a Sweet Kiss, letting her lust run its course, much to Mewblade's absolute despair.

Mewtwo stood on the stands, infuriated by his inability to do nothing but watch as one of his daughters took advantage of the other. Demisewan and Harddense were still holding their positions on the field, but becoming progressively more confused by Swadeaqua's actions. Mewblade was not confused at all by them, especially with a paw shoved between her legs.

Mewblade and Mewtwo had no gender to speak of, and even though both the male and female Mewthrees had the same external structures, the sub-internal between a female, male and an asexual were vastly different. It was not like there was much there for Swadeaqua to fascinate over, begging the question as to why she bothered in the first

place. To even come to such a conclusion let Mewblade realize that the fog that had constricted her mind was lifting. Swadeaqua could not multi-task her desires with her waning control.

“Swadeaqua!” Harddense and Demisewan shouted, breaking out into runs as Mewblade betrayed movement. Mewblade jerked her body from Swadeaqua, ready to turn her tail on her sister. Swadeaqua was disorientated, not sure what happened.

“You will die because of that!” Mewblade threatened. Fueled by panic, Swadeaqua fumbled for her magnum. From the barrel she unloaded one shell to Mewblade’s eye, her perfect aim missing and lodging the bullet into Mewblade’s impenetrable forehead. Mewblade did not even flinch. Swadeaqua looked on in terror, not wanting to envision what was going to happen to her next.

Mewblade’s left paw became incased in metal, which she then jabbed into Swadeaqua’s middle. Swadeaqua let out a gasp, hearing a suction noise as her intestines were pulled away from her. Without the capacity to use Recover, Swadeaqua knew she was as good as dead.

Mewblade snarled discontentedly as she whapped the bundle of organs onto the ground. Swadeaqua’s eyes followed the motion, then her body went with. She crumpled to the field, landing on her knees, making vain attempts to keep the rest of herself in. From the way Swadeaqua’s body was shaking, she was soon to be dead.

“If you want him to screw you so badly, then here’s your chance!” Mewblade snorted in contempt, looking down upon the sorry display beneath her feet. “You can be just as dead as he is.” Swadeaqua looked up at Mewblade, looking strangely humbled.

“You’re wrong . . . The one I always wanted . . .” she trailed, her vision spotted and her mind weak, “was you.” She gave a delirious smile upwards. Mewblade watched as Swadeaqua exhaled for the last time, before her entire frame slumped uselessly to the ground. Swadeaqua was deceased.

“Swadeaqua!” Harddense cried from afar. His single cry for his departed sister was the only one. Demisewan had become a figurative statue, unable to move or speak because she was far too stunned.

“Shit!” Stanford scrambled, bowling over Isabelle as she was staring at the monitors. His fingers fumbled over the panel, trying to find the right button. Isabelle effortlessly flicked it on, disgruntled from Stanford’s lack of manners. “Swadeaqua! Respond!” He could not see her move from the vantage point they had with the stadium cameras.

“Stanford, she’s dead.” Isabelle murmured, flicking the switch back off. He bent his head down, his face emotionless.

“Heh,” he scoffed. “She could never interpret love.” Stanford walked away, his expression vacant. Demisewan and Harddense supported Swadeaqua just as a family should. Stanford wanted to be the one who could love her.

“Nichole, you’ve trained Harddense,” stated Justin.

“Yeah . . .” Nichole had no idea where this was going.

“Good,” Justin nabbed her hand, yanking her towards the panel.

“Hey!” Nichole protested while Justin grabbed her shoulders and forced her down into a spare chair.

“That,” he pointed to the screen, “is Demisewan on the verge of a rage spell. She won’t function, period. Harddense needs help.” Isabelle nodded in agreement and began commanding the situation. She handed Nichole a headset to use.

“Isn’t there some sort of back-up plan? You know he can’t fight!” Nichole continued to protest loudly.

“And who will do it? We can’t send people in there to retrieve Demisewan and Harddense. Mew alone practically exhausted the forces,” Justin motioned at the screen that had all three Legendaries in sight. “There is no way anyone is going on the field while Mewblade is still standing.”

“003 has been proclaimed deceased. Control will be allotted to Nichole, utilizing 004.b.” Isabelle connected the two-way with Harddense. “Harddense, Nichole will be guiding you.”

Harddense heard over his headset, petrified as he comprehended that he was the only one responsible for protecting the hapless Demisewan. There was no time to grieve, Demisewan needed him. He held back his feelings, suppressing them under his protective instinct. Of the things he had learned while battling in the Viridian Gym, was that not caring helped.

“Draw her attention. Insult her,” Nichole ordered sternly. “And don’t treat this like a video game, damn it! You saw it. You die and game over. You’re not Mewblade with her fucking nine lives and save game feature.”

“Right.” Harddense tore after Mewblade, reducing his defenses so he could move faster. “Hey, stupid!” he called out to Mewblade. She turned away from the corpse, hardly insulted. She caught sight of Demisewan and went for her instead.

“God . . . call her a fucking, cock-sucking, lesbian cunt or something,” exasperated Nichole, convinced that that would rile Mewblade a bit, especially after the sexually-charged Swadeaqua encounter. Harddense had no idea what any of those words meant but said them anyway.

“Fight me, you cock-sucking, lesbian cunt!” Despite having no clue what the phrase meant, it definitely got a response from Mewblade. She turned deliberately, a murderous glare on her bloodied face.

“Say, ‘You afraid I might win, bitch?’” Harddense was not the type to swear, but took Nichole’s suggestion.

“Wut?!” he gestured, acting punkish. “You afraid I might win? Huh, bitch?!” Proved that the rap videos that Harddense liked actually paid off. The attitude angered Mewblade a whole degree further, bringing all her attention to her idiotic brother. After all, Demisewan was not going anywhere.

The pair met, colliding into each other, pulling away then colliding again. Harddense wanted all of Mewblade’s undivided attention, keeping himself in constant motion, boxing with her. Mewblade sparred, raking her claws and slicing with her wings. A successful strike was brought against Mewblade’s chest.

“Ugh!” she groaned, feeling her heartbeat fibrillate. Mewblade slammed her fist hard into her chest to correct the arrhythmia. Harddense was fast to act. He reached behind her, grabbing at the base of the titanium wings. Mewblade retaliated, her paws strangling at Harddense’s neck. Nichole was quiet, finding little to say since she knew how desperate he was.

The air to Harddense's brain came back as he wrenched Mewblade's wings from her back. Upon tearing out most of the muscle that supported the Steel Wings, Harddense backhanded Mewblade across the face, felling her. He did not want to be so brutal, but with Demisewan's life on the line, he had to be cold. *Just stay down!* Harddense stomped his left foot onto Mewblade's. She cried out, lashing her tail to shoo him. He backed down as the tail blades tried to lick at the underside of his belly.

The wings on Mewblade's back were useless. Without any muscles to move them, they were hampering her movements. The moment that her tail had awarded her she used as fast as possible, going through the reverse process of recalling her wings. Since the act of withdrawing the wings was sloppy due to its limited function, Mewblade went through it quickly and relatively painlessly. Her wings become a cryptic blood red, the Steel Wing recomposing itself of blood and marrow before being sucked into her body through the massive gashes on her back.

Harddense watched Mewblade rise, distressed by how much of a glutton for punishment his sister was. Blood was somehow continuously seeping from almost every conceivable artificial orifice littered across Mewblade's frame. The dark color of her fur hid the bruises she had developed, but it did not hide the lumpy swells. She looked terrible but was still standing, determined to end the fight with Harddense and Demisewan's deaths. A lot of the injuries were caused by him, and he had never seen a Pokémon so willing to keep the battle going far past serious injury. He had to suppress the guilt, focusing on ignoring his compassions.

Mewblade was fast with fixing her Steel Wing problem, giving Harddense little time to strategize when she quickly disappeared from his sight. *Where?!* His thoughts were interrupted as he felt a force ram him from behind. Before he could realize what was happening he was crammed into a powerful Barrier, his mind dazed from being slammed against it so hard. Mewblade used Extreme Speed again, jabbing her energy cannon into the small of Harddense's back.

"Ahh!" he cried out, the pain substantial.

"*Use your tail!*" Nichole yelled, panicking.

"I can't!!!"

Mewblade forced her brother's shoulders into the Barrier, not allowing for any give. Her much longer tail snaked around Harddense's, Binding him tightly. Harddense could not move at all. He could hear Nichole screaming, demanding that someone, anyone, do something. Isabelle was trying to entice Demisewan into activity, but her eyes had not left Swadeaqua at all.

"I'm sorry, Mewblade! I'm sorry!" Harddense screamed, then broke down entirely. "Ahh!!! I don't want to die!!!" he sobbed. Mewblade pressed the side of his face against the Barrier. She shut out all excess distractions, including the concern of her father. There were only two Pokémon on the field that mattered right now, her and the Pokémon she had to kill.

Harddense looked at Mewblade with dreadful anticipation. *Oh, God. This is it. She's going to kill me!* he blubbered to himself. He had failed miserably, blundering with protecting Swadeaqua, and unable to continue protecting Demisewan. Harddense had tried as hard as he could, but he had nothing left to give. He closed his eyes in resentment, having to accept that his life was at an end, and that he was as meaningless as he felt.

“Make it quick,” he muttered, the only thing he could ask of Mewblade. She blinked, somewhat confused. He was the first being who requested their preference of death to her. To some extent it was flattering to be asked.

“Okay,” she replied quietly, honoring the request. Mewblade bent her head down, her head blade lightly resting against Harddense’s upper back. Harddense looked at the sky longingly; likely the last thing he would see as he waited for his final breath. Mewblade counted down.

“Three. Two,” she held her head back. Harddense closed his eyes, dropping his defenses further. He accepted his coming. “One.” Mewblade stabbed her blade through the center of Harddense’s spine and heart, speedily dislodging it afterwards. Her victim dropped to the ground, dead and limp in an instant. Mewblade could hear the very loud calls for his name over the headset, but there would never come a reply.

There was still one assailant left for Mewblade to destroy. She looked at Demisewan just to notice that the vulnerable little thing had moved. Her disembodied paws were covering her mouth, tears silently trapping themselves in her fuzzy cheeks. It was not exactly an abnormal response to the realization that one’s family was no longer alive. Mewblade blinked Harddense’s blood from her eyes, disliking the metallic sting. As her lashes parted she noticed that Demisewan was gone.

Ghost types had a notoriously spooky nature about them, but not quite like this. A quiet, disjointed voice spoke from behind. Upon turning around, Mewblade could see Demisewan, wondering since when she could move in the time span of a blinking eye.

“Harddense, can you hear me? Harddense . . .” Demisewan was whispering, kneeling next to her beloved twin. She brought her paws to view, the fur drenched with his blood. Mewblade was perplexed as she watched the display. When she had resurrected Michael some months ago, his reaction to his colleague’s deaths had been grief. Demisewan’s was somewhat different, strange and if not a little perturbed. Demisewan was whipping her head back and forth between her paws, eyes darting about wildly. Left paw, body, right paw, body, repeat. Her sharp inhales grew increasingly fast, hyperventilating to such an extent that Mewblade was almost convinced that Demisewan would pass out.

Fast as the behavior began, it stopped. The breathing calmed down and Demisewan stood up, muttering inaudibly under her breath. After a few moments of standing motionlessly she quieted herself completely. Mewblade was becoming uneasy. Her sister was perfectly statuesque, the only thing that moved were her lungs from steady breathing. Cautiously, Mewblade dared to go closer, tip-toeing softly across the grassy field.

The maddening stare of Demisewan brought Mewblade to a halt as she swiveled with an uncoordinated, but purposed jerkiness to face Mewblade. Demisewan’s ghoulish expression made Mewblade unsure if she should move any further, but she risked it, taking a single step more.

“I *hate* you!!!” Demisewan shrieked, her double-jointed jaw breaking into an inhuman scream that echoed off the stadium walls. Her generally sweet features were masked with incomprehensible rage, the air sweating so much with it that the feeling was suffocating. So intimidated by the vicious outcry, Mewblade was ready to take to the sky. Demisewan would not have it. A Mean Look, grossly sinister enough that it grounded Mewblade, giving Mewblade no advantages when she desperately needed it.

Demisewan raced to Mewblade's position, utilizing a Pursuit. She toppled into her sister, nails ripping into her rib cage ferociously. Mewblade hardly noticed the injury over Demisewan's face. The playful, bubbly Mewthree was absolutely gone. There was no sign of her former self. Instead, Demisewan was possessed by her spite, a demonic entity bent on revenge. Mewblade's painful demise was Demisewan's essence of being.

Mewblade attempted to throw her sister off, but Demisewan volunteered the motion instead; kicking off of Mewblade and somersaulting a few feet away. She returned with a vengeance. Mewblade had to play smart and met Demisewan in the center of the field. As her head blade went down to charge, Demisewan threw an even greater fit. An angry howl wavered through the air, Demisewan's intense, red aura ripping through Mewblade. Mewblade stopped in her tracks, paws slicking across her blades. Every single blade was dull, Demisewan's Spite having disabled their functionality. The moment of bewilderment allowed Demisewan to use an even stronger attack on her sister. She jumped onto Mewblade, increasing her speed with a Quick Attack. The move threw Mewblade to the ground, with Demisewan landing on top. The ghost's reflexes were instantaneous as her paws ripped and shred at Mewblade's thighs.

Mewblade could only give herself time to wince before Demisewan snarled with fury and sunk her carnivorous teeth deep into Mewblade's exposed neck. The carotid artery, the primary blood supplier for the brain was buried deep within the neck. Since Demisewan did not know more than basic biology, she missed the artery and instead hit the primary vein, the jugular. Mewblade could feel the teeth tear away, taking a substantial portion of her flesh, and part of her vein. With desperation setting in, Mewblade powered a Shadow Ball, the only attack that had proved effective on Demisewan so far. Despite the primal drive, Demisewan was well aware of Mewblade's intent and ran away as an invisible spook.

Invisibility only extended to anything within direct contact with Demisewan up to a certain mass. As she ran, the blood from her hands and her face dripped off, betraying her location. With her right paw pressed against her oozing vein, Mewblade used her left to hurl the Shadow Ball. A startled sound emitted from the crimson drops before Demisewan came back into focus. The beast of a Pokémon drew back her bloody lips into a hiss, then screamed in Frustration, adding the power of that move to her Night Shade. While Night Shade had little effect against steel and dark types, the sheer intensity could easily play off the weaknesses of a psychic.

Mewblade grimaced, unable to run from such a move. Demisewan's aura spread throughout the field, the color bleeding to a sickening red. Mewblade was surrounded by an electromagnetic field, designed to counter the electric impulses in the brain. For a psychic Pokémon it could disrupt their energy, causing a lot of pain and multitudes of other effects.

Mewblade brought her steel type traits to the surface, metal racing across her arms, feet and tail to ward off the effects of the attack. The wave of red crashed through Mewblade, dissipating as it passed. The pain was quick, but that was hardly a concern as Mewblade soon discovered. The energy in her body was jarred significantly enough that it had undergone a temporary alteration, and like her blades, was now unusable. No energy and no blades meant Mewblade was limited to physical attacks. She had been forced to fight without either before, and just like in her nightmares, the results were going to be no better.

Demisewan performed a combination of abilities to make her faster and hit harder. The ghost shot past Mewblade's right side, but instead of striking there, she dug her paws into Mewblade's left with a deceptive Faint Attack. Then in less than a second, Demisewan performed a sweeping motion before hand-springing and kicking the falling Mewblade in the chin. Mewblade went down, struggling to stand from her fallen position. She was in trouble.

Blood was seeping out of every one of Mewblade's injuries. She had no capability to staunch the wounds, let alone move her full 436 lbs. If she was smart, she would have used Bulk Up or Recover before the Night Shade finished, at least that way Mewblade could take more injuries.

Struggling to do so, Mewblade heaved her body off the ground, catching sight of some strange energy coursing through Demisewan's paws. There was something truly depraved with what would come next. Demisewan whipped her severed appendages through the air, nails scratching Mewblade's skin. This was a move that Mewblade feared and she desperately tried to force her energy back into a functional state. Demisewan clawed away at the flesh on Mewblade's back.

"Rrr . . ." Mewblade winced, wrapping her arms around her waist. She could swear she saw part of her shriveled kidney go with the retracting paw. Another Shadow Punch went through Mewblade's chest, temporarily disrupting the function of her heart. Demisewan started to go for Mewblade's head.

Mewblade dodged her head to the side, determined to avoid the paw. A swipe careened through her head, phasing from one side and out the other. Completely disorientated, Mewblade stumbled in a daze. "Hmm?" Mewblade thought she felt something in her mouth. "Mmm!" she gave a muffled cry as Demisewan jerked Mewblade's jaw around. Despite her struggles, Mewblade could not dislodge Demisewan's paw from her mouth.

To every end of Mewblade's rationale, she was certain Demisewan was trying to solidify her paws inside any vital organ that offered give. With any luck, the solidification would cause such a rapid expansion that an aneurism seemed highly plausible. The only reason why she had not died yet was that Demisewan had never been angry enough to use such a move, and was somewhat out-of-practice.

Mewblade tried to struggle out of the grasp only to have Demisewan do it for her by ripping her paw through Mewblade's cheek. Mewblade hollered, her cheek ripped wide open, the flesh flapping uselessly from the side of her face. The muscles on one side of her jaw were completely destroyed, making it hard for her to spit the gushing blood out of her mouth. Although there was a gaping hole on the side of Mewblade's face, most of the blood ended up in her throat, making her nauseous. In the minute amount of time it took for Mewblade to lose her capacity to speak, Demisewan was already stalking her down.

Mewblade took to her feet, trying to distance herself from her sister. She heard a banshee's wail as Demisewan came up from behind. Mewblade managed to successfully remove what was left of her armor, trying to gain any speed that her body could muster. Demisewan appeared in front of her. Mewblade made the snap decision to retreat, but with Demisewan's endless Pursuit, any way she faced was always met with her.

A Shadow Punch phased through Mewblade's chest, solidifying in the spongy tissue of her left lung. Mewblade felt the tissue instantly expand away to make room for

the paw, her lung subsequently collapsing on itself as the vacuum effect took over. Mewblade doubled over, spewing blood from both her stomach and lung. She forced herself to heave the remainder, coughing the rest out as she did. Another paw narrowly missed the top of Mewblade's skull. Demisewan was aiming to kill, and Mewblade's luck had run dry.

The spastic Mewthree backed her Legendary counterpart into the stadium wall. There was nowhere to go. Mewblade was weak and heavily disabled. She thought she heard someone call her name, her mind too delirious to pinpoint the source. Demisewan would kill her before the multiple critical blows had the chance.

Please . . . help me.

"Mewblade!" Coline was calling out her friend's name, oblivious to how dangerous it was to attract Demisewan's attention. Mewtwo and Moltres had tried several times by now to break the protective force surrounding the field, but Demisewan was so determined to act her vengeance, that they were unable to break through. Mew was rapidly swapping Transformations, taking on any available type that could bypass a ghost's abilities but to no avail. They could not save Mewblade.

Mewblade was telepathically incapable, but there was one thing that always knew what she was thinking. Almost a welcome, it told her what was required.

~You must accept it.~

I accept! she thought, understanding what she was being asked to agree to. Mewblade's eyes washed over in the inversion of her aura, closing her eyes to hide what she was doing. At the edges of her revived aura were traces of a pale green, almost indistinguishable enough that the Legendaries around her did not notice. Demisewan hardly gave the strange looking aura any mind as she furthered her onslaught.

~"Imprison."~ Mewblade spoke telepathically in a voice that sounded nothing like her own. Demisewan became locked in an electrifying embrace, unsure of how she got there but very certain that she wanted freedom from the oddly constricting grip. As quickly as the onset of the aura had happened, it left.

Mewblade recovered her wounds minimally enough that she would not bleed further, saving the rest of her energy to make certain she dealt with Demisewan properly. To kill a ghost was an oxymoron. Aside Demisewan, most ghost Pokémon were well established as dead. Unfortunately Demisewan was so far into her rage spell that she was more ghost than mortal, and killing her was going to be difficult. Even a second of sentience would be more than enough time to kill Demisewan properly, that was if she could even get her to that state first. Torture was beneath Mewblade and bringing Demisewan to some level of awareness would cause Demisewan pain, and a lot if it.

Mewblade focused her energy on the Imprison, winding it tightly around Demisewan with the intent of squeezing the life out of her. Sure enough, Demisewan began to struggle, then scream out in pain, but it was not enough. If she did not have the sentience to realize that pain meant she was alive, then Demisewan could not be killed. Mewblade brought her damaged paws close together, treating the Imprison like a knot. The more she pulled on it, the tighter it would get. She opened her arms slowly, Demisewan's body causing resistance. *Come on*, Mewblade thought, so determined and focused, watching for the split second response when Demisewan would realize her

mortality. Demisewan hissed and spit and screamed to such an ungodly pitch that Mewblade's ears started to bleed. *Enough of this.*

<“You’re dying, Demisewan!”> Mewblade shouted at her sister, then there it was. Demisewan tilted her head, batting her eyelashes while she tried to comprehend the notion with her sickened mind. Mewblade took it, arms thrown wide as she choked the life from Demisewan’s tiny little frame. Exhausted, she threw her arms down, with them fell Demisewan; a mangled heap of broken bones and twisted flesh.

On the other end of the deceased Mewthrees’ headsets, discord resumed upon the final death of Demisewan. The Team Rockets that the Legendaries had scared off peeked in from the entranceway at the other side of the field, stunned by the sight of the three bodies sprawled on the field. They refused to enter due to the powerful offense, remaining timidly where they stood. Mewtwo was assured the Rockets had gotten the message and led the small party to the other exit. From his darkened gaze one could tell he was not in the mood for anymore bloodshed.

Mewblade let her comrades leave, clueing in that they had been watching at least some part of her battle. She brought her disfigured face to the Rockets. <“You can have them back.”> No one was exactly enthused to retrieve the bodies, especially with Mewblade still standing on the field. <“If you are at all wise, you will let your superiors know that if this ever happens again a lot more of you will suffer the same fate as these three. Take note that they were my genetic family. I do not discriminate with whom I kill.”> Mewblade turned around, marching away, somehow ever dignified even when so destroyed. None of the Rockets dared to follow as Mewblade went to the other field entrance to reunite with, to her, was her true family.

The light of the late afternoon sun cast dimly down the hallway, showing sight of those most special to Mewblade. The same sunlight cast her body in shadow, giving her a flawless silhouette as she Recovered her wounds. As Mewblade approached, Mewtwo instantly berated her.

<“You just had to kill them all, didn’t you?”> he muttered coldly. Mewblade hardly wanted to give him an answer for why she had not gone easy on them, and given them a chance to leave Team Rocket.

“They broke the laws, simple as that,” Mewblade replied, finally able to speak normally. She brushed past Mewtwo dismissively. “Hey!” exclaimed Mewblade as a paw clutched onto her arm. She yanked her arm from Mewtwo’s grip.

<“We know what happened, Mewblade,”> Mewtwo gave a low, intolerant growl. <“We saw the whole thing, so don’t cover up for what you did.”> Mewblade looked back at him, her mouth hanging open in dismay. She was in a foul mood to be antagonized by her father, but definitely not in any mood to believe he watched the sickening parts of the fight.

“No, you did not,” Mewblade countered firmly.

“Mew mew mew mew,” (We all saw what happened,) said Mew with her head bowed, eyes turned away. Mewblade did not know what was worse at that moment. On one hand there was Mewtwo scolding her for destroying her detrimental siblings, and on the other that he actually watched what they did to her.

“I did what I had to do!” Mewblade snapped, feeling justified for ending the lot.

<“They didn’t break any laws. They broke you. You could have stopped and left at any time but you didn’t,”> Mewtwo retorted. Mewblade thought his viewpoint was so far flung from reason.

“Then what?!” she lashed out at her parent. “If you saw what they did then how could you possibly accept them?”

<“Remember what you did to me? Mew and I still accepted you even after that,”> Mewtwo spoke quietly, reflecting on the first meeting he had with Mewblade and the resulting aftermath.

“I . . .” Mewblade shut her mouth altogether. He was right. There were a multitude of things she could have done to avoid conflict, to protect her brother and sisters, and to remove them from the harmful reach of Team Rocket. Only because Swadeaqua shot at her did not mean she had to fight. Legendaries could forgive their adversaries, effectively calling off Mewblade. *All of it . . . None of it would have happened if I said I forgave that one gun shot.* She gave her siblings no chances and slaughtered them all. Already they were out of reach for her resurrection ability, her having failed to protect them, and them failing entirely to protect their souls from themselves. And all of this for what reason?

“ . . . Because you could only see Vicebane.” Mewblade was puzzled and looked to her Chosen. She knew it was impossible for anyone else to have heard Swadeaqua. The girl was solemn, holding onto Eevee tightly. She offered the explanation. “Sometimes I can feel your sadness,” she frowned sympathetically.

“Eeveee eevee, eeve eeve eevee eee eve,” (We both can, even when it’s not so obvious,) Eevee added, her sympathy as visible as Coline’s. Mewblade was speechless, wondering how caught up in her own grief she was to have missed the fact that both Coline and Eevee were developing empaths.

“I think we need to talk,” Coline said with a sad smile. It was the conversation that Mewblade had been dreading. Mewblade kept putting it off, aware that none of the assorted beings before her were ever around at the same time and thus she would not have to bother with it. Had she followed Emma’s advice and talked to her parents, Moltres, and her Chosen, she would not have fallen prey to Swadeaqua’s manipulation. There would have been nothing to fear and she would have had the ability to make solid decisions. Avoidance and denial had made Mewblade’s humiliating defeats and almost brought the loss of her life.

<“If we had known sooner we could have helped you. You knew you could come to us,”> Mewtwo said, filling the silence.

“I deal with my problems the way I feel I should.” Moltres listened, trying to be patient with Mewblade but even she was frustrated with Mewblade’s refusal to talk.

<“We can be patient and wait for you for however long you need, but we care about you like nothing else in this world. You have given yourself for us, especially for me.”> Moltres kept her eyes even with Mewblade’s, understanding that what Mewblade had done for her could never be repaid. <“We would give every ounce of ourselves for you.”> Moltres went behind Mewblade and embraced her.

“No!” Mewblade said in defiance, trying to get away. The fight with the Mewthrees had took most of her strength away, making struggling with Moltres futile. Coline and Eevee were watching, praying silently that despite Mewblade’s current state of misery, that Moltres would get through to her.

<“Stop fighting it,”> Moltres ordered. <“Don’t you see how lonely and hurt you’ve become because you keep hiding yourself? I am not here to hurt you. None of us are.”> Moltres was hugging Mewblade tightly, refusing to let go. <“We don’t want to see you suffer like this anymore. I’m sick of it, we all are. We love you, Mewblade. And it’s not because we have to, it’s because we *want* to put up with you and all your stubborn, twatty, insane, lazy, do-it-myself, every-day attitude that makes you, you.”>

“Eevee eee,” (Don’t forget stupid,) Eevee added with a cheeky, yet loving smile. Coline cuffed her for that one.

<“I would be honored. No, ecstatic to be part of what you would consider to be your real family. The one that really matters to you in the end. We want to be there for you when you feel alone, to share your burden and let us take it off your shoulders. Let us into your life. Please, Mewblade.”> Where Swadeaqua was forcing her, Moltres was practically begging for the privilege. Mewblade became still in Moltres’ wings, listening. Mew started up in tears, having a hard time dealing with how unhappy Mewblade had been. Wordlessly, she nestled her tiny body against Mewblade’s cheek. Mewblade understood, everything they said and did was not because they wanted something from her. She welcomed Mew’s touch with a gentle nuzzle before she was startled by Mewtwo’s timidly rigid hug.

<“If it makes you feel better, I doubt any of them could replace you,”> he muttered, somewhat obliged to be the continuing moral compass for Mewblade, but at the same time embarrassed to be mimicking Mew’s behavior.

“Eevee eeevee eeeve eeeve eeeve, eeeve eeeve eeeve eeeve,” (And if it makes you feel even better, I tease you because I love you,) Eevee said, still cheeky and snide as ever, but Mewblade could accept that.

Coline was the last to approach, carrying Eevee over as she joined Mew, Mewtwo and Moltres in their support for Mewblade. Mewtwo made room to accompany the child as Mewblade hoisted the girl in her arms. Coline snuggled up to Mewblade, resting a head upon her shoulder.

“It’s okay if you cry. I don’t mind,” Coline spoke reassuringly, glancing up at Mewblade’s eyes. “People do it to feel better, and you’ll feel better too.” Mewblade smiled, slightly bemused by Coline’s little words of wisdom. The girl smiled, caring and supportive of the Legendary she was chosen by. “I love you,” she kissed Mewblade on the cheek, the Mewthree leaning into it so she could remember the good that was still left in the world. Coline’s confession brought about a torrent of expression.

“Eevee eeevee eeevee eeeve, eeevee!” (I love you lots and lots, Mewblade!) squeaked Eevee delightfully.

“Mew mew!” (Love you!)

<“I love you, you big pain in my firey butt,”> Moltres chortled gleefully, giving Mewblade an extra-tight hug.

Mewtwo said nothing along the lines of what the girls said, simply saying, <“You know,”> and continued smirking as per usual.

Mewblade was overcome for once with positive emotion, tears readily falling down her face, not because she was suffering, but because she was overjoyed. She hugged Coline closer. “Thank you. I love you too,” she whimpered. She felt safe in these arms of her father, her mother, her best friends and her Chosen. Mewblade let herself go, crying for as long as she needed. Her family would give her forever if she asked.