

Life and Law – **Vita Sanguinence**

By: Vaporeon Lugia Krabby

It would be an eon and a day, some million and four hundred thousand years before any human would refer to a Pocket Monster as such. It would still only be shy of that before the languages of humankind would exist, that they could begin to call themselves masters of the world. For now, Pokémon ruled the earth, sea and skies. Once a beautiful globe of lush forests and teeming oceans of life, everything had become frozen to stillness; a snowball Earth.

The Legendaries ruled this world. To encourage the recycling of materials, to create the fertile soil, there were Groudon and Kyogre, the creators of lands and waters. To protect all who rested on the firm soil, there was Rayquaza, the guardian against all invading extraterrestrial forces. To keep the climates even, weather forever changing, the Legendary Birds, the great Titans of the Sea, of Flame, of Ice and Thunder, gave the world the dynamic churn that was the seasons. And from that fold, there were the Articunos, the bringers of winter and cold. Of course, there were many Legendaries, all who had great responsibilities, but through the eyes of the most Legendary of Articunos, she saw all who loved the rest, though her species was shunned. To the great Lugia, she must pay homage. To Moltres and Zapdos, she must share her powers. Balance at the cost of her pride, as she was the most powerful and the most deserving to control, thus she did. She was a monarch, Her Highness, forever to be referred to as Ice Queen.

Under her reign, the Articunos fought back. Together they took control, conquered the climate, the seasons and the sunny days. No more was there warmth, but an ever present chill that robbed the comfort from the bodies of the living. But it was not enough. Soon the cold penetrated to the bone, then the soul as countless lives perished, and soon she turned on her own kind, convinced they were disloyal to her cause. The only real way to be truly the most revered was by being the only one that remained. The massacre began. First the lowly Pokémon, then to the sub-Legendaries and those that fought back. It was not enough to get rid of them. She turned her attentions to her competitors, the Legendaries, and among the wake of the dying, did she finally take her passions out on her fellow birds, slaughtering those of her very own flock. Of those that remained, both mortal and god alike, life's forecast was that of fear, and of the few of the Legendary fold that remained, it was a terror like no other.

“You must hurry, brother! There is safety at the sacred space. Hurry!”

“Sister, go without me. I cannot continue in this state.”

The female looked back to her sibling, eyes meeting, her refusal obvious. The sub-Legendary Mew would not abandon her brother, Legendary or not. It was not his choice in the matter that he must undergo the transition from a mortal to that of a Legend. The pair stood alone, and as right to ascension is necessary for world balance, it was either him or her that was to be chosen. Why it had to work in this way, she did not know.

Ever since Ice Queen began her rule as one and only, the Legendary numbers had dwindled. So bad was the eradication of all species, that instead of going through the normal process of a Cleansing Ceremony, the approval process was at random and instantaneous. There was no time to opt to become a Legendary. A transition for a sub-Legendary stipulated that they be of virtue, but fate had no time to be choosy, and there were no longer any sub-Legendaries to agree upon who should be a dead Legendary's replacement. It was just as it was.

The female had grabbed her brother, leading him on a panicked chase through the once lush rainforests of what would eventually become known as the Amazon. Her brother was hampered from the effects of a forced sub-Legendary to Legendary transition. A Legendary neither breathed, ate, or even blinked. To become one was a process of suffering. The body voided all foreign material, from tears to food, where the brain began to switch what would be considered normal survival functions, off. Her brother was in near agony, parts of his brain going through rapid decay, rewiring itself to favor even higher senses over the primitive needs of breathing or REM sleep that his cerebellum controlled. His sickened lurching caused by his body trying to expel all food and wastes left him further incapacitated. If it were not for his sister and her prodding, he would have fallen to Ice Queen hours earlier.

"I can sense her coming," whimpered the male. His sister, still with the male embraced in her arms, glanced back. Ice Queen's aura was disgustingly huge. Sensing it was not a problem, actually knowing where she was amongst the mess was different altogether. The only way to get an accurate estimate of where she was, was through visual identification, and if one could see her, it was already too late. Sheer Cold was an ability that Ice Queen was a master of. Any creature would long since perish to it before ever bearing witness to the cause, and already, the freezing affects of her aura could be felt.

<She is near,> whispered the female into the head of her brother, slowing her speed down and suppressing her aura as much as possible. She refused to let her heat-giving Barrier to drop, as it was the only thing keeping them alive. At a nippy sixty below and falling, being without was lethal. All the pair could do was pray that the Articuno would not notice the temperature disparity.

Minutes passed and the cold had dipped only an additional five degrees further down. Ice Queen may have been near, but not close enough to be seen. Hurriedly, the pair flew down a small tapir path, heading for the small shrine that the jungle Pokémon made as a tribute to the abundant fertility of Mew. The going was not that fast, and as much as both wanted to move through the dense jungle, the icicles made for dangerous obstacles. A brief dash across a small breadth of open canopy was all Ice Queen needed. She had wanted to catch this pair for weeks, and now it was time. A cackling screech rang through the air, the sound as numbing as its owner's aura.

"She found us!" screamed the tiny sub-Legendary, trying to increase her speed to only find that her brother was pulling back.

"Go on without me," he pleaded. The plea did not have her convinced, but only more moved to save him.

"You are the Legendary. I must protect you!" she retorted, struggling to move forward with him both resisting and because of the energy it took to carry them both along.

“Go forth and survive! As your Legendary you must do as I command!” barked the ill-stricken Mew, Ice Queen’s form was now visibly looming off in the distance. His sister was shocked. For him to quote honor at such a time, to willingly sacrifice himself for her, that was not an option. Whether Legendary or not, they were family first.

“I shan’t abandon you to such a thing! You are my flesh, my blood!”

“If you were the Legendary, you would instruct me the same. Go on!” screamed the male as loudly as his confused diaphragm would let him shout. They both could see Ice Queen now, those cold, murderous red eyes. The female obeyed. She fled for her life.

Off in the distance she could hear the blood thirsty cackle and a strangled screech, her brother dying in the bird’s icy talons. The sound made the Mew go faster. She had lost everyone, her friends, her family, and was now the only one of her kind left. The only thing alive and familiar to her was the shrine that was the sacred place of Mews. No other Legendary was welcome in that space. Maybe the idea that some place could offer her sanctuary seemed like a foolish idea. It was not like Ice Queen had respected the shrine of any other Legendary; after all, the crown she wore on her crest was that of her treasure and those of the two other Legendary Birds.

No, this cannot be happening to me! Please universe. Have mercy on me for a small time. Now is not the moment to change me! grimaced the female, feeling her body already succumbing to the Legendary transition, her thoughts racing, her body racing faster still, she needed to get to that shrine before the affliction took her out. She wished she had not eaten that frozen mango, feeling it sit in her throat, wanting to jump out of her body. The nausea broke her concentration, giving her only the strength to float as she hurled the mashed fruit from her stomach. It only brought temporary relief since Ice Queen was on the move and she was nowhere near safe.

The cold began to whistle through the trees, drawing nearer, the oppressive stillness of it sucking the warmth further out of the air. The rumor that prevailed for so long, until there was no one left to spread it, was that standing next to her was the temperature of absolute zero. Maybe it was fear, or she was really that close, but the solitary Mew knew that soon her end was nigh.

It did not take her long to reach the shrine, though it seemed like forever. The smooth granite of its steps welcomed her as she collapsed upon them, weakened by the affects of her body’s Legendary transition. If only she had someone to look after her, to care for her while she changed. She was truly alone and that left her vulnerable.

As their numbers dwindled, it became easier and easier to kill off pesky Legendaries. A robust individual could go from sub-Legendary to Legendary in three days time and function, but Mews were weak and easy targets. Only their tiny size and ability to Transform into virtually anything had kept their numbers high for as long as they had. Ice Queen settled before the shrine’s steps, looking down at the last remaining Mew, the only Legendary that had held out against her, except for the one lone Lugia who dove beneath the ice, never to be seen again. The blue eyes looked up at her, worn, fearful, wanting the end of the tortured ice Hell her life was surmised by. With merriment, Ice Queen danced and slashed above the Mew, ripping her little body to shreds, bleeding her dry all across the creature’s precious shrine. No longer was it shrine marked by life, but of death, the last of the Mews drenching the steps in life now lost. Satisfied with the sight, Ice Queen took flight and left.

Waking up from somewhere in the universe, a fading call echoed in the mind of the being. Her gaze fell to the fused, misshapen lies for hands as the last of the Mew's life source absorbed into her flesh. It was not enough to make much from, giving her the most basic of forms, a female silhouette falling away to nothing at the bottom of the breasts. Shame overwhelmed her; naked and exposed, her white wings the only thing that covered her bare frame. Terror filled her and she attempted to scream but nothing came out. She had ears to hear, eyes to express herself, but no face.

This is not the life I want. This is not the existence that I was promised! Her duty was to be creation and yet she was mocked by being a dead being. ~Fix me!~ she cried, blood seeping from her eyes, washing her face in red. The universe understood her, it may not have been words, but feelings are all the same. Death and Law did not give a care for her, she was not theirs and their gifts were not for this one. At the very least Life could clothe this poor child of its, the bastard mockery of existence gone wrong. From itself it draped her in the richest velvet, clothing her in a rose colored robe with skirts long enough to mask the lack of a lower body, sleeves that covered damaged hands, and a hood for her face to hide behind. She knew she could not feel like those that were alive could, but she could reach out to the world and realize, that she was very, very alone.

It had been many days since her birth, the lone figure having long since wandered out of the safety of the forest and onto the plains of the Andes. The cold hardly varied, the terrain might, but the color remained a persistent snowy white. It was hard for her to imagine that this was the world she was brought into. Her heart whispered quietly, telling her that the planet used to be teeming with life, but now there was nothing.

Slowly she walked, essentially floating though imitating the motion, letting her robes drag behind her, a trail left behind. There was no one to follow it, no path to guide her. Maybe up on the high hills there was something for her to find, and indeed there was. A pair of red eyes watched her as she passed.

The female startled at the sound of fluttering wings, a nightmare from the past reminding her of something sinister, only to be cast aside by the warming glow of a large, orange bird.

~What be you?~ she questioned the bird, incapable of using speech and thus relying only on an emotive telepathy to communicate her questions.

"I am Ho-oh," Ho-oh smiled at her, though unsure of what to make of this strange oddity. It looked like a hominid for the most part, except for the large, white angelic wings and the absence of a face. The eyes hiding beneath the hood narrowed at it. She could understand Ho-oh's emotions, able to gather that it thought she was queer.

~How dare you pass judgement on me,~ she whimpered, overwhelming the bird with expressions of dejection and the horrible sight of crying blood. This was unexpected. Ho-oh could easily tell she was not a mind reader, but from what she let on, it was likely she was an empath. Her type of empathy was strong, allocated to understanding others' emotions, forcing them to internalize hers, and in turn, her internalizing theirs. It was a dangerous trait, yet there was no one around to be exposed to it. Despite it did not lie, it still felt things it did not want others to know. Ho-oh would have to be completely honest with this one and short to avoid revealing too much.

“I am not judging you harshly. Your appearance is unseen to me, and the unfamiliar can often be considered strange,” Ho-oh openly confessed. It could see the mark of a Legendary by the sparkle in her eyes. While created from the remains of a Mew, this one was an entirely new species without a name to identify herself by. She had no clue what she was, and understood that Ho-oh was not too sure either. While it could reveal the future and the past, it was not an exact science. Maybe she knew something about herself, even a small thing could offer some insight.

“Tell me of the circumstances of your birth.” This was expressed as genuine curiosity, and the female was eager to answer.

~I awoke from a dream and into a puddle of blood. A poor creature lay slain before me. I felt . . . life, wrap itself around me. Something I cannot express. Life? Fate? Both?~ She was not sure if what she said was making any sense. It hardly made any to her.

“As I thought. The Fates sent their first child and they started with Life.” Despite not being willing to verbalize its thoughts, it was either that or set the female wondering what it exactly meant by its current state of mind. “Life’s Blood, Life of Blood,” it addressed the female, giving her in essence a name and title. “Vita Sanguinence, Decider of Fate. Whatever hidden irony your concept saw in giving you a dead body, I do not know. There is meaning in what you are. To press upon itself and bring an avatar into existence means that this crisis is truly only yours to contend with.”

~You mean the one where no soul is living?~ Vita Sanguinence asked for reaffirmation.

“Yes. An Articuno who calls herself Ice Queen has destroyed all you can see and sense,” Ho-oh gestured across the expanse of sky and rolling hills that lay before them. “As it is my duty to be the guardian of this world, only you are able to go and confront Ice Queen.”

~Confront?~ the newborn Legendary easily emphasized how absolutely wrong that sounded. She had no experience in dealing with political matters, or fighting, and such a suggestion seemed foolish especially when she instinctively recognized Ho-oh’s 3.4 billion year age. ~I am an infant!~ she protested. ~You are wise. You must be able to reason with her!~

“She is beyond reason.” Vita frowned over the mention, but was not deterred. Surely the innocence she possessed and her moving empathy might have some positive effect on the bird.

~Then I shall find her.~ There was a strong emotional underlying in Ho-oh’s words that implied that violence was the only real answer, but Vita Sanguinence would not see it that way. For the universe to send someone who was affiliated with life would make no sense if Ho-oh were to have its way. Ho-oh had its doubts as well. Someone as weak looking and pacifistic as Vita would undoubtedly be useless in combat. Possibly she had other skills to make up for it, though, it was not something it could hope for.

“If you cannot find her, do not fret. While she may be attracted to warmth, she will find you all the same. Just give it some time.” Vita nodded her head in agreement, watching as Ho-oh disappeared in a flash. Fighting was the first resort for uncreative minds, and the last for those that still had options left. With any luck Vita Sanguinence would find her quickly and convince the Articuno to stop her tyranny.

Despite the absence of warmth, nourishment, nor a safe place to shelter, Vita Sanguinence had marched on tirelessly. From what Ho-oh had told her, she could expect to find Ice Queen chasing after anything that resembled some aspect of life. With her psychic capacity, it was possible for her to have an idea where a living creature might be, however faint the signal. As the days and nights drew on, the signals, the so few she could sense, continued to fade away, some dying off entirely. Existence was choking and grasping at anything to keep it warm and fed, and at this point, Vita was starting to realize that what she was feeling was really the last living creatures on Earth.

For days now she had chased this one, small group of Pokémon, her inability to suffer from mortal inconveniences the only reason why she had been able to catch sight of them. The little group consisted of mostly rock and ice types, basically Pokémon that simply generated less heat and had lower energy demands than most other Pokémon types. Despite the conveniences of having lower metabolic rates, the group was still suffering from exhaustion, hunger, and dehydration. At the temperatures they were living in, even the ice types had a hard time ingesting frozen water and melting it enough to keep themselves hydrated. From afar, Vita watched and empathized with their suffering.

In the lee of a snow drift, the Pokémon huddled together. There were several Geodudes along with a few Glalie, a Castform, a lone Swinub and a Lunatone. Most other rock and ice Pokémon were too heavy to navigate the snow, where other than the juvenile Swinub, its associated companions all floated. The flurry of snowflakes was cutting down on visibility, and they had all agreed that it was best to stop moving. Once it cleared up they could resume heading towards the land bridge between the two continents, here it was rumored there where volcanoes that kept the land around them close to freezing.

“Look! Out there!” the Castform called attention to a figure in the distance. From afar, they could see a shape with large wings.

“Go! Go!” cried one of the Glalie. “I’ll slow her down!” The collective of Pokémon began to scramble up the side of the snow bank, hoping to escape.

~Wait! I am not the one you fear!~ Vita Sanguinence called out to group, her empathetic projection stilling and calming them. To cover the distance quickly, she glided over, gracefully taking a seat beside them all. ~Hello,~ she emoted, smiling with her eyes.

“Hi.”

“Hello,” said one of the Geodudes. The loving expressions of the angelic figure set the group at ease. She was not a threat and the sight of her, while strange, was welcomed.

Vita giggled as they crowded around her, then began to make her assessment of the damage. There was extensive erosion on the rock Pokémon, the Castform was small, having withered from a lack of proper moisture, and the Glalies displayed deep ice fractures. The one she needed to be really concerned for was the Swinub. The emaciated thing was thin, with clumps of hair having fallen out from rot. Clearly, it was dying.

~Here, let me help you.~ While the Pokémon could not quite understand her, the expressions Vita gave them were clear. She was a benevolent, kind soul, there to assist them. Closing her eyes, Vita Sanguinence thought about giving them warmth, to bring a semblance of physical wellbeing and health to their broken bodies. The Pokémon

marveled as they witnessed their wounds healing, their energy perking up. They felt in a way they had not felt in such a long time.

"You are amazing!" giggled the Swinub, her coat thick and shiny with a glossy sheen.

"Thank you, thank you!" spoke one of the Geodudes, groveling at the base of Vita's robes. Their delight brought the Legendary her own. She could not be happier for them. In the moment she was about to ask where they were headed, the sinister feeling of conquest brought on by the notion of near success ran through Vita Sanguinence's mind. Her head snapped to attention, as did those of everyone else. Another set of wings appeared off in the distance, and it could be of only one thing, Ice Queen.

There was terror amongst the group, them scrambling about with renewed vigor. Over the past while as her query became starved and frozen to incapacitation, it had been easier for Her Highness to slaughter her prey. As she flew in to lay her claws on a Geodude, it swiftly dodged away from her grasp. Since the common Pokémon exhibited blatant heat production, the bird attacked the sources, bypassing Vita Sanguinence altogether. In a way, because she emitted no radiant heat of her own, she was invisible to the Articuno's senses except that of sight, and in a snowstorm, visual cues were often unreliable.

"Move!" shouted one of the Glalies before being frozen and then shattered into many pieces by a talon. Though not frozen, Vita might as well have been as she looked on. The little, fluffy Swinub called forth all her strength and threw her body into the bone-chilling feathers of Ice Queen. The rumors of her absolute zero temperature body were true, the shocking cold incapacitating the small swine and killing her instantly. Everyone alive saw, amplifying their fear to a whole other level, before running over the snow bank.

Anything that moved, and Ice Queen was after it. She barreled down upon the group, the Sheer Cold rising from around her and freezing the Pokémon into frozen, petrified corpses. She sung in a beautiful way, happily proclaiming her hunt successful. While the song may have been charming to hear, Vita Sanguinence was mortified by how repulsively vile the bird's emotions were. Ho-oh was just in its reasoning that Ice Queen was impossible to negotiate with. The bird was obviously insane, whether from her maddened spree of worldwide genocide, affliction of mind-numbing thoughts that millennia of existence brought on, or possibly a Chaos bond. Such a mind as hers could never handle any of the three for long, let alone a combination involving two or more. So devoted in her rule, that only Vita's tearful emotive sniffles grabbed Ice Queen's attention.

What is that thing? she wondered, thinning out the snowfall to get a better glimpse of the white winged individual. Ice Queen could instantly recognize something was wrong with it. Down the female's cheeks, there was a thick, red stain. There was no real face, and it was just as cold as the environment around it. She had her doubts whether it was alive or not. If it was a ghost type, as some of its traits supported, then it should have dissipated some time ago. Ghosts did not necessarily eat, but they still fed off of basic energies such as heat, plasma, dreams, and nightmares. With nothing around to provide any of their food sources, all ghost types had simply vanished from the Earth long ago.

“Bow to me!” she ordered whilst strutting up towards the infant of a Legendary. Vita Sanguinence was still ‘seated’ on the snow, shaken and distraught by not only Ice Queen’s putrid emotions, but the horrible pain and terror she had felt from the now deceased Pokémon. It felt to her as if she too was dying. Such a terrible sensation it was, that Ice Queen’s command went unnoticed.

Not liking to be dismissed, Ice Queen repeated her threat, squawking, “Bow to me!” in an even louder voice. Up close, she knew this was a Legendary, maybe one of the rare ones that she never heard of, and possibly missed.

~Why? They did nothing to you . . . ~ Vita’s expressiveness was emotionally controlling, overriding the Articuno’s way of feeling. This creature made her feel miserable, when for herself, she was elated. How dare this *thing* control her in that way?

“I am the master here!” Ice Queen screeched, spitting the cold of her breath at the female. Vita Sanguinence acted in alarm, throwing up a Barrier to protect her from the Ice Beam. Conquering Vita’s emotional overrides was hard for Ice Queen. She did not know how to express anything other than detest for others, and being forced to internalize someone else’s sorrows and fears was unmanageable. She did not want to feel this way. She hated this thing!

“Freak!” Another blast of deadly cold surged towards Vita Sanguinence. Empathy prepared her, and the angelic Legendary deflected the blow. Ice Queen made two more attempts, both times being denied as Vita Sanguinence effortlessly threw them past herself. Realizing this would not work, Ice Queen moved into Vita’s personal space, talons standing at the edge of her robes.

“You . . . ugly . . . hideous . . . beast . . .” the bird growled, a talon looming in front of Vita’s fear-stricken face. “Denying me my pleasure.” Vita Sanguinence was in tears, and so was Ice Queen. This was not as satisfying as she had hoped, giving her second doubts. “Next time,” she hissed, taking flight and leaving. The reprieve was short for Vita, as the Decider of Fate realized that her charges were in danger.

~Are you well?~ murmured the Legendary Pokémon, getting up and moving to each of the bodies. A distorted paw went to the Castform, touching the icy surface that encased it. ~Please be okay,~ whimpered Vita Sanguinence. ~Don’t leave me here alone!~ she cried as she tried to force her will into the once lively cloud. She prayed for life, for existence, for the nourishing warmth of a long lost sunbeam; all the things she could conceive as being cradles of creation. There was no activity beneath her fused fingers. The body did not stir. She moved about silently, touching each of the statuesque figures strewn about the snow. Again and again she tried, and again, she failed. She could heal and cure disease, but to overcome death was beyond her understanding. The barren landscape was only broken apart by the forms of the frozen dead, the whistling of the wind, and her grieving screams.

It had been a while since Vita Sanguinence had last seen Ice Queen. Once every few weeks the pair would cross paths, clashing with one another and always finishing in a stalemate. After the first experience and internalizing the feelings of those that had died around her, Vita Sanguinence could not summon the courage to attack the Articuno. The pain had burned her to the core, searing the soul, and that was only by being in the

presence of those that Ice Queen was in the midst of killing. To bring herself into the state where she could do the same to the bird was likely impossible.

Ice Queen was displeased by the continuing issues with the strange, winged and robed thing. She was starting to figure out that the emotional states she was experiencing around the female were not really attempts at harming her, but a reactive behavior to the things that she did. It almost seemed that the Legendary, whatever species it happened to be, was a juvenile. She had seen many a child Legendary, as she was the one that caused them, and then killed them, but while the behaviors fitted the description, this one was physically developed in some ways and bizarrely resistant to her attacks. She had hoped that in a surprise attack she could wipe Vita Sanguinence away, but even direct hits, while they stunned her, did not cause lasting damage. There were not many chances to experiment with strategy here.

The two chanced meetings when their paths crossed. They both had similar aims. Vita Sanguinence wanted to find others to be with, and Ice Queen was looking for the last few holdouts that were between her and being the sole recipient owner of this world. Because Vita Sanguinence chose to always walk over flying, she never arrived first. Her lack of speed, and considerably low energy output meant Ice Queen had only seen her roughly a dozen times over the last few years. Just like the Lugia that used the underwater currents for his protection, this Legendary essentially avoided conflict by seeming not to exist. Ice Queen could bide her time; eventually, she would rule as one and only.

Vita Sanguinence was aware that she personally had a lot of time on her hands, but the remaining living of the world did not. Life was always resilient. It thrived in the most harshest of climates, under the most difficult of circumstances, but when the environment became too tough, the last remaining refuge was always the ocean. It was the direction she had been heading in.

Falling snow blurred her vision, and sometimes she mistook the shadows in the distance for something alive, only to see that once she got close, that it was some wasted figure frozen into place. The sight of an immense Gyrados, its head missing despite the rest of it was intact, sent chills down Vita's shortened spine. Around it were other dragon Pokémon. It was not obvious if she was close to shore, though since a lot of the Pokémon were water dwelling, she guessed she was either near the water, or over it.

From what she could tell besides that, the number of deceased gathered in this one place meant they had put up a fight. A lot of them had their mouths agape, readying deadly moves such as Dragon Rage, or Hyper Beam, only to have Ice Queen snuff them out. Some Dragonites and Dragonairs littered the ice sheet around her, crumpled into pieces. All their efforts, and all it must have taken in turn was a single blow. These were the same types of attacks that Vita Sanguinence herself so easily shrugged aside. If only she was born sooner could she have possibly saved everyone. Resigned to the notion that she did not control the timing of things, or her own destiny, Vita Sanguinence continued onwards.

Something up ahead looked out of place. ~Another body?~ she sighed openly to herself. Any break in the ocean ice was guaranteed to be a corpse that had been covered in so much snow that it was no longer recognizable as anything but a lump. Vita Sanguinence ignored it as she drifted past, only to hear something stir. Arms at ready, Vita prepared herself for another encounter with the hostile Ice Queen.

From the ice rose the silvery form of a Lugia. Indeed, he was trying to be threatening, but only for the sake of saving his own skins. With his wings raised, and a mighty bellow he hoped to scare the feathery thing before him. A Glare was more than enough to imitate everything except Ice Queen to run from him, though to his dismay, the female started laughing mentally. Sure, he found it forcibly comical, yet he still tried to seem just that extra bit more menacing to scare away the laughing entity. It did not take long before Vita Sanguinence's infectious mood rubbed off on him, and then he too found himself laughing.

~I am not the evil one, only a passerby,~ she said with an added giggle. He could not help but believe her based on how she projected herself.

"I am sorry. I felt this aura of a Legendary, and other than Ice Queen and Ho-oh, I thought I was the only one left," confessed the bird in his native tongue, which was a mix of whistles and clicks, akin to porpoise song. He could speak any way he liked, and Vita Sanguinence would always understand. Likewise, because native porpoise was interpretive, understanding Vita was not as much of a problem as expected.

~It's okay,~ soothed the much smaller Legendary. ~I thought you were the nasty bird as well.~

"Then we both agree that we are glad we aren't her," chortled the Lugia, then extended his left wing towards her to introduce himself. "My name is Silver." He was confident in his name, but Vita Sanguinence was quick to note that he was unsure if he was supposed to still be addressed by that name.

~Maybe something else?~ she asked, letting him know she was aware of the mental and verbal discrepancies.

He nodded and replied, "Lugia, but because there was no formal Cleansing Ceremony, I do not feel it is in my right to claim my species' title." She accepted that answer.

~Shouldn't you be in the ocean?~ Vita Sanguinence poised her question, this receiving a thoughtful look from Silver. She recognized this individual by certain markers. For the longest time he had been below the ice, far out of her reach. As to why he was no longer hiding below the ocean's solid waves had her curious.

"As a Lugia, it is my responsibility to keep the currents churning, even if it only slows Ice Queen down a bit. I was hoping that above the ice sheet life had somehow managed to hold on. I came up here to have a look and in that short period of time, my exit hole had closed up. You're right, I should be in the ocean, but there is nothing there either. I can't force photosynthesis. She has killed everything. Maybe . . . just maybe . . ." Silver trailed off. The look of defeat on his face was palpable. "I wish my parents were here, I was too young to be a Legendary, and they were too old. It chose me over them, but they were powerful . . . wise." His vocalizations turned into snarly gurgling sounds as he continued. "I can only resist her, never face her. That Articuno is too strong and I am so weak that even her ice flows can stop me. There is no life here. There is nothing to save. All you and I are playing is a fool's game," he grimaced, his finger tips resting against his forehead. Vita Sanguinence offered her condolences, broken hands gently clasping the Lugia's shoulder. During this whole time he forgot even the most basic of common courtesies, which was to ask who she was.

"I'm sorry, I should not make light of your efforts when I don't even know who you are, or what you even do."

~Ho-oh called me, 'Vita Sanguinence: Decider of Fate.'~

The mention of Ho-oh caught his attention. Ho-oh tended to appear to sub-Legendaries at their birth, and when they were chosen to become the next Legendary. The Lugia could not remember his encounter as a hatchling, and due to the crisis, emergency ascension had taken place, where coincidentally, Ho-oh was not needed. *It probably figured I would have died by now, and not worth visiting.* That thought was entirely for himself, yet was surprised to see Vita's ears perk up, both alarmed and saddened by the idea.

"You can read even my mind?" he inquired. Mind reading often caused headaches if someone was trying to read the mind of a powerful psychic. The psyche was unaffected, and either he could assume this never before seen Pokémon was that powerful, or she was doing it some other way.

~I can share in emotions,~ she confessed in a shy manner, emphasizing her innocent nature.

"Anything else you can do, 'Decider of Fate'?" Silver chuckled, enjoying the company of the sweet, rosy Legendary. It was easy to see when she was blushing, her cheeks becoming a bright pink. Maybe she seemed a bit babyish, though absolutely darling all the same.

~Well . . .~ she swayed about, hesitating to answer, in part since she was not sure of all that she could do. ~Sensing emotions. I can heal others, and I can find them anywhere too! So all is not lost yet. There are still those that are living!~ the Legendary did a little bounce in her spot, excited and hoping the news would excite Silver too. ~Your duties are important, and you must get back to them. Control the climate.~ Relief washed over them. Silver had something worth working for. ~I sense life up north.~

"In the gulf?" This was answered with a look of clueless bewilderment. All she knew was which direction it was, not what said place was called. "We're going the same way. The ice is weaker there." His eyes went to the horizon. "Maybe with each other, we will stand a chance. If I fly too fast, she'll find me. And if she catches me in the open, I'm dead." He glanced to the Decider of Fate, seeing if she was catching on to his idea.

Of course she did. She did not want to be alone anymore, and Silver did not want to be alone either. Being by oneself was the fastest way to be killed in such a place. ~It feels like a long way to go. The company would be nice,~ confessed Vita Sanguinence, eyes turned away. Likely they would be moving at her speed, and from the pace she kept despite the endless marching, it could take weeks before they reached the warmer gulf. She really hoped he would not mind her company. The companionship of such a gentle, kind creature made the slow trudge seem worth it. Silver was more than willing to be in the presence of her. Whatever a Decider of Fate was, it must be rare, and something very special.

Despite being between the proverbial latitude lines of the equator and the Tropic of Capricorn during summer, the nights were as cold as it should have been hot in the opposite direction. At a nippy thirty below zero, Silver was chilled. Even the waters below the ice remained around freezing, where the night air was far less hospitable in contrast. His eyes turned to Vita Sanguinence. He had at least a thick layer of blubber,

where she had the thin velvet to cover her. There was no way she could not be cold. The Decider of Fate caught the thought, looking back at him with her albino stare.

~I don't notice. Because I am not alive, everything is always cold to me,~ she supplied an answer. The statement was near heartbreaking. Before him was this angelic figure, so loving and gentle and yet she always felt void of mortal pleasures. This was something that the Lugia would not stand for, and in a good natured manner he got close, leaning in to embrace her within the folds of his wings. The response he received was less than welcoming.

~Get off!!! Get off!!! Don't touch me!!!~ screeched Vita Sanguinece, emoting what equated to the utmost level of revulsion and violation Silver would likely ever have felt. The expressions sent him bolting several meters away, taking a few moments to regain his thoughts and overcome the sickened feeling that in a sense, he had just raped Vita. His expression of wide-eyed shock did not leave the tearful face of Vita's.

I only hugged her . . . he shuddered, not sure what he did wrong, when even the Fate had no idea.

~The robe,~ whispered the female. ~It's . . . personal.~ It really was just fabric, like the threads spun from a silk worm. There was nothing particularly special about it. The fabric had no sense of touch, it was next to impervious when it came to receiving permanent damage. The idea of being exposed and naked, while not ideal, was not something she instantly shunned. Somehow when Silver touched it, her instincts overwhelmed her and ordered her to guard this most precious of item with her life. It was the gift given to her by the universe, and only *she* was allowed to be in possession of it. Anything else touching it caused such a sickening feeling that unless Vita Sanguinece absolutely trusted the individual, there was no way anyone could physically interact with her other than with the exposed parts of her body. She was robbed of even the most basic pleasures of touch. Vita was not allowed to remove the robes, or be parted from them; in addition, no one was allowed to touch them either.

~It's not fair!~ howled the female, collapsing to the snow, and rocking back and forth in a bloody mess of her own sorrows while the Lugia looked on, unsure of how to comfort her. He cried for her, just as she was crying for herself. Being a Legendary meant that one had to abstain from intimacy, but even the process was not cruel enough to deny any sense of companionship. The helplessness he felt from not being able to hold her and comfort her was distressing.

If only . . . Silver reached forward, a single long finger of a feather touching the bloodstained cheek. A mental exhale, a non-verbal sigh meant the touch was well received. Vita Sanguinece took her hands to clasp the single feather, not letting go. Pure and alive, Silver was her rock, the safe place for her to fall. They took a moment to relax within the presence of each other, Vita relishing everything Silver was, and that she was lacking in. While she could never truly live, he was there, living for her. She would do what it took to keep this special individual; Silver, the one that must have been chosen for her.

Only the darkening of the sky tracked the days. Silver's natural ability to detect the magnetic field of the earth had been their only sense of direction. Unlike some of the Legendaries, Lugias were long-lived due to their resilience to mental strain. They were

hard to bore, so even with the endless white of the ocean ice before them, the monotony of it all hardly bothered him. For the Decider of Fate, she had nothing to compare it to, thus the redundancy was well tolerated.

Over the past few weeks, Silver regaled Vita Sanguinence with stories of the Legends themselves, of past fights and battles, about all of their duties, and basically whatever else his wise parents had taught him. Vita Sanguinence was a great listener, that being her most basic of masteries. She loved indulging the Lugia in conversation, hearing his emotions as he talked about things that really interested him, though trying to hide his excitement at the same time.

From him she learned about how the Legendary hierarchy worked, the full ramifications of the selection process for individuals, and the strain of having to become one. He mentioned of the nuances of sub-Legendary and Legendary life, about treasures. They had come to the conclusion that Vita Sanguinence was a standalone Pokémon species, flanking from Mew, and that her species' treasure was the cloth she carried around all the time. Silver had taken the treasure of the Titan of the Sea, and dumped it in an underwater canyon, someplace where Ice Queen could never reach. Given how many times Vita Sanguinence had been attacked by the Articuno, she wish she could have done the same.

"Looks like a good spot," announced Silver, stopping in place over a patch of buckled ice.

~Good?~ It looked like more of the same ice to her. The gulf was still a long distance away, but by now they had reached the equator, where hypothetically the warmest water was. She would have to offer her respect for this one.

"Stand back a bit. I am going to give this a try," Silver instructed, motioning to a spot further away. Vita Sanguinence only nodded and obeyed, watching as Silver began his attempt at breaking the ice sheet.

With a snarl, Silver focused energy into his open beak. There was a signature move of Lugias that most knew how to use easily and well, and it would be the first choice for his assault. Aeroblast charged, Silver hurled it at the ice. The hit sent the snow flying off, exposing the ice beneath.

~Nice effort,~ Vita Sanguinence said cheerfully, adding a clap to her Encore. This made Silver smile, feeling more energized as he prepared and released a second Aeroblast.

The ice in the target area creaked and moaned, yet it hardly buckled further. It should have weakened more than it did, but Silver was a Lugia, and he would not let the frustration get the best of him. Straightening his neck, he gave it another try, then another. The Aeroblast was having next to no effect on the icy surface, it being a move that was good for pushing things through the air and water, not for actual drilling as he was trying to do. After a few more attempts, Vita Sanguinence could sense his exhaustion, offering her energy to him so it would Refresh the Lugia and allow him to try a few other moves.

Between Body Slams and Hyper Beams, Silver was only moderately chipping away at the ice. It should have been easier than it was, but Ice Queen's winter-like grip was strong. He began to notice that grip tightening, the temperature of the air around him crashing.

“Is it getting colder?” Before he could get a proper answer, a bird cry spread across the sky, Vita Sanguinence in turn expressing levels of panic. They had been caught out in the open. “Not her!” Silver snarled.

“I thought that was who I sensed!” Ice Queen cackled, dropping down from the sky. While Silver was attempting to break through the ice, he and Vita Sanguinence were being unrestrained with how they used their energy. Silver’s youth may have made him a weak Lugia, but they still were strong Pokémon by default. Hiding their energy load was hard if they were actively drawing from it. “Both of you together. This is my lucky day!”

It was now or never in Silver’s mind. Any Legendary who encountered a corrupted one was responsible for destroying them. Ice Queen however was not going to let him have any dignity as she outright mocked him.

“This little whelp is the last remaining of the Lugias? Such a coward you are to hide in your oceans for so long. Have you come out to die quickly at my claws?” she twittered gaily. Silver was infuriated.

“At least *we* Lugias are noble enough to follow our duties!” retorted the sea bird. Between Ice Queen’s statement and his, he brought himself up into the air. Being on the ground was a death sentence, and he was already at an extreme disadvantage without his waters to aid him. Part of what Ice Queen had said was right. He was afraid of facing her, since the odds were in her favor, but if he had to die, he would die as a Lugia.

Aeroblast at ready, Silver took aim. With a dismissive glance, Ice Queen merely shook out the churning air with a cold vortex of her own, effectively nullifying the attack.

“Your signature attack. Was that really it?” Her Highness mused, casually glimpsing to see Silver’s baffled face. “You know, I’m feeling in a really good mood today, so I’ll let you try that again,” she chirped, further agitating Silver. He would show her everything he was, and with a passionate roar, tossed his energy and will into another Aeroblast.

Ice Queen was not exactly impressed by the juvenile’s attack, and like before, a simple Gust from her was all it took to dissipate the move. Her chilled laughter was more than enough to remind Silver as to why he was such a coward. He stood no chance.

“That was cute,” the evil, blue bird cooed, “but now it’s my turn.” Head back, and beak open, out came an Ice Beam. A Gust was a move even a hatchling could learn by just flapping its wings, and Ice Queen’s was enough to stop an Aeroblast. Silver had no hopes that he could handle anything even remotely extreme if it came from the Articuno including the Ice Beam she let loose on him.

“Light Screen!” Silver cried in alarm, using the move that dulled the effects of Ice Queen’s attack. The moment she heard him shout out the name of the attack, she started hooting. It was considered perfectly normal for a Pokémon to posture and verbalize when in the heat of battle, but to actually call out the name of the ability they were using showed blatant inexperience.

“I know you can’t kill me, but that was so pathetic that it just might!” Ice Queen continued to laugh hysterically, a noise mostly summed as a lot of irritating squawks. Silver’s pride was damaged so much that even with Vita’s hopeful emotes of encouragement he was beyond discouraged at this point; still, he had to focus and take the opportunity his own humiliation gave him.

Bringing his aura around his body, Silver used Extreme Speed to race at the distracted bird. Because Silver had been underwater for the years Ice Queen had been

conquering everything above them, he was not aware of the danger his next move presented.

~Stop!~ Vita Sanguinence shouted, throwing up a soft forming Reflect to bounce Silver away from Ice Queen's very negative body temperature.

"Vita!" Silver called out Vita Sanguinence's name, berating her for stopping him when she was only trying to save his life.

~Don't touch her! She's too cold,~ warned the robed female. It slowly dawned on Silver of how stupid a mistake he almost made. The moment Ice Queen had arrived, the temperature dropped significantly, and as he was flying in for an attack, despite the speed, he did notice a further temperature decrease. Vita Sanguinence inadvertently saved his life.

<You fought her?> he projected in private telepathy, using his speed to create some distance.

~Sort of,~ Vita confessed, watching as Ice Queen whipped after the Lugia. She was not a fast flier, and to Silver's merit, his speed was about the only thing he was better at than she was. Using this to his advantage, he figured that he might be able to back attack the bird.

While Ice Queen chased and blasted at him with her speedier moves, Silver was constantly attempting to circle and hit her with jets of water. Neither were really getting anywhere, and as Ice Queen realized, a change in direction might help her out.

From flying counter-clockwise, Ice Queen did a little turn of her body, changing direction. She was face on with Silver once more, him trying desperately to alter course, or slow down his momentum while Ice Queen was prepared to slam full force into the Titan.

~Halt!~ snapped Vita Sanguinence, a hardened Reflect appearing in front of Ice Queen, the force sending her sprawling into the ice below. In the same second Silver went from petrified to elated, Vita Sanguinence went from defensive to agonized. She had not meant to hurt Ice Queen so badly, the karma effect of her empathy had caused her to experience all of Ice Queen's injuries. There were a lot of negatives to her abilities, and this one was the worst.

"Stop crying. Shh," Silver repeated himself, distraught by how loud Vita's misery was. "This is a good thing. You finally stopped her!" he further added, almost in a pleading manner. He personally was not at all unhappy at seeing the sprawled out and struggling form of the Articuno. Her wings were badly maimed, no longer allowing her to fly.

"My beautiful wings!" bemoaned Ice Queen, her turning her icy stare to Vita. "I'll kill you!" Vita Sanguinence ignored what she said, her gaze on Silver as she looked for forgiveness.

~It hurts too much . . .~ she whimpered, body shaking out of mental anguish. She did not have the legs and lower body of Ice Queen, but Vita's phantom limbs felt the pain anyway. ~Go, please. I will restrain her.~

Silver was mortified. After all this time, and finally Ice Queen was downed, yet Vita Sanguinence was going to heal her. "No, you can't do that!"

~There has to be some . . . other way,~ choked the Decider of Fate, her face masked in pain that appeared to be even worse than what Ice Queen was experiencing. While Ice Queen was suffering from broken bones, she had not once let up with her

angry remarks. Vita Sanguinence was borderline incapacitated, and if she felt that way, everyone else was starting to as well. ~Silver, go . . .~ It was not like he had a choice. Any more time spent with Vita Sanguinence's mounting distress would paralyze him. How she was handling it, he was not sure. He had never felt so bad in his life, this including when he saw his parents die. Slowly becoming mentally distraught, Silver hurried his leave. Vita Sanguinence would find him eventually.

Regretting her decisions and hating her body, Vita Sanguinence began the process of begrudgingly healing her semi-mortal enemy. With effortless execution, the bones fused, the bruises vanished and within seconds, Ice Queen was fully healed. The whole act of being healed by something she tried to kill was confusing, and this was made worse as Vita Sanguinence held the bird within a Psychic, not letting her move. As promised, she would hold Ice Queen long enough for the speedy Lugia to get out of the Articuno's sensory range.

"What is wrong with you?!" Ice Queen screeched between her struggles. "You attack me, nearly kill me . . . then you heal me, and then you restrain me?!" She had never been manhandled, or exposed to someone else's sadistic nature. Ice Queen had done her fair share of torture to others, and with such actions being done upon her, she was certain Vita Sanguinence was a sadist with masochistic tendencies. There was no other reasonable explanation. "At least if you are going to kill me, actually do it!" she further challenged.

Vita Sanguinence narrowed her eyes at the bird, not able to come up with an excuse for why she did what she did. Without any explanation, and her restraints now set to hold for a quarter of an hour, Vita took off as fast as she could towards the horizon line and the general direction of Silver. Ice Queen was left all alone with her thoughts.

~Sob. Sob.~

Silver was true to his nature, not willing to abandon Vita. In the last few moments of their encounter with Ice Queen, he had been ordered by the Decider of Fate to run away with no real plan of how they would find each other. Vita Sanguinence might have the capacity to sniff out other individuals, but he did not. If he had been smarter about it he would have settled down somewhere for Vita to find him, but instead had done the wrong thing and was visually looking for a blip of rose-colored red amongst the endless sea of white. The strange, soundless projection of sobbing was what caught his attention first.

Following what he knew was the absent-minded expressions of Vita, Silver soon spotted the frail form lying about in the snow. Such an experience of doing harm to another had shaken her badly, causing her to not move from the spot she had settled in hours earlier. Expecting her to find him might have taken days, since it was unlikely she would have risen out of her self-loathing mood quickly if left to her own devices. Still slightly out of her range, Silver contemplated whether to scold her for healing the enemy, or comfort her for being a pacifist. Vita Sanguinence had no will to fight, and as it showed, when she did, it psychologically maimed her. The child Legendary was something to be wholly pitied.

"Found you," Silver spoke softly as he gently came in for a landing beside Vita. Part of her was relieved to see him, and the rest deeply ashamed. Silver had such

aspirations to see Ice Queen wiped from the face of the globe, and when the opportunity had finally presented itself in Vita, she could not do it.

~I am a failure . . .~ she muttered, the atmosphere around her a dark sulk.

“You’re not a failure. If hurting others hurts you, then there was nothing you could do about it,” coaxed the older Legendary, getting in as close as Vita would allow, wings surrounding the other Legendary but not daring to touch her. The poor thing had suffered enough for today, and did not need to be reminded about all the other problems she had. *I can’t just leave her alone like this*, he grimaced. The reality was, that while he could go back into the sea eventually, he could not take Vita with him. After the display he saw with Ice Queen, and the fact that the two had had encounters before, he simply did not lack the compassion to leave her by herself. Vita Sanguinence looked up, catching what he was thinking.

~Your duty is not to me but the oceans!~ she protested outright. No way would she have it. There were responsibilities that had to be attended to, she had hers, and with Silver being a Lugia, he also had his.

“I do not see the point in churning a dead sea. Without you, there is no hope, and no point in me doing my duties. Maybe you are right, and there is another way, and until we can find it, I am sticking by your side, Decider of Fate,” Silver finished with an elegant bow. “I am your Chosen, as it were.”

~Chosen?~ she asked with a little tilt of her head. This was something Silver had not explained, since he had not had one himself.

“A select individual who is loyal to a Legendary, aiding them in whatever they need. To you, I am such an individual. You can find life, and preserve it, which at least gives you a purpose. Since I have none, and wish to aid you, then effectively, I am your Chosen,” proclaimed the bird, unabashed by how ridiculously absurd his statement was. No Legendary was ever Chosen to another Legendary, it just was not done. As a Legendary each had their own duties, they could never ask another Legendary to sacrifice their responsibilities to forever help another. The situation had become so dire that Silver actually considered just shrugging his duties. There was no one to benefit from them if he did perform them, and no one to punish him if he did not.

“I promise I will not leave you,” further affirmed the Lugia, truthful and loyal. It was saddening to hear that despite how pathetic she was, Silver still devalued his importance in comparison to herself. Of course, there was a positive outcome to all of this, Vita Sanguinence would no longer be alone. In her quest to find anything, she had found Silver, who vowed to stand by her.

~I am very happy!~ Vita Sanguinence projected the emotion of pure joy, delighted in her new Chosen’s commitment. She was more than willing to lead him in her quest. ~We are getting real close to some of the survivors.~

“This would be so much faster if you just flied,” whined Silver, slowly flapping alongside the striding Vita Sanguinence. He had offered his services to her several times, only to be rejected. He was not a mount, and Vita was not comfortable with the idea of her robes sitting on his back.

~I know, but if we’re too high off the ground, then she might spot us,~ Vita spoke, referring to Ice Queen. After watching Silver struggle against the Articuno, the

Decider of Fate was being extra cautious about her energy usage. Bringing Ice Queen to them might not have been suicide for the dead Legendary, but for the Lugia, it was a very bad idea. Silver got the impression, then his attention went to something else.

“I sense something.”

~Great!~ Vita Sanguinence chirped, smiling with her eyes. They had been trailing a small group of Pokémon for a little over a week, and with the distance closing, and Vita Sanguinence’s persistent encouragement, Silver was able to pick up on them.

Vita and Silver had clung to the coastline where there were dense trees that made it almost impossible for Silver’s large frame to move through. Even Vita was unable to get through the jungle easily, given that her wings had just enough of a span to be a nuisance. They were lucky that the group they were after was close to the coast, and near a river. Moving a bit way inland had allowed the pair of Legendaries to get near.

“Did you hear that?!” a voice whispered shrilly. There was a brief bit of commotion, then sudden quiet. The Pokémon stilled themselves into silence. Silver wanted to chuckle, but at the same time understood their paranoia.

“I am the Legendary Lugia, accompanied by the Legendary Decider of Fate. We mean you no harm!” Silver called out to the hiding creatures.

“What do you think?” one voice murmured. Because Silver’s vocal tones sounded sort of like a bird, they were not completely certain that he was not Ice Queen.

~He speaks the truth,~ Vita further added. She could feel the Pokémon instantly respond in pleasant surprise. They knew, as did everyone else, that Ice Queen worked alone, and if what the first voice said was true, then there really were two Legendaries to greet. No one hesitated to come forth.

The Legendaries were met with eager enthusiasm as the seven hiders bounded out of the frozen ferns to welcome the leaders of the world. Silver was unable to hide his shock that somehow, these tiny things were still alive. Every last one was emancipated, shriveled to the bone. While he might not have wept outright, Vita Sanguinence did, and was instantly to their aid.

~Come, Silver. I will show you how to heal them,~ Vita Sanguinence instructed to her Chosen. The Lugia was a kind, and generous creature, the perfect match to Vita’s loving nature. He wanted to help in any way he could, and while he did not see how he possibly could do anything, if his Legendary was willing to teach him, he was more than happy to indulge her.

None of the Pokémon were without serious injury. Despite that they had not been attacked, the cold had taken its toll in multiple ways. Each of them suffered from frost bite, and if it were not for the Absol in their group, their limbs would have all become gangrenous, resulting in fatal blood poisoning. The Torkoal that was present, nearly black from the lack of heat it was failing to produce, had been used to sear the injuries to prevent infection and massive blood loss. It was the best they could do with that they had, this group willing to put up with their inflictions if it meant survival. To some, it was commendable, but to Silver it was a sign of despair. If there was really any way to help them, then indeed he wanted to try.

~Wrap your hands around them. Hands are healing,~ Vita gave her first direction. Lugias did not have hands as expected, though their defined wing structure had the same bones that a normal grasping hand would have. Silver understood, reaching his ‘hands’ out towards the closest creature, a disheveled Mudkip. The frog-like creature was absent

of fins and a leg, giving Silver no confidence that he could actually heal her. Vita Sanguinence did not doubt his abilities for a second. If he was willing to learn, she could teach him.

~Look deep inside yourself. Think about your energy, how you can manipulate it, use it for whatever you want,~ began the female. Silver looked at her quizzically. This was not exactly how he would normally use a Recover on himself. A Lugia's Recover was nothing to snort at. They were effective, though they only worked on the user, and never for replacing tissue. There was no way this was going to work. Before he could protest, Vita Sanguinence calmed his mind, helping him keep focus.

~Don't be discouraged,~ she spoke coaxingly. ~It is all right,~ Vita further added. Everyone quietly watched as Silver closed his eyes, focusing on his energy, letting himself become familiar with it and its possibilities. A psychic's energy could be used for almost anything if the individual was flexible with their skills and usage.

~Feel its physical shape.~ Silver grasped the scope of his energy, its dimensions. ~Take hold of some of it, and bring it to your hands.~ He did so, his wingtips surrounded by a flickering blue aura. ~Hold it there.~ Now came the complicated part, the actual healing. Conventional Recovers varied based on the Pokémon's understanding of anatomy. For those with highly developed brains, it was possible for them to sense the physical cells of the body, and either repair them or force them to duplicate. A very advanced usage of this method involved substituting energy for tissue, this forcing replication using a psychic's aura as physical matter. Such Recovers were very rare, and often only an aged Legendary could perform such a feat. Most Recovers that were done was by using ones available energy pool, directing it to the area of injury, and visualizing the injury not existing. Of course, if the psychic was in pain, or had a lower energy pool, then a Recover involving extensive damage almost always botched. Unfortunately Vita Sanguinence's was a different kind entirely, and hard to explain. She basically used her energy, wished for healing, and it happened. Any thought that could be put into it was not there, mostly since it was instantaneous.

~Bring your energy away from your hands, and touch it to the damaged spot, keeping it there.~ This instruction was easy to follow, as Silver moved his aura over the missing fins and limb. ~While keeping it there, go into their body. Imagine where they would feel pain. Imagine stopping it by pinching it. Tell a little bit of you energy to go and do that.~ Silver was focusing as best as he could, trying not to think about the disgust he felt for invading another's body and manipulating it to his will. One just did not do this to another individual, and no wonder Recovering others was not done. In a way it was more of a trespass than just touching someone, but it was actually going into their very body, into places that even they could not reach.

~It's okay. You are doing this so they won't feel pain. When you heal that much of them, it would hurt. Do not worry. They do not mind,~ came the reassuring emotions of the Fate, comforting Silver further. He proceeded without further hesitation, pinching the nerves between his energy.

Vita Sanguinence was quick to compliment, expressing, ~Good,~ as Silver progressed. There was going to be some major difficulties at this point. An injury that had healed and scarred over had in a sense, done what it could to replace dead and damaged tissues with newer tissue. The cells around it memorized where their new borders were, and thus replicating the tissues and making new ones, while possible was

impractical. Forcing the cells to do what they could not was almost impossible. This had not been an issue for Vita Sanguinece at all, since the difference between her Recovers to that of every other Pokémon, was that the body's boundaries were not obstacles for her. If she wanted new tissue to be there, she could make it. This ability was beyond that of Silver, though she could still use this opportunity to train him, but was still required to intervene.

~I will help a bit.~ Vita Sanguinece wrapped her energy around the Mudkip's scarred tissue, restraining her urges to just instantly heal it, and instead gave the scarred cells the ability to relearn of the lost tissue beyond their borders. At least this way Silver could use their innate genetic knowledge and continue the Recover on his own.

~What you will do now is tell the cells to do as they would do normally. 'Feed' them your energy and use your will to give them the motivation to go and multiply. They will do the rest,~ Vita Sanguinece said, finished with her instructions. Because Silver had been exposed to Vita's empathy for some time now, he understood how to use his consciousness to communicate his will, and in turn using it to urge the healing along.

The Pokémon watched, astounded as Silver grew the missing body parts of the Mudkip, slowly inching along and reforming all of the missing tissue. While it was gross to watch in a way, it was also fascinating as no one could believe that it was possible to grow permanently damaged body parts. Silver was unaware of his accomplishments only until he found that the tissue was resisting him, his eyes opening to see what he did wrong.

"The injuries . . . I really healed all that?" he turned to Vita, gawking at what he had just done. Wordless delight was expressed by the Legendary, her more than thrilled for him.

~Yes. I will get you to do the rest so you can practice, become faster, and work better under pressure.~ The sad reality was that if Silver could not use the Recover Vita Sanguinece taught him effectively, he would not be able to perform it fast enough with the pressures of Ice Queen bearing down on him. He needed to be able to do this. Silver understood entirely, enthusiastically continuing his Recovery on the rest of the Pokémon, along with Vita's occasional aid.

It took a substantial amount of time before the small group was fully healed by Silver. Exhausted, but proud, the Lugia looked over his work, then realized the one major flaw in his skills. Despite what he could do, the Pokémon were still thin, and very hungry. There was nothing he could do to fill an empty stomach. He might have been a Legendary, no longer requiring any sustenance, but he knew all mortals needed food and rest, neither of which he could provide. His pride quickly turned to failure, Vita Sanguinece sympathizing with him.

~I can make the hunger go away, but I cannot get rid of the feeling of an empty stomach.~ It was not like she could manifest nourishment from thin air for them. All she could do was utilize her healing skills, furthering Silver's efforts by using her energy and providing the cells with a mimicked version of what they needed. Convinced that they had proper nutrition, the cells of each of the creatures revitalized, becoming full and energetic. The external effect was immediate, as Silver observed the collective sporting a healthy epidermis and filled-out forms. He was simply in awe of Vita.

"I'm hungry . . ." whimpered the Cubone, paws clutching his stomach. The six other Pokémon noted the same thing. They felt great, and looked fine, but were they ever

famished. Legendaries were beyond hunger, the pair exchanging glances. The feeling of futility was wearing on Vita, leaving it to Silver to come up with an explanation.

"I am sorry, but there is nothing we can do. Vita Sanguinence can keep you well, I can offer you my protection, but we cannot feed you. I'm sorry," Silver further reiterated, head hung low. As much as he wish he could offer himself up to them, not all of the Pokémon were carnivores; plus, the ethics put in place made it so a lowly non-Legendary individual could never demand a Legendary for a favor. They would have to live with the feeling of perpetual starvation until greener pastures could be found.

"We understand," said the Absol, the rest echoing their thanks. Protection and health were two very good deals. They were already starving earlier, and at least the ache in their stomachs was not as strong as it had been. They could get by.

"If everything is all settled, and there are no other complaints, we would like you to come with us while we go find some more." No complaints were raised as the whole group agreed to Silver's proposal. They would follow the red robed angel, and the silver winged angel to the ends of the globe. Their lives rested in the pairs' wings.

Being out in the open, even with two Legendaries was paranoia inducing amongst the creatures. They feared that at any moment Ice Queen would appear and slaughter them all. Because of their small stature, it gave them the ability to hide from the freakish bird. In the wide open space of the coastline, there was no cover for them and no place to run. Vita Sanguinence had assured them time and time again that if anything happened, both her and Silver were capable of defending them, but there were still doubts. Only once they went inland did their worries subside.

~Do not be afraid. We're not here to hurt you,~ Vita Sanguinence spoke coaxingly to another group of lost Pokémon. Beckoned by her sweet sounding empathy, none of them hesitated to greet the lady Legendary. Even while being merely a shadow of a Mew, they were welcomed by the sight of her. Always smiling with her eyes, never once raising her emotions in anger, she was a gentle soul. Silver watched as she cooed and flittered about, healing her most recent charges. Between themselves, the current group, and the recently discovered one, there were eighteen individuals now under their care. It may not have seemed like much, but after months of solitude, the amount was of great proportions.

"We would love to come with you!" was the enthusiastic, though still monotone blurting of a Voltorb. The giant ball of metal rolled to join the established cluster, encouraging its fellows to accompany it. Amongst this group there were very heavysset Pokémon that had the capacity to bunker down and hibernate for a long while. Of the most prominent was a Ursaring, a bear-like creature that was a master at hibernation. A Pupitar, the pre-evolved form of a Tyranitar hopped along, itching to become its massive bipedal lizard form, but was lacking in the energy to do so. It had a lot of potential in being dangerous, but aside the lone heat emitting tortoise, Torkoal, most of them were either ineffective at attacking Ice Queen, or in actuality, were severely weak to her attacks. This was not the army Silver had been hoping for.

~You cannot expect them to fight her,~ the Decider of Fate chided her Chosen. ~If even a Moltres could not fight her, what chance do any of them have?~ she gestured to the group, making it obvious that they were not all that special. Most of them

immediately responded with downcast gazes. The only reason why they were alive in the first place was because collectively, they were cowards. They hid, thus they lived. Anyone who fought Ice Queen just made their deaths a quick guarantee. ~We cannot make them fight. I would like to find them a home where they can settle down and forget about Ice Queen.~ It was a dreamy proposal. Such a place probably no longer existed. Any hotspots that were found by Ice Queen were likely frozen over and barricaded a long time ago. And even if they could find such a place, usually they were toxic. If any were a rare Muk, then maybe they would not mind, but these were living, breathing animals. They could not breathe in sulfur dioxide and expect to survive.

“You know I doubt it.” The Titan of the Sea was no optimist. Maybe Vita Sanguinence could see the possibilities in finding them all a home, though the chances seemed nigh high to impossible. He knew of underwater geological hotspots that were still thriving, though the life there was so basic that most did not even have brains to live with, something Ice Queen did not know, or would even care about. Above water, any source of warmth was geothermal, and that meant mostly volcanic. Maybe the Torkoal would find himself at home there, but water types, or plant types might suffer. The world expressed great biodiversity, and there needed to be just as varied environmental niches to support it. The option available was a poor one, and it also meant taking a group through hard to navigate terrain and forests, which Silver was silently dreading. As commitments stood, despite his apprehensions, he would agree with Vita. There was little choice.

“Whatever you think is best,” he spoke in a solemn tone. Even without a mouth or eyebrows, he could still see how concerned, and in a way angry Vita Sanguinence was by the statement. Her ears drew back beneath the hood, that it was almost easy to see the shift. She was not arguing with Silver, and was not there to control him. If he opposed her ideas, then he should speak up for them, rather than begrudgingly follow along as he was doing.

Before Vita Sanguinence could protest, Silver interrupted her with private telepathy. <We have a few, I should be happy. Dunking them underwater and constantly reviving them though forever drowning them is not a good alternative. I just wish I had a better idea.>

~Good ideas simply take time.~ It was the only advice the infant Legendary could offer. Today, they could count their blessings, all sixteen of their companions. Small strides lead to bigger ripples in the pond. ~And we have lots of it!~ quipped the Decider of Fate. Joyous to be surrounded by life, Vita Sanguinence fluttered ahead of the group, dancing about and boosting everyone’s mood. To her, it was a momentous occasion worth celebrating, done so as she danced and twirled ahead of them, acting as a piper leading her little band along. In a way, Silver was almost impressed. Before finding the first group of living Pokémon, Vita had been wholly miserable. Despite having no capacity to physically laugh, he could feel her bubbly giddiness echoing through his spirit. He would never have believed it himself if it were not for the fact he was seeing it.

Decider of Fate, whatever makes you happy. Life is joy. Anyone would follow you to the ends of the Earth just for that experience with you. Was her laughter ever warm and infectious.

“With this many of them, it is risky to go across such a wide, open space,” warned the Lugia as he looked out across a desert turned tundra. They were moving about the land bridge between the two continents, which were once covered with lush jungle, as well as sweltering deserts. The group had been roaming through the spotty vegetation of the hills, and were now looking out to an expanse with no cover. “I do not like the looks of this.”

The Legendaries’ troupe was weighing their options. Most were slow-moving creatures that were unable to cross vast distances quickly. They had waited until sunrise to start their crossing when they were fresh. Despite the rest, in front of them lay many lengths of bare, open land and even with a good night’s sleep, it was not possible to cover the distance all in one day. It was quicker to move across it than try for the craggy mountain passes, but the cost seemed high.

“I do want to get out of the cold,” the little Mudkip whimpered. The exposed air was making the wind chill intolerable to even Silver, who had his aura to keep himself warm. The vast majority of the group had stuck close to the fire tortoise for warmth, making the going even slower and even more miserable.

“I want to go where its warm!” the Absol echoing the Mudkip’s sentiments. Voices sounded forth in agreement.

“We can cross it in a day or two if we hurry. We can face the cold!” the tiny girly creature known as Smoochum shouted. Easier said for her, as she could handle the cold better than some of the others. They would go forth with Vita and Silver present. Their Recovers were effective for curing frost bitten tissue, and while this meant that every last one of the Pokémon was going to suffer a lot from the cold, a large cut in time spent away from a potential hot spring was worth it.

“Are you all in agreement that we will cross here?” Silver took authority and asked of his charges. Wincing glances aside, all agreed they would try. Foolhardiness was not Silver’s forte, but he acknowledged their request. “I will lead,” announced the silvery bird, taking flight.

~I will stay behind you. If you start to slow down I will do my best to help you,~ Vita said with a charming smile of her eyes. Being indifferent to the cold was advantageous since it meant she could focus on the others’ suffering and assist them without concern for herself.

The group went forward with hops and skips, their enthusiasm falling soon after and their pace settling to a slow trudge. Silver was forced to fly, land, and then fly again, up until he realized that they were not going to go any faster. He more or less opted to flatten the snow ahead of them as he walked. The nagging feeling that he was on a death march would not leave his mind.

The sky was overcast with light snow. It was daytime though freezing as usual. Once it reached a certain point all cold seemed the same, so how bitter the temperatures were, Silver was no longer able to tell.

Unable to figure out the answer for himself Silver shouted, “Vita, how cold is it today?” back to his Legendary. Dumb question on his part, since Vita Sanguinence was cold blooded.

~I can’t tell,~ Vita Sanguinence replied in turn. ~I think the wind is making it feel like it’s colder.~ Her robes were billowing about her, being caught up in the stray blasts of frigid air. It was an odd thing to mention at this time. While it was windy on the ocean ice, it was not this windy. Wind was purely generated by influxes in air temperature and

air pressure. Without the Legendary Birds available to generate climate, the extent of the weather was at most, mild precipitation and slow-moving cloud cover. There should not have been any wind.

“Kreee!” Silver cried in alarm. They had fallen into a trap. “Under my wings! Now!” Everyone was to him in a matter of seconds, diving beneath his raised wings. Vita Sanguinence was on alert, a Barrier already raised around Silver and the other Pokémon. No one needed to question what was going on, they all knew.

“Hehehe,” echoed a voice among the valley. “You fell for my trap. I was hoping to catch you by surprise, Lugia, but it turns out you can read the winds after all.” There was no sight of her yet, but Ice Queen was definitely about.

“You stay away from them!” snarled Silver, firing a small Hyper Beam as a warning shot. He could not see her at all. From what he could observe from Vita Sanguinence’s shifting blood-red eyes, the bird was hiding in the clouds. It was no use shooting at her blindly. “Show yourself!”

This was the sort of tactic Her Highness was most pleased by. Of course she could show herself, but where was the fun in that? With a sinister cackle she unleashed an Ice Beam. Silver was caught by surprise as the attack went for his back. Prepared by her empathy, Vita Sanguinence intervened. Her protective Reflect took the hit, shooting the beam off into the sky.

Forgot about that part, Ice Queen snarled to herself. One could not exactly catch Vita Sanguinence off-guard with an attack. Only in a state of panic was there any chance of releasing a move without emotional commitment. With little to fear, the Articuno never attacked rashly. Given the situation with Vita, she realized she would have to make herself known.

“Have it your way, Lugia. Here I am, the great ruler of this world!” Ice Queen proclaimed as she lowered herself from the clouds. Silver could feel the Pokémon shake beneath him with fear. They never wanted this encounter, and both he and Vita had brought them to the monster. “My, my. Look at all the little friends you’ve gathered,” the bird twittered. Each one of the creatures was pressed against Silver, hoping he could protect them just as he had promised. Ice Queen’s icy stare was unmatched to Silver’s anger-filled snarl. All this world had left was him and these innocent creatures hiding out of fear beneath his wings.

~Don’t let your anger get to you,~ Vita Sanguinence cautioned, stepping between her Chosen and the Articuno.

<Vita, are you crazy? You can’t do anything!> hissed the Lugia into his Legendary’s mind. She was aware of it, but tried to reason with the Articuno despite it.

~Please, Your Majesty. We just want to live. We respect your power and your rule, just do not harm us,~ the Decider of Fate made her plea. It was too risky to fight the bird given all the creatures that were under their care. With the greatest level of humility, Vita Sanguinence knelt before Her Highness, offering respect. The behavior intrigued her. Never before had another Legendary willingly put themselves before her as such. With a puffed out chest, the bird landed and strutted up towards the thing that had haunted her world and refused to die. Vita Sanguinence was unshaken, not moving. Even the bird’s Swagger, an intimidating strut that expressed her magnificence, did not shake her resolve.

“You want to live? Why should I offer you or your comrades that favor?” she sneered, eyes alight with desire to see to their demise. “I went forth, I took control. I made this world an arctic haven. Maybe the other Articunos could not appreciate it, and obviously none of you do. Why share this beauty that my graces give when you pathetic *things* just aim to tarnish it.”

“You’re crazy!” the Cubone blurted out. He instantly ducked behind Silver’s leg, afraid of Ice Queen’s wrath. He was beneath her, and despite how much it riled her, she would ignore it. This was her triumphant moment. Nothing was going to ruin it.

“I have spent years chasing you. I think by now you know *exactly* what I want.” The subzero feathers of the Articuno inched closer to Vita’s face. She knew she could not change Ice Queen’s mind, but she still had to try. Every option was exhausted, causing Vita Sanguinence to hang her head in defeat. Ho-oh was right, had always been right and years into her endless wanders that statement still hung in the air. Ice Queen could not be reasoned with and the only way to do so was through conflict.

Watching from afar, the Pokémon were alarmed by Vita’s submission, each one crying out to her by name.

“Vita! Vita!” they shouted and whined.

Maybe if she hurts me badly, she will forget about the others for a while and leave them alone. Vita Sanguinence offered herself up to the bird, refusing to run, Ice Queen taking the gesture for all its worth. With a maddened screech of ecstasy, the Articuno tore her icy talons into every available piece of fabric and flesh.

It hurt, but she promised herself she would hold in the screams. Having the bird rip through her only possession was the worst of it. If only she ripped her wings, her bare face and breast, would it all be okay, but that was not the case. Touching the fabric was a violation like no other, just as much as she harming someone, or seeing someone harmed. The universe instantly yelled and berated her. The robe was a gift and she was letting someone destroy it. Unable to contain her distress, Vita let a strangled whimper escape.

Silver had had it. Before he could yell, “Get off of her!” the sixteen Pokémon were set for action, all lined up in front of him, ready to fight.

“Magnemite!” bleeped one of the two Magnemites, it throwing out sharp star-shaped beams of light as it used Swift. Ice Queen stumbled backwards, more annoyed than anything. One of the sixteen weaklings had just had the nerve to defy her.

“You . . .!” she screeched at them. “Aha! You think you can actually stand up against me? Look at all you . . .” The Cubone had just Boomeranged its club at Ice Queen’s face.

“Insolents!!!” Ice Queen further screeched, the sound next to shattering.

“That was a good one!” the large, armored nut of a Forretress chuckled.

Silver was impressed by them. Faced with their own demise, the Pokémon were actually willing to stand up for themselves and the beautiful, yet destroyed Legendary. His primary concern was for Vita. Having never seen her hurt before, he was unsure if the oozing injuries and shredded robes and feathers was something she could heal from. Lone behold, it was more than a couple times that Ice Queen’s moves had caught her, Vita Sanguinence already quickly healing them.

Silver was not going to remark on how absolutely bizarre Vita’s own personal Recover was. Her rosy robes turned from a reddish-pink to a crimson color, becoming liquefied before oozing about and patching up the torn areas. This same effect also went

to her white tissue. Life of Blood was a perfectly suitable name for her, as witnessed by her healing abilities. In a quick second, she was well, but remaining low as she watched her group of followers preparing to fight.

“Our Lady is fine!” Absol barked to her strange semblance of a pack. This put the group at ease, but also at the ready. No one would get away with harming such a sweet being. Over their dead bodies.

“Fight! Fight! Fight!” the mischievous monkey, Aipom started chanting. Soon the rest of the group joined in. Silver was delighted by their willingness, himself rising into the air and preparing for battle.

“Stay back,” the Lugia urged towards his Legendary. After the attack Ice Queen had done upon her, he did not want the Decider of Fate to be any more of a martyr.

“We’ll fight for you!” trumpeted the Phanpy.

“We’re not scared of the nasty bird!” the lone Nidorina added.

“Just stay there. We will protect you,” was the soft-spoken assertion of the slightly shell-shocked Shuckle.

Listening to the verbalizations, Ice Queen could do nothing but scoff. She had taken out a flock of Zapdos without much effort, and somehow these stupid creatures thought they had a chance. The Lugia alone was more powerful than the non-Legendaries combined.

“Sure. I will play your little game,” Ice Queen said with a toss of her crest feathers, showing off the crown of treasures she usurped from the two other Legendary Birds. With ease she took to the sky, ready and waiting for their measly attempts.

For Vita Sanguinece, she was absolutely dismayed. Everyone except her wanted a fight. The true horror in it for her was that she could not stand to be around those that were receiving injury, it simply hurt too much. Silver seemed to have forgotten about this one very important weakness of hers, that if someone was struck, she felt especially pained, and then projected that back to everyone else. With her there, it did not matter who attacked who, everyone would know about it. All she could express was, ~This is a bad idea,~ not able to get her point across over the intense battle drive.

With a Legendary at the helm, Silver led the charge. Slapping his wings together, Silver made a small Whirlwind. Its aims were not really to harm the Articuno, just to knock her back and disorient her. The move worked, and the group began to take up positions on the icy field.

The Absol was the first to attack. Whipping her bladed head appendage, she sliced the air around her, bringing the Razor Wind up at Ice Queen. The move struck the bird’s icy tail, but because she was exceptionally high in her defense, it did nothing. Absol growled, frustrated that her move was ineffective.

From across the field, the Voltorb was making itself known. A blasting Sonic Boom tore up at Ice Queen, only to have her slap it aside with a Gusty breeze of her wings.

With no hesitation, and faith in his healing abilities, Silver charged in. Such a brazen move from someone who should have known better. Ice Queen met him with gusto, dodging several attacks from below as she did. Feathers flew as her claws went into Silver’s long, vulnerable neck. The shock of her icy body nearly knocked him unconscious. His blood was freezing, the cold a suffocating chill. Trapped in her talons, he went limp, forcing both himself and Ice Queen to the ground.

The Articuno rolled off, ending up in a pile up against the protective shielding of the Shuckle and the Magnemites, trying to defend the Dewgong. His Aurora Beam was enough to jostle Articuno into a standing position.

From afar, Vita Sanguinence watched in a unending state of alarm. The closest individual to her was the Pupitar. He was swiftly coming to the realization that being next to the Decider of Fate was far more unpleasant than Ice Queen's cold could ever be. As it went, the Fate basically had an aura of grief-stricken agony emitting from her uncontrollably. Her state of mind was anguish, and the basic need to save Silver's life.

<"I'm good!"> Silver projected to all around, already in the process of stitching up his very destroyed neck. <"Keep her distracted!"> further encouraged the bird, buying himself some time while his body repaired. If it were not for the usage of Calm Mind he would have easily have succumbed to his duress.

The Smoochum obliged with the most oddest of distractions. Lips puckered, she started to jump up and down madly, attempting to get Ice Queen's attention. The move was known as 'Sweet Kiss', where the Pokémon that was using it feigned desire for the opponent. Inappropriate moves in battle were one of the manipulative tactics used by certain species to bewilder their opponents. Legendary Pokémon were naturally repulsed by gestures of affection, and sure enough, it bothered Ice Queen immensely.

"Locked On," came the monotone voice from behind. Ice Queen knew what was to follow that. A Zap Cannon lurched through the air. Only Ice Queen's quick wit saved her. In defense she made an ice wall between herself and the electric attack, moving into the air so any future attempts would have less chance of success. Most of her prey was incapable of aiming well, let alone having long range attacks. Even the bone from the Cubone did not get quite enough reach.

"So weak!" she made her insult while circling above. By now Vita Sanguinence had calmed down, and Silver was almost fully recovered. Ice Queen carefully made her observation. She had seen Vita's aura before, it was a mingling swath of red and pink. The aura around Silver was a very distinct blue. *She taught him a better Recover?!* the Articuno seethed in her mind. Every last Lugia she killed had died to such attacks, where this one was successfully beating the odds and recovering from it. *Impossible! She taught him! That little healing bitch taught him all that same shit she does around me!* So vehement on Vita's destruction, Ice Queen focused solely on her, raining down a Hail storm of hate on the Legendary.

Predicting the move, the distraught Vita blocked it with her usual defensive tactics, causing the fist-sized ice balls to bounce away. Then the Articuno had a devilish revelation, turning the same move on the Pokémon that Vita Sanguinence had sworn to protect. Malice born balls of ice fell from the sky, whacking into everything beneath it. The Pokémon cried out as they were pelted. Vita Sanguinence's barricades were not the strongest there could be, or that widespread. She brought her aura over the most vulnerable while the Pupitar, Shuckle and Forretress weathered the hits. Almost everyone was covered in welts, some with open gashes, and others with concussions. To cover for her pain and those of the others, Vita was fast to healing them all. She was not the best protector, but was still an amazing healer. Her charges were only half appreciative of this since being injured hurt.

"Oww . . ." groaned the Nidorina, already healed but still not enjoying the experience of being pelted.

“I’m sorry, did that hurt?” Ice Queen cackled snidely. “I’m done with my games,” she sneered. What made her dangerous were her strong blasts of cold. Hail was one of those moves, but Sheer Cold was the worst. The finale had yet to happen, only because she chose not to.

<What have we gotten ourselves into?> Silver murmured to Vita Sanguinence, not bothering to look at her as the dangerous bird was the biggest worry.

~A big problem . . . ~ agreed the Decider of Fate, still wincing from the damage everyone had taken.

“I did not even hit you!” accused the icy bird, noticing Vita Sanguinence’s blood stained face. “Wait . . .” Ice Queen’s face broke into the wildest of sneers. Of course it made sense now. This ‘Vita’ was an empath, one of the rarest kinds. Not only did she deposit her feelings onto others, but she internalized the feelings of those around her. Ice Queen did not have to do a single thing to Vita Sanguinence at all, and yet still cause her terrible suffering. “Oh, hoho! You’re one of those fun ones!” She did not need to explain herself, she knew the robed Legendary got the message. It was even more clear as Vita’s face went from contempt to horror.

~Don’t! You mustn’t!~ Vita Sanguinence begged. She did not want to see everyone tortured for the Articuno’s amusement. It simply was not fair.

“‘Don’t,’ what?” the Ursaring looked around at the others. He received a few shrugs in return, none of them certain what it was that the Articuno was talking about. Silver knew exactly what Ice Queen was getting at. Vita Sanguinence was her own demon here, a receiver and distributor of pain. Physical and mental pain were the fastest ways to demoralize any crew. All Ice Queen had to do was grab one of the weakest members; Vita Sanguinence would empathize with that individual, and her inability to essentially silence her expressions meant that the pain would go to everyone else around. Of course, this meant it would go to Ice Queen too, but she was of such a sick mind, it did not matter. With a sadistic twitter, Ice Queen dived low.

“Move!” Silver ordered, already up in the sky to avoid being next. The Pokémon scrambled about, wanting to make themselves impossible to catch. Very few of these Pokémon were fast. Aside the Voltorb, Absol and the two Magnemite anyone else was easy pickings. For her selection she picked the Shuckle, talons landing on both sides of the creature. Shuckles’ natural defensive instinct caused them to Withdraw into their shells. Admittedly, Ice Queen did not really enjoy trying to kill these things. Usually she froze them in a block of ice, where they eventually died of hypothermia, a process that could still take upwards of an hour for a Shuckle.

“Come out!” sang the bird, as she then began to ruthlessly hammer away at the shell with her beyond freezing beak. Shuckle resisted with all her willpower, having faith that her shell would hold. She was a breed of Pokémon that was renowned for having the best physical defensive capacity in the world. If anyone could hold out, it was her.

“Oh, forget this.” Ready to commit the Shuckle to an icy tomb, one of the fastest Pokémon breeds in the world came to her rescue.

“Voltorb!” the Voltorb interjected, throwing itself across the field, sending the Shuckle flying and itself into the waiting arms of the Ursaring.

“I’m okay!” Shuckle announced from a ways off, not at all phased by the dramatic rescue. There was something unprecedented when dealing with a variety of

Pokémon capable of holding out for so long, was that were they ever determined not to die easily.

No matter. Plenty of the creatures available were both vulnerable and slow. She only had to look as far as the Mudkip to see that. With a half trot and a fly, Ice Queen went after the land fish. Silver could only curse to himself. He could not physically assault the Articuno, and all of his moves were so widespread, that he risked killing everyone by accident.

“Run! Run!” he screeched, already readying a Swift. The move hit Ice Queen’s back directly, and she hardly flinched. From a Lugia, that move actually stung, but of the Legendary Birds, she had the build to take such weak moves. For Silver, he had put all he could into that shot with no rewards for his efforts.

Mudkip was screaming in terror, hopping away as fast as she could until the razor sharp claws ripped her back open wide. Most of the group stopped to call out to her, only to be drowned out by Vita Sanguinence’s even more alarming expression. A dull ache went through all of their body parts, none sure of the source.

“Aww, that hurts doesn’t it?” Ice Queen turned to look straight at the choking Vita. It was already wearing on the Articuno, but it looked like Vita Sanguinence was suffering far more dramatically. Relishing this, the Articuno brought her full foot around the Mudkip, near flash freezing it. Mudkip was screaming, but Vita was louder.

~Ahh!~ screeched Vita, her face masked in agony. ~Stop hurting it!~ she screamed at the bird. While she was actively healing the Mudkip, she could not quite wrestle the creature out of Ice Queen’s grasp, this made for a constant feedback loop of pain with the Mudkip not dying and the torture ongoing. It slowly dawned on the troupe of exactly what the problem was.

“Free Mudkip!” the Absol called out. Using their long distance attacks, Ice Queen was almost peppered by a variety of abilities. She took off from the ground, dropping the distressed Mudkip. Escape was all too easy for her.

“You really didn’t tell them your weakness?” came the condescending serenade. “Harm one, it harms you, it harms everybody else. No wonder you showed up when everything was dead. If you came earlier, everyone would be *thanking* me for getting rid of you!”

Dejected, Vita Sanguinence covered her face with her mockeries for hands. She was her own worst enemy.

“Don’t listen to her. We do not see you that way,” Silver made his counter statement. “It is something beyond your control and we are not blaming you for it.” Such a callous thing to say to the loving Decider of Fate that the Lugia was in his right to be mad. Vita Sanguinence was selfless; whereas, Ice Queen was ruthless. The only emotion that could be expressed about Vita’s predicament was compassion. “You’re an insult as an Articuno,” Silver said while turning his eyes up to the bird. She merely shrugged it off. They could insult her all they liked. It was up to her how she would interpret it.

Instead of reciprocating, Ice Queen did something else. With a tilt of her head, she took her aim and spat an Ice Beam condensed as a large icicle directly at Dewgong, impaling it through. Everyone shouted, and Vita Sanguinence was already working from afar to remove the spear and heal the injured seal.

“Any further objections?” asked the bird in a bemused tone. “I can always just kill you two last, so that way you can watch all of your poor little pawns perish.” Play time

was over for her. The Decider of Fate caught that emotion clearly. All attacks were going to be either painful, near fatal hits, or fatalities.

~Alarm!~ came the panicked cry from Vita, instilling a feeling of panic in those around her.

Sloughing ice from her frame, Ice Queen decreased her mass and increased her speed through the use of Agility. With a blood curdling cry, she landed on top of the tallest Pokémon with a heavy thud. The move crushed the Ursaring's shoulders and broke his back, crippling him to the ground. As before, Vita's response time with healing was fast, though Ice Queen was quick to add another victim to her list. Once done dancing on the bear, she turned to the two neodymium Magnemites. The rare earth magnets they used to help them float were notoriously fragile. Even something as simple as a frozen sweep of her wings was enough to down one, and shatter the magnets on the other completely.

Ignoring the fact that this was going to hurt, Silver flew in between Ice Queen and her next target, physically using his body to block her. Transitioning her wings into an almost metallic hardness, the Articuno slapped the Lugia to the snow. A full force blow of her flash freezing body to the neck and torso nearly killed the Legendary, him rolling around and gasping, momentarily forgetting how to heal himself. This type of incapacitation forced Vita to do the Recover for him.

~Oww . . . oww . . .~ whimpered the young Legendary. All the dying of flesh around her was dragging her down mentally. Her body swayed about, head a swirl of something unfamiliar. She was dead, she should not have been able to feel really anything, though the white hot sear throughout her frame was a reminder that at least some part of her was alive. Ice Queen had just ripped off the tail of the Aipom. Empathy always on, Vita Sanguinence could feel the jerking tug down through her soul. Her guardian Pupitar was making hurling noises, unable to stomach how grotesque Vita was feeling, the empathy practically toxic.

The loving Legendary rationalized that if she ran away, every last creature would die, but at least they would not suffer to the stamina of Ice Queen or Vita's emotions. If she just sat there, soon everyone would be crippled by her just relaying around how much she was hurting, and that of whomever the current victim was. Feeling was a curse. It was the capacity to feel that allowed her to heal, to assess the urgency of individual and give them appropriate care. It felt good to do right, to be in the presence of happiness, to give others comfort and spread her own joy. At the same time though, through her the sorrows of one was that of the group.

~I . . . must. Must . . .~ Vita Sanguinence attempted to stand, losing focus as Ice Queen nearly beheaded the Torkoal. ~Aah!~ That one really stung. She was on the injury, swiftly repairing the partially decapitated Torkoal. Even with her instantaneous healing capacity, the Pokémon were losing the will to fight. No one wanted to be on the receiving end of Ice Queen's blows, since they knew from Vita's emoting that it was considerably unpleasant. Some had been lucky enough to be only near seriously injured, the rest, not so much.

"Keep it together!" ordered Silver. He was struggling to keep up with Ice Queen, who stayed within a few feet of the ground. Because of his size he needed a lot more lift than Ice Queen did, where she was creating her own cold thermals to aid her along. There was no way he could compete with her unless he gathered massive altitude, or grounded

himself entirely, neither of which were advantageous. Even he was becoming demoralized by the situation, stuck watching as the bird ripped out the eye of a Magnemite, turning it into an ice ball and breaking what should have been the protective skull of the Cubone with it.

Vita Sanguinence had been reduced to a shivering ball of tears, pressured to heal due to the motivation that if she did, she too would no longer be suffering. There was very little the Lugia could actually do with his given skill set. Even the most powerful of psychic moves, named accordingly to represent the types that used it, was not going to work unless Ice Queen was caught off-guard. It seemed that Vita had a good understanding of it, where Silver simply did not.

Frustration setting in, Silver took an opportunity at one of Ice Queen's low flying passes, shoulder bumping her to the ground. The bird basically bounced off of him harmlessly, giving her even more of an easy opening to rip into Silver once again. The Lugia was in no position to defend himself, his whole right wing badly bruised and frostbitten. In this state he was at his most vulnerable.

The Decider of Fate could feel the maddened thoughts of her enemy, *Die!* burning through the Articuno's poisoned mind. That was Vita's Silver that Ice Queen wanted to kill. Her Chosen.

~My Chosen!~ Vita Sanguinence cried out, gripping Ice Queen in a Psychic hold.

"Chosen? Really?" Ice Queen was pretty confident that Vita Sanguinence was not going to harm her, letting herself relax in the grip. Normally if a psychic type performed the move, they accompanied it with crushing pressure and squeezes, which Vita did not. This fact comfortably allowed her to look at the injured Lugia and mock him. "Did she really say that?" the bird squawked. "Chosen . . .?" The mirth of her laughter was a chilling sound. "Chosen! You are a Chosen to that brat?! She is lowlier than dirt, and you are Chosen to that thing?!" With a puffed out chest she continued. "I am the mighty Titan of The Sea. Ahaha! Chosen!" Ice Queen was nearly hyperventilating from her hysteria, enjoying the level of humiliation Silver must have been feeling. Not being like Vita, Ice Queen was unable to fully conceptualize how shamed Silver was, or in turn, how mad his Legendary happened to be. Knowing it would not cause any repercussions, Vita Sanguinence abruptly let go of the Articuno, dropping her.

"What was that for?! Oh . . ." Ice Queen looked to the rose robed female, the angered expression quite evident in her eyes, as well as in her oozing mental invading aura.

~To the side. Now!~ Vita Sanguinence commanded her charges. They did not dare disobey. An authoritative direction made even Silver consider joining the dispersing group, but not before he asked of her plan.

<What is going on? You almost sound like you want to fight.>

~I do.~ She walked up to her Chosen, patting him on the beak.

<You can't fight.>

~That is for me to decide. Go,~ she urged. ~I will be fine,~ she further assured her Chosen.

Ice Queen was standing a small ways behind her, also unsure of what was going on. The attitude Vita gave was not one of surrender. Maybe by insulting Silver, Ice Queen had pushed her too hard. It was one of the theories she was considering. For Vita Sanguinence, it was the realization that having others fight for her meant that eventually

they would all be dead. At the point of mortis, there was nothing the Fate could do but weep. Having another death on her hands was not what she wanted.

~Ho-oh was right . . .~ Vita Sanguinence smiled sadly, then turned to face the bird.

Ho-oh? She's talked to it? Ice Queen thought to herself, unaware that because thoughts produced emotion, that Vita Sanguinence could easily read her mind.

~Yes. Ho-oh. It said fighting was the only option. I will fight you.~

Ice Queen only rolled her eyes. Fighting Vita was a pure waste of her time where she could be spending it eradicating the useless bits of life that stood around them. Humoring the whelp was not on her mind. To emphasize how little she cared for Vita's challenge, her head moved to stare down the Nidorina, unleashing a blast of unbearable cold.

~I'm serious!~ snapped the Decider of Fate, a Barrier nullifying the ice attack. At roughly 5'11" in height, there was nothing physically intimidating about Vita. It was all about composure. There was no mistake in how one read Vita's demeanor that she meant what she said. If Ice Queen did not want to attack her, she could always make her. ~I will force you,~ she warned.

"Forget that." Ice Queen rose into the sky, refusing to let Vita Sanguinence basically control her emotions enough that she would just rage on the lady-like figure. If Vita wanted to be that persistent, then she would just have to indulge her.

Span of her wings spread, Vita took off to join Her Highness in their immortal sky dance. Silver had never seen Vita fly personally, noting how absolutely angelic she looked with the full span of her wings flared out. Good versus evil, it was clear who stood for truth. Ice Queen's next statement just sealed it.

"I hope you regret this decision!"

"You are pathetic! What sort of Legendary are you?! Can all you do is dodge?!" screamed the condescending hate of Ice Queen. Vita Sanguinence had only barely successfully maneuvered out of harm's way. The Ice Beam was predictable like always, though she herself was slow.

Anger, hate that was so intense that Vita could feel it burn her to the core. The only heat left in the Articuno's heart was of rage. Pride, putrid emotions of conquest, decimation, there was nothing holy left in her. Between Ice Queen and Vita Sanguinence was her rule, the ultimate honor. She would not let this stillborn freak of nature stand in her way. If she wanted to defy her so badly, then would Ice Queen ever remind her as to why no one ever stood up to her for long.

"Filth!" further screamed the Articuno, unleashing a wave of cold that dampened the air. It should have been a comforting Mist, but instead it shocked the body, taking all the pleasant sensations from it.

~Gasp . . .~ Vita Sanguinence choked, scrambling as she fell from the drastic increase in weight. Immortal as she was, the fear of falling to one's death was present in the mind of every living thing.

"Vita!" hollered her Chosen. Meters from the ground, Vita Sanguinence finally shook off the Sheer Cold; a move so dangerous that no one ever survived it but her.

“Die! Die! Die!!!” with the spewing, murderous howl the wind turned into a dizzying blast of cold and wind, buffeting Vita from every angle. She could Endure, and she did. Sharp spurs of ice dove into her flesh, wings, piercing through her robes and out the other end; the robes that cried out of indignity over pain.

~Violator!~ Curses flinging, blood of a suppuration that looked like it would never staunch. Vita Sanguinence only barely managed to compose herself before the next wave of attacks began. So cold was the space around Ice Queen and Vita that any blood that escaped froze instantly. Most of the spectators could see the slowly deepening pink of the snow below as Vita persistently continued to fail to cause any damage, instead incurring her own.

Energy at the ready, a pink aura laced around the bird, grasping her for all she was worth. ~I must. Please let me,~ Vita Sanguinence begged the universe to not let her be punished for trying to hurt the life she was responsible for her. Denial was her only response, the attempt to strangle the Articuno crushing the very existence out of her in turn. ~No . . .!~ Vita howled at her failure, forced to let go. Frail arms wrapped in velvet, they went instantly to embrace her falsely damaged lie of a rib cage. Lacking in all the necessities of life, and yet she still lived through the aches of others. If only she could overcome the crippling agony could she take out Ice Queen.

“Try harder, fool!” Easy said for her, as Ice Queen swooped in, grabbing onto Vita’s wings.

~Bleeding?!~ was the startled expression from the Decider of Fate, feeling the blood in her wings freeze, her limbs numb. Using her own momentum, Ice Queen took the angel for a spin and tossed her towards the icy dirt below. The group gasped as they looked on, seeing Vita bounce and roll across the snow. Silver wanted to intervene, immediately stopping himself as Vita shouted, ~Stay back!~ at him. He was not going to put himself in danger again.

“Do exactly as *your* Legendary says!” laughed the vile excuse of a Legendary from above. Using her energy, Vita Sanguinence shot up as fast as she could to try and tackle Ice Queen. “Nice try!” came the sarcastic compliment as Ice Queen smacked aside the empath with her wings. With barely any weight to her frame, this sent Vita flying off into the distance. Even from afar, Vita could feel the intent. Out of range, Ice Queen saw her chance to murder the things that blemished her snow-covered world.

No distance could ever really stop Vita from using her mind. Emotions were her enemy, and she needed them to save someone today. Across the distance came her empathetic Roar. ~Denied!~ This startled Ice Queen enough that she almost forgot how to fly. It also distracted her from her attack long enough for Vita Sanguinence to return to combat. Never had Ice Queen seen Vita Sanguinence act so determined. When there were others to protect, she would try her hardest to defend them.

“You are a determined fool, aren’t you?” The snarky remark was hardly glancing to Vita. Ice Queen could insult her all she pleased with her words, since she was in the wrong there was nothing that she said that would ever be that destructive. Hateful Pokémon were not meant to be taken seriously.

~Could I hurt her?~ Not particularly skilled at hiding her thoughts, the Articuno wondered why anyone would mention that aloud, not realizing that for Vita Sanguinence, her thoughts and her speech were more or less the exact same thing.

“The answer is, you can’t,” cackled Ice Queen, already preparing her next move. Ice accumulated around them, clumping together into melon sized balls. Ice Queen moved back as she let her Hail do all the work for her, raining down on the vulnerable Vita. A little conniving on her end, she let them strike, hoping that her mental pain would dampen Ice Queen’s blood lust.

“You’re such a child!” Unfortunately for Vita Sanguinence, while the strike had hurt, it did not feel quite as bad as anything she felt when someone around her was struck. Granted, such a laying down of arms had still caused a transfer of emotional pain to Ice Queen, but it was the weakest so far of anything she had experienced. “Going to do that again?”

~No . . .~ grumbled Vita, Recovering the broken bones. Of all her luck, she had no sympathy for her own suffering, thus making her expressions towards others considerably weak. Maybe some other things could work to her favor. Emotional overriding was a very real option. ~Don’t you think I’m nice to you?~ In a strange attempt at trying to best Ice Queen, Vita Sanguinence was laying on the Charm, basically forcing Ice Queen to like her.

For a moment the move worked, Ice Queen responding back with a, “You have been very nice.” *Wait, that sounds wrong. Since when did I care if someone was nice to me?* The red eyes turned on her adversary, aware of the rouse. “You cannot control me!”

~No, I cannot control you. You’re too powerful,~ complimented Vita with the use of an intense Flatter. Every word she was expressing was truthful. She really did believe Ice Queen was a bit too difficult to control because of her power. The compliment was well received.

Maybe I have this one wrong. The bird began to doubt herself, which was a positive result. Problem lay in how far Vita Sanguinence was willing to push her luck. If she over-complimented Ice Queen, then she might become suspicious, though if she did not do it, then the effect would eventually wear off as Ice Queen’s conquest-driven brain realized it was being denied its goals.

Below, only the Smoochum was able to recognize the use of manipulative moves. Since she used them herself, it was easier for her to tell when someone else was. Most of the other creatures either thought Ice Queen was playing along in some way, or had lost it even further. The oblivious Phanpy was the first to point it out.

“Did Ice Queen just grow soft?” he whispered over to the Forretress, though more than loud enough to be heard by even those further away.

“Either that or she is trying to trick Our Lady,” answered the Forretress, contributing his own hypothesis. Dismayed by what she was hearing, Vita Sanguinence could already tell that the effects of her Flatter were wearing off. It had been too easy for Ice Queen to hear that she was being played.

“Manipulative cheat!” Since Vita was close, it was not hard for Ice Queen to direct her frustrations. A flinching gesture was the most Vita could manage, as she had been trying to keep herself emotionally positive. Caught slightly off-guard, it was simple for the Articuno to physically collide herself into Vita Sanguinence. The ever present cold of Her Highness’ form sent Vita spinning to the ground once more.

Another tumble, and Vita Sanguinence was beginning to see she really stood no chance at success. There was little she could do in this situation other than block, take hits, or dodge. Her mind struggled to formulate the concept of even an attack. Blocking

was a complicated venture, forcing solidity into a defensive move. Dodging seemed feasible, if only Ice Queen was slow. Taking hits was the easiest for Vita to handle, mostly because she was just that efficient of a healer. A blast from the frozen beyond reengaged Vita in her fight. She drew in her wings, doing a small twirl before landing on the ground.

Ice Queen pointed out the flaw in that tactic, remarking that, "It is a bad idea to stand against someone that flies."

~I really do not have a choice,~ protested the Decider of Fate, hands across her chest to demonstrate her sincerity.

"You have no idea how much I dislike ground kissers," snorted the bird, taking her dive. With such little weight to her form, if Vita Sanguinence wanted to stay down there then she would have to really work for it.

To avoid any chance of injury, Vita ducked. The second pass from Ice Queen was unsuccessful, her talons only grazing Vita Sanguinence's hood as she threw herself to the side. Snow piled up around her, though unable to hide the stark color against the pristine of the white all around. The Pokémon looked on with a sense of horror and guilt as they watched Vita struggle against Ice Queen. They could not run into the field of combat to save her; any attempts would be pointless anyway. The most they could do was get themselves killed, and that was not helping anybody.

"Got you!" cried the bird in triumphant glee, snatching her prey in her icy claws and dragging her up into the sky. Her adulations were drowned out by Vita's protests.

~Let go of me!~ Vita Sanguinence squealed at her opponent. The robes of her body were ripping apart, bringing about the terrible sensation. Such a profound level of protest resulted in Ice Queen actually acknowledging the demand, letting go of her prey. She released Vita in mid-flight to witness the floating Fate shivering from the sodomy of her clothes. *No one* touched her robes. It was the ultimate trespass on her as an individual.

~Rapist . . .~ murmured the pain-stricken emotes. Ice Queen rolled her eyes while she circled about. The expression was making it very hard for Ice Queen to draw near, let alone to want to. When she first started her campaign, there was some semblance of guilt that remained, now it had long since vanished from her mind. Never in her life had Ice Queen ever felt that she had wronged someone so much. The feeling passed quickly as her darkened mind comforted itself, fully in the know that these feelings were caused by Vita's projections. Confidence restored, she powered her next arsenal.

~An attack?~ The air around Ice Queen's beak condensed into a ball of frozen fury. Obvious to her as usual, Vita Sanguinence made her own preparations with what would be a timely Reflect. ~Bounce!~ interjected the female, Reflecting the move away from herself. Because of the angle Ice Queen was at, and consequently the shape of Vita's Reflect, the move refracted down to the ground. ~Stop!~ came the scream of Vita Sanguinence, unable to react fast enough to the blast.

Below her, the Pokémon were in the midst of scattering, though too slow to escape. The icy projectile caught one of the vulnerable Magnemite, flash freezing and instantly shattering it into a hundred pieces. Vita's scream could be heard for miles.

This was something Vita Sanguinence had not seen. Pure black. There was something alien about it, even hostile, that she could not quite wrap her mind around it. Slowly coming to in the blackness, she then remembered what had happened.

~The Magnemite . . . No . . .~ she sobbed. One of her charges had perished because she did not block correctly. If she had just chosen to take the hit instead of Reflecting it, the Magnemite would not have died. Her soul churned under the emotional pain, agonized by the notion that because of her negligence, a living being died. Caught up in her tumultuous rolls, she did not even notice her host. Quietly, it watched from outside the spotlight that illuminated the lone figure, bidding its time. It could wait for however long it need. In this space, in the 'blackness' as one of her future title carriers would refer to it as, the time they shared was dictated only by them. Near infinity was an option that was available.

~It died! Why did it have to die!?!~ Vita Sanguinence repeated endlessly, her nattering next to unbreakable. The spiritual pain could easily best that of the emotional. ~I promised to protect them! I promised!~

The observer remained quiet still. Of the three constants in the universe, it was most closely related to Life, the same thing this Vita Sanguinence hailed from. Its knowledge transposed across the dimensions, anywhere where existence was, is, or ever would be. Without life it could not be. This world that Vita Sanguinence had been sent to was so deprived of life that in order to exist it had resorted to taking its fuel from time lines that were not the present. There was simply little here to sustain it. Its attention peeked when it caught the sniffing emot from Vita, her just realizing that something was watching her.

~Is someone there?~ She could sense a feeling of consideration.

~*Chaos is here,*~ answered the energy, drifting about within the field of sight and sense of the first Decider of Fate. It had waited some several billion years for this opportunity. During that time it developed into something sentient over the proverbial senseless player of matter, but never would it ever have a permanent form. There was a certain allure to being truly alive, to have little lives to possess and play with. Problem with possessing life was that Chaos was so grand, and the forms it was given were dismally inadequate at handling it. This one may not have exactly lived, but still it existed on the physical plane. A Decider of Fate, the colloquial term that Ho-oh had given the current avatar of Life, were the best candidates.

Vita Sanguinence would have to obey the rules of time, just as the future personification of Death would. There would be no way for her to know why the universe worked the way it did, or how it would further on. Life was something that existed in the now. Past was defined by entropy, and the future was something to be hypothesized by Law, and fought over by Life and Death. It was simply the three basic rules of the universe. There was energy and mass. The energy and mass obeyed divine laws that dictated how they interacted. Then there was decay, the breakdown of mass and energy, and into the eventual nothingness: Life, Law and Death.

The situation had become so dire that the three governing forces saw it suitable to send themselves to deal with it. Much to its annoyance, there was no actual explanation that came with it. These forces just were things, that in a sense acted out of their own best interests with no sentient thought to them. There was no real answer to if this Vita Sanguinence was actually Life, a partial form, that she just mimicked it in some way, or

that she was some sort of messiah that could easily draw upon Life's capabilities. In the given scenario of a snowball Earth, she was the best candidate to select. For Chaos' needs, she was also both the perfect vessel to control, and the means to give it the life it so desperately fed on. Maybe she would not be quite as tantalizing as the forbidden nature of Death, but this was a Fate all the same. Chaos was not going to complain.

In the first few seconds of meeting, Vita Sanguinence had been spending it trying to get a profile on Chaos. Its vastness made it incapable for her to figure out its intentions other than a couple of primary ones. Even trying to guess a few basic motives was headache inducing, since Chaos had an extensive set of personalities, thoughts and consciousness. She had an idea of what bees were, and this was an example of the whole hive being in one center. From what she could understand, was that it wanted to help her, that it wanted to use her for that task, and it was really going to enjoy doing it.

~Are you a demon?~ Words were not Vita's strong suit. The expression was mostly asking if it was something powerful, and if it was evil.

~*Very powerful,*~ it answered the first part of her single worded descriptor. ~*A selfish goal is not always an evil one. You ask for life,*~ countered the energy, pointing out Vita Sanguinence's reasoning.

~Can I trust you?~

~*Trust in I, or lose all trust.*~

~Are you making riddles?~ Vita stared at the swirling vortex of chaotic energy, not sure if it was playing her or not. The jumbled delivery was more than enough to make Vita's faith in it dwindle.

~*If that is what you perceive, then yes,*~ Chaos calmly replied, still remaining unthreatening as a whole. It decided to change the subject. ~*As things of existence, you and Chaos have the same goal.*~ It waited to see if Vita Sanguinence could supply the rest. She knew what her motives were, hesitantly supplying an answer.

~To see life?~

~*Yes. Without life, there is nothing. Life is needed to thrive.*~

~I can heal but I'm . . . barren,~ Vita Sanguinence said with a hung head, her paws clenched tightly in front of her lower abdomen. Despite her optimism, she realized that even if she could save every last living creature in the world, it was not enough to repopulate it. Had she been an actual Mew, it might not have been an obstacle. Ice Queen had committed the world to utter silence. No one was able to explain to Vita what it was that she could do. Using its knowledge of all things, it was possible for Chaos to gauge Vita's true potential, to which it chuckled at her mention of being less of a female.

~*It is possible to impregnate you with the powers and knowledge of Chaos, for Chaos to be your drive, to awaken your fighting spirit, to defeat your enemy.*~ Vita Sanguinence's ears perked up as she was listening. ~*Let Chaos be your driving spirit, and all the potential the universe has for you will be revealed,*~ with that, it stretched out a proverbial hand. Almost relieved with the thought that all her problems could be solved, she pulled back only at the last moment.

~Wait.~ The red eyes looked at the energy, questioning the idea of what this would mean. It wanted to bond with her, and from what she frighteningly came to the conclusion of, wanted to control her. ~You want to control me?!~ she gasped in shock, her hands retreating to her breast. Chaos had to offer her some patience. What it had told her would be alarming to anyone.

~Your powers are of the living: A healer, a creator, a mother. You need not be a physical whole to give life,~ Chaos explained in a calm tone, trying to avoid its overlaying gibberish which most it visited found to be intimidating. *~The living can hurt the living. Life exists from the life of others, perpetual eradication. If life must take life to perpetuate the majority of life, it can. You have all you need to do that to others.*~ No one really knew anything about Vita, and here she stood in a black void before an energy beyond her scope of sense, and somehow it knew everything. Of the things that was most frightening was that it implied that she could kill, just that she did not have the will. Chaos further elaborated that issue. *~To take from this enemy, her life, you can give life to all that was lost, Life of Blood,*~ it spoke, addressing Vita by her literal title. *~The will to create is within you, that of destruction is not. Chaos cannot use itself to destroy, as you and I are of the same fold. Through you, Chaos can kill. The will is of I, the abilities, yours.*~ It then passively swirled about, waiting for Vita Sanguinence to absorb all that it had mentioned.

In a way, Vita Sanguinence understood completely. By letting Chaos take control of her, it would use her hidden aggravating skills against Ice Queen and win the fight. This would overcome Vita's unwillingness to cause damage, while still giving Chaos the comfort that it was not actually use its own energy to do so. The will to fight was being freely offered by Chaos, with from what she could tell, with few catches. If the rest that Chaos had said was true as well, then in one way or another, as long as they got rid of Ice Queen, there was a very positive outcome, the potential of worldwide rejuvenation. If the bird survived and that was done, the process would just repeat itself for a second time. The battle was not going to be all for not, though part of her mind was nagging at her, doubting the idea. She still did not let that factor alone weigh in the discussion. A fight where she alone was responsible for its outcome was one of the things she had wanted to accomplish.

~I want to do it. Become part of me and help me.~ Vita Sanguinence was unable to hide her desperation, or her eagerness. She wanted to save all life; whereas, Chaos wished to thrive, and have the delight of using a Fate in the process. These strong-willed individuals, of which Vita was the first were the perfect bonds, and of them, she was also the purest of them.

~With pleasure, Decider of Fate.~

Ice Queen watched in adulation as her adversary dropped unconscious to the ground below. After all this time she had finally felled the creature. With the scream of horror that Vita had given, Ice Queen was convinced she was dead. The chilling birdsong was no comfort to those below. Silver especially was distraught. He had to keep to his word of protecting the Pokémon, but all he wanted to do was race over to his Legendary.

"Vita Sanguinence . . ." he murmured, wanting to grieve though forced to restrain himself. His temperament switched quickly from the usual Lugia calm to that of anguish. His brown eyes glared up at Ice Queen, wishing he could summon his aura and simply light her on fire. The thought was a pointless waste. Everyone that he was responsible for knew that without Vita, they were within a few minutes of their collective deaths. That timeframe diminished to what would be a minute, as Ice Queen looked on with ecstatic malice. In her mind she was unstoppable.

“Well, with that done, it’s your turn!” announced the bird, taking herself down into a deadly swoop. No one moved, just cringed as they waited for their demise.

~“*I don’t think so!*”~ Ice Queen was brought to a stop at the sound. A poisonous emotion twisted about through the air, suffocating it with anger, determination and a murderous desire. Both Ice Queen and Silver knew exactly what it was, stilled in their fear as they waited to see the source.

The ground around Vita Sanguine came alive in a surge of vines, branches and brambles, them lurching forth to a sky broken wide to reveal the forgotten blessing of a warm sunbeam. There was no mistake that something strange was about with an odd, prevailing warmth and the several dozen feet of beautifully raw vegetation that stood where Vita Sanguine once lay. The structure was imposing, occasional twitching about with a hint of intelligence. Whatever it was, it was not normal, even if it had been the first living greenery any of them had seen in years.

No one knew what to expect, though they knew they should be wary. It was not long before the pillar revealed its intentions. Like a blossoming bloom, the climbing vegetation split wide to reveal the thing every Legendary feared, one of their own under the complete sway of Chaos.

Chaos pulled back the hood to make it clear of their union. Pools of black drew everyone into them, almost lost in the emptiness of what were once Vita’s eyes. The beauty of her form, the angelic elegance, now torn away with the shredding of her wings, nothing left but bleeding stumps removed of all feathers. Useless things they were, Chaos decided to rid what it could. To further emphasize that it owned her, that they together were the close children of Life, the energy committed the ultimate perversion. Atop of Vita’s robes dripped a blackened tar that melded as far as it could into the bloody velvet. From the weeping layers of lies of cloth, the blood and tar mingled, soaking the top of pillar’s trunk and running down it. Stunned was the only expression anyone but Ice Queen could make, where she was silently terrified. Any Legendary so desperate to summon Chaos to them was one that would do all it would take to right their wrongs.

~“*It ends now, Your ‘Majesty’*”~ Chaos Vita Sanguine snarled callously, her attitude uncharacteristically sarcastic. Inside the combination, Vita Sanguine was nervous, though somewhat impressed with herself. From literally nothing, Chaos had urged her into using the blood of her robes to create all of the wriggling plant life that together they stood triumphantly upon. Never before had she seen such energetic plants, and they were all from her. With Chaos’ knowledge and a bit of encouragement, she really did have the capacity to live up to her title. Starvation could be a forgotten concept with such a skill, and Vita Sanguine was no less than thrilled. Though at the same time, Chaos was more powerful, more knowledgeable and more determined than she was, and also in complete control, which made the experience sobering. Aside the urgings that it gave to her to make her use her hidden talents, it only let her emote as she would normally. Letting Vita have a moment of control could mean letting Ice Queen escape, and Chaos refused to let that happen. Vita was skillful, but an emotional burden, and with that in mind, her very nature was a risk. For now, it led, and that was how it would stay.

Chaos bonds were typically done if the user craved pure power. The negative side-effect of bonding with the energy was that it resulted in expenditure of the host’s will, and consequent insanity. Having a need for power was not why Vita Sanguine had been motivated to do this. She so badly needed the will of Chaos to win her the

battle; ironically, being the one thing no one ever wanted of Chaos, willing submission to its insane nature.

The energy was not naturally motivated to destroy the minds of possessed individuals, it just happened to be one of the natural consequences of bonding with its expansive consciousness. What it had observed with the Deciders of Fate was that they were of the mindset that could handle it. In the case of Vita Sanguinence she had willingly sacrificed control to it. Because they were of similar origin, it was less likely to hurt her mentally despite what Chaos' past experiences had dictated. Given all this, Vita still was not completely comfortable with the setup. She struggled with the idea of committing herself to hurting anything, even if it was not her thoughts that actually directed the damage.

Can you not be too brutal to her? Vita requested of the energy, able to think to it without projecting by accident.

~Only as brutal as the fight dictates, no more,~ assured Chaos, though knowing that it would have to be in order to handle Her Highness.

Full of herself, Ice Queen was cocky about her ability to survive the fight. There were two things that she reminded herself of. One; was that Chaos bonds lasted up until brain death, and with Vita's fragile mind it seemed likely that if she was not gone already, she would be soon. And two; even if Vita Sanguinence did survive there was still the crippling agony to deal with. Ice Queen was self-assured that no matter how powerful a bond with Chaos might be, there was no way to overcome the failings of Vita Sanguinence.

"My, aren't we full of ourselves," twittered the bird, eyeing her wings with a blatantly dismissive gesture. Part of her was afraid, but since she was next to completely arrogant, whatever fear there was, was not as great as it should have been. With Chaos as the leader, it did not hide its laughter.

~"Naïve as you are, this bond is with a Fate. No Legendary can compare with these females."~

Females? Silver looked up, concerned. He did not recognize the strange telepathy as Vita at all, nor did he know what the speaker meant by 'females'. The only Decider of Fate he had ever heard of was Vita Sanguinence, and that was a title Ho-oh had given her. From what she had expressed, she was the first and only, so what the speaker meant by multiples Silver just did not understand. What was more concerning besides the mention of more of them was that the speaker was addressing Vita in third person. She was not in control, and possibly not even there. *She gave up everything!*

<Silver, it's okay,> Vita used private telepathy, though still mostly composed of emotions instead of words. <I am still here. Don't worry,> assured the Decider of Fate, still capable of sensing the emotions of those around her. Chaos was not going to stifle her completely, letting Vita reassure her Chosen that what was going to transpire was nothing he should be afraid of.

The vulgarity of the speaking voice was that of Chaos, no one else, which Ice Queen was silently dreading. In her conquests several Legendaries and sub-Legendaries made desperate contracts with Chaos in order to protect everything they stood for. Never had the bonds lasted this long, and never were they consciously led by Chaos. *She should have been dead in the head by now,* grimaced the bird in her thoughts, insides churning in disgust. It was a pathetic display of weakness to ask for it, but it was very dangerous to

realize that in some way, an energy as powerful as Chaos had possessed something that stood up to the mental crush of itself. She would just have to wait for Chaos Vita Sanguinence to move and then judge whether or not the combination was a threat.

“Why don’t you show me how *dangerous* this bond is this time. The last eight idiots you took over did not last two minutes!” Ice Queen made her challenge. This was something Chaos had been looking forward to for a long few years, kicking Ice Queen’s feathery ass.

~“*Gladly!!!*”~ it roared, a maddening sound that incapacitated those of weaker wills. Tapped into the powers of the first Decider of Fate, Chaos used everything it knew Vita Sanguinence was capable of; the full force of Life itself, and threw it at the Articuno.

Pure, unadulterated fear was what could be described at the sight of the pillar of plants spreading apart and aiming its lashing appendages at Ice Queen. Before she could even blink the horror from her eyes the mass surged, racing through the air and along the ground for any lick of feathers or flesh.

Panic set in and Ice Queen took off into the sky, almost all of her defensive icy mass gone just to gain greater mobility. With age came experience, her managing to barrel roll from a long lash of brambles only to have the whippy branches of some oddly mobile willows slash across her exposed back. Instantly, Ice Queen cried out, the stinging strike ripping into some of her back muscles. Vita Sanguinence was in agreement, her pained cry being a combination of a deafening sound and a bitterly anguished feeling that it made the ears of the Pokémon below her bleed.

Stop it! Vita Sanguinence begged Chaos, her urges to wrench control from Chaos were strong. The energy resisted her, mentally wrangling the Decider of Fate further into place.

~*This needs to be done,*~ it reminded her, the expanse of voices it possessed a collective growl.

It hurts! Stop!!! Vita blubbered further, her mind a haze of white hot pain. *You can’t do this to her! Stop!* Chaos was not going to bend to her wishes no matter how much she begged, or cried. This was part of their deal, and it would see their fight to the very end.

True to its word Chaos continued with its assault on the Articuno. From the blood of her robes it forced her most uniquely sacred of skills to the surface. With it the act of creation and resurrection could take place, of which there was a lot of it currently going on.

Beneath Ice Queen she could see a trail of green following her about, and from it more of the nasty brambles, vines and branches. Her face blanched at the notion that Chaos was going to whip her to death, and with that it was time to gain some altitude. Chaos Vita’s face mimicked a blackened sneer, liking how Ice Queen underestimated her.

Effortless execution and Chaos Vita beckoned to her sinister mess to rise to the challenge of Ice Queen’s ascent. Under Chaos’ controls and with Vita’s skills, everything it made was a bastardized concept of existence, life unrestrained and perverse. Ice Queen gave a startled squawk as she realized that even many feet up in the air, the vines could still reach. A snare of thick vegetation choked at her neck, trying to drag her down to her death. With a frozen protest and a strong pump of her wings, the vines broke away in a shatter of ice and she was off.

~“*I could do this all day!*”~ sang Chaos Vita Sanguinence, watching in amusement at Ice Queen’s struggles.

The thought of hours upon hours of this sort of fighting style set Vita on edge. *Please don’t . . .* she whimpered. The quicker the better. It was so hard to stomach the waves of nausea or the stabbing jabs her soul was experiencing. Why anyone would want to take a life was already inconceivable to her. If anyone were to experience it the way she did, there never would be murder. Her mind rolled, and all she wanted to do at that moment was black out. *End it . . .* Chaos dismissed the concerns of its host. She could suffer for however long it needed to get the job done.

A reinforced wreath of branches looped around one of Ice Queen’s legs. Even with the capacity to freeze things in an instant, she found that the core of the branch was resistant to flash freezing, thus able to offer a firm hold. The red eyes were wide as she watched the long arm of the limb rise up in front of. She knew exactly where this was going as the arch of the arm moved towards her struggling form, ready to toss her to the ground.

The full length of the one branch was so long that it did not have the necessary thickness and strength to toss her hard to the dirt, instead letting her go at a level that put her in a better range for Vita’s absolutely nightmarish projections to cripple her.

~Release me. Now!~ was just one of the expressions that was still somehow discernable from Chaos Vita Sanguinence’s jumbled mess of a mind. Most of it was agonized yelps and hollering to either stop attacking, or to let her go.

At a time like this, Ice Queen really wish she had hands to block out the sound. The temporary loss of concentration was a godsend for Chaos Vita. The long line of forestation wriggled about in excitement, anticipating who of them would get the pleasure of striking the bird.

Ice Queen sped on, dropping altitude just enough to amplify her flying speed. She would outrun the nastiness that lay below her. Good ideas went awry and a wall of climbing creepers latticed its way in front of her, blocking her path and catching her in its net. The Articuno screeched and trashed, sharpening her wings into a dangerous edge enough that she sliced through the lattice. Caught up in the randomness of it all, she started laughing inanely, an expression of pure stress. The laugh was cut short as her belly was nearly pierced by a stabbing pine.

How can that stupid thing handle Chaos this long!?! Vita was obviously still aware somewhere inside, as she had not once let up about how absolutely miserable the fighting was for her. Most of the battle had taken place further away, her not really willing to go near the dreadful thing and risk serious injury.

Ice Queen had been so absorbed in dodging the stuff Chaos Vita Sanguinence sent that only on her most recent flyby did she get a close glimpse of the bond. The rosy red eyes of Vita were completely masked in a filthy black aura that created a wholly unsettling experience as they smiled when she swooped past. Ice Queen could only reason that if the Celebi she had fought had succeeded at a Chaos bond, she would not have dared to have fought another Legendary. The things that Chaos Vita was doing were unimaginable.

“Screeaaa!” Ice Queen cried as a serrated blackberry bramble slashed her across her left wing. *I can still fly.* She headed for open sky, only to be blocked by the sudden eruption of several sequoia trees. The last thing she wanted to do was turn back into the

hazard zone. *Stupid bitch!* Articunos were too big to live in trees, partially because of their weight but also because they froze them by accident. Ice Queen headed for the shortest in the line, mounting the branches and using her weight to bend the tree so she could hop over it. Chaos was laughing at the attempt. With a little flick of her wrist, Chaos Vita swatted the bird back into the field. Chaos was absolutely loving this, where Vita had not once ceased in her screams.

~Chaos, stop it!~

By now Ice Queen was tired, badly bruised, and lacerated all over. A tangled web of who-knows-what snared her yet again, cutting her wings and taking out feathers. After a frigid struggle did she manage to free herself, only to be beaten by the thickened arms of a variety of hardwood trees. Chaos Vita refused to let up, or let her rest, and after only five minutes of walloping she was on the verge of collapse.

~*It is almost over,*~ Chaos assured the Decider of Fate who was in a delirium. The thought of this all finishing soon was a welcomed relief to her. She wanted it to be done as soon as possible.

With its opponent on the verge of fainting, Chaos Vita Sanguinence was confident that the next sweep would send her permanently to the ground. Ice Queen's beak was agape as she watched the world around her come up in a sea of brown and green, ready to crush her into oblivion. The tangled mass solidified into a broad limb and through the air it swung, sending Ice Queen spinning and crashing into the ground below.

~Aah!!!~ Vita Sanguinence hollered.

"Twee. . .!" Ice Queen gave a halfhearted twitter upon smacking the ground before spiraling across it for several meters until she finally slid to a stop. She no longer had the strength to move, and even if she had, her whole body felt broken. The bones of her wings jutted out through her torn tissue, white and shimmery against the blue of her feathery down. For the first time in her life, someone actually fought her and won. A Legendary with such an injury, unless healed immediately, was useless and executed; which was just how Chaos wanted it.

With Vita howling from the inside, Chaos Vita Sanguinence jumped down from her magnificent pillar of mangled malice and strode up to the fallen fiend. The Articuno knew, and in a way hoped that Vita Sanguinence would intervene and save her. The Decider of Fate was a kind, loving, gentle creature who did not want to see anything die in her presence.

"Vita Sanguinence," Ice Queen began to plead, "you have to heal me." Such a pathetic display, even still, Ice Queen's plight pulled on the strings of Vita's sympathy. The bird had to have learned her lesson.

Let me heal her, begged the Decider of Fate. In such a state as she was, it was not possible for Vita to completely sense how much of a manipulator Ice Queen actually was.

~*She does not learn. Kill her,*~ Chaos countered, able to sense that everything the Articuno ever did was only for her own gain. Such an individual was not welcomed in Chaos' impression of the universe.

No, I cannot, I will not! Vita Sanguinence retorted.

~*The bird must die.*~

Ice Queen looked on as the Chaos Vita Sanguinence stood still, unmoving. Of all her luck, it looked like the bond had succumbed to Chaos completely. Her body was

wrecked, and she did need the Recover but fortunately it meant no killing. She was not aware of the internal bickering that was going on inside the blasphemous arrangement.

I am not going to kill her! Vita was resisting with all her might, forcing her skills as far out of Chaos' reach as she had the capacity to do so.

~If you do not end your enemy then this world will be forever barren just as you are.~ That statement sullied the mood immensely. Despite all of Vita's wishes, where no one would die, Ice Queen had to be at least punished.

Even alive and damaged, Ice Queen still kept an icy grip on the world around them. With a world frozen solid, there was no point in Vita even trying to use her skills. She would bring forth existence, and yet suffer as it all perished from the frigid landscape. Under the bitter realization, Vita Sanguinece relaxed her control on her abilities. Part of this was driven by her own selfishness. Vita believed everything could live harmoniously, that they learned from their mistakes and others would forgive them. She also adamantly despised the agony she was experiencing on part of her injuring the Articuno. The thought of killing something made the already excruciating experience seem merely inconveniencing in comparison. Chaos could use her delirium to its advantage. Like it mentioned earlier, the final blow had to be by Vita, whether willingly or through force.

~You are Life. Your mercy knows how to end her pain quickly.~ Chaos Vita Sanguinece looked upon the fallen bird, contemplating. Ice Queen was doing her best to look helpless and sorry, hoping for compassion. *~She is a burden to this world. A burden to you. In her death you shall flourish. Pain passes. Over time, it is nothing.*~

I know you are right. It did always go away. Vita Sanguinece wanted to believe that she could have solved this problem properly, and maybe in a way she could achieve her true goals. At this moment the only option was one thing, and that was to kill Ice Queen. *Why must killing be the only solution? Why the suffering?*

~Suffering is part of life. The universe is give and take. You must take her life to give to the rest.~

Vita Sanguinece could always ask Silver to do it, or any of the other Pokémon. None of them liked Ice Queen, and all would volunteer to end her if given half the chance. Because Vita knew what sustained a body, and had the capacity to fatally injure in one blow, she felt that the responsibility solely rested with her. It was her duty to be the murderer, to kill. A Decider of Fate was the be all, end all. Through her there was life, and as what Chaos had hinted on, through others there would be death. Such matters were in her hands, of things that only she could truly control.

~And with those hands you are given choice. Decider of Fate, these are yours.~ The feeling of control came back to Vita's body, she was in the lead ahead of Chaos. It stood to the back of her mind and watched. It had faith that Vita Sanguinece would give it the results it wanted.

~"You took the lives of millions. No, billions. If you had it your way nothing would be left. It is my duty to assure that there will always be those to experience life on this planet, something of which you don't seem to want to be a part of. I hope you learn something today."~ This was what Ice Queen did not want to hear. Vita Sanguinece was speaking over Chaos, and apparently from what she was saying, she too agreed that Ice Queen deserved to die. *~"I do not want to kill you, but the world needs time without you, to live, to grow. I am very, very sorry."*~ She wept true tears for her enemy.

“I can change!” Ice Queen cawed, all a lie but trying so desperately not to let it end this way. “Just give me a chance!”

~“*I am so very, very sorry,*”~ Chaos Vita Sanguinence murmured while she formed a large oak spear. To keep Ice Queen from struggling and messing with her aim, Chaos Vita restrained the bird in a Psychic hold, then brought the spear over to point in-between the bird’s eyes.

“Don’t . . .”

Chaos Vita Sanguinence was a mess of sobs, blood streaming down her face. Energy was brought around the tree spear so she could force momentum into it for a guaranteed quick and painless death. With a final murmur of, ~“*I’m sorry,*”~ the spear shot through Ice Queen’s skull, leaving the bird to drop to the snow. Chaos left in alarm. To be part of the aftermath was not something it wanted to experience. Vita Sanguinence too, soon joined the deceased bird. The bird had died, where Vita wished she had instead.

~What have I done!?!~ Vita Sanguinence wailed, the ear bleeding emotes forcing everyone else at bay. There was no way anyone could get close to her and compliment her for a job well done. Her level of emotional and spiritual distress was so high, that in fact some of the Pokémon had inched themselves to a tolerable distance, just so they could get away from the emotional torrents.

<“It’s okay!”> Silver shouted to his Legendary loudly enough so he could be heard over Vita’s din. <“What you did was right!”> he further complimented her. Chaos bonds were strictly forbidden, though he was not going to punish her, and he definitely did not think she should have been punishing herself.

~It’s not okay! I killed her!~ Vita Sanguinence further bawled. She was incapable of being rational at this point, her thoughts becoming rudimentary, focused completely on rectifying her mistake. ~I need to fix this.~

<“Fix what? She’s dead!”> Silver was shocked by how obsessive Vita Sanguinence was with the notion of bringing Ice Queen back. It made no sense at all. Vita was unapologetic about the Chaos bond, yet completely remorseful about actually have killed her enemy only seconds later. <“You can’t bring her back!”>

~Yes, I can!~ snapped the Decider of Fate, then added, ~Chaos told me I could.~ Not a reassuring thing to say.

<“If she comes back she’ll do the same stuff she did before. You told her yourself just a minute ago!”>

~So? With all the Legendaries around maybe she will finally stop.~

<“She never would have stopped, Vita! She would only stop when she’s dead. Do not start crying for that bird. She was not worth it when she was alive, and definitely not now that she is dead.”>

~Well, maybe she really meant it that time!~ Vita Sanguinence ended the argument with a finishing yell. ~She may really have changed her mind. I have to give her that chance!~

She must have lost it, the Lugia surmised, not willing to risk verbalizing that point after seeing Chaos Vita Sanguinence’s brutal combat techniques.

Life of Blood, a title given to her by Ho-oh and supported by Chaos. Blood was life, the essence of her very being. Vita Sanguinence was not a mere Legendary, she was

a *Fate*. Focused on her goal, Vita Sanguinence let her sight waiver. Through this she could see the expanse of energies flitting about, or the lack thereof. If it had existed, she could make something from it, and if not, she could create it until her energy pool dried up. For a task that was designed specifically for her, she had an immense pool at her disposal and was determined to use all of it.

To the universe she made her plea, for life, for happiness and prosperity, for all eternal. Most importantly did she want Ice Queen back and alive. There was hope as Vita Sanguinence poured her heart out into the one thing she had always wished for, the absence of loneliness.

I am Vita Sanguinence, Life of Blood and through me there is everything.

All those who were still alive were capable of seeing a brilliantly white energy course from Vita Sanguinence, each speck of light and blood the potential of being. Her blood was a small gift to the rest of the world, a starting point for which things could build. To the far reaches of long frozen lands, Vita Sanguinence let her energy spread, it beckoning to the frozen corpses, to the slumbering vegetation to awaken, to come back to the world and its promises.

She may not have known anything about the afterlife, that even if there was such a concept. In Vita's mind the world was the only place anything existed, that anything not alive was something just yearning to return. To the universe she cried out, a call to come back, to trust their souls to her potential. Their response was giddy with excitement, eager to continue on with their lives before everything had gone so terribly wrong.

The spectators bore witness to a world that almost suddenly began to bubble with life. The once barren snow drifts around them stirred, shifting away to reveal bushes, small trees and soon as they discovered animals and Pokémon. It was a spectacle beyond awe-inspiring proportions. The Magnemite that had been shattered by one of Ice Queen's deflected blasts was whole once more. A Rattata from nowhere stirred from her chilled, death slumber, not sure of what had transpired but surprised all the same. A vulture, one of the standard carrion birds of the region, took off from the ground with a startled sound, not comfortable with the idea of being around the highly advanced creatures.

It was beyond words what Vita Sanguinence was in the midst of accomplishing, though summed as a full world revival beyond the dreams of what Silver could ever imagine. From ocean to ocean, across continents to the poles, there was nothing she could not revitalize. Deciders of Fate were something special, as this one had proven with a feat so beyond scope that Silver was sure any to follow her would never compare.

<“Vita! You . . . I . . .”> Silver was at a loss of words.

“It's amazing!!!” giggled the Nidorina.

In a trance-like state, Vita Sanguinence had hardly been aware of her capabilities, only that she was able. She turned to Nidorina at the sound of her compliment, eyes slowly opening with a smile.

~It is. Isn't it?~ She could be no more proud of what she had just done.

Broken as her body was, only now did she feel like a whole. All the time she spent wandering the frozen landscape, all alone, the constant depression that haunted her was lifted. There was no more absence of anything, other than warmth, and with her senses she knew that the roles of Legendaries would be quickly taken up as they always had been, bringing once again the seasons and balance. The happiness Vita Sanguinence felt quickly dwindled as her head turned back to the Articuno. Yet in all the glory of the

moment, one thing remained constant, Ice Queen was still dead. The very thought roused a whole new level of grief and indignation in the Decider of Fate. After the miraculous thing she had just done and the Articuno was still dead.

~Curses!~ There would be no stopping her. Maybe she just had to try harder. Focused more than ever, Vita brought her energy out for use, tears fresh on her cheeks. The attempt at the resurrection failed, the energy that had been partitioned had dispersed and the blood drying up with no results. ~Don't deny me!~ Vita Sanguinence snapped at her energy. In another flustered attempt she brought more of her will into the thought of bringing back Ice Queen, only to feel something resist her. She had just done the impossible, and still could not bring back one, specific Articuno. ~This cannot be happening. I just brought back the world! Why are you not a part of it?!~ Vita paused for a moment then continued her emotional screeching. ~You have to come back to me. Please, Ice Queen. Please!~

<Interesting turn of events, is it not, Lugia?> Silver jumped back at the voice, that was then accompanied with a flash of light.

<Ho-oh?> he stared at the orange bird, which had just appeared next to him. The Pokémon were in great respect and in a sense mourning, none making a peep. <What are you doing here?> the Lugia gave a whispered hiss, not the least bit respectful to the new arrival. Ho-oh had been around the whole time the Earth was in turmoil yet did nothing about it. <Do you have any idea what we went through?!> Ho-oh brushed him off with a raise of a feathered wing.

<Until the Cleansing Ceremony, you are but a sub-Legendary in my eyes,> the bird reprimanded the other, making it clear that it did not want to be disrespected. Rank and file had no place in Silver's mind. To him he was a Legendary after all he went through to salvage what was left. Silver was the Lugia, the Legendary one, and other than Vita the only one that had lasted throughout the whole crisis.

<And what are you going to tell the rest? You stood back, did nothing where I and Vita . . . a baby no less, did all the work!>

<You will say nothing of this, and especially her,> Ho-oh then made a gesture towards the Fate with its plumed head. It had come to check on the phenomena that just took place. Something that lasted through a Chaos bond as she had done, and with her powers at her disposal was dangerous. Why it was here currently was to watch the said activity included in observing Vita Sanguinence. It was wary as she progressed further into a maddened state. <If we are fortunate, she may just end herself.>

<And what is that suppose to mean?> snarled Silver rhetorically, knowing full well what Ho-oh was implying. Ho-oh did not reply, and instead Silver focused on the mounting distress Vita Sanguinence presented as she tried and failed to correct her mistake.

~I'm sorry, I'm sorry! Just get up!~ Worn from her many efforts, Vita Sanguinence had started sweating blood. Her energy pool had been largely used from her dramatic display earlier, but was dropping dramatically at every over-exerted failed attempt she had been making for Ice Queen. This single individual alone was taking more of her energy than the full span of the planet. ~Get up! Just open your eyes!~ The hematomas were skewing her vision, and the tears were making it hard to see. Carelessly, she wiped the bloody mess on her sleeves, still unstopping in her efforts to resurrect the bird. ~It was only suppose to be temporary. Just long enough for me to bring

back everyone else. You weren't suppose to die!~ The Pokémon heard, somewhat saddened for Vita but also disappointed in her. After all that she did to them, Vita Sanguinence still never wanted to permanently commit Ice Queen to the grave. ~Please get up. Please . . . Please, please,~ she continued on, rambling in a daze.

<Excuse me, Ho-oh, but I need to stop this,> Silver brushed the much older bird aside and stepped forward within a comfortable talking distance of Vita. "The world is revived. Ice Queen is dead. You should be happy," he half jibbed, half scolded. This was taken negatively.

~I killed!!!~ Vita yelled at him, her emotions full of bitterness and self-loathing. ~Only sadists are happy when they kill things! I did not want her to die! I did not want anyone to die!!!~ The emotions were revolting enough that Silver actually took a step back. Satisfied that he got the message, Vita Sanguinence went back to her work. She had repaired the body so there was no visible damage, leaving only the soul as the last missing piece to guarantee a live body. Motherly, she rubbed Ice Queen's unbearably icy feathers, coaxingly saying, ~It's going to be all okay.~ Silver had no idea if there was really anything he could do. Vita's ramblings began to become more incoherent as the minutes passed, only interrupted by her occasional frustrated torrents. In such a situation, he was completely helpless.

Vita Sanguinence continued trying, putting more and more energy into her signature ability; though persistently failing to get any results. The two Legendary birds were aware of her dwindling energy pool, and so was she. If she could not resurrect Ice Queen before it expended, then she probably would never be able to bring back the Articuno at all.

~I'm trying so hard. Why won't you get up? Why?! Please . . . Please, Ice Queen! Wake up!!!~

<As I had guessed, Life of Blood can only revive those she does not kill.> Strange thing for Ho-oh to remark about at a time like this. <To wish something dead would mean it is not deserving of her gifts, no matter how retracted Life of Blood's desires might be.> Silver looked on, distraught. Vita did not know that was her punishment for dealing in death. For Life to hurt, to kill it would punish absolutely. This one soul would always be out of reach.

~You have to live. You can *not* just die like this!~

Dripping in blood, her field of vision a haze of red, Vita Sanguinence forced the energy from the very bottom of her energy pool for use. There was her soul energy, though there was no way for her to tap into it. If she could exchange that source and give it to Ice Queen, she would, but it was not a possibility. ~Cry of Existence!~ Using the last of her resources, Vita forced every ounce of her will into the skill, stretching it out for as long as her mind would hold. The energy left her, and with it all hope of a successful resurrection. In Ice Queen's revival, Vita Sanguinence had failed.

Back turned to her audience, no one could see the mask of negative emotions that went across Vita's face. ~No!!! No! No, no, no, no!!!~ she howled, and then without warning, the noises ceased and her body slumped.

"Vita?" Silver ventured. There was no response. Fear washed over him. *Ho-oh wasn't right . . . She didn't just . . .* "Vita!!!" Silver did a dogged tumble, flopping next to his Legendary. With a ginger poke, he touched Vita's cheek, her still under his fingers. He tried again, this time caressing her gloved hands, praying to see some sign of stirring.

Using the wealth of insight that his experiences with Vita had given him, it was clear to him what had happened. “Oh . . . Vita . . .” he blubbered. Wordlessly, he scooped his most loving of angels up in his wings.

Silver held her for as long as he possibly could, in some way his own refusal to believe that the crisis was over. Such a beautiful gift to the world, only to be taken away from him when her duties were done.

I cared about you a lot. Vita knew. She always had. The longing for an embrace of someone you loved, and only in death, in the place where she could no longer feel, could Silver finally hold her.