*1: Awakening*

*A/N; This is an awful chapter; I need it, but writing it has been such an immense pain that I’m just leaving it now. There’s some important stuff in here but not enough that you’ll be totally alienated if you just skip to the next chapter right now.*

*Shimmering blue crystals floated in incomprehensible patterns. I contemplated them as I hung in the endless hall of impossible geometry, for lack of anything better to do.*

*A roar echoed in the distance, casting a ripple of stillness through the air. I winced as it passed through me, and for a moment time seemed to stop.*

I was abruptly forced awake as my alarm clock blared. Grumbling, I rolled out of bed and stumbled across to turn it off.

As I switched off the alarm I got a strange feeling that something was distinctly off. After a few moments of consideration I realised that it was probably the alarm- today was one of the few free days I had with my current schedule, and I’d made plans (Or possibly un-plans) to do absolutely nothing until at least lunchtime. Clearly I’d forgotten to change my alarm clock to reflect that.

Still, that niggling feeling that something was *wrong* stuck around.

*Probably will until I forget about it. It’s like remembering to breathe.*

I stood there for a second thinking about what to do next. I was awake enough that going back to sleep wasn’t a guaranteed thing, but not awake enough to actually want to *do* anything, or be competent at anything I *did* want to do.

My stomach decided to voice its own opinion by rumbling. Looking down at it, I hummed thoughtfully, running my tongue around my mouth.

*…I suppose food is an acceptable course of action.*

I didn’t realise anything was *actually* wrong until I was in the kitchen, and noticed I couldn’t quite reach the higher shelves in the wall cupboards.

I’d been able to reach that shelf for *years* now.

Panic was, I think, a fairly understandable reaction when I realised this.

*I need a mirror.*

Finding one was easier than it should have been because, as I was starting to realise now I was slightly more awake, this *wasn’t my flat*. The layout was slightly different, the furniture was of a different make, and in general it was a much nicer flat, as much as I hated to admit it.

Among these differences was a large wall mirror, innocuously hanging on one of the walls by the front door.

I hesitated a moment before stepping in front of it, not really wanting to see what had happened. It was only a moment however, and I took the step.

The obvious difference was, of course, that I was younger. About five years younger- I looked about fourteen, give or take half a year. This was something of a shock.

The smaller differences didn’t really start to register for the first few minutes that I spent gaping at my own reflection, but they were there. A scar I’d picked up from burning myself the one time I’d been careless when trying to cook, the skin indents I’d had from wearing a watch constantly for six months straight, the slight stain on my right arm I’d picked up at some point and never noticed…

The biggest of these differences was that I wasn’t as absurdly skinny as I had been at that age. Thankfully, it seemed I’d missed the period in which I went too far in the other direction.

I took a step back, still staring at my reflection, and deliberately pinched my cheek. Hard. The sting of pain made me cringe, but more importantly I *could feel the pain.*

I didn’t often remember my dreams but I *did* know that feeling pain like that didn’t happen.

I took another step back and started hyperventilating.

*Guess the shock wore off then.*

One panic attack later, I was staring out a window taking stock of my current situation.

I was roughly fourteen years of age, significantly healthier than I originally had been at that age, and in a flat similar to but better than my own.

I also had no idea how I ended up like this, or where *here* actually was. The view I was currently taking in was almost as opposite to the one I was used to while still being a relatively urban area; a small, almost artistic town backed by woodland, as opposed to the massively built up metropolis I’d ended up living in before.

Though it really was rather pretty, what I could view of the town gave me absolutely no clue as to where I actually *was*. The overnight de-aging was a pretty good indicator that physics as I knew had gone out the window, so knowing my luck I’d end up somewhere in fiction. If you believed the stories, that was how they were supposed to work, right?

Thankfully, this didn’t seem to be somewhere like Berserk. The only things I could tell for certain were that humans existed, and that they had modern dress sense. That was good; I didn’t really enjoy sticking out like a sore thumb because I needed to learn how to put on whatever clothes might be the current fashion. Unfortunately, it didn’t help much in narrowing down exactly where I might be- ‘modern dress sense’ covered a very large percentage of settings I knew, both good and bad.

*Nothing for it, I suppose.* I turned away from the window, back toward the rest of the house. *I’ll have to try and find something here. I don’t want to stumble around like an idiot and run in to something that’s going to get me killed.*

Searching for clues didn’t actually take as long as I expected. The piece of paper with the bright green printed words was unmistakeable now I was actually *looking* for information.

*im sorry*

*found you drifting*

*couldnt fix everything*

*fit you in where i could*

*drew on your history to try and fill in the gaps*

*not perfect but it worked*

*pulled together some connections to mend the rest*

*things set up for you*

*still so sorry*

*-c*

I read the note twice, trying to understand it. The characters were different enough to make reading it kind of difficult, which wasn’t helped by the total lack of capitalisation or punctuation. Or the green ink.

I didn’t know who or what ‘c’ was, but if the note was truthful it had done me a hefty favour. It’d probably be a good idea to try and work out a way to return it at some point. I gave the paper one last read before folding it and pocketing it.

Though it may have somewhat answered the question of *why* I was here (Even if only in the vaguest terms) it still didn’t give me any hints about where *here* was. Aside from the fact that something relatively benevolent going by ‘c’ was hanging around, anyway.

Thinking through how I was going to get information without making myself look like a fool took some time- enough that I had time to finally have some food like I’d been planning to earlier.

The solution was actually quite simple. My first instinct had been to go for the Internet, but I’d put that off on account of having no idea what the laptop I’d found, a sleek black unit with an odd, bulky side attachment, would be like. Or even if I knew the password.

As I realised though, there *was* something I knew how to use; the television. It was much better from the one I was used to, another of the differences here.

However, it seemed that no matter the world a TV was a TV and after locating the remote control I switched it on.

The first thing that came on seemed to be a soap opera of some kind, so I took to channel hopping. Talk show, advert, animation, another advert, some kind of game show…

Live news program showing what were unmistakeably (Though… not-animated? Close enough) a Garchomp and a Tyranitar duking it out on a battlefield, with an announcer doing a play-by play.

As I watched, the Tyranitar moved with speed I wouldn’t have expected from a Pokémon I normally thought of as slow, doing its level best to take out the Dragon-type. But the Garchomp was even faster, moving so fast it practically blurred on the cameras.

Judging by the state of the battlefield this was something that had been going on for some time, and now that I looked the Pokémon both also looked rather battered. The Garchomp more so than its opponent, yet it was practically dancing around the Tyranitar, taking maybe one hit in ten.

The Tyranitar staggered from a white-glowing arm fin to the face, but recovered and blasted a wave of black energy that was probably Dark Pulse. The Dragon-type blocked with its fins, the dark energy crackling over it and clearly causing pain. Seemingly ignoring that, it uncrossed them and dashed forward so fast it outright *vanished*.

The running camera changed, showing that the Ground-type had managed to get behind the Tyranitar, where it lashed out with a single white-glowing claw. The Rock-type was flung off its feet, crashing down halfway across the field. After a second of struggling to get up, the Pokémon slumped down, and vanished as a beam of red light connected with it.

The Garchomp dropped to one knee as the camera panned back across to one of the elevated boxes as the crowd *erupted* in noise.

I stared at the person on screen for a second in slight disbelief, unable to mistake the waist-length blonde hair with decorations for anyone else’s, no matter if the wearer seemed younger than I might have expected.

*“And Cynthia claims the title of Champion, becoming the youngest person to ever have held the title at seventeen years old…”* The announcer rattled off, sounding slightly too excited for his own good.

On the screen Cynthia pocketed the red-and-white Poke Ball she had just recalled her Garchomp into with a broad smile on her face and turned toward the official who had just walked on to her platform.

I turned off the screen and slumped back, deep in thought.

If I was being honest, I mused to myself as I searched the only bookshelf in the flat, Pokémon was basically one of the absolute best possible places to get dropped in, no matter who you were and where you went. It was both relatively safe, and a place where even a completely normal human could make a difference if they were a good enough Pokémon Trainer.

On a personal level it was even better. I would freely admit that, as a child, it was a dream of mine to be a Pokémon Trainer. While that might have faded as the years went past, I still knew a rather frankly absurd amount about the series.

Of course, from what I had gathered so far, a good chunk of that might not be applicable; my biggest knowledge base was in the games, a result of having spent a truly inordinate amount of time playing them over the years.

Alas, what I’d seen so far didn’t match up with what I knew the games to be like. Well, mostly the *live-televised* Champion match, but even that was a significant departure from the isolated and private one-on-one matches that were the end result of the games.

I’d attempted to use the laptop to try and discover exactly which version of the setting I was in, but hadn’t been able to find the internet browser. I *had* discovered that the intimidatingly bulky attachment was apparently a transfer device of some kind, before realising that I could probably work things out faster the old-fashioned way.

Removing the book I was looking for from the shelf, I thumbed through the pages of the atlas until I reached the index, then scanned along the A section until my finger stopped at the one name I could think of that could prove my suspicion.

Alto Mare.

I was in the world of Pokémon anime.

Taking a breath, I snapped the atlas shut and placed it back on the shelf, a slightly relieved grin making. The Pokémon anime wasn’t a death world. It wasn’t even overly hostile.

I could work with that.

I’d been giving careful thought to what I was going to do now when the post arrived.

On one hand, I had basically the ultimate childhood fantasy right in front of me. Had anyone who had ever encountered the series before *not* at least wondered what it would be like to be a Pokémon Trainer?

But on the other… as dreary as it might have been the last few years, my life back home was *my* life back home, and I always was rather possessive of things that were mine.

All of those considerations were immediately cast aside as I arrived at the front door and saw the envelope lying innocently on the floor. Strictly speaking, it looked much like any other business envelope; white, with one of those clear plastic film windows to show the address- apparently, I was living in Aquacorde Town of all places.

Of course, most of those business envelopes weren’t embossed with a red-and-blue Poké Ball symbol across the front.

Cautiously, I ran a finger across the top of the seal and extracted the contents. A small handwritten sheet of paper fluttered out when I unfolded the letter, which I ignored in favour of staring at the contents of said letter- or more specifically, the plastic identification card with my face on it. Glancing up to the letter, I began to read.

‘*Mr Johnson,*

*Your application to become an active Trainer on the Pokémon League circuit has been processed by the Admissions Board and accepted. Below are the details of your admittance, your Trainer Card, and the steps you should take now to expedite the process of taking your first steps as a full Pokémon Trainer. Contact details for your relevant breeders and official Pokémon League licensed starter Pokémon suppliers are also listed below.’*

The last sentence was crossed out, and a two words in a handwritten scrawl that was nearly as bad as mine had been added underneath. With some effort, I managed to decipher them as ‘*read note- D*’. The rest of the letter was mostly bureaucratic drivel, with the odd PR-friendly ‘yes *of course* we actually care about you individually, no you’re not just another name on a list why would you think that?’ sentence thrown in here and there that I couldn’t really care less about.

Instead, I peeled the Trainer Card off the letter, and examined it. It was basically a slightly fancy ID card- I was pretty sure that there was a chip of some kind inside it from the way it didn’t flex evenly, but what kind I wasn’t sure.

A slight rustle of paper drew my attention, and I realised that I’d managed to stand on the small sheet of paper that had dropped out of the envelope earlier. Picking it up, I attempted to interpret the handwriting, though it was hard to call it ‘handwriting’. It was nearly as bad as my own spider-vomit block capital writing, though fortunately not as bad as my natural writing was.

*‘Ben,*

*This note has been somewhat difficult to write, and I suppose it is technically an abuse of my position to deliver it to you in this manner.*

*I was a good friend of your father when your parents were still alive, and we had agreed that I would provide you with a starter Pokémon when you became a Trainer. I don’t know if you’ll remember me, as the reformation of the League kept me very busy for the last few years.*

*I would like to express my dearest sympathy for the loss of your parents. I know this may be somewhat belated but I find that sympathies expressed in the moment may come across as spurious and annoying. If it had come to it I would have gladly provided you with a place to stay, but your psychotherapist put in a recommendation for you to be given space, as she believed you were capable of independent supervision.*

*Below is the transfer code for the starter Pokémon I have arranged for you. If you have already made arrangements for a starter Pokémon, and do not wish to use it, I understand perfectly. Simply leave the code unused for a week and the transfer will expire.*

*My utmost apologies,*

*Drasna’*

Below that was a thirty-two digit code in blocks of four, with the instructions to input it at any compatible transfer machine.

My first thought on finishing the note was ‘Wow, did she eat a thesaurus before writing this?’. The second was relief at not needing to work out how on earth I was going to manage getting to Lumiose City without a Pokémon. The reminder that my parents were still dead was something of a kick in the teeth- it had been long enough for me that I was barely phased by mentioning them anymore, but the way the letter had been phrased implied that it had only been a few months here.

Shaking it off, I returned to the desk where my laptop was sitting and booted the transfer program. The large plugin split open to reveal a small dish-shaped indentation, which briefly sparked with white lightning as I entered the code, and deposited a suddenly-there Poké Ball with a soft *click*.

I stared at the Poké Ball for a moment, before reaching out to pick it up. Feeling the cool, plastic-y surface sent a thrill down my arm, and I grinned. Mentally turning my nonexistant baseball cap backwards, I flung the Poké Ball forwards. “Poké Ball, go!”

The red-and-white sphere bounced off a wall before snapping open, a stream of white energy pouring out and taking a form. I squinted slightly past the glare as the energy solidified into a small, winged shape in the centre of the room.

I grinned at the Noibat, feeling like I could fly. “Hey Noibat, looks like we’re going to be partners. You think we can do it?”

The Dragon-type Pokémon looked me over and nodded. “Bat noibat.”

“Awesome.”

A/N:

*Oh my everything I HATE this chapter. So much. I swear, this is the only part of the entire story that made me even once consider just not writing it.*

*From start to finish, this particular rewrite has taken from late 2014 until now.*

*On the actual story, there’s one major butterfly in the SI’s past compared to mine; my parents are still alive, well, and rather amused that I needed to resort to killing them off. Ultimately, if I was thrown into some other dimension I’d stop at nothing to get back.*

*That’s not the story I want to write here. So I had to take drastic action to make it so that I wouldn’t, and gave myself a pretty bleh life. Not* bad*, but not something that anyone would deliberately choose to get out of life. Something that I wouldn’t mind throwing away.*

*But yeah, aside from that, this is me. Me who kind of stopped paying attention to the anime late XYZ (just before the tournament, basically) but kept up with the games- even in twenty years, because I wouldn’t be able to keep my knowledge separate to such a degree. But yeah, my game knowledge will be top-notch, anime not quite pre XYZ, non-existant past that.*

*This also means I can recall combat info off the top of my head that literally nobody else in the world knows- Types of Legendaries, anyone?*