

Coding, designing, building. The experience Arti had with manipulating digital interfaces to get them to do what they wanted wasn't anything out of the ordinary, for someone who'd grown up playing games with the interfaces to change and build their own pretty readily accessible. They'd built maps in 3D space for people to jump and platform around, dabbled in coding choose-your-own-adventure text games from scratch, and had pretty comfortably broken more than a few apps or built-in security measures in their PC to more easily do what they wanted with it. They were even working towards gathering the means to get a computer science degree, a gateway to occupations that could safely land them in future financial stability outside their artistic passions and endeavors.

So, with all Arti's experience in more traditional coding languages and skills with program functions, the transition into picking up Digimon modding went a lot smoother for them than most.

Arti sat at their PC typing away, poring over the code they'd already written and flicking between windows to check over and adjust the 3D model component every so often.

Changing text or swapping out spritework and visual texture packs were one thing, but modding new mechanics or functions entirely into games always tended to need more elbow grease put in to get them working properly. That'd involve assigning space in the code for it, and making sure they didn't bump into any already existing mechanics that'd leave it a buggy mess- on top of the arduous process of designing the new assets tied to the effect to bring it to life, reliant on their own artistic eye and talent to make it look in any way good. Ideally, it'd all come together to be finished and looking clean enough to be shared with others who might be interested, who could then in turn test it out and give feedback on what needs fixing or polish where the modder might have missed.

It was a communal effort, really... one that Arti couldn't stand. Hard work for little reward and the worst user feedback imaginable- there was a reason they usually didn't make mods for more popular games, especially ones without modding API already built into it.

But today, they weren't modding any old open source code of some unsatisfying game, or for anyone on the forums to complain about. This little project of theirs had a target demographic of exactly *one*.

Arti glanced over to the metal behemoth the color of rusted metal seated beside their desk, leaning its back against the wall- busying itself scrolling on Arti's phone.

Eyeballing the huge figure's heavy, clunky, two-fingered gauntlets, they shifted back to the screen to widen the handle on the 3D model displayed just a smidge to fit better.

Target demographic of *two*, in truth.



“Mmm. One away,” Guardromon rumbled without looking up, peering close at Arti’s phone in concentration. “Snowball, Balloon, Marble, and Mushroom. Foolish of me to believe the theme archaic enough to be ‘things that are round.’ Mushroom in particular *did* seem a bit of a stretch for that, anyhow...” They gave a little disappointed hum, carefully tapping the phone screen with their huge, mechanical gauntlets to deselect the words they had picked. “Assistance would be appreciated, please.”

Arti bit their lip, coming up for air from Programming Brain long enough to rack their brain for their partner’s benefit. “What were the other words, how many left?”

“Eight left,” Guardromon reported, green eyes only just subtly moving in their visor to rapidly reconfirm the data they had to be accurate. “I had already correctly identified ‘Augmentative Prefixes’ and ‘Orderly’ as the two first categories. The other four uncategorized words remaining are Stick, Swell, Domino, and Jack.”

“Hmm...” Arti considered for a moment, eyedropping the rust colored palette they had saved for Guardromon’s usual armored frame to paint the accents and hose hooked up to the boxy asset on screen, before looking over again. “Odd one out is Marble. Marble, Domino, Jack, Stick is one group- they’re like really old games. Ball and Jacks, Dominos and Marbles, Sticks and... sticks, I dunno. But that’s that one.”

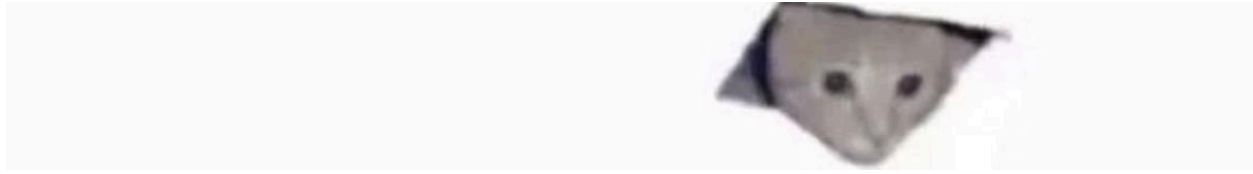
Guardromon tapped the phone a few more times, giving an affirmative grunt.

“Items in Classic Kid’s games,” they read aloud. “Well, given I’ve never played these ‘Classic’ games before, I do not find it surprising I did not get this answer.” They glanced up to Arti with a dry look, one that seemed to ooze *Can you believe this?*

“Yeah, fair enough,” Arti rolled their eyes, saving their progress on the mod to the file *Guardro_medictf2_v1.dvm* and closing the code editor. “See if you can guess the group for the last four before you put them in, though- oh my god.”

“What’s happened?” There wasn’t any urgency to Arti’s voice, so Guardromon had looked back down to the phone to puzzle out the answer. Arti spun the monitor around to face them, sharing the internet browser they had open on the screen.

“There’s another update posted for that one Human Disguise mod- the fake one. I’m *appalled* they haven’t taken it down yet, this shit’s *embarrassing*,” Arti chortled, scrolling down to check if the dev had bothered to attach any visuals to the post this time- of which she had, to their delight.



“God, *look* at this. I try to stay civil and all when other modders bring it up, but like... I really can't take this, honestly.” They shook their head, plugging in their Digivice to upload their own work in progress for later testing. “You know, they didn't even code an actual human form into the mod? The dev's partner already has some kind of illusion or shapeshifting abilities, and all she did was just slap a texture pack onto it to make it look more like a human with fox ears. Laziest ass on the Digimon forums, I swear.”

Guardromon looked up to Arti's screen, leaning closer to squint at the post's attached pictures of the update for a moment longer than they expected. Arti didn't blame them, the lighting on the screenshots were bad enough to pass for an MMO character creator.

Finally, they leaned back, their muted green eyes meeting Arti's with a dubious, unimpressed look. “Considering the quality of the visuals she thought appropriately represented her work, I cannot tell whether this is a mod for Digimon, or the *Sims*. Girl should've stuck to pixel art.”

“*TRUE*,” Arti crowed, leaning back in their chair and stretching long and good, folding their hands behind their head. “Guardromon, you are *such* a hater. I love you so much.”

“I have standards, don't I? Though I would say having eyes had been more relevant to my evaluation.” The Digimon shrugged their heavy shoulder pistons nonchalantly, but Arti still caught the subtle preening of a Digimon seeming very pleased with itself.

Arti would have responded back, but a notification ping caught their attention first. Turning their monitor back to its proper position on their desk, Arti's face lit up upon seeing a message from Parker having jumped to the top of their notifs.

Upon hurrying to open it, they saw it had a pretty hefty file attachment to it- something Arti stood at the ready to click and download while scanning over the message.

ponky-kong: Hey Arti! Just finished polishing up the pet project I've been working on, sending you what I got so far if you wanted to check it out! Kokabs and I'll be on the private server for just about all afternoon testing it out, feel free to join if you like! 💜

Upon the confirmation it wasn't a scam from his account being hacked, Arti immediately downloaded the file attachment, something Parker had named *Biomerge_attch_v1.3.dvm*. Wasting no time uploading it to their Digivice and dropping it in the Mods folder, Arti rushed out a response, a smile climbing over their face.

doublyarti: YOU DID ITTT IM SO PROUD OF MY GROWIN G POKYY <333

doublyarti: what does it do and how can i see it work



ponky-kong: THANK you Arti!!!! Having it just be there on your Digivice should be enough, though as of now I can only get it to work in digital space- but you'll get to see the effects firsthand next time you Digivolve Guardromon! Hope you have fun with it next chance you get ^w^

doublyarti: ummm okay give me two minutes

ponky-kong: You can join whenever you want, no rush! Again, we'll be in the server all afternoon really

doublyarti: two minutes :D

Arti looked back over to Guardromon, unable to help the giddy smile across their face. "I'm done with the Medigun for today, I think. Parker just invited us to hang out and try a mod thing he just finished, probably the one we were talking about the other day. You up to go?"

Guardromon hesitated for a moment longer, staring intently at the phone in their clunky gauntlets.

"Expanding rapidly, the action," they finally spoke, tapping the screen a few times before handing Arti's phone back to them. "Puzzle completed. And yes, I am ready. I would very much like to see Parker's modding efforts come to fruition, I find the concept fascinating."

"Same here, it sounded so cool," Arti agreed, unplugging their Digivice from their PC and already navigating to a locked folder on their desktop. "They sent us a copy for us to try it out ourselves too, once we meet up."

"Very proactive." Guardromon's tone was still largely flat, but their green eyes sparkled in anticipation reflecting Arti's own excitement. They hefted to their clunky feet, moving closer to the monitor. "Shall we be off?"

"You got it, partner." Arti launched the 'Web Portal' hidden in their locked folder, feeling that same bit of thrill they always did seeing the Digital Gate loading up on the screen. Double checking the surge protector hooked up securely to their PC, linking arms with Guardromon beside them, and holding up their Digivice to the screen, Arti smiled. They just couldn't wait.

"Digi-port, **open!**"

And with a blinding white flash, they were off.

*



Arti touched down into a familiar dusty ground once the map loaded in, the server's designated default map set to good old 2Fort. Couldn't go wrong with a classic.

They were alone for the time being- Parker and Kokabuterimon must not have joined yet, being the only other people that had access to their own little private server.

As anyone versed in Digital World Code worth their salt would know, and many novice coders starting in had made the unfortunate mistake of running into, attempting to load the *entire Digital World* onto any given device was a surefire method of crashing and forcing a restart via the notorious Blue Screen of Death. Opening a Gate to the *Main* Network that the greater Digital World was spread across required 'prior authorization', Parker had explained to Arti one time- moreso to ensure the heavy lifting done to establish the connection would be coming from the *other* end, handled as a courtesy and restitution to those on Human world's side who wanted to cross but couldn't more often than not, through no fault of their own. A pretty inescapable caveat, that kept even the most tech-proficient Digidestined from crossing into and out of the Digital World as they pleased.

...Well, most of them, anyhow. But Arti wasn't particularly jealous, all things considered.

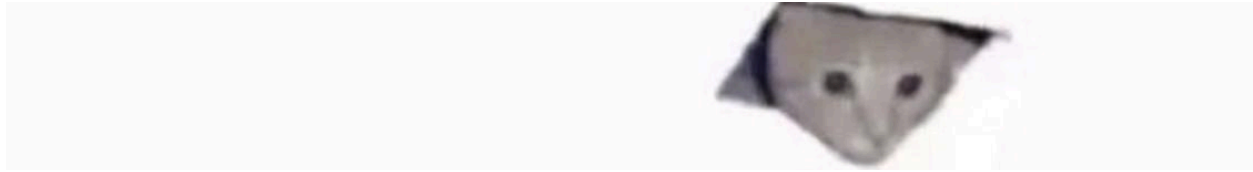
The workaround that most everyone else used instead was relatively simple- running the code function that opened the Gates into smaller servers instead, ones easy enough to connect to just with what people had on hand.

Digimon being lifeforms made up of *data* meant that they could show up just about anywhere the ambient junk data the Digital World happened to leak through... which meant just about anything hooked up to a network or connected to the Internet, nowadays, so long as the Digimon in question knew where to look.

Multiplayer or team games run online were particularly ripe for Digidestined and Digimon partners alike to take advantage of over the years, as such. Having their own public servers built in that users never had to host themselves, and serving as relatively inconspicuous places to gather or meet with friends- that with the right address, meant the humans' Digimon partners could meet up with them, too. Mileage would... vary, however, based on the degree of moderation for each game with multiplayer support; ironically, Digimon hanging out in servers with humans more often than not kept getting flagged as bots.

But it did at least serve as a pretty fruitful jumping off point for many people- and Arti was no exception.

Arti was well aware of quite a few communities and more Digimon-friendly servers hosted by other Digidestined that had cropped up in the time since, but they found most of them a bit



difficult to keep up with, personally. There were just too many incompatible types of people for them, when it came down to it- even after honest efforts on Arti's part to be friendly with them.

It was all fine, though. They always had their private servers to fall back on that worked just fine enough, that didn't have the people who kept getting on their nerves.

Guardromon's model flashed into existence just next to Arti an instant later, already twisting their wide, armored form to look around for both their friends. Gaze drifting downward just a touch, Arti felt very pleased to see that the Medigun they finished coding for Guardromon just earlier sat on the ground at the Digimon's side, hooked up to some extra gear on their back. They'd have to test it later, Arti made sure to note.

"You want to try out their new mod now, or should we wait for Parker and Kokabs to get here?" Arti offered, pulling out their Digivice to tab over to the rather sparse file explorer on the comparatively archaic screen, just to double check if the new files were in the right place.

"Hmmm," Guardromon hummed, turning back to Arti to report their findings. "They both do not appear present at the moment, though the private server already being hosted by Parker's I.P. suggests that they should be arriving shortly."

"Personally, I... am very amenable to testing the new mod as soon as convenient, myself," they went on, muted green eyes all but sparkling in curiosity and anticipation. "But I am content to delay satisfaction, should you wish to wait for your boyfriend for longer before we begin."

Arti bit their lip. They really *did* want to check it out right then and there, discover for themselves what Parker had made and feel out the limits and bounds on their own- but then came the issue that Parker would want to *watch* Arti getting to know it and see it in action, too. Thankfully, that wasn't as difficult to come up with a solution for.

"Let me just set this up to record the first try, and we can give it a go..." Arti answered, pulling out their phone to open the camera and situate it against the wall, stepping back once they were satisfied with the angle.

"Yeah, that should do it," Arti affirmed, turning back to Guardromon with a little thrill rising in their chest. "Alright, take 1: @doublyarti and partner Guardromon's first attempt testing user @ponky-kong's Biomerge Digivolution Attachment mod, version... 1.3." They rattled through the proof of ID and description of the test, just in case they were going to use the footage in any professional capacity. "Ready, Guardromon?"

They offered a wordless thumbs up, for the sake of the recording- Arti was already well aware of just how ready they were. Both of them, really.



Stepping back to join their partner in the frame, Arti gripped their Digivice tight and closed their eyes, calling on that familiar power- and they smiled wide as it reached back, from deep within. The Digivice's screen lit up with a *beep-beep-beep-beep* as it detected Arti's wish, signaling their success, and their partner tensed beside them in anticipation.

Guardromon, digivolved to...!

The Digimon in Arti's vision took on a familiar visage, the texture and visual surface coded into Guardromon's form growing blurry and abstracting into mass of similar shape and color glowing brightly as an Evolution ring took form around it. Guardromon's data began to grow in size, a tension seeping into the heavysset shape's joints as the function called more data to fill its form and intensify its *mass*, in turn.

But Arti wouldn't be watching for long, as it would turn out. With a start, they looked down to realize that as Guardromon's body grew, their *own* body was starting to crumble away and disappear.

Well, more like it was disintegrating into data, really.

The alarm that shot through Arti's mind at the sight hung in the air for a tentative moment, since it didn't have anywhere *e/se* to be. Arti was all but swept up in a heavy tingling crashing over their body as the visual texture marking the 'surface' of their skin dissolved- feeling almost like when Arti's leg would fall asleep after sitting on it for too long, but magnified by ten and spread *everywhere*.

Amidst their alarm, there was a part of Arti that honestly expected to feel their sense of bodily shape and physical awareness vanish the same moment their body did. Their tactile senses grew hazy and fuzzy, but the drop to cutting off entirely never came- their data must have still remained coalesced into vaguely the same shape as their previous form, despite their visual textures having been stripped away.

Arti didn't realize their remaining body-data was drifting closer and closer to Guardromon until they felt their speed pick up, accelerating as they drew near. The Evolution Ring had just about fully formed around Guardromon's torso-height level, Arti could see- and the moment Arti's data touched the threshold it marked, they felt the stomach flipping sensation of their position being *snapped* to the Ring's very center.

The location data of which overlapped with Guardromon's blurry, growing form *precisely*.

They tensed, at first without quite realizing why. Once Arti's hazy senses took a second to catch up with them, they could feel it more properly with a drop in their stomach- there stood a *vast* difference between the human and Digimon, made tangible due to their proximity. Not only in



the sizes of data constituting the two of their forms, but in how effortless Guardromon's sheer *presence* seemed to overshadow their human partner's, especially as they were growing even larger and *stronger*.

The edges of Arti's alarm curled into fear. Their budding worry left them suddenly all too aware that in the sweeping wave of euphoria Digivolution brought, that Guardromon had described to them in such detail before, they could be just as easily forgotten and swallowed up entirely-

A sense of touch on the hazy remains of their data-constituted body shook Arti from their thoughts, of a pair of bulky, steadfast metal gauntlets wrapping around their torso from behind, pulling the human into an embrace as gentle as only a powerful mechanical marvel could. Holding them with the learned control and discipline of a gentle giant showing care and affection to others much, much smaller than itself.

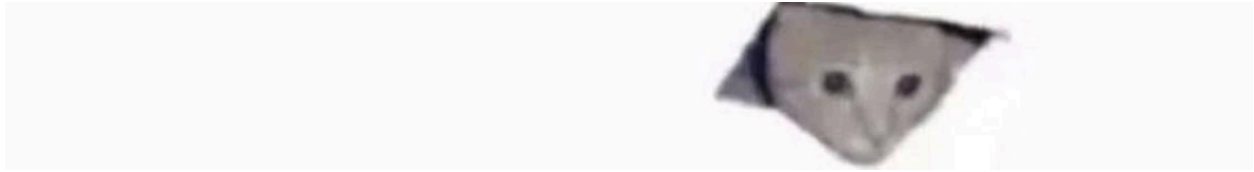
That fear and tension plaguing Arti's form in that moment of vulnerability all but melted away at the gentle contact, feeling warm in Guardromon's embrace. The two of them might not be partners in the way Arti and Parker were, but they were still *partners*. Human or Digimon, they'd protect each other, take care of each other- and this act of intimacy and proximity was only all the more proof of that.

Arti leaned in further into the embrace, full of trust, as Guardromon gently pulled the human's data into their own. Letting both of their bodies of data untethered to physical form mesh and slide together like a deck of cards felt *easy*, the two partners assured and established as equal presences from their bond occupying the same space combining into a singular *whole*.

Arti could *feel* Guardromon's body- the weight and bulk of solid metal, the spatial awareness of being *wide* and heavysset, the inflexibility of their head set low into their torso with no neck joints to turn it, the mechanical pistons and circuitry and framework inside, *everything*. And in being even closer to Guardromon's own mind than Arti had ever been, they knew their partner could feel their own *human* body in turn, just as closely.

And when their mesh of data began to *change*, they were ready.

In the strictly functional sense of what lines of code were being called, their data was being reformatted and converted to the next level higher- but to the pair of consciousnesses inhabiting that data, the *sensation* was another act entirely. Arti's shoes and Guardromon's mechanical foot supports grew as one, the disorienting filter of double physicality fading as the data of their feet slid and solidified into each other seamlessly into a pair of larger, polished steel boots. Their legs together felt more and more solid and *real* as that sense of unity crept up their bodies, data of flesh and data of pistons being traded for data of *armor* settling in place around a singular pair of sturdy, muscular legs, melding with the skin in emulation of... not the design, but the *idea*



of greaves, poyeys, cuisses. Somehow, that adherence to aesthetic over practicality seemed to only strengthen the solid, armored skin even further, gleaming a polished chrome.

Arti's focus split between feeling their own thin, human hips and torso swell and bulk wider pitched oddly in tandem with the sensation of Guardromon's own torso shifting, having already been shaped rather wide and heavy themselves. The sense of Arti's human skin hardening and billowing into the shape of hefty armor and the feeling of Guardromon's steampunk-themed frame and internal mechanisms smoothing and shining as the data of polished Chrome Digizoid took hold hazed and flowed into one, as a pair of wide, maneuverable tassets clamped down from their singular, fully-formed waist. Their chest and arms were quick to follow, as a grand breastplate and pauldrons barrelled forward from Arti's chest and broadened their shoulders, and Guardromon's rudimentary arm structure and clunky tactile appendages swelled into a single pair of muscular, steel arms donning a set of shining, *perfect* gauntlets. Capable of wielding the most devastating destruction or handling valuable objects with the utmost care.

There was so *much* data filling their new, single form beyond either of them could imagine, that only grew more overwhelming as more of their bodily data was used to shore up the missed details. A sheathed sword saddled in place to their side on Arti's stylish belt, and the steam power conduits and *very* important mod Arti had coded into Guardromon's form were smoothed out from their back to make way for a polished, wide shield to strap over their back, shining with Hope. A fine, flowing tabard rolled down from the fold just beneath their breastplate, neatly filling in the outline flickering into view of the grand, mighty form they were Digivolving into, together.

The bulk of their new form felt singular, whole, solid, *complete*, with only the data of their heads left to synthesize, the static and haze of feeling double coming into sharp and clear FOCUS as the changes came to a head. Arti gave a start when it felt as though their depth perception snapped backward a touch, bringing the distinct sense that they were peeking *out* of Guardromon's inflexible metal cap as they did. The data carrying that rusted metal wrapped around the front of their face in their vision, reshaping and sharpening into a shiny, beautiful *helmet* settled snugly over their new head.

The bright, clear eyes peeking through the visor of that solid, proud knight's helm worn on their head shut for a moment, their head throbbing as the last of their separation as two distinct entities were swallowed up along with everything else. The data constituting their consciousnesses would combine, their very *identities* as Arti and Guardromon pushed to the side as their data synthesized into the new, *Perfect* whole.

Their eyes snapped open and awake, colored perhaps a deeper shade of cerulean than their normal sky blue. The grand figure instinctively reached up to grasp the hilt of a large, mighty broadsword slung over the shield on their back, unsheathing it with a trained, poised swing down into a battle-ready stance that already felt intuitive to their new, singular form.



...Knightmon!

It wasn't as though Arti and Guardromon had disappeared outright, they reflected in amusement, rolling their helmed head across their broad, proud frame to relish their true, *Ultimate* power. Moreso like their sense of 'who' and 'what' they Were and what they Needed To Be had shifted smoothly, *naturally* to accommodate their form as a powerful Ultimate-level Digimon... corresponding with their name, right alongside it. 'Knightmon.'

The residual data of Arti wasn't familiar with this shift in perspective, yet curiously, the recycled data from Guardromon *was*. Their merged form absently wondered if this was how Guardromon *always* felt upon Digivolving into Knightmon in the past, even separate from Arti- which they confirmed after hardly a moment spent considering it, a deep chuckling rumbling in their throat. Of course THEY would know, being that same Knightmon in the first place.

Well, perhaps not *quite* the same... they could feel that bond with their human partner hardwired into their very data, the memory and underlying comradeship and care keeping their data fresh and alive and aware as a cherished part of the Knightmon's whole. Being so close with their partner, being OF their partner as much as they were of themselves, brought a whole new dimension to living and moving and feeling that Knightmon could hardly contain in that proud, protective armor. Their duty to protect and defend, fighting for honor and their shared **Ideals**... felt all the more real, in this combined form. All the more *Right*.

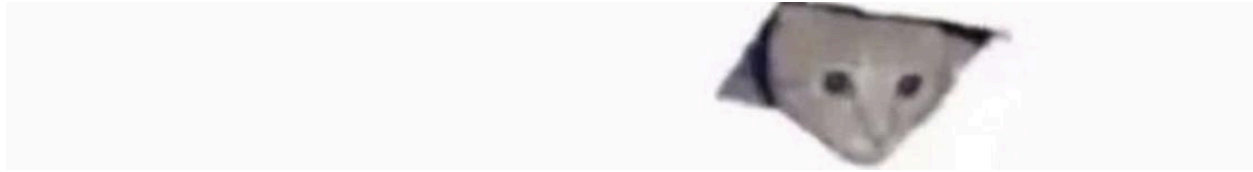
Needless to say, Knightmon was feeling really, *really* good right now.

“Berserk Sword!”

That powerful broadsword cut through a thick wall of the concrete fortress they'd arrived in like warm cheese, leaving an impressive gap in its wake. They still hadn't gotten over the *power* they could feel coursing through their form, clenching and unclenching a mighty knight-like gauntlet and relishing that rock-crushing strength- they could do this all *day*, even. This was incredible- they loved being Ultimate level.

In the midst of their fun, it occurred to them that they should probably conclude their recording, turning to look back towards where they'd left their phone. They trudged back over to the wall, armor gently ringing with each step before he slowed to a stop to stand in front of it.

“Biomerge Digivolution attachment mod v1.3 test concluded, final form Knightmon, Ultimate level. Data stable, power output above average,” Knightmon boomed out from behind their helm, their voice deep and noble. “To be analyzed for exact power output later, no glitches or bugs found. Test and recording ends.”



Due diligence done and mod test report taken care of, Knightmon carefully picked up the phone from where it lay against the wall, fumbling with how suddenly *small* and difficult to use it was in his great, mighty gauntlets. Grumbling under their breath, they managed to end the recording successfully and store it in a space behind one of their tassets before a familiar sound reached their hidden ears.

Two new users had just logged into the server.

Knightmon perked up, craning their muscular neck to look around for Parker or Kokabuterimon, but found no one. Their eyes turned suspicious as they carefully glanced around, on the lookout for any funny business... there. Nothing they could see yet, but they could *hear* the hum of electromagnetic fields acting in defiance of gravity as something rapidly approached.

The Knight Digimon turned their body heavily in one direction, just in time for a blue and yellow shape to come barrelling towards them like a truck. Instincts and 'training' kicked in on reflex, and Knightmon tensed their body- they opened their gauntleted palms, and *caught* the great interloper hurtling towards them with hardly a flinch, absorbing the tremendous force with naught but their own armored form.

...Well, maybe after having taken a step back too, just to hold their stance.

The hunk of metal and electricity crackling through it tilted its horned, armored head to look up- and a pair of blue eyes shined back at Knightmon in giddy thrill, rather than his typical green. The unexpected extra power of his tackle should have been enough already to tip Knightmon off, based on their own great increase in power, but they were grateful for the additional confirmation.

"Hey hey, good seeing you, Knightmon- that you already biomerged? Lookin' good, dude!" The delight to see them sparkling in his eyes betrayed Beetlemon's casual demeanor all too readily, before he dropped it entirely to wrap the Digimon up in a proper embrace.

"Sorry I'm late, I still had some work to wrap up in the Digital World- er, rather, Kokabs did. Parker was waiting for him to get back," He explained, rubbing the back of his helm in adorable sheepishness. "But how's the form, how's the feel? You liking the mod so far? I feel like I got everything down smoothly so far, but there's still plenty left to go- still haven't found a way to activate it in the Meatspace just yet, since humans aren't made of *data* that can be reformatted at a moment's notice, if they're not in the Digital World-"

Beetlemon's train of thought was interrupted by Knightmon wrapping their armored arms around the Champion in return, even *lifting* him up and spinning him around despite the heavy metal armor weighing the both of them down, made possible by that tremendous Ultimate-level strength. They couldn't help it, Beetlemon was just *too* adorable to resist.



"I *love* it... *we* love it? Whatever," Knightmon finally answered, musing for a moment on how they should refer to themselves before deciding it was a stupid question. They set their beefy, beetleborg partner down and let out a contented sigh. "I don't know what to say... I feel closer with my partner than ever, in two ways. I've gotten the chance to share what it feels like to be *Ultimate* with my partner, how Perfect everything feels. I can't believe how *strong* I am, how natural being a *Digimon* and using moves feels, I feel like I can do anything. Like nothing could stop me."

Knightmon looked back down at their large, heavy gauntlets that weighed nothing to their noble strength, imagining for a moment two different pairs of arms in their place. Each one of the three feeling just as *right* to them as the other two.

"I don't know. I feel *whole*, somehow, you get me?" They shook their head, mystified. "I know other people have put it like their Digimon partners feel like their missing other halves, but being with- being with *my* partner together, like *this*? It's something else," Knightmon tried, resting a hand on the pommel of their smaller sword in reassurance. Yet another impulse hardwired into this grand form that they couldn't help but feel excited by.

"I know, right? I *completely* get it," Beetlemon nodded, his eyes alight with the same cute enthusiasm Parker always had every time they got the chance to talk about their coding projects or the latest episode of an anime they'd gotten really into. "Like Kokabuterimon and Parker, right- we were partners before, and now we're together. I digivolved. I'm Beetlemon. I feel like myself, myself, and myself. I'm myself and I feel totally in control. It's all balanced." He paused for a moment, seeming to hear himself. "Does... that make sense? I don't really know if that actually meant anything, uh. Maybe it didn't."

Knightmon stared down at Beetlemon for a moment, towering over them by at least a foot.

"I am in *love* with you," they finally responded, easily lifting Beetlemon up by the torso to gently *clunk* their helmet against his. "If either of us had mouths and weren't blocked by armored helmets, I would be so making out with you right now."

Beetlemon in their strong arms burst into a fit of giggles at the response, perhaps more befitting the human partner Parker that made him up rather than the heroic, powerful visage he wore. But then again, that wasn't all that different- even on his own, Kokabuterimon had always been a bit of a dork...

Knightmon withheld a snort, amused at the further proof of how Kokabs and Parker really were the perfect partners for each other.

Beetlemon let out a dramatic sigh without missing a beat, playing up his dismay.



“Devastating, truly... guess we’ll have to wait until we’re back in the Physical World to do that, then.” He rolled his neck, free from Knightmon’s grasp once they’d set him down. “So, what do you want to do in the meantime? We got the whole afternoon to ourselves, you know.”

“Hmmm...” The grand knight pondered, cerulean gaze drifting off to the nostalgic walls and map of 2Fort. Their left gauntlet subconsciously gripped the pommel of their smaller sword hanging on their belt just a bit tighter, while the fingers on their right twitched and itched to feel the weight of the larger sheathed over their back. Yeah, they knew what they wanted to do- especially while they were still like *this*.

Knightmon turned back to peer down at Beetlemon, meeting their eyes.

“You want to like... break stuff?”

Beetlemon’s eyes lit up in anticipation, sparkling blue in the doomed map’s lighting.

“Oh my god, I was hoping you’d say that- I haven’t gotten the chance to go ham in *ages*. You ever seen a water tower explode?”

Yeah, for all its ups and irritating downs, Knightmon didn’t regret getting into coding one bit. Not after an afternoon of insane stunts and platforming with their favorite people in the world, anyhow.

Now if only Beetlemon could ever figure out how to Rocket Jump properly...