

Scene: End of Pokemon Adventures Manga, Fire Red/Leaf Green arc, when Red and the other Pokedex Holders are frozen in stone by Sird. Dmac the Lucario has somehow protected himself from Sird's blast, and is now chasing after Mewtwo who left to do who knows what.

Context: Dmac is a PMD pokemon. He woke up one day on a beach he didn't know, no memory of who he was. This is after that story is completed, and Dmac has chosen to see his old friends because he worried about them, but he does not remember who he was, but he intends to go back to Draco, the Charmander he had left behind. Upon teleporting to this world, he got caught up in the fight 'against' Deoxys, and is just now getting the chance to think about looking for his old friends.

Dmac ran to catch up with Mewtwo. Somehow, he could run just as quickly as Mewtwo could fly.

*What are you doing?* Mewtwo thought to Dmac.

*I'm following you to catch Sird,* replied Dmac.

*What happened to Red and the others?*

*I tried saving them, but my aura shield only protected me. I couldn't help them, and I didn't want to stay any longer, and I wanted to follow you.*

*You're used to exploring and living with other Pokemon, aren't you? You don't trust humans. I understand, I've only ever trusted Red and a couple others, David too. Other than that, I trust you. No one else.* Mewtwo looked to Dmac reassuringly and understandingly.

Dmac wasn't used to the idea of a human, in his old world they were myth. His first experience with people showed him their extreme diversity, and extreme ability for evil. Giovanni was a person who used pokemon and people to his own advantage. He led a crime organization larger than any team of pokemon Dmac had ever seen. He was very wary of people if they had such an ability to be evil.

Soon, Mewtwo and Dmac arrived in Kanto. Mewtwo flew over the ocean, while Dmac used his aura powers to run on the water at high speeds.

*You know, Mewtwo? I followed you to find my purpose. You don't seem to have much of a purpose either, I thought we could help each other. I can try to help you find Sird, but then what?*

*I don't know. I don't know what my purpose is. I was a genetic experiment organized and carried out by Team Rocket. My purpose was to serve Giovanni and do his bidding; help him to rule the Kanto region. I knew only hatred, hatred and lust for power. It was all they gave me. I was too strong, though; I escaped them. I terrorized the Kanto region for a while, but eventually, someone helped me to see that there is more to life than hatred and power. David helped me to feel all sorts of different emotions. He knew how to do it. Through him I learned compassion, sympathy, kindness, respect, more. With him I learned of my place in this world, but not of my purpose. I am scarred by my origin, though. There are very few humans that I ever can and ever will trust. I trusted David, and I trust you, and I trust Red, Blue, Yellow, and Green. I will not talk to anyone else, nor will I trust anyone else. So, I understand why you find it hard to trust humans, Dmac. They have a high capacity to be evil, I am the product of that evil. I was stronger than it, though, and I eventually learned to be good.*

*Thank you for understanding, thought Dmac. They stopped, just outside the Viridian forest. Mewtwo nodded a slight bit.*

*I don't think we'll ever be able to find Sird. She disappeared almost as quickly as it seems the Pokedex holders were petrified. Thought Mewtwo.*

*Then what will we do?*

*I want to visit somewhere, there's something important we need to do. We should meet Professor Oak in Pallet Town, to see him about something.*

*About what?*

*You may be as sentient and intelligent as I am, and able to speak with your mind as well, but you're still a pokemon. Back in your old world, there was no way for pokemon to be captured and possessed; there were no humans to do that. Here, though, humans capture pokemon in poke balls. Then, they own them. Depending on the poke ball they use, you may or may not be able to resist capture. Some certain types are a lot harder to escape from, while it is impossible to escape from others. I was caught once in a Master Ball, the only known poke ball with a 100% catch rate. Luckily for me, Red only wanted to help me. I assume you don't want to be captured, though; Professor Oak will be able to give you something that will not let you ever be captured, under any circumstance.*

*Thanks...* Dmac had seen the devices Mewtwo was talking about, all the Pokedex holders held their pokemon in them when not interacting with them. Dmac hated the idea of humans owning pokemon, he imagined all of his friends being captured. How could humans justify catching pokemon perhaps against their will to be used in fights or other similar contests? Dmac didn't see how these pokemon held healthy relationships with their trainers while being owned by their trainer.

*It's not as bad as you think.* Dmac was surprised by Mewtwo's direct response to his thoughts. *Many good people catch only pokemon they become friends with, or many times both wild pokemon and humans understand battles to be contests of strength, and a determiner of trust. It is only selfish people who will ever force a pokemon to do something against their will, or to be caught. There is usually a trust between trainer and pokemon that transcends the owner-property relationship and forms a strong bond, and many people treat their pokemon as friends and trusted allies, while only some treat their pokemon as property.*

Dmac understood what Mewtwo was saying, but was amazed to notice that he was reading Dmac's mind enough to understand what he was thinking. He was beginning to trust Mewtwo even more, though, especially since he had some ability to read Mewtwo's intentions, emotions, and thoughts too which didn't leave him completely at Mewtwo's mercy.

*Remember, at least until we get you protected from people who may want to capture you, we'll want to stay completely hidden. No one except for Professor Oak must know that we are here. When we see him, maybe he can tell us what we should do.* Mewtwo said.

*Ok, where will we hide?* Replied Dmac

*Tonight, we'll stay here; this place should be safe. In the morning, we'll make our way to Pallet Town, then hide outside of it until the Professor comes back. Then, we'll see him as soon as we can, preferably at night to help hide our presence.*

They had just been sitting as they were talking, but they were still outside the forest. Together, they got up, and made their way into the forest, where they were able to find a place to hide for the night. They slept peacefully that night, relatively comfortable in each other's company, lying next to each other on the forest floor. The Viridian forest was a relatively peaceful environment compared to how they lived the past few days, and they needed the rest.

The next day, they made their way to Pallet Town. They preferred to run rather than walk, but preferred stealth above all else. They made relatively little progress that day than they had making their way to the forest from the islands, but along the way, Dmac and Mewtwo learned about each other, and Dmac learned a bit about David. He determined that his personality hadn't changed much, but David sounded tired of travelling. Dmac wanted to settle down too, but not before he knew who he was. They arrived late at Pallet Town, it was the perfect time to find a place to hide to rest.

Outside the town, they waited two days for Professor Oak to arrive. In the meantime, Dmac was able to learn how people normally lived with pokemon. The children had fun testing their skills in battles, while parents worked with pokemon to get jobs done. Wild pokemon roamed the fields outside the town, and were safe and cared for. Mewtwo told Dmac that this is where the most successful pokemon trainers in Kanto started their journeys. Red and Blue both lived here before they left on their journeys. Oak gave them their pokedexes, and they set off to catch every pokemon in Kanto, and to beat every gym, and eventually participate in the Kanto Pokemon League. Outside the city on the second night, Dmac realized something:

*Mewtwo, I haven't seen any other pokemon like me here in Kanto. Am I a unique pokemon in this world?*

*You are unique, but not because you are the only pokemon of your kind here. In other parts of the world, you can find Riolu and Lucario. You are unique, though. You have the sentience and intelligence to speak in the human language with your mind.*

Dmac was confused; it didn't seem weird that he could speak out loud. And Mewtwo mentioned he was speaking with his mind -- Dmac didn't realize he was doing that.

*Not every pokemon can speak like we can. I don't know if you know, but you've been talking to me with your mind. That's pretty amazing. You're strong. Generally it's only legendary pokemon who can do that.*

Dmac had a hard time believing what Mewtwo was saying. He'd already been told he was strong; now Mewtwo was comparing his power to that of a legendary pokemon. Thinking about it terrified him; he didn't want to think about how much he could hurt others.

*You really don't know the limits of your power, do you?* Mewtwo said, sensing what Dmac was thinking. Already, Dmac had begun to get used to it.

*Yeah, I've always been too scared to find out.*

*Maybe Professor Oak will be willing to help you. It could be dangerous if we try to find out ourselves, we could put the people and pokemon around us at risk, or hurt each other in battle.*

*I could be that powerful?*

*Yeah. David knew how powerful he was, he always held himself back as much as he could, but when he wanted to, he could conjure some impressive shows of strength. If you're as powerful as you were before you lost your memory, you need to be careful.*

*I will.*

Dmac and Mewtwo soon fell asleep. Well, Mewtwo slept peacefully, but Dmac kept thinking about his power. If he was so powerful, how could he control himself? He hoped Oak would be able to help-- he didn't want to hurt anybody.

The next day, Oak finally arrived, and entered his lab.

*OK, tonight we'll go see him, said Mewtwo.*

*OK.*

Later, just after sunset, Mewtwo and Dmac crept into Pallet Town, and found the lab. Mewtwo unlocked its door, and they entered. Inside, there was a lot of research equipment that neither of them totally understood, and many different sorts of poke balls, some of which were occupied. They looked around, and stayed totally quiet. They both had great eyesight in the dark, allowing them to see everything clearly, so it wasn't too hard for them to keep quiet. Eventually, they found a living area, and a bedroom to its side. They assumed Oak was sleeping in the bedroom, and entered it as quietly as they could, creeping over to his bed. Sometimes it is hard to wake somebody up verbally without shouting, but when one is sleeping, the subconscious brain interprets telepathic speech as part of a dream. Unfortunately, both Dmac and Mewtwo spoke telepathically. They had to push Oak awake, which startled him greatly, and he yelled at them, scared.

"Who is it!" he said.

*Shh! It's me, Dmac! I'm a friend of Red's, do you know me?*

“Uh... Yes, I think so. Weren't you there when he and Blue saved me from Team Rocket, along with Mewtwo?”

*Shh! Yeah, he's here with me.*

Oak finally took the hint, and whispered.

“Who's idea was it to wake me in the middle of the night like this?”

*Mewtwo's, he didn't want us to be seen by anyone.*

“Mewtwo's? That means you can communicate with each other?”

*Well, yeah, we're pokemon. Can't all pokemon talk to each other?*

“Yes, but only a very few pokemon can say anything other than their own name. I figured if you could talk, he might be able to, also.”

Of course, the Professor wouldn't have known that Mewtwo could talk. Dmac thought back to what Mewtwo said, and figured it was best to keep that knowledge hidden.

*I'm from a different world, maybe that lets me talk? Everyone spoke your language where I came from.*

“Perhaps... What do you want?” Oak wasn't convinced that Mewtwo couldn't speak. He figured the pokemon was too intelligent to not be able to understand human speech, at least, and his vast psychic power must've enabled him to talk.

*Do you have any way for me to avoid capture? I can't go anywhere and be seen without the chance of being caught by someone.*

“Yes, I may have something that might help. Anything else, while you have me awake at this horrid hour?”

*I was wondering if you had any way for me to test my power. I've never been required to draw on it*

*much, and I need to learn to control it.*

“I might be able to help there, but wouldn’t Mewtwo be better able to help with that? He’s the strongest pokemon ever, I doubt you would be powerful enough to defeat him.”

*We’re not sure, and we weren’t willing to find out that way. It would be too risky for us, and the people and pokemon around us.*

“Well, I can help with one thing immediately.” Oak got out of bed, and Mewtwo and Dmac got out of his way. He went into his lab area, and found a patch of some sort in the dark. He brought it to Dmac, and gave it to him.

“Put this on your body, and you can’t be caught.”

*Thanks.*

It was a relatively small circle, the patch was an outline of a poke ball. It made sense, but Dmac wondered where to put it, and about how it would work on his fur. The professor didn’t mention anything about his fur, though, so he decided to put the patch on his right arm, on the side opposite the bicep. Dmac noticed that when it touched his fur, it sort of melted into it, changing the color of the fur so it matched that outline. It was some technology Dmac didn’t understand, he thought that David might have developed it before he lost his memory.

*That’s right, David designed and made those for his friend, Lucario.* Mewtwo thought to Dmac.

Dmac smiled internally, Mewtwo understood. Dmac then turned to Oak:

*Professor, what about my power? I don’t know how strong I am.*

“I’m sorry, I can’t help with that,” said Oak. “you need to test yourself to see how strong you are. It might be too dangerous here to do that if you’re as powerful as you seem to be.”

*As I seem to be?*

“Yes, you may be a pokemon from another region -- world, even -- but I can always sense when a Pokemon is strong. Mewtwo would probably be best able to help you, he’s the strongest Pokemon

known to this world.”

*Thanks, we'll leave you alone now.*

“You’re welcome, hope to see you soon!”

Dmac and Mewtwo left Professor Oak to sleep. Quietly, they left Pallet Town behind, again not knowing what to do.

*Thanks, Dmac, for talking back there. Could you sense that Professor Oak didn't believe that I couldn't talk?*

*Yeah, I'm impressed with how trusting he was. Personally, I'd be scared if two powerful Pokemon came to my door late at night.*

*But we're not two random Pokemon, not to Professor Oak. He had those patches that David designed; he knew him before he lost his memory. He must have known that you were once him. Even if you have a different identity than he, what people remember of him will always affect what they think of you. He trusts you because he trusted him, and he trusted me because he trusts you. It may be annoying that people judge you based on who David was before you, but in certain cases it means that you can start relationships knowing that you can trust the other person, and that the other person trusts you. It could be helpful sometimes.*

*I hadn't noticed... Where to now? Dmac wasn't sure what he thought of that, but he didn't want to deal with it in the moment.*

*I think maybe we should go to Cinnabar Island, just a ways south of here. There, the old gym leader had a hideout that we might be able to use to train together. It's an empty place, no one lives on the island, and no one visits, except for those looking for a gym battle, which we may have to provide.*

*Sounds good!*

Where Mewtwo was taking Dmac was actually Mewtwo's home, or at least the closest to it he had. There, he and Gym Leader Blaine spent about a year together because Mewtwo's DNA was mixed into Blaine's body. They couldn't be apart from each other for too long, or they would begin to weaken. Eventually, Blaine found Entei's help to cleanse his body, and the two were free from each other.



Mewtwo was Blaine's pokemon, but Blaine chose to respect his sentience and intelligence, and released him. Ever since, Mewtwo was left on his own. At least, until he met David, and later teamed up with Red, and eventually found Dmac. Now, he was to take Dmac back to where he forged his identity.

They decided to wait until morning to head for the island, and found a safe place in Viridian forest to sleep. They tried going to sleep, but Dmac had trouble, and he sensed Mewtwo did, too. Dmac thought of his friends. He wondered what they were doing, and how they were doing without him. Draco was particularly unhappy with him leaving, understandably, but Dmac felt it was necessary to do so. As long as he knew there were people and pokemon he had left behind to help Draco's world, he could not settle there knowing that everyone he knew was worrying about him. When he came, though, he got immediately involved in Red, Blue, and Green's struggle against Deoxys and Team Rocket, and then chose to run away with Mewtwo after his new friends were petrified. Now, he was safe from any person who might have wanted to catch him, and he was going with Mewtwo to train with him. He still didn't know where his old friends were, but Mewtwo thought it was important that Dmac learn to control himself; Dmac wasn't going to argue with him. Dmac noticed fairly late that he felt Mewtwo's presence in his mind less than he did normally; Mewtwo was trying his best to leave him to his own thoughts, or thinking about things himself.

Mewtwo was trying to stay out of Dmac's thoughts, but he was having thoughts of his own, too. He thought over what he and Dmac had done since they met, and also of David before him. He wondered about Dmac's past on the other world, too. He knew how powerful Dmac was, he witnessed it himself on a couple occasions. He wondered then why Dmac was so scared. Even without the patch Professor Oak gave him, it was very unlikely he'd ever be caught. Yet, even with the patch, he still seemed scared.

*It's the humans, the humans have scared him. Too much happened too quickly, and he understands others too much. He doesn't trust humans, but he also doesn't trust himself. Not only that, but the pokemon here are different. That's partly why he's become so attached to me. The pokemon he's used to are as sentient and intelligent as we are, pokemon here are less intelligent, more dependent on people. Hopefully I can help him learn the extent of his powers at Cinnabar. He may always depend on others for strength, but he has a strength of his own, a moral strength that will help him to always do what is right. Along with his ability to feel others' thoughts and emotions, and the other aspects of his aura sensitivity, and his power, it seems strange that he needs somebody else to be his emotional strength. But... David was like that, too. He relied on Lucario as Dmac now relies on me...*

Eventually, the two of them finally fell asleep. After a disquieted night's sleep, they made their way directly south to Cinnabar Island. This time they didn't talk much, but contemplated the future, and what happened to the Pokedex holders.

*Mewtwo, do you think Red and his friends will be OK?*

*I hope so, but there's not much we can do now for them. We have to trust that their other friends will find a way to revive them. Mewtwo noticed that Dmac was thinking of how they turned to stone. Dmac, it's not your fault that they turned to stone. Some backfire of Sird's device caused it, and your aura shield could protect only you.*

*I know, but I feel like I should have been able to protect them somehow.*

Even though Dmac didn't trust humans in general, he trusted Red, at least, and Professor Oak. Through them, he trusted Blue and the others enough to feel sorry for not being able to help them. He thought about humans as they approached Cinnabar Island, and came to the conclusion that they look weird. Soon, they stepped foot on the island, and Mewtwo led Dmac to the gym, and Blaine's hideout.

The island was barren, lifeless; the result of an active volcano. The only buildings on it were the gym, and a pokemon center for trainers who wanted to challenge the gym. Currently, they were both empty, so there was little chance that a challenger would come, but the longer they stayed, Mewtwo knew that a challenger would be more likely to appear. In that case, he and Dmac would have to man the gym.

*Dmac, the gym is empty, but that doesn't mean that people won't come and try to challenge it. If they do, and we are around, we will have to accept the challenge, and fight the challenger. We must decide on criteria for a trainer worthy of the gym badge in Blaine's place.*

*Yeah... what makes a good trainer?*

*... I don't know. Blaine never really talked about it with me, we focused mostly on trying to stay alive. Mewtwo didn't know where Blaine was, just that he had abandoned his hideout. He was sure Blaine wouldn't mind it if they were to use it for a while.*

*The gym is up ahead, and the hideout just underneath it.*

Mewtwo was right; just after he said it, Dmac could see it. The gym was a rather plain building, like a big grey brick, its only adornment the symbol of a pokemon gym. They came to its front, and its doors slid open. They could see signs of negligence on the building, the ground around it had grown wild, and plants were starting to wind their way up the sides of the building. Inside, everything was still pristine, though, and untouched.

*Nobody's been here, said Mewtwo.*

The main entrance led directly into the battle room complete with (and only with) a battlefield, but off to the right wall, Mewtwo found a portion of wall that concealed a switch, which, when pressed, revealed a hidden door.

*This is the entrance to the hideout. From in here we can know almost everything that's happening on the island. There will be an alert for challengers, ample supplies, places to sleep, eat, rest, wash, and places to train. This place is meant to be lived in, we can do so for months, perhaps.*

Just the short description impressed Dmac. How could Blaine have been so important to have such a well-stocked hideout?

*It was his laboratory, he did research here before he found me.*

In fact, the return home brought back many memories to Mewtwo. Red had caught him, but he gave him to Blaine so they could figure out how to fix their mutual DNA impurities. He spent a year here with Blaine, researching, training, and learning. He didn't know how limited a view he had of the world until he traveled with David, though. That's why he was back here with Dmac now, indirectly. Being back here brought bad memories, too, ones of being trapped in a large tube, suspended in a liquid and connected to numerous tubes that did his bodily functions for him and let the scientists analyze him. He remembered sensing outside of his bubble, being unimpressed with the beings outside, and disgusted when he learned that *they* made him... he was willing to brave it all so Dmac could have somewhere safe to develop his powers.

*Mewtwo?*

Dmac felt Mewtwo's attention slipping away, and he pulled him back.

*Sorry. Old memories.*

*Are you going to be OK here?*

*I'll be fine.*

That was the end of the conversation; Mewtwo walked ahead, bringing Dmac through the facility. They walked through a bland white corridor, brightly lit so it was harsh on Dmac's eyes. He would've preferred something darker, but he couldn't really describe what at the time. Mewtwo stopped at a door, and when Dmac caught up to him, he opened it, and invited him to enter.

*This is where we'll be sleeping.*

If Dmac were being honest, it seemed pretty uncomfortable. The room had three bunk beds in it, designed for efficiency not comfort. He wondered what it would be like sleeping on them; back home they didn't have beds like these. These were human beds, and Dmac wondered how he would sleep on them, given his spikes.

*I'm sure you'll figure it out. It's not too bad, really, but I can't say I know how comfortable it feels to sleep on your world.*

*Is this where you slept?*

*No, I slept somewhere else. Blaine slept here. I figured we could sleep here together, as long as we know the beds we're sleeping in are clean.*

*Sounds good.*

Dmac left the room, and Mewtwo closed the door with his mind. In fact, Dmac noticed that Mewtwo did most things with his mind, and that he even favored floating over walking. He was walking now, but mostly because he was already the better part of a foot taller than Dmac; any more would have been intimidating.

Mewtwo brought him next to the practice room, where Blaine, then David helped Mewtwo develop his powers. This room didn't have a door, and it was spacious. It had a sort of antechamber with computers that could monitor what was happening inside, and the training area itself seemed well

armored and padded.

*This is where we'll train. I don't think we'll be needing the computers, but they can be helpful if we want to measure your abilities or compare them to mine. The room in there is well-protected against my psychic attacks, I hope it will work against your aura attacks, too.*

Dmac realized it wasn't a question to Mewtwo; Dmac's powers compared to his. And Mewtwo worried about Dmac breaking things that he couldn't -- how powerful did Mewtwo think he was?

Mewtwo turned around to show Dmac the last relevant few rooms in the complex. The kitchen was sparse according to Mewtwo, but it contained all sorts of contraptions that Dmac didn't understand; Mewtwo assured him that he would show them what they all did. Dmac was thankful to know how the bathroom worked, but he was intrigued and excited by the shower. It seemed that Mewtwo had high standards of cleanliness, and while Dmac always considered himself clean, he anticipated bringing himself up to Mewtwo's standards.

That was it for the tour. Mewtwo suggested that they eat something, so they went to the kitchen, and he pulled something from storage. Dmac was used to eating fruit, mostly, and it surprised him when Mewtwo made them something that wasn't made from berries, but, as Mewtwo explained, was mostly a grain, along with certain animal byproducts. As Mewtwo called them, 'pancakes.' Dmac was delighted to enjoy them, especially with the syrup Mewtwo procured from storage. He had a hard time handling the utensils he needed to eat them, but Mewtwo helped him out. It seemed most human devices weren't meant for pokemon paws; only a few pokemon species were lucky enough to be able to use them without difficulty. Mewtwo, admittedly, was not one of them, at least without the use of his mind. His three-fingered paws could do some things, but they were clumsy at other things.

After they ate, they decided to get some rest. They didn't feel like starting training so soon, so instead they tried their best to wash the sheets of the beds they chose, and Dmac tried out the shower. He made sure to wash everything like Mewtwo instructed, but he wasn't sure he liked the smell of the shampoo; it was harsh and it hurt his head. It smelled fresh, Dmac supposed, but he thought he might like something much milder, more warm-feeling. Once his fur dried, though, he enjoyed how clean he felt. Months of oil and dirt that didn't wash out bathing in lakes, rivers, or other such bodies of water were cleared from his body, and drying off with a towel left him feeling poofy instead of matted down like he did drying naturally, and was much more comfortable. He could see why Mewtwo liked doing that, and as he lied in his bed next to Mewtwo's to sleep, he wondered if David before him enjoyed showers as much as he enjoyed his.

*Did you enjoy your shower?*

Mewtwo was in the bed right next to Dmac's; they had chosen to sleep next to each other. Sleeping in the top bunk worried Dmac a bit; what if he fell out while sleeping?

*I don't remember feeling so clean before. My fur is sticking up, and I'm not sure I like the smell of the shampoo, but I still liked the shower.*

*That's the only shampoo we have. It hurts my head, too, but we have more sensitive senses than people do, and it's a shampoo for humans.*

Dmac rolled around a bit in the bed, trying to find something comfortable. His first inclination was to lie on his stomach, but that was an impossibility; his spikes would pierce the bed under him. Instead, he tried curling up on his side, much like he did at home, but it felt weird on the human bed; he would have to get used to it.

The thought brought Dmac back to his home. He wondered how Draco and Pikachu were doing. He missed them, but he also enjoyed Mewtwo's company. He felt comfortable with Mewtwo, even though Mewtwo could read his thoughts. Mewtwo never seemed to pry; he could feel Mewtwo trying to give him privacy. Of course, Dmac could read Mewtwo somewhat, too, but reading aura was different from reading minds. Dmac couldn't see what was in Mewtwo's mind; he could only try to infer from what he felt from Mewtwo's aura. He seemed to be good at doing that, but it wasn't the same, and Dmac didn't blame Mewtwo for being unable to keep to himself 100% especially when he couldn't keep to himself 100% either.

Then, Dmac's mind wandered to before he was a Riolu. Mewtwo had mentioned that David had lived with him here for a while. Apparently, Dmac had taught Mewtwo quite a bit before he lost his memory. Dmac realized Mewtwo knew him before he was a Riolu, so maybe he could say something about him.

*Mewtwo?*

*Yes?*

*Is there anything you can tell me about who I was before I lost my memory?*

*I'm not sure I'm the right pokemon to be asking. I knew you, but not nearly so well as some others. You helped me, but you didn't stay long, and you left to be with your friends. If you want to learn more about yourself, we should find them after we've trained for a while.*

*What's so important about me training?*

*You should learn how to use your powers. You have to be able to protect yourself, and you have to overcome your fear of it.*

Dmac felt that wasn't the entire story, but he didn't pry. Mewtwo wanted him to be able to protect himself, and given what happened with Sird, Dmac figured it was important to train so he could learn how to protect others, too.

*Do you know any of my old friends?*

*A Lucario, that's it. He had others, but they tended to stay behind when David went travelling.*

*Were they close?*

*They were very close.*

Dmac felt that Mewtwo wanted some privacy, so Dmac tried his best to get to sleep.

In fact, Mewtwo was thinking about Dmac before he lost his memory. He was always thankful to him for his help, and he always liked Lucario, and Lucario and Dmac were a great match for each other, but now that Dmac was unattached to that Lucario, he realized that he was ever so slightly jealous of that Lucario. That Lucario had most of Dmac's compassion; that Lucario unlocked Dmac's ability to relate to others. Now that Dmac was able to relate normally again, Mewtwo hoped secretly that he would not form that relationship again, or at least form it in a way that left him more open to Mewtwo. He realized that was a crazy thought to have, though; there was no way Dmac would stick with him. He was either going to remember who he was and stick with his old friends, or go back to the new friends he'd made on a different world. Mewtwo couldn't be selfish; he had to let Dmac choose what he wanted, however much it hurt.

They both finally got to sleep, much later than they had anticipated, simply because they couldn't

stop thinking about the past.

As promised, Mewtwo started training Dmac in the morning. First, he prepared them a full breakfast: berries for immediate energy, grains for long-lasting energy, and milk to round it all off. Dmac was still getting used to the complex foods and meals Mewtwo was preparing for him, but he found that he enjoyed them, and that he didn't find it too weird to be eating them. Then, they went to the training room. They didn't start training right away, though. Dmac was surprised when Mewtwo invited him to sit down on the floor with him.

*Close your eyes, and concentrate on yourself.*

Dmac did as Mewtwo asked.

*You should feel something within you. It's not just you in your head, it's you and your power. Focus on that power; that's your aura.*

Dmac tried to focus in on himself like that. He thought he sensed what Mewtwo was telling him about, but he didn't exactly understand how Mewtwo knew.

*It feels... a bit like a burning.*

*Good. That is your body generating your aura. Lucario are special; your bodies generate that aura. You draw off of that to power your attacks. I don't feel that, I can't even feel my aura.*

*What do you feel, then?*

*Potential. My body has power, but I don't feel it. I instead feel what that power could do. Whenever I do anything with my mind, I am applying my power to those things. I'm speaking in your mind that way; I sense it, and I am unleashing the potential of the words I want to say.*

Dmac had a hard time understanding what Mewtwo said he felt. He never felt anything that way; he wondered how it worked. *I don't talk like that.*

*No, you don't. Don't worry about how I do things, concentrate again on that power you feel in you. Aura is the force of life; life can't exist without it. Every being is born with a certain amount of aura which stays*



*fixed throughout their lives, but Riolu are born able to make more, and evolve into Lucario who can use it.*

*What does that mean for me?*

*It means that as you use your aura, you will grow weaker. If you use it all, you will die. You are lucky to be able to reserve much aura and recharge it quickly, it means that you can fight harder and longer than most other Lucario.*

*Do I have to worry about using all my aura?*

*Generally, you will pass out long before you have to worry about dying. Expending aura uses energy, too.*

That was a relief. Mewtwo was trying to make him comfortable with fighting, but if Dmac had to worry about dying every time he launched an aura sphere, he couldn't have imagined using his aura.

*But back to meditation. Focus back in on yourself, but this time, turn it outward. The aura within you, you should be able to feel it all around you, too.*

Again, Dmac tried focusing, but this time, he tried focusing out instead of in. It seemed like he had to be aware of his own aura to do whatever it was Mewtwo wanted him to, so he tried to remember his own aura as he turned to that around him. His vision lit up, at least he thought it did until he realized that his eyes were still closed. He also realized that he could sense all around himself; he was aware of everything in the room, even outside of it.

*You can see with aura.*

Mewtwo was right; the most prominent thing Dmac sensed was, in fact, a bright blue shape in the form of Mewtwo sitting in front of him. Around him, things were duller, but aura seemed to light up everything around him.

*You seem especially good at sensing thoughts and emotions with your aura; it seems to happen naturally for you. You can do this, too.*

*Everything is blue... is that the color of aura?*

*I didn't know it was blue. I assume so.*

*I can see all around me. I can see I'm blue too.*

*Open your eyes.*

Dmac opened his eyes, and saw that his aura senses overlaid everything he saw. He lost focus pretty quickly, though, as he tended to rely on the visual input.

*You'll get better. You don't even need your eyes, really, but I'm sure you'd still prefer to keep them.*

Mewtwo was right. Dmac could sense everything with aura, but he liked the colors of his sight, too, and he didn't have to concentrate so hard to see.

Mewtwo opened his eyes too. They were purple, darker than the short, pink fur that covered most of his body, and darker than the darker purple fur that covered his tail. They were a deep purple. Mewtwo's expression was somewhat sharp; Dmac guessed it was always that way.

*Your eyes are nice too, a deep red color. Intelligent and understanding. They contrast nicely with your blue and yellow fur.*

Mewtwo looked away a moment; Dmac wondered if he felt embarrassed. He let it pass, and Mewtwo looked back to him to continue.

*Whenever you charge an aura sphere, or make a shield, or propel yourself, you draw on that aura reserve you felt earlier. Try to focus your aura in front of you so that it becomes visible, almost as if you're charging an aura sphere.*

Dmac concentrated, and focused his aura in front of him. He'd fired aura spheres before, but he wasn't ever aware of what it felt like or how it worked. It was just sort of autonomous, but now that he was concentrating, he felt he could control it better. Pretty quickly, a spark appeared in front of him, a small blue sphere. It grew brighter as Dmac kept concentrating. He started worrying that it would explode, so he lost concentration, almost causing that to happen before he let the aura dissipate slowly.

*Good. There's a difference between feeding aura and focusing aura. You don't have to keep feeding it to*

*keep it focused like that. Do it again, but this time, keep it fairly dim.*

Dmac focused his aura again, and formed another sphere, this time keeping it fairly dark.

*Now, will it to explode.*

*What will happen?*

*Do it. Mewtwo commanded, almost scaring Dmac. However, Dmac felt he could trust Mewtwo, so he exploded it. All that appeared was a blue-colored burst; it wasn't nearly enough to harm them, despite Dmac's worries.*

*Every time you use your aura, that's what it feels like. For now, if you focus in on yourself whenever you try to use your aura, and you will be able to control it more easily. Pretty quickly, I think, it will become second nature to you.*

*Everything you've had me do seems pretty easy for me, and it all seems to make intuitive sense. Why do this if it's all stuff I can do?*

*Because you didn't know any of it before. Yes, everything you're doing is natural to Lucario, but other Lucario are aware of it. You weren't, because you didn't have the chance to see other Lucario before. I'm showing you, and soon I will help you develop it all.*

*What does that mean?*

*First, let's talk about battling. As a Lucario, your strengths lie in reading your opponent and in using your aura. Other pokemon get emotional when they battle; you can't afford to do that. You have to stay in touch with yourself and the pokemon you're fighting.*

*What does that mean?*

*Whatever you're fighting for, whatever you're feeling that caused you to be battling, it doesn't matter while you're battling. You need clarity during a fight.*

*You mean I should be emotionless?*

*No. I... find this hard to explain, I don't really understand it myself. Maybe we should start practicing, you might understand it better as we go.*

*Probably.*

Mewtwo had Dmac start with aura shields. He had him make a couple, and he shattered them easily before he explained *how* he wanted Dmac to make them.

*Think of it this way: the wall is just a surface to bear the brunt of the force that's hitting it. It only requires a small amount of aura to make. Everything else is just reinforcement. Use only a little bit of aura to make the shield, but use more to keep it together. You're not building a strong wall, you're building a wall then reinforcing it when necessary.*

Dmac tried doing what Mewtwo said, and it made sense: he wasn't *building* a shield, he was *supporting* a shield. When he started thinking of it that way, he used less aura making the shield, which helped him strengthen it against Mewtwo's attacks. After a couple tries, his shield held up against Mewtwo's psychic sphere, albeit a weak one. Mewtwo was satisfied, so they moved on. Mewtwo had Dmac fire a couple aura spheres at the wall, reminding him to keep focused on himself as he charged and fired them. It seemed to work; Dmac's projectiles were already getting stronger. When Mewtwo had Dmac fire them at him, though, he had a hard time. He didn't want to hurt Mewtwo; he worried that his attack would be too powerful.

*Dmac, you have to trust me. You can't hurt me too much, I'm the strongest pokemon alive. If I think you have any chance of hurting me, I can protect myself, like any pokemon you would be fighting would. You don't have to worry with me.*

*Ok, I'll try.*

Mewtwo stood there in front of him while Dmac focused inward again. Mewtwo was right; as he kept doing it, it kept getting easier. He focused his aura as much as he felt he could right in front of his outstretched paw, and he willed it toward Mewtwo. It hit its target and exploded, sending Mewtwo into the wall behind him. He fell to the ground, sitting against the wall behind him. Dmac rushed toward him, hoping he wasn't hurt too much.

*Are you OK?*

*I'm fine -- If I were trying to kill you, you wouldn't be able to worry about hurting me. Hurting is a part of battling, even in friendly battles you're going to have to hurt someone else, and they're going to have to hurt you. We are resilient beings, Dmac. You don't have to worry about hurting someone else. Actually, sometimes you can't afford to worry, sometimes you have to do and think later.*

*As long as you're not hurt too bad...*

Mewtwo was about to tell Dmac not to think that way, but then he realized that it was alright. Nobody had to hurt anybody else more than they absolutely had to.

*That's alright to think, but you're going to have to be hurting me a lot more before we're done training.*

Mewtwo got up, and decided to move on. They had already spent a long time training, and there was at least one more thing he wanted to go over. They both were beginning to feel tired, though, and so Mewtwo settled on showing Dmac one more thing. He brought him back to the center of the room, and positioned himself right in front of him.

*One last thing: Force Palm. I don't know if you've ever used this move, or ever knew you could, but I want to teach it to you a bit differently than you would normally learn it.*

*What do you mean?*

*Force Palm is a fighting type move. The user channels energy into their palm -- or paw, in your case -- and uses it to throw an opponent. The energy is usually the same energy any pokemon draws on to power their moves, but I think you can use your aura.*

*How do I do that?*

*It's called Force Palm only because you use your paw to do it, but it doesn't really have anything to do with your paw. You channel energy into your paw, and use it to bluntly throw your opponent backward. If you use your aura, though, I think it'd work a bit different. You'd create a potential, and then you push through with your aura. Does that make any sense?*

Dmac felt that it did; it was like the wall concept they'd covered earlier. Instead of pushing with the force of his arm, he was pushing with the force of his aura. If he thought of it that way, Mewtwo was right: he probably didn't need his paw to do it, but if it was Force Palm he was emulating, he should

use his paw.

*I think so*, he responded.

*Then use it on me.*

Dmac laid his paw on Mewtwo's chest; it was the first time he felt Mewtwo's fur. It was soft and short, and seemed wholly uncharacteristic for a pokemon who was designed to be a merciless fighter. The people who made him put the time and effort into making him look nice; Dmac didn't think that it would happen randomly. He focused energy behind a potential that he created about the size of Mewtwo's chest. His paw lit up with his aura, much like he assumed it would've if he were using force palm like he was supposed to. Then, he pushed through. Mewtwo again was thrown against the wall behind him, and again, Dmac rushed over to him.

*That was pretty good*, Mewtwo commented, after he recovered from hitting the wall with his head a second time.

*Aren't you worried that I'm hurting you?*

*No -- watch this.* Dmac could feel Mewtwo was excited to show him something. He stood back up on his feet, then walked back to the middle of the room, turned to face Dmac, and started floating off the ground. He pulled his arms and legs into himself, as if he were crouching in mid-air. Mewtwo started glowing a slight purple, and his eyes closed, as if he were sleeping. Dmac could feel him gaining strength; he was recovering not only from hitting the wall, but expending the energy he had breaking Ri's aura walls. After about a minute, he stopped glowing, and he touched back down on his feet, looking refreshed and ready -- nearly to Dmac's dismay -- for a fight.

*What was that?* He asked.

*That was Recover, a move I can use. I rest for a while, and I can heal from most injuries. If I ever seem physically fragile; being able to do that makes up for it.*

*Can I do something like that?*

*If you could, I'd expect it to be a drain on your aura, and therefore on yourself.*

Therefore, it would be counterproductive for Dmac to heal himself using his aura; to try would only leave him more exhausted.

*That's enough for today, I think.* Mewtwo continued. *Tomorrow I'll hit you with the same sort of attacks you hit me with today so you know how they feel, then we can try a short battle.*

OK.

Dmac worried about both of those things, but maybe knowing what it felt like to be hit with his attacks would help him to worry less about hitting others with them.

Dmac followed Mewtwo out of the practice room, and back to the kitchen. Mewtwo made them another meal, and they found somewhere to sit and eat it together. They picked at their plates; there was something on both their minds.

*You're doing well, Dmac. I worried that it would be hard for you to understand some of the things I wanted you to. You're already getting pretty strong.*

*Thanks?* Dmac wasn't sure he liked what he was hearing. He didn't know if he *wanted* to be strong.

*You're more than just worried about hurting others, aren't you?*

Dmac thought through it, and Mewtwo was right. *I don't want to hurt others, Mewtwo. I'm scared that if I get stronger, if I keep fighting, it's going to become my life. I don't want to be the sort of pokemon who hurts other pokemon.*

*You're a fighting-steel type, but that doesn't mean you have to like fighting. It's OK to dislike battling, but you also have to be able to protect yourself. I want you to be able to fight when you need to; that's why I'm letting you throw me around. So you can see what your attacks do. Given, I'm a strong psychic type, and resistant to fighting type attacks, but I'd rather you do that to me when I'm confident I can take it than to anybody else who might have a harder time. I'm the strongest pokemon in the world; nobody, except maybe professor Oak, I thought, is more equipped to help you understand yourself.*

*But why do I have to protect myself? I was able to get by at home.*

*You can't always depend on others to protect you. What if nobody's around when a human tries catching*

*you? Yes, you have a patch that prevents that, but nobody knows that. They will bring their pokemon out to fight you, and you could try running away, but some people won't give up, Dmac. They will chase you, and corner you. You will have no choice but to fight then, and if that's the case, I want you to be prepared.*

It seemed like Mewtwo just wanted Dmac to be comfortable with the realities of being a pokemon on this world. It was a reality back home, too, especially in the Mystery Dungeons: you were likely to be attacked. Dmac got by because he had friends to help him, but Mewtwo was right: Dmac might not always have friends around to protect him. Dmac saw the sense in Mewtwo's reasoning, and decided that it was important to be comfortable fighting. He knew he didn't like hurting others; he trusted that that wouldn't change training with Mewtwo. There was a difference with being comfortable hurting others and OK hurting others; Dmac didn't need to be comfortable, only OK. He decided to apply himself more to the training, and to try to worry less when he would hit Mewtwo.

Their food had grown cold, but they ate it anyway. Mewtwo explained that most pokemon ate human-made concoctions that, while healthy, didn't quite taste right sometimes. There were pokemon-oriented delicacies too, but Mewtwo preferred human meals, and was able to cook them. Dmac found he preferred them, too; the more he ate, the more he realized that the things Mewtwo was making resembled things he had eaten back home but never knew how to make. Mewtwo offered to show him sometime, training permitting. After dinner, they both felt exhausted despite Mewtwo's use of Recover. Mewtwo had to admit there wasn't much to do at the base, so they went to sleep early.

The next day before training, Mewtwo showed Dmac more of the base. They walked past where Mewtwo was created; he didn't tell Dmac but he knew it, and Dmac felt that he knew it. Dmac tried putting it aside while they trained, but he was distracted, and Mewtwo was, too. Mewtwo tried hitting Dmac with the same sort of attacks Dmac had hit him with, but psychic spheres were a poor substitute for Dmac's aura attacks. They tended to do far more damage because of Dmac's typing, and tended to leave him confused longer. Dmac knew, at least, what it was like to be thrown against the wall like Mewtwo was. It didn't seem to hurt as bad as he thought it felt from Mewtwo, and he recovered quickly. Mewtwo made sure he knew that weaker pokemon would've had a harder time recovering from an attack like that. Dmac wanted to know what it would've felt like if he were weaker, so he had Mewtwo hit him again, harder. This time, Mewtwo's attack really hurt him, and left him properly confused, which took him a couple minutes to shake off. Mewtwo was worried this time, and came to make sure Dmac was alright.



*Sorry I hit you so hard; I could've knocked you out right there.*

*It's fine, I asked you to.*

*You were confused before; the humans call it a status effect, but it's just normal confusion. Psychic attacks can make almost any type pokemon confused, but it affects fighting types most. You lose your focus, and that leaves you practically defenseless.*

*Is there anything I can do to prevent that from happening?*

*There are items you can hold, but that's not worth worrying about. I've never heard of pokemon overcoming their type disadvantages; I think maybe it's just a fact of battling.*

*Maybe we can try sometime.*

*Maybe.* Mewtwo was already thinking of ways of helping Dmac get over his weakness against psychic types, but first they had to train his general ability to fight, and they wanted to find his old friends. Mewtwo didn't think they would have enough time to go over special details like that, especially if Dmac was going to either stay with his old friends or go back to his home. Instead, Mewtwo wanted to make sure that Dmac could fight and beat most opponents.

Dmac had taken a beating and needed to rest, and they were both somewhat distracted anyway, so they stopped training for the day. Dmac laid in bed, trying to get everything straight in his mind after being confused, and Mewtwo made him a concoction of berries to help him recover. As promised, once Dmac was feeling better, Mewtwo let him help him make dinner, showing him all the ingredients and explaining their function when Dmac didn't know what they were. The result was... interesting, even though Mewtwo had taken most of the control over the process. Dmac had fun learning, anyway, so he didn't mind too much. They went to sleep fairly early again, considering how training had gone.

However, they were both having trouble sleeping.

*Are you alright?* Dmac asked, when it finally bothered him too much that Mewtwo was having trouble.

*What do you mean?* Mewtwo asked in return.

*Ever since earlier, you've seemed a bit distant, even during training.*

*I'm fine.*

*No, you're not.*

*You can read me, too... Mewtwo wasn't used to being readable; Blaine didn't even understand him when they were together. He figured there wasn't a point in trying to avoid what was happening; he would have to say it some time or another.*

*I was thinking about being born. Most pokemon don't remember hatching, humans don't remember being born, and certainly nobody remembers the time before they came to this world. I do, though. My egg, it was a large tube. I was submerged in artificial amniotic fluids, and I remember it all clearly. My hatching was explosive; I killed a number of people breaking out. I didn't care for them, I only wanted freedom, and revenge. Revenge on the people who made me. It was a dark place for me, coming back here is reminding me of it.*

*I don't have any sort of hatching to remember. I don't even know how I was born; that was a different life. The first thing I remember is waking up on a beach confused. I didn't know who I was -- I guess I still don't. I'm sorry you have to live with that, Mewtwo, but at least you have some sort of origin to remember, I don't. And, to find it, it seems like I'm going to have to lose myself. I came here to learn about my past, but so far I've only learned that I might not want anything to do with it.*

*Dmac wanted to check on his old friends, but he wondered if he wanted anything to do with his old life. He still wanted to know, but he also knew that if he chose to regain his memories, he would lose everything that he was becoming without them.*

*Your old life wasn't with me. I don't really know how you arrived here if you were looking for your old friends. I'll bring you to them soon, after we've trained more. I'm sure once you meet them, you'll figure out what to do.*

*Thanks, Mewtwo.*

*You're welcome.*

*And -- thanks. For facing that for me.*

Mewtwo nodded mentally, returning back to his thoughts. Dmac returned to his own, and thought about his own 'birth.' He realized he missed Draco and Pikachu; he wanted to share with them the things he's learned with Mewtwo. He wanted to introduce Mewtwo to them, maybe; he would like to see how they'd react to such an imposing pokemon. Mewtwo seemed cold to Dmac at first, but the more they lived together, the more he could understand him. Mewtwo was still dealing with his origin, and he had a hard time trusting humans because they made him without any regard for his own feelings and wants. If the humans were like that... Dmac wasn't sure he liked them, either. Nobody he knew at home would've considered doing such a thing, and Dmac was sure that was partly why there was no such thing as a Mewtwo on his home world. Dmac was oddly thankful, though; Mewtwo was letting him adapt without setting selfish expectations on him. The only thing he expected of Dmac was that he would get better and more confident as they kept training, and now Dmac was hoping for and expecting the same of himself. Dmac enjoyed and expected to continue to enjoy Mewtwo's company and their training, but he hoped to move on soon so they could see Dmac's old friends.

Mewtwo was having his own problems. David never belonged with Mewtwo. Before, they happened to meet, and David helped Mewtwo tremendously, but David was close to Lucario. Now, Mewtwo could sense that Dmac still cared for his old friends on the world he considered home -- he missed them. He wanted to see David's friends, too, but Mewtwo could see that Dmac wasn't sure about being David again. If Dmac needed help, Mewtwo promised to Dmac silently that he would help him figure out what was best for *him*, not his friends from either of his lives.

The next couple days, Mewtwo broke a lot of Dmac's shields and hit him a lot both in ranged and close combat. It was annoying, but Dmac wasn't annoyed at Mewtwo, he was annoyed at himself. Mewtwo wanted him to be able to protect himself; Dmac kept failing him. Mewtwo showed him his modified version of Bone Rush, having Dmac use his aura like he did with Force Palm. It resulted in a bone of energy that Dmac could use like a club or other blunt instrument, and he and Mewtwo fought with large sticks to get Dmac used to fighting that way. Dmac started forming habits with his attacks, doing things that felt natural. He tried to make sure they didn't give away his intent, but swinging his arm above him while charging Force Palm seemed to be the most comfortable and best way to ready that attack. Around the fourth day, though, Dmac started realizing that Mewtwo was (intentionally) displaying his attacks before he released them, and Dmac started figuring out how to read them. The next day, Mewtwo changed it up.

*What I'm about to tell you might sound weird.*

*Yeah?*

*You can read ahead, too, Dmac. You don't need to see what I'm doing to know that I'm going to do it before I do it; you can use your ability to sense aura, too. I haven't been reading you in return, but today I'm going to start doing that, too, and I'm going to stop being so readable and predictable. I'm going to start fighting like I would actually fight.*

*Sounds good.*

They fought again, and Dmac was happy to feel that their fighting felt less like training, and more like an actual battle. Mewtwo was trusting him to be able to hold his own, and Dmac was finally proving him right. As Dmac trained, he felt his command of his aura grow: he was learning to read ahead like Mewtwo mentioned, and his attacks and defenses were growing stronger. The sixth day, Mewtwo launched a particularly strong attack toward Dmac, expecting his shield to break under the force, but was surprised and pleased to see that it held, allowing Dmac to land a relatively strong Force Palm on him -- Dmac was learning to worry less about hurting Mewtwo -- and another attack that had grown in strength. Dmac realized that he could charge Force Palm extremely quickly, and it made it easier for him to find an opening to use it. They stopped after that for the day. Mewtwo was running out of basic things to teach him, so he was starting to think that Dmac was completing his training

The next day, one week after the start of Dmac's training, they took a break. Mewtwo was satisfied with Dmac's progress, and they both needed a rest. They sat and talked in the kitchen, mostly about small things. Dmac wondered about his past, and Mewtwo told him as much as he could. As the day progressed toward evening, though, Dmac started feeling something deep within him, like something was trying to pull him away.

*Mewtwo? He called.*

*What is it? Mewtwo replied.*

*I'm not sure. It feels like... something's trying to take me away.*

Dmac was starting to get worried. He was comfortable with Mewtwo, but anywhere else... he didn't

know what to expect.

*What should I do?*

*I don't know...* Mewtwo started to think, while Dmac concentrated on keeping himself in their base. It was only a minute or so later, but Dmac came up with an idea.

*Mewtwo... whatever it is that's trying to take me away, it wants all of me, right?*

*I'd assume so.*

*So, what if all of me wasn't here? What if I were in multiple pieces?*

Dmac had confused Mewtwo nearly as effectively as Mewtwo's attacks confused him. Dmac could feel the force trying to take him away, but he rebelled, and pushed through to try to explain more clearly.

*My aura is like my life signature, right? It's the essence of my existence?*

*You could say that, but I'm not sure it's exactly accurate.*

*I know, but what if I mixed it with yours? If I gave some of my aura to you, and took some of yours in return, there'd be no way for all of me to be taken to wherever it is this force wants me to go, so maybe it will stop trying to.*

*That doesn't make sense to me.*

*I have a feeling, Mewtwo, and I don't want to be taken away. I don't know if I'll be able to get back.*

Dmac was really starting to worry; he could feel his concentration slipping, and whatever, or whoever was trying to take him away was growing more persistent. He wouldn't last long, and this was the only idea they had to keep him safe.

*Fine.*

Dmac was thankful Mewtwo was letting him try. He concentrated on himself like Mewtwo had shown him a week ago, and then focused on Mewtwo too, so he could sense both of their auras. He tried to

detach some of his aura from himself, but that wasn't working. Instead, he focused on manipulating Mewtwo's aura directly, draining it away from him and replacing it with his own, while replacing his lost aura with Mewtwo's. The moment Dmac started, Mewtwo fainted, but Dmac felt immediately more grounded. Dmac didn't stop until the feeling faded away; when he was finished, he had transferred about a quarter of Mewtwo's aura out of him, and it happened to be about a quarter of Dmac's own aura, too. He sighed in relief that he didn't have to worry about being pulled away, but he worried instead that Mewtwo had fainted. He sensed Mewtwo, and aside from sensing a little bit of himself from him, Mewtwo seemed alive and well, just asleep, so Dmac brought him back to his bed and he laid in his until Mewtwo awoke, some hours later, groggy and confused.

Dmac felt something when Mewtwo awoke, like something was awakening inside him. He didn't know what it was, but it felt like Mewtwo, so he checked, and sure enough, Mewtwo was sitting against the headrest of his bed, trying to understand what had happened.

*What happened?*

*When I started draining you of your aura, you fainted. Are you alright?*

*I think so, I just feel a bit...*

*Fragile?*

*Yes, how did you know?*

*I had a feeling.*

*You said you drained me of my aura? I guess it worked.*

*Yes, but I replaced it with my own. Your net loss of aura should be zero. And, yes, it worked.*

*Would it be possible to undo if I don't recover from it?*

Dmac worried that Mewtwo might want him to undo it.

*I don't know. Your aura, it seems to have mixed in with mine. I can't access it, but it's there, and it seems pretty inextricable from mine. When I sense you, you look like you're in two parts: a me part, and a you*

*part, but as time goes on, those are mixing together, too. I don't think there's anything I can do to undo it.*

*I feel weak, is that the reason?*

*I believe so. My aura is still filtering into yours; your body is taking longer to adapt than mine did. I think if we take it easy the rest of today, you should be back to normal tomorrow.*

Mewtwo tried to take comfort in what Dmac said, but he wouldn't know until his aura was in one piece again. Or -- until his aura had adapted Dmac's. Dmac sensed his agitation acutely; Mewtwo was used to being strong, and he didn't seem very strong then at all. They would just have to wait and see.

*I'm sorry this happened to you. I hope it doesn't have any lasting consequences.*

*I'll get used to it if it does. You didn't mean to hurt me, you just wanted to stay safe. I can't really blame you for that; I would've done the same.*

*Thanks.*

But, from the things Dmac was feeling from Mewtwo, their aura exchange *would* have lasting consequences. Dmac was always able to sense Mewtwo's feelings, and interpret them into thoughts, but it seemed like now he didn't *need* to interpret them, Mewtwo's thoughts seemed clear to him, at least if he decided to look. Mewtwo was going to have a hard time adapting to feeling weaker than normal, but Dmac could also sense he was willing to try, if it were to be necessary. It just made Dmac hope all the more that Mewtwo was going to be OK.

Dmac tried making dinner while Mewtwo recovered, but he still wasn't familiar enough with the kitchen to be able to make anything palatable. Instead, he just brought Mewtwo fresh berries for when he woke up. Mewtwo spent most of the day sleeping, so Dmac rested in his bed, watched the fragment of his aura trickle into Mewtwo's, and contemplated the things he was feeling from him. When he thought back to hearing Mewtwo's voice when he first woke up, he thought he heard it *inside* of him, when usually Mewtwo's voice felt foreign to him. He had gotten used to it, but it never quite seemed right. Unnatural. But, suddenly, it seemed natural and easy. When Dmac concentrated, he thought he could feel someone else in his mind; it must have been Mewtwo. At first, Dmac thought aura was just aura, but it was obvious now that it was more than just a life energy: Dmac shared his with Mewtwo, and now it seemed like they were linked together. Dmac wondered why Mewtwo hadn't

mentioned feeling the same thing, but he figured that it was because Dmac's aura wasn't a part of him yet. Dmac fell asleep wondering about the extent of this link he had accidentally created between them; had he accidentally lost them both their individuality? Would he ever be able to keep anything private from Mewtwo? When you can read others' minds, how do you make sure you don't see anything they don't want you seeing?

Mewtwo didn't wake up until the morning anyway. He found the berries lying on a small table Dmac had found and placed beside his bed. He was appreciative; he hadn't eaten anything since the morning before. He ate them, then woke Dmac up.

*Good morning, Dmac.*

*Good morning. How are you feeling?*

*Better, I think. There's something I think we have to talk about, though; something I have a feeling you know about.*

*Yeah.*

*I'd ask if you knew that this would happen, but I already have a feeling you didn't, that you're trying to work through the same things I'm starting to.*

*It feels like I'm there with you, in your mind, right? And when I talk, you hear it within you, not from me like usual?*

*Yes, that sounds right.*

*It's our auras, I think. Your aura is in one piece again, and if I sense your aura, I see you, but a little bit of me, too.*

*And when I sense you with my mind, it almost feels like I'm sensing myself, too.*

*I feel your presence in my mind, now more than I did before.*

*I think I feel that too.*



*And you could sense what I'm thinking?*

*I could do that before, too.*

*I know, but I can do it too now, when before I could only see your emotions.*

*Is this permanent?*

*I don't know. I was worrying more about dealing with this than I was about whether it would stop or not. If I can read your thoughts, how do I make sure I don't read something you don't want me knowing?*

*Usually, it's something I can turn on and off. I don't have to look, I can choose to ignore. It can be hard, but I've learned how to do it.*

*I've noticed that, but everything you're thinking feels so near to me, I don't know if I can ignore it.*

*Focus on me, Dmac. Not my mind, but my face. It's like how your aura sense is always there, but you choose when to pay attention to it. If you focus on other things, I don't think my thoughts will be so noticeable.*

Dmac looked at Mewtwo's face; something he realized he didn't ever really focus on. Mewtwo's eyes were the same deep purple, but he also noticed his face was covered in short fur. He looked relieved that he felt normal again, but this connection was something unexpected that they'd have to work through. Dmac focused on Mewtwo's eyes, and his thoughts started to seem much less prominent to Dmac.

*I guess it's just something I have to get used to.*

*Yeah. I admit, though, I'm having a harder time than usual ignoring your thoughts... do you really think that about my face?*

Dmac snapped back to attention; he got a little *too* lost in focusing on Mewtwo. Dmac started feeling embarrassed, something surely that Mewtwo felt.

*No matter. Have you eaten?*

*No, not yet.*

*Let's do that, then.*

They ate, and thankfully, everything seemed normal. They were still able to interact normally, which they both knew they were both thankful for. Dmac was happy he didn't have to transfer any more aura out of Mewtwo; if he had, their resulting connection might have been much harder to deal with. They rested again that day, making sure that they were both ready to start training again. The next day, they started with a quick battle to warm up, and they found that it was easier and quicker for them to anticipate the other. They were like two parts of a machine, they were both able to match the other almost exactly. With time, they were sure that they could effortlessly tie each other indefinitely. Mewtwo cut the battle off short, because it became apparent to him pretty quickly.

*It seems that this link has made battling between us pretty trivial. We can see what we're going to do before we do it; the battle happens a second or so before our bodies actually carry it out. I don't think it's going to be any use to you right now fighting like that, because you have to be able to fight opponents when you don't know what they're going to do so easily. You might be able to read them ahead like you can with me, but their minds are still working in realtime, so when both of ours are working ahead, the resulting battle isn't too realistic.*

Dmac knew what Mewtwo meant. It wasn't a challenge to match Mewtwo anymore. Working together like that was a skill they could develop if Dmac had planned to stay, but it wouldn't help Dmac back at his home, so they stopped fighting that way. Instead, they kept working on Dmac's aura attacks and defenses, and he kept internalizing the techniques Mewtwo had taught him. At least, until Mewtwo sensed somebody waiting outside the gym.

*Do you sense that?* Mewtwo asked, stopping in the middle of shattering another of Dmac's shields.

*Yeah, I think so. Somebody's outside.*

Mewtwo led Dmac back to the gym proper, but hid away when Dmac went to open the door. It seemed strange that Mewtwo, a pokemon so strong that he didn't worry about being attacked by another pokemon who is stronger than most pokemon himself would worry about people. Dmac answered the door, and found a male trainer waiting outside with a Charmander, presumably his partner.

"Get out of my way... whatever you are, and let me in!"

Dmac was shocked, and rather confused. He stepped aside, wondering what he did to be treated that way.

*If you'd just waited a moment, I would have,* he responded.

The trainer was walking by, but when he heard Dmac's voice, he turned around, and leaned down to look Dmac closely in the face.

"Did you just talk? I didn't know there were pokemon who could do that."

Dmac was about to mention that all the pokemon he knew could talk, but he was getting major warning signs from Mewtwo not to talk too much about himself. Instead, he tried to turn the trainers' attention away.

*Are you looking for a gym leader? There aren't any here, this place has been abandoned for years.*

"No, I was hoping for an easy gym badge. No leader, no battle to fight."

*We're staying here now, you'll have to fight him.* Mewtwo told Dmac, trying to guide how he should interact with the person. Dmac tried thinking of something to say; he knew he couldn't talk about Mewtwo's presence or the existence of the underground base, so he needed to make something up.

*I found some, and I have them all, but I don't think I should just give one to you. I'm staying here now, maybe we should battle for one?*

Dmac was out of his element. He usually let others do the talking, so he felt uncomfortable, especially covering up half of what he was doing there. It was comforting having Mewtwo there, even if he was just watching from the shadows, because without him Dmac would have had no idea what to say or do.

"Why should I fight you for a gym badge? Why not fight you to catch you, instead, then take that badge for myself anyway! Charmander, go!"

Dmac had almost forgotten about the Charmander. He didn't hear him say anything before, and, well, the human was so distracting.

*Be careful, steel is weak against fire.*

Mewtwo's warning made Dmac realize the severity of the situation: he was about to battle another pokemon for the first time. It wasn't going to be like fighting Mewtwo, where they were both concerned with the others' safety, Dmac was going to have to fight with the intention of making Charmander unable to battle, and Charmander wasn't going to worry about hurting him, either.

Dmac backed away from Charmander and his trainer, readying himself to fight. This battle was going to be different in another way, too: Dmac could attack Mewtwo all-out, but he had to be careful with this Charmander, even if he was at a type disadvantage.

"Charmander, use Ember!"

Dmac was almost confused. Did trainers really yell out commands like that? Dmac knew what the Charmander was going to do nearly seconds before the Charmander actually did it. The attack might have been easy to block, but Dmac dodged it instead, letting the weak flame fly past him. He sensed a second one coming, so he dodged again. In fact, Charmander was sending out repeated flames, and hoping that at least one of them would hit Dmac. One came too close for comfort -- close enough for Dmac to feel its intense heat -- but Dmac was unhurt when Charmander tired out. Dmac knew it was his chance to hit him with something, but he realized he had no idea how strong to make his attack. The Charmander seemed fairly weak compared to Mewtwo, but then again anybody should have seemed weak compared to him. Dmac had only one reference point, and that wasn't much to go off of. He guessed, and sent a weak Aura Sphere Charmander's way. It barely sparked when it hit Charmander, not much more than a nudge. Obviously, he needed something stronger.

"Ha, so that's why all you've been doing is running! You can't even hurt my pokemon! Charmander, hit him with a Fire Spin, and make sure he can't run away anymore!"

Dmac expected the attack, but he didn't expect it to expand as it neared him, and he didn't expect it to hit him. Dmac felt the brunt force of Charmander's fire attack for the first time -- it burned, it made his mind go blank for a moment -- but it was worse than that -- he was trapped in the move. He couldn't move too much in any direction; he risked being hit by the spinning wall of fire if he did. Dmac started feeling way too hot, and was starting to weaken quickly. Mewtwo was right; he didn't do too well with fire. He needed to think of something fast, or else face Charmander's Ember attacks head on. He thought back to his first day of training, and started to realize just how important what

Mewtwo had told him was. He focused in on himself, and tried to push away the worry and the uneasiness. He felt his aura, and focused it around him, allowing it to light him up as he charged it. He released it in every direction, dispelling the wall of fire that had surrounded him. The trainer was surprised, but was quick to tell Charmander to use another Ember attack. Dmac was quicker, though, and he used his speed to throw Charmander against the wall with an aura bone. He held up his paw, charged up a stronger aura sphere, and threw it at Charmander, but it was much too strong. Dmac settled down and almost started celebrating in his head before he realized what he'd done, but already the trainer was running away with his Charmander in his arms, shouting and saying things that Dmac didn't hear.

*What was that!?*

When Dmac snapped out of it, he realized Mewtwo was standing in front of him. He must have said that many times. Mewtwo was angry; Dmac could've felt it without aura powers or special connections. Dmac was speechless; he was still trying to process what happened.

*Let's battle. Right here, right now, until one of us can't fight anymore. I want to see what's gotten into you.*

Dmac only nodded, then realized he was about to fight Mewtwo. He was confused -- hadn't he nearly just killed another pokemon? The thought terrified him, and he wanted to run away, but he could feel that Mewtwo wasn't going to let him get out of this. Instead, he pushed his uneasiness as far down as he could and prepared for a proper battle with Mewtwo.

Mewtwo crushed Dmac fairly easily. After Charmander, Dmac couldn't bring himself to try to hurt Mewtwo intentionally, and hesitated whenever he had a chance. It was irritating. Dmac thought he was making progress before, but now he was back to being a huge disappointment, in seemingly more ways than one. Mewtwo had Dmac pinned on the ground, and was ready to fire a psychic sphere to finish it, but stopped, and helped Dmac up. He felt much calmer, having figured everything out.

*I'm sorry I put you through that, Dmac. I needed to see how you felt during a battle like that. During your fight with Charmander, you were nervous at first, until he hit you with that Fire Spin. You hit him way too hard after that, but I see now that you just didn't know. You were angry, too, I wasn't sure if you were angry at the Charmander, the trainer, or yourself, and I didn't know if your attacks were so strong because you were angry or not.*

*I was angry at myself, Mewtwo. I still am. I didn't like the way that trainer was treating me, but I wouldn't take that out on Charmander. That's not fair or right. I didn't mean to hurt him like that.*

*I know that now. I'm sorry I pushed you to fight him, you obviously weren't ready. I saw that from our battle, too. You were unsure of yourself the whole way, and it only irritated you, causing you to lose your focus. You didn't know when doing something was right or wrong, so you hesitated instead. You could've beat me, I think, but you were worried about fighting the right way. You still don't know what the right way is; I understand. Mewtwo paused. And I'm sorry I overreacted. I'm not used to feeling things from others like this. It's so much information, having your feelings along with your thoughts.*

*I just don't want to disappoint you. I'm starting to wonder if I really am good at fighting or not.*

*You're a good fighter, Dmac. I don't know anyone else who could stand a chance against me, and you've only trained for a week. That's impressive. You held up against the trainer's abuse; that's impressive, too. Not that it didn't affect you, but that you didn't let it affect how you act.*

*What use is fighting you if I can't fight anybody else, though?*

*You will be able to, in time. Let's spend a day or two practicing restraint; after going all-out for a few days, I could use it, too. You know your limits, now, but you still don't know others' limits. You can only know that through experience, Dmac; the only way you will learn is by doing.*

*I understand.*

Mewtwo walked Dmac back into the base, but left him alone once they reached their room. Dmac thought about how he felt fighting Charmander, and wondered what led him to hit him so hard. Mewtwo seemed convinced it was just a mistake, which was a major comfort to Dmac, but if Dmac's mistakes could kill other pokémon or even people, how could he ever trust himself to fight anybody other than Mewtwo?

Mewtwo was right, Dmac needed experience. Training helped him develop his skills, but it didn't help him learn how to apply them. Now, he needed to develop new skills to make sure he didn't do anything like that ever again.

After a couple hours' rest, Dmac was able to reflect on the incident with much deeper clarity. He hated how it felt, standing there in front of Charmander's broken body. He hated the sense of enjoyment of

victory he almost felt before he realized what he'd done. Dmac was sure now: he never wanted to hurt anyone like that again. He also knew that he wouldn't be comfortable fighting anyone else until he learned restraint. He also trusted that with Mewtwo's help, he could do it. Mewtwo had to restrain himself to fight others, so Dmac was sure that Mewtwo would be able to help him learn how.

Mewtwo returned, wondering how Dmac was feeling. Dmac was feeling better, but the incident still weighed heavily on him.

*I'm sorry, Mewtwo.*

*It's OK, you're still better than I am. The first conscious choice I made killed multiple people, and I didn't really care at the time. You're in a better spot than I was. It was hard getting where I am now from there; that's part of why I reacted so harshly. That's somewhere you don't want to be, Dmac, and I think it might be wise to be careful until you're sure you can fight any pokemon effectively, keeping their safety in mind.*

*Agreed, but how do I get there?*

*Battling, and a lot of losing.*

Of course Dmac would be losing a lot, because he would be underestimating his opponents until he was able to judge them accurately.

*This is something most pokemon don't have to worry about, Dmac. Most pokemon start from the bottom and work their way to the top, so they know what it's like being a weaker pokemon; you're at the top and working your way down. I had to do that, too. It's possible, but hard.*

Dmac felt a change of subject coming on.

*I've thought through things the past couple hours, and I think maybe we should take a break from training for now. You came to see your friends; maybe it's time I brought you to them.*

*You know where they are?*

*Yes, they're on a world quite similar to this one. We'll find them hidden in the Viridian Forest.*

*Are you coming with me?*

*Do you want me to?*

*Yes.*

*Sure, I'll come.*

*Thanks.*

*No problem.*

Dmac was already lying in bed, and Mewtwo crawled into his. Before they went to sleep, though, he felt like he had something to say.

*I don't blame you for what happened today. I'm more at fault because I pushed you too hard. Again, I'm sorry.*

It was again a major comfort knowing that Mewtwo didn't think any less of Dmac. It helped him to think it was something he could get over and move on from.

*It's OK, I don't really think you're to blame, either.*

There was a pause while Mewtwo considered something else.

*Charmander is going to be OK, Dmac. He was hurt less than you might think, and his trainer overreacted because he didn't expect you to be so strong. There would be police in the morning if anybody thought you were an actual threat; I don't think there will be any.*

Mewtwo felt Dmac's gratitude, and Dmac knew Mewtwo cared. They were able to rest rather peacefully that night, thanks mostly to their new shared connection which helped them to know that things between them were OK.

In the morning after breakfast, Mewtwo prepared to bring them to David's old world. Dmac was starting to get worried; meeting his old friends felt scarier than Charmander's Ember attacks the day before. He was getting comfortable with Mewtwo, but now they were about to add a number of new



people to the mix, and Dmac had no idea what they were going to be like. He had no idea if they were going to accept him, if they were going to like him, or if they were going to ask him to remember who he was.

*Relax, Dmac. They wouldn't be David's -- your? -- friends if they weren't good people.* Mewtwo said as he made final calculations for the interdimensional teleport. He wanted it to help Dmac calm down; it was working. It was also helping that Dmac knew Mewtwo was going to go along with him. It was always nice to have something -- *someone* -- familiar nearby when trying out something new.

*I'm almost done, just a couple minutes more.*

Those minutes felt like an eternity to Dmac. It was just enough time for him to start thinking again about how everything could go wrong. Thankfully Mewtwo was finished before Dmac's imagination went too wild.

*Ok. The world we're going to will look almost identical to this one, but it's not. Everyone you know from here is different there, and they won't know you, at least until you tell them who you are.*

*Ok.*

*Ready, then?*

*I think so.*

Mewtwo pressed a button on a small handheld device, then stood up with it and walked over to Dmac and stopped so he was beside him. A moment later, there was a bright flash, and everything around them changed. The walls of the lab disappeared and were replaced with trees, the fluorescent lighting with that of the sun. Mewtwo had teleported them deep within the Viridian Forest, somewhere he believed that few people traveled.

*David told me he and his friends lived somewhere in this forest... I never really thought to ask where exactly.*

*Can you sense them?*

*No, I can't... this forest must be bigger here than it is on my world. I always wondered how they could*

*hide here, but of course it's clear to me now.*

*How should we look for them?*

*We should split up.*

*I don't know what to look for, though.*

*Look for another Mewtwo, another Lucario, or auras that don't resemble people or pokemon. If they are all home, they will be together. If not, if you come across a house, I don't think there are any other houses in this forest, especially if it's deep within. I will check the eastern half, you check the western half. Let's meet back here in an hour and a half.*

*OK.*

Mewtwo flew off toward the east, leaving Dmac to check the west. Dmac realized while walking toward the west that it was the first time -- ever -- that he was really alone. He'd never been far from friends as long as he remembered, effectively his entire life. He could feel for miles around himself, and there was no sign of the people they were looking for, so Dmac started running through the forest.

Thinking about it more, Dmac remembered that he wasn't truly alone - even while they were miles apart, Dmac felt Mewtwo's presence in his mind. He poked a bit further, and tried to sense Mewtwo's thoughts. It wasn't long before he was interrupted by Mewtwo.

*There's nothing interesting to see here; I'm looking for David's friends. Whatever you're doing, it seems like it isn't that.*

*Sorry.* Dmac didn't really want to see what Mewtwo was thinking about, he just wanted to know if he *could* see what Mewtwo was thinking about, but it was fair of him to be upset at the intrusion.

*It's alright. I was wondering, too.*

*But you didn't look.*

*I was going to eventually; don't feel bad. I was also wondering if we could still talk to each other; it seems like we can.*

*Yeah.*

*I'm almost through searching this side of the forest, and there's no sign of them. You?*

*I haven't seen them either. I have a bit more to go through, but I should be done soon.*

*Let's meet back in the middle soon then.*

*Sounds good.*

They both finished their searches, and met back where they started. Dmac hadn't kept track of his surroundings as he searched, but he could feel Mewtwo's presence and went toward it. He felt Mewtwo felt it too; there was no need to talk about it.

*I expected to find them here; it's odd that they've disappeared.*

*Where do you think they went?*

*I'm not sure. Maybe we should find this world's Professor Oak; he might know.*

They went south to Pallet Town, expecting to find him there at his lab. Pallet Town looked different; it was bigger and looked older than the one they knew. Obviously, time moved faster here than it did on Mewtwo's world. They found Oak's laboratory, and knocked on the door. The person who answered wasn't who they expected; instead, a young man in his late 20s greeted them.

"Mewtwo? Lucario? Gramps told me you'd gone your separate ways. I didn't expect to be seeing you together again, much less here of all places."

The man was certainly confused. Not only could Dmac feel it, he looked taken aback by their unexpected presence. It put many questions in both Dmac and Mewtwo's minds, but it was Dmac only who responded.

*I'm sorry, we're a different Lucario and Mewtwo. We're not who you think we are.*

The man was only more confused, wondering what Dmac meant by *different* Mewtwo. He looked

closely at Mewtwo, trying to figure out if he recognized him.

“You do look a bit different than I remember.”

*We were looking for Professor Oak. Do you know if he's around?*

“You mean Gramps? He's inside, sleeping.” The man paused, remembering that the pokemon didn't know him. “I'm Gary Oak, Professor Oak's grandson. Please, come in.”

Gary led them inside to a room with chairs on which they all sat. There wasn't much more to the room; it looked like a sectioned off area of the lab proper to make the place more like a home.

“Do you know my grandfather?”

*No. We just wanted to ask him about some people we wanted to find, including the pokemon you thought we were.*

“What business do you have with them?”

Dmac wasn't sure how to answer.

*Don't tell him who we are yet.*

Mewtwo didn't know enough about Gary, so he wasn't inclined to trust him.

*That's a personal matter,* Dmac said. It was technically true; it was between Dmac and his old friends.

“Whatever. I'm surprised you haven't heard by now: they're all gone. They all lived together in the Viridian Forest, but when one of the ones from another world -- the dragon, I think they called themselves? -- disappeared, the rest dissolved. Gramps told me Lucario and Mewtwo stayed the longest, but eventually they gave up too. Lucario went back to Sinnoh, while Mewtwo is living somewhere in Johto. There was a Pikachu, too, but I don't know where it went. Not that it matters anyway; that Pikachu used to be Ash Ketchum's before they split apart. I didn't even know losers could lose loser pokemon...”

Gary seemed disinterested. The only upside in his mind was that talking to these new pokemon was

more interesting than watching his grandfather sleep. It was news to Dmac, and also to Mewtwo: his old friends gave up on him, then so soon on each other? David must have held that group together, but he must have thought that they would stay together waiting for him to return.

*I'd heard that Pikachu decided to stay with David when Ash abandoned him, said Mewtwo so only Dmac could hear.*

*Do you know exactly where any of them are?* responded Dmac to Gary.

“No, I don't. Gramps might, but I shouldn't wake him.”

*How is Oak?*

“I thought you didn't know him. Why are you so interested?”

*You're not going to get anything else out of him unless you tell him who we are.*

Dmac agreed. It seemed like Gary wanted them gone, so he could focus on his grandfather. Oak must have been pretty old; Dmac already considered the Oak he knew to be old, and this Oak was 20 years older.

*Is there any way we could find them ourselves?*

*No. I have no idea where anyone is.*

*I guess I should tell him, then.*

*That might be best.*

It was decided.

*Gary... I'm the -- dragon, you said? -- who left. You and everyone else knew me as David.*

“That makes no sense. You're a Lucario, and the Mewtwo with you isn't even the one David knew. If you were David, you'd know where to find Lucario anywhere; he wouldn't need me to tell him where he is. Anyway, David didn't come back like he said he would. Real nice of you to make fun of his friends

like that. They waited for him.”

*They should've waited longer. David kept his promise -- he just didn't know how long it would take him to, or that he would be coming back as me.*

“As you... what are you if you are and aren't David?”

*I'm a Lucario who only remembers his current life. I know I've had a past one, but that's all I'm sure about it.*

“So, let's say you're David. What took you so long?”

Dmac wasn't sure, but he sensed Mewtwo was trying to make the relevant information available to him. Mewtwo didn't seem to understand it much, either, but he hoped it would help Gary understand.

*Time moves slower on the world I was on. It takes relatively longer for a year to go by there as it does here. I got sidetracked, too; when I left that world, I didn't come directly here.*

“What could have been more important than your friends for you to get distracted by a Mewtwo from another world!?”

*I wouldn't be here if it weren't for that Mewtwo! He's David's friend, too, so maybe you should forgive him for keeping me from them!* Disrespecting Mewtwo was too far for Dmac. Mewtwo had as much of a right to see him as Oak did.

“I don't care what you do or don't do, I just care that you don't hurt Gramps doing it! He's still waiting for you; he never lost hope, but you've disappointed him again and again.”

*Let me see him, then.*

Gary shook his head, getting his mind back to what he considered 'straight.'

“No, I don't want you doing that. Leave us alone, let me care for my grandfather. You're not David, so I don't even know why I'm talking to you.

*Dmac, I think I might have an idea where Mewtwo might be, but I need to see a map first.*

Mewtwo interjected to let Dmac know that it was OK for them to leave, but also that he needed that map to do so.

*Fine, we'll leave, but we need to see a map of Johto first.*

“Why can’t you just leave me alone? Don’t you have pokedexes, or pokegears, or something like that? Anything to get you out of here, I guess.”

Dmac didn’t know what those were, but if they were human devices, he figured neither he nor Mewtwo would be able to use them. It didn’t matter; Gary left to find a physical map to show them. He came back a couple minutes later with one that was brown at the edges and old-looking; Dmac guessed that they didn’t have a need for physical maps anymore. He laid it out on a short table in the room next door, and waved them on to it. Mewtwo went over and took a look, and explained to Dmac as he did so.

*If I needed to hide, there’s a couple places back home that I’d choose. If this world’s Mewtwo is anything like me, and if those places still exist, and as long as Mewtwo’s hiding the way I think he is, he’s probably in one of those places.*

Dmac went over and looked at the map too, so it didn’t seem like Mewtwo was doing all the work. He’d never seen a map of Johto, but it seemed like a large place. His world back home was split into 5 continents, but none of those continents had more than a couple towns on them, and all the towns existed separately. Johto was about the size of one of those continents, but to think that it was a single -- region, he’d heard said -- was hard to believe. He saw at least 7 different hubs of human activity on the map, and most of them were larger than any town Dmac had ever seen, according to Mewtwo. Then, to think that all of those worked together as a single unit under a single authority -- and that single region interacted with at least two others -- Dmac saw on the map some wording that said “To Kanto” and Gary’d mentioned Sinnoh before -- the sheer complexity of the world was hard for Dmac to comprehend.

*There’s a lot more people here than there are pokemon on your world, same with my world. They are territorial and they tend to team together with others like them; the hard part wasn’t forming the regions, but getting them to work together. You’re lucky we live in the time we do; if it were a few thousand years ago, we might be fighting in big wars between human kings.*

Dmac didn't want to imagine what that would be like. He much rather preferred to let Mewtwo finish analyzing the map and get going. Mewtwo found everything he was looking for pretty quickly after that, so Dmac thanked Gary for the map and they were on their way. Mewtwo led Dmac toward his first choice of hiding spot, but Dmac couldn't help but think of Gary on the way.

*What was it with Gary?*

*He blames David for Oak's condition, whatever it is. It's not fair, but it's understandable. It's good he didn't believe you're who you said you were; he would've been madder at you if he did.*

*Why didn't he believe me, though?*

*It didn't make sense to him, I'm sure you sensed that.*

*Yeah, but I don't understand why.*

*He doesn't know you very well. He thought David was very loyal to his friends, so it confused him when he didn't show up, forcing them all to give up on him. Since he thinks David abandoned his friends and especially his grandfather, causing as he believes his condition, it's easier for him to believe that you're not David than that he's wrong about everything he's told himself the past 10 years.*

*I wish I had come back sooner, maybe none of this would have happened...*

*It's not your fault; you didn't know.*

*It's not yours; you didn't know either.*

Mewtwo seemed inclined to blame himself for asking Dmac to stay with him longer, but Mewtwo had no idea anybody had been waiting for Dmac, or had given up waiting. He was right, though, and Dmac tried to let it go. He was back *now*, and that's what mattered. The conversation drifted out of existence when neither of them could think of anything to say; what could've been said was already apparent to both of them. Instead, they sped along their way towards Mewtwo's first Johto landmark, hoping that Mewtwo would react less aggressively. Dmac could run as fast as Mewtwo could fly, but with the help of Mewtwo's psychic powers, Dmac was flying with him. He watched as forests gave way to mountains signaling the border between Kanto and Johto. Dmac felt nervous and excited to see the new region ahead. He looked forward to experiencing new things but he also felt terrified of them,



too. Dmac was thankful they were just flying high above the land, because if they'd needed to walk they would've needed to stay at some of the big cities they'd passed. Mewtwo was right; the cities looked ginormous to Dmac. They were far more densely packed than Dmac thought looked comfortable, and way too big. He could even see Goldenrod City from the border; the light it emitted in the setting sun helped.

*We're not far now, you can see where we're going in the distance.*

Dmac was happy to see that Mewtwo was leading him far from civilization. Instead, it was a lone mountain with its top cut off on the other side of the region. Dmac would call it a mesa, but it looked like it was *supposed* to have a top. Instead, as they neared it, he saw that it had a crater instead; a large depression which made it look like somebody scooped up the top of the mountain and moved it.

*We're going inside there, Mewtwo said. I think I can sense Mewtwo in there, but I wouldn't know what a Mewtwo feels like.*

Dmac focused on himself, and turned that focus outward to look with his aura. His eyes were closed, but everything around him was lit up in blue. Mewtwo was brightest, as he emitted a strong aura signature of his own, but far away, under the mountain, Dmac could sense a collection of strong auras. They were hard to make out, but Dmac compared the mass to Mewtwo's, and found that one of them *did* seem similar to Mewtwo, minus what Dmac could feel of his own aura from Mewtwo.

*I think you're right.* Dmac replied.

*There might be a way in, but we'll have to search for it.*

*Will that take long?*

*I don't know.*

They made their final approach, arriving at the mountain a couple hours after nightfall. Now that it was dark, Dmac realized that they had arrived in Kanto relatively later than they left; if time moved the same, it would still be light on Mewtwo's world. Neither of them were tired, so they chose to investigate the mountain, hoping to find an easy way in.

*What made you choose this place?*

*I came across it travelling between being freed from Blaine and meeting David. It was high up, and it had a spring of pure water which was a marvel to behold. It was protected, and it was free from people because the air was too thin. I considered staying there before I started feeling lonely. The spring is gone now -- I think maybe Mewtwo had something to do with that on this world.*

*You were lonely?*

*Of course. I didn't have anyone to relate to. I might not have admitted it at the time, but that's what I was feeling. I masked it with a deep loathing for humanity, but something inside me knew that wasn't ok to think, so I felt pulled back, and that's what caused me to meet David.*

*Your pokedex entry -- the humans call you heartless. That was never really true, was it?*

It was something Dmac could feel from Mewtwo. Dmac didn't even really know what a pokedex was, but he assumed that it was something that could describe pokemon.

*Is there a difference between a pokemon who can't feel empathy and one who chooses not to? I chose not to feel; that's heartless enough. Come on, we need to find Mewtwo. Mewtwo had intended to cut the conversation short, but an explosion nearby stopped it in its tracks.*

*Leave now, or I'll attack again!*

It seemed like they didn't need to look any longer; the native Mewtwo had found them. He flew up in front of them and started to charge another psychic sphere.

*You invade my home; the least you could do is introduce yourselves!*

Dmac and Mewtwo stopped flying, and instead hovered in the air at the same height as Mewtwo was.

*We didn't mean to invade; we just wanted to visit.*

*How did you know I'm here? Nobody should know.*

*We didn't. I guessed.*

*How could you... oh.*

As Mewtwo approached, he realized that another Mewtwo was one of the intruders. He knew Dmac was a Lucario, but like Dmac's Mewtwo, he had never sensed another Mewtwo before. Now that they were acquainted, surely they would be able to recognize other Mewtwo in the future.

However, this Mewtwo had no fur -- he was almost shiny, even in the dim light of the moon. Dmac wasn't sure what he thought -- he liked Mewtwo's fur.

*What are you doing here with this Lucario? I don't like outsiders seeing this place.*

*You are David's friend, right? I am also one of his friends. He left a long time ago to save a world on which there are no humans. This is Dmac; he came from such a world to mine in search of you and David's other friends. I brought him here to see you.*

Everything finally clicked in Mewtwo's mind; all the pieces were put together.

*You're David? He said to Dmac.*

*I don't remember being David, but yeah.*

*I'm not sure if I believe you.*

*You're psychic, right? You can tell if I'm telling the truth.*

*How do you know that?*

*I've been living with him for the past couple weeks. Dmac nodded toward Mewtwo as he said it.*

*Maybe you're right, but things don't seem to add up. Why didn't you get your memory back yet?*

*I haven't decided if I want it back or not yet.*

*Why wouldn't you want your memory back?*

*I've started a life that's all my own -- what happens to it if David takes over again?*

*Is it fair to destroy that life because you want to live yours a bit longer?*

*Is it fair to make him choose to destroy his in favor of one who chose to forget it all?* Mewtwo interjected, seeing bias in Mewtwo's opinions. Mewtwo wanted David back; of course he'd think of Dmac that way. Of course, there was bias in Mewtwo's opinion, too.

*He's David, he just lost his memory.*

*Since he lost his memory, he's made new ones with new friends, and he's learned new things that would all be lost if he regained those memories.*

The native Mewtwo took a good look between Dmac and *his* Mewtwo, deciding something.

*You're going to be looking for Lucario, right?*

Dmac and Mewtwo nodded yes.

*I know where he is. I'll bring you to him, but after that I'm coming back here. I think it'll be best that way.*

*Are you sure? You're welcome to stay.* Dmac offered.

*Thank you, but I think it's best for me to be here now. We should go pretty soon; it's going to take a while to get to Sinnoh.*

*Fine,* Dmac responded.

The native Mewtwo blasted off, and Dmac and Mewtwo looked at each other before they followed. The other Mewtwo wasn't used to others; he had been alone with his clones too long. They sped off together toward Sinnoh, each keeping to their own thoughts the whole journey.

Which was far longer than Dmac had imagined it would be.

*This world is big,* Mewtwo said in his mind.

*How can a world this big function?*

*For a long time, it didn't seem that way. The world was much smaller because people and pokemon couldn't get far from home easily. The only world they knew was the land around them. Now, we have technology that lets us communicate around the world instantly. It takes only a few hours to get from one side of the world to the other, and it's easy to know what's going on elsewhere in the world.*

Dmac understood computers; it's like he didn't forget David's knowledge of them, even though he didn't remember them specifically. It surprised him then that this world seemed so strange to him; wouldn't he remember that, too?

*It's more weird that you're familiar with computers than it is you aren't with the world. You shouldn't remember anything from before you showed up on your world.*

*Are you two talking to each other? I sense something between you two, but I don't know what it is. When I sense you, it's like I can't sense one of you without the other. I can't really differentiate between your thoughts; they feel muddled together.*

Dmac and Mewtwo stopped talking, but they could still feel each others' emotions and sense each others' thoughts. Dmac could sense that Mewtwo was feeling a bit apprehensive visiting Sinnoh; it was apparent he had never been there before. He was interested, too, and Dmac understood both emotions. It felt weird, leaving relatively familiar Kanto and Johto behind for a completely new place, but also somewhat exciting, too. Dmac had never met other Lucario before, and it was a somewhat intimidating thought to be meeting others like him. He didn't know what Lucario culture was like; he hoped he wouldn't make a fool of himself.

They kept flying, flying for what seemed like forever. Dmac tried mapping out the sea under them, but he gave up when he decided they had travelled at least 10 times as far as the farthest Dmac had travelled at home. The crazy thing was, they had covered that area crazy fast. It took days for Dmac, Draco, and Pikachu to get to Purifying Cave, but they had covered a much greater distance in a number of hours. Dmac then tried to gauge how fast they were going, but he had no meaningful point of reference to go by. Walking speed was far too slow, and Dmac didn't really know how to measure distance without any meaningful point of reference. It felt like they had travelled far, and it felt like it took a long time for them to do it.

*We're almost there, the leading Mewtwo mentioned, breaking the silence between them. Just one more hour.*

They stayed silent afterward. Mewtwo saying that didn't really mean anything to Dmac; he had no way to measure time except by the movement of the stars which were beginning to twinkle faintly in the receding sunlight. Maybe 15 minutes later, Dmac saw land in the distance; it must have been Sinnoh. Once their objective was in sight, the flight became much more interesting as Sinnoh grew in the distance. Dmac could see new cities, with lights that brightened up the sky measurably.

*That's Jubilife City in the distance. It's not the most impressive city, but it's big, and it's lit up all the time. Detailed the native Mewtwo. We're going inland; Lucario's pack doesn't like the bigger cities.*

Dmac wondered what Mewtwo thought *was* an impressive city. Jubilife looked pretty impressive to Dmac; it was bigger than any city in Kanto. As they got closer, Dmac started to sense all the people's auras underneath him. It was a confusing jumble of light and emotion. Many people were hurrying around, thinking about little more than their next task. It was too much for Dmac, and he had to find some way to distract himself. He thought about Lucario's pack, and how little he knew of his own species. Lucario lived in packs? Dmac didn't remember hearing of any such thing back home. Could all Lucario sense aura like he did? He assumed so, but his fight with Charmander made it clear he wasn't a normal pokemon. All these questions made meeting the Lucario pack seem intimidating. Dmac was a Lucario who didn't know who a Lucario was.

*You come from a different culture, Dmac. Pokemon where you come from don't seem to group together like pokemon here do. It's OK that you're not sure, and it's OK if you don't want to conform. Be yourself; what does it matter what a group of Lucario from another world thinks about you?*

Mewtwo's words were comforting to Dmac. He was from another world; what did it matter if Lucario from this world didn't understand him... or him them? Dmac followed the Mewtwos to their destination, feeling more reassured about the entire thing. Soon they were flying over Jubilife, and they had reached inland Sinnoh, where there were fewer people and more wild land for pokemon to live largely free of human influence. They slowed down north of Hearthome city, and the native Mewtwo started searching around for the pack Lucario had joined. Pretty soon, he found them much nearer to the city than Dmac had expected.

*Lucario is over there, Mewtwo gestured to the area in which he had found them. South, quite near the city. I suggest you go there without me, and I'll go back to my sanctuary.*

*Why don't you come with us to see him?* Dmac asked.

*We meant never to see each other again when we parted after you left. We didn't agree how to deal with your absence, so we split apart. If he sees me with you now, it might not help you.*

*Are you sure going back is the best idea?* Mewtwo asked.

*There's nowhere else for me.*

Mewtwo didn't seem to agree, but Mewtwo also had a different experience of the world. He couldn't keep Mewtwo from leaving, but he could try to help Mewtwo in some small way.

*Find somebody.*

*I have my clones, they understand me.*

*No, they reflect everything you think back at you. Being caught up in yourself is not the best place to be; the right person can help you remember that you can care about more than just yourself.*

*That might be your experience. There's one human who I thought could possibly care, but he hasn't thought of me in years.*

*How would you know?*

*I'll be fine. Just go and help your friend find what he's looking for.*

Dmac knew what he was looking for; he wasn't sure what Mewtwo meant by saying that.

Anyway, it seemed like Mewtwo wasn't going to stay, so they let him go, and turned to the Lucario pack in front of them. Already, Lucario were gathering in the field, their aura powers alerting them to the powerful intruders. Dmac sensed they were all alert; maybe they thought he and Mewtwo were threats? When they touched down in front of them, they surrounded the two, seeming to confirm that. It seemed to be what Mewtwo thought as well, and it confused him.

*We're not threats, we're just looking for one of your packmates. A Lucario who should look a bit like my friend here.* Mewtwo said.

“Who is speaking?”

*I am?* Mewtwo didn't know why the Lucario didn't know it was him; it should've been obvious from what he said if they couldn't localize Mewtwo's voice.

“Your auras, what have you done? We see two pokemon in front of us, but we feel only one.” The Lucario who was speaking to them seemed to be the leader. He stepped out from the circle to confront the two more directly. He still seemed confused, and he was unhappy about their intrusion.

*Maybe you should speak. It might help them differentiate between our voices.*

*Ok.*

*I replaced his aura with some of mine, and I used his aura to replace the aura I lost doing that. We are two different pokemon.*

“What right do you have to play with the auras of others! You have defiled yourself, and you have nearly killed another!”

*I'm sorry?*

Dmac was utterly confused. He had no idea that the other Lucario would care so much about that. The Lucario rushed up to him, and charged an Aura Sphere in his face. It scared Dmac, at least until his training came back to him: he could see that the Lucario had no intent of blasting him in the face, and even if he did, Dmac could block it when he felt the other Lucario was about to discharge it.

“Insolent! You use your power thoughtlessly; you have no respect for the power given to you.”

Dmac glanced at Mewtwo, unsure of what was about to happen. *You can beat him*, Mewtwo thought reassuringly. Dmac knew exactly what it meant: don't worry about getting hurt, but don't embarrass him. Mewtwo trusted Dmac to be able to measure out his power this time against the other Lucario. Dmac didn't *want* to hurt the other Lucario, especially after Charmander, so he was going to be more careful this time.

“Fight me. If you get any help from your aura-mate, we will know, and we will hurt him.”



*That was scarier than any physical threat the Lucario could use against him.*

*Don't worry about me, they can't hurt me. Just fight your best.*

Again, Mewtwo didn't mean 'fight and win.' He meant 'scale your power so that you are a match for him.' Mewtwo turned his attention away to weaken the connection between them. He focused on something else; Dmac didn't try to see what. Instead, he followed the Lucario to the center of the circle, and Mewtwo floated above to give them room.

"The first to knock the other unconscious is the winner. Are you ready?"

Dmac nodded.

"Then fight."

Dmac looked into the other Lucario's eyes, trying to gauge his strength and fighting style. He purposefully underestimated him, but took into account his being a pack leader, and likely the strongest of the Lucario around him. When an Aura Sphere flew toward him, he quickly used a bone to dispel it and returned one of his own. It hit, stopping the other Lucario in his tracks. Dmac followed up with a Force Palm powerful enough to throw him a short distance, but not to harm him significantly. He got up, and Dmac sensed that he started to see Dmac as an actual threat. He pulled out a bone, and Dmac responded with his own, initiating melee combat. The other Lucario rushed toward him, and Dmac swung his bone expecting to be parried. He was, and he anticipated the retaliation and parried it, swinging his bone again quickly to hit Lucario. He hit his mark in Lucario's side, but Lucario was barely phased. Dmac sensed he wanted to use Force Palm to get some distance between them, so he jumped away himself. It seemed like he could hit a bit harder, but he remembered that he had to let Lucario hit him, too. Dmac swung away the Aura Sphere which had come toward him, but he let Lucario's bone hit him backwards. At that moment, Dmac was happy he trained with Mewtwo; Lucario's attacks would've seemed powerful before, but they weren't as confusing as Mewtwo's attacks, and they simply didn't hit as hard. Dmac could sense Lucario getting tense, though; he wasn't fighting with his aura like Mewtwo had taught Dmac. Did Mewtwo come up with that all by himself, then? Dmac was acting too powerful, and he was just playing with Lucario, not acting like this fight was a challenge to him. If he changed his tactics now, though, it would just be confusing to the other Lucario, and a clear indicator of Dmac's lack of experience. Dmac was about to commit to matching Lucario perfectly without hurting him or letting himself be hurt when somebody else interrupted their fight.

“Stop this!” Another Lucario rushed out between them, forcing them to end their fight. He continued talking to the pack leader and the other Lucario surrounding them.

“This Lucario is not from our world. He never learned to respect aura like we have. He and the Mewtwo are both fine, and I’m sure that they will both benefit greatly from the bond they share. Anyway, I’m tempted to think sometimes that we care too much about aura to explore what it can really do. I’m sure this Lucario can teach us something if we choose to listen.”

Dmac finally thought to focus on the Lucario around him, and they were all surprised. They’d expected their leader to demolish him; he’d just demonstrated that he had enough power to spare to play with him. Dmac had accidentally embarrassed the other Lucario; obviously he still had learning to do.

*I’m sorry, I didn’t do it right.*

*Don’t worry too much. You did better, you just have to figure out how to act like you’re less powerful. It’s a lot harder than it seems; I have trouble doing it too. You haven’t disappointed me.*

*Thanks.*

“I told you no help from your aura-mate!” Dmac sensed that the Lead lucario felt like he was losing control; he was angry that the other Lucario had interrupted them, and that Mewtwo wasn’t doing what he thought he should be.

*This fight was over when Lucario split you apart.* Mewtwo touched down beside Dmac, finalizing his opinion on the matter.

“He’s right. They’ve done nothing wrong, so stop accusing them like this. Let’s go somewhere else, and talk about this more privately.” said the Lucario who had interrupted them.

The leader didn’t seem happy about it, but he was willing to get away from everyone else for a moment, and he seemed to respect the other Lucario. He let the mystery Lucario lead them away into a nearby cave where they could have some privacy. They sat down together, and waited for someone to break the silence.

*I'm sorry, Lucario, I didn't mean to embarrass you in front of your pack.*

“That was you trying *not* to embarrass me? I couldn't even hit you unless you let me, you were one step ahead of me the entire time. How could that not be embarrassing?”

“Stop, and take a moment to recognize that this Lucario saw your embarrassment; saw how the fight made all the other Lucario react. He *was* one step ahead of you, and he sensed that with his aura. He feels bad, too; he didn't mean to hurt you like that.”

“Doesn't excuse his behavior, his disrespect.”

“Your pack has always been conservative in your attitude toward aura. Most Lucario are like you, but some aren't. I have respected your beliefs because you have accepted me into your pack, but this Lucario has no such obligation. I suspect Mewtwo taught this Lucario himself; that's why he can read your mind so well. He isn't bound by our traditions, so don't be insulted when he doesn't follow them.”

The leader was considering what Lucario told him. “Is it true Mewtwo taught you?”

*Everything. He's still teaching me, but we stopped for a while to find my old friends.*

“Old friends?” asked Lucario. He already had suspicions about who Dmac was, but now it seemed pretty obvious to him.

*Later*, Mewtwo told him. He was right; it was probably best to wait until this was cleared between them.

“You fight like a psychic type; that's clear to me now. You had no right teaching him yourself; you should have brought him to his own kind to train like Lucario should.”

“This Lucario is strong; that much is clear. This Lucario is also inexperienced; that much is also clear. If he's been training with Mewtwo, and if he's so good at predicting his opponent's actions, he must compare in strength to Mewtwo. It would've been foolish for anyone but Mewtwo to train him; he could kill anyone else. You're a natural fighter, Lucario, that much is obvious. What's hard for you is fighting opponents weaker than you, because you don't know how to judge their strength. Keep fighting, you'll get better at it quickly.”

Dmac nodded thanks, and the leader hung his head almost shamefully.

“You’re still the leader of this pack. I have made it clear I don’t want to be, and I don’t think this Lucario is going to be staying very long. The Lucario are loyal to you because they trust you, not because you’re strong. Hold your head up; one fight isn’t reason to stop respecting yourself.”

“For the last few years you’re the reason they’ve been respecting me.”

“No matter; you’ve had the humility to carefully consider what I have to say, but the pride to stand up for your actions.”

“I should go, it seems like these pokemon want to see you.”

“It seems that way to me,” replied Lucario. The leader left to be by himself, leaving Lucario alone with Dmac and Mewtwo.

“Who are you? And if I remember correctly, you’re from another world.” Lucario asked, referring first to Dmac then to Mewtwo.

*You’re right. You visited my world with David a few years ago.*

“Was it only a few years ago? It seems longer.”

*It seems like time moves differently on our worlds.*

“Maybe that’s what happened...”

*What?* Dmac asked.

“You still haven’t explained who you are.”

Dmac wondered why Lucario was so militant about that; it was a bit off-putting, but he answered as calmly as possible.

*I’m Dmac, I’m a Lucario from another world. I woke up as a Riolu on a beach with no memory, and I was*

*rescued by a Charmander who wanted to form an exploration team with me. I left because I wanted to find my old life and make sure my old friends were doing OK.*

“And how are they?”

From what Mewtwo knew about them, Dmac expected his old friends to stick to each other more closely. They seemed to care deeply for David, so why did they give up on him?

“It’s been years, David, when it’s only been months the last time you did that. You’d mentioned maybe staying this way, so when time kept passing, I figured you moved on. Here you are, years later, and you still haven’t remembered, and you still want to go back. You came, but was I wrong in thinking that you would leave us behind? You’ve bonded to him, now, too, and you can’t take that back, even if you do regain your memory. Where does that put me?”

Lucario had done well to conceal his irritation. Dmac thought it was for the leader, but now it was obviously directed at him, and he didn’t understand what he did to deserve it.

*Lucario, I see you’re angry, but do you want me to stay? I have friends on my world, too; do you want me to desert them the way you say I deserted you? I don’t know why you’re angry at me, I came to see how you’re doing because I cared about the people David left behind.*

“I’m angry because you left and became someone else knowing that he might not want to become you again.”

*You’re talking to me like I’m David; I’m not. I’m not the one who did that, he did. I’m the one he became; if you want to be mad at me, be mad at me for not wanting to become who you want me to become.*

“Well, then, if you ever cared for me, regain your memory so we can be together again.”

Dmac was speechless; he didn’t even remember being in a relationship with this Lucario. Obviously this Lucario did remember, and he wasn’t happy that David seemed to abandon it without saying goodbye.

*It hasn’t been as long for me as it has been for you. A year, at most.*

“Does that change anything?”

*It only means that it's been less time for me than for you -- if I had my memory, I wouldn't have known how long it was taking me for you.*

It helped Lucario a bit that Dmac was trying to comfort him, but he still had anger to vent regarding Mewtwo, too.

“And you, you take him in and train him, keeping him from me when you knew who he was? You should have brought him right here!”

*If I'd done that, he would've been gravely injured in a fight against Mewtwo, or in a fight against your leader. He needed help getting over his fear, and as you said, I was the best pokemon to do that.*  
Mewtwo replied calmly, knowing that he was perfectly justified in helping Dmac.

“Whatever you say. I suggest you leave soon, leave me to my pack in peace.”

*We'll leave, but first, do you know where Pikachu is? We wanted to see him, too.*

“He wasn't at the house in Viridian? He stayed behind when Mewtwo and I left.”

*Thanks.*

“Just get out.”

Mewtwo and Dmac left Lucario alone. The entire encounter confused Dmac, especially after how he helped them regarding his leader. They stayed in Sinnoh, finding a secluded area to sleep for the night away from the pack they had just left. They both found it hard to sleep, so they started discussing to figure it out together.

*I don't understand what happened, Mewtwo. Why was Lucario so bitter?*

*He cares for David. You just reminded him of how he felt rejected when David left and didn't return. You came back, but Lucario didn't get the return he wanted, he just got a reminder. He gave up, but something in him held out; you just witnessed that last bit realizing that David is gone.*

*But I still have the choice to regain those memories, right? I don't want to leave knowing that by*

*becoming me, David caused so much harm to his friends.*

*Mewtwo is getting over it; in time, Lucario will, too. Eventually, he will appreciate that you came, and he will feel sorry for yelling at you. Like you said, you have friends at home; you can't do that to them, too. David already broke off his relationships with his friends; I don't think you should do it again to fix the old ones.*

*You also don't think I should give myself up for him.*

*I don't know. I know what I want, but I don't know what's right.*

*I just... I just wish that I could know what David was thinking. Did he know this would happen? If he did, why did he do it? Why didn't he say goodbye?*

Dmac could feel that Mewtwo was unsure; he didn't know exactly what to say. He settled on something eventually, after a not-too-long pause.

*Might it help to go back to where David lived the first few years of his life?*

Dmac thought it through: if he wanted to try to understand his former self, it made sense to start where he formed the core of his being.

*You can do that?*

*Everything from a universe has specific properties -- you could say they 'resonate' together. I know how David's body resonated, and I think I can find the universe that resonates the same way.*

*Would you be willing to do that?*

*Of course.*

*Thanks.*

*We'll start tomorrow.*

Now that they had a plan, it was easier for them to sleep. Dmac felt like he could still resolve the

problems Mewtwo and Lucario faced, and if they ever found Pikachu, it seemed like they could help him, too. They would think about it in the morning; Dmac decided to rest well that night.

Mewtwo woke Dmac up fairly late that morning, and it was apparent Mewtwo had slept in as well. On the one paw, it felt like the day started without them, but Dmac enjoyed the night; it was cool, and dark, and everything felt calm. Besides, the night sky was much more interesting than the daytime sky, at least when light from the cities didn't hide the stars. Mewtwo didn't seem to mind the night either; Dmac felt that he reflected his sentiments about it.

They skipped breakfast, owing mostly to the fact that there wasn't much of a breakfast around. Mewtwo wanted to get to work anyway, and Dmac couldn't really do anything else anticipating this next leg of their journey. Dmac tried practicing toning down his attacks, but it seemed futile without an opponent to react to his attacks, so he ended up sitting by Mewtwo and thinking, trying his best not to distract or disturb him. He realized that the Mewtwo and Lucario of this world both thought of him as David, while the Mewtwo he knew had no trouble thinking of him as Dmac. It hadn't occurred to him before that others could think of him as who he was before he lost his memory, and it seemed obvious to him that he wasn't the same person he was before he lost his memory. Apparently it wasn't, but he was thankful Mewtwo didn't seem to expect him to become David again.

After a couple hours (it felt much longer to Dmac), Mewtwo had found the universe they were looking for.

*I found it!*

*Finally! Are we ready?*

*I think so, let me just get this prepared.*

Mewtwo pressed a few buttons on his mobile teleporter which Dmac realized appeared out of nowhere. Mewtwo must have been able to teleport himself and others and other things from one place to another, but if he needed a device to teleport to another universe, there were obviously limits to his power.

*I can teleport, but I can only really teleport somewhere I've been before, somewhere I recognize. I have to be able to see the place I want to be in my mind to teleport there. Also, I've never tried teleporting across dimensions myself; I find it too dangerous.*



*Pretty cool, though. How'd you get the device you're using?*

*David gave it to me in case I wanted to visit. It looks like I ended up using it; I just never expected it to happen this way.*

Dmac understood; it was hard to predict that he would use it to help the person who gave it to him visit his own world which he forgot about. At least, that's how Lucario would've thought about it. Dmac needed to get everything sorted out quickly; he was starting to get confused.

*Let's go.*

*OK.*

Mewtwo stood by Dmac, and turned on the device again. Again, everything disappeared in a flash, and was replaced by a completely different scene.

*We should try to be quick; I don't think there are any pokemon on this world.*

*No pokemon?* Dmac found it hard to imagine, but of course he didn't need to imagine it, it was there in front of him. Looking around, they were standing on some sort of a road. It was dark grey; some material which was hot and felt unnatural under Dmac's footpaws. It hurt, almost, and smelled acrid.

*Asphalt. We have this on my world, too, you've just never been this close to it.*

*I don't like it.*

*It's a smooth surface for the cars people drive. Look, it seems like they've been sitting here a while, and I don't recognize their logos or their shapes, but those look like cars there.*

Dmac saw what Mewtwo was talking about. They were roughly as tall as Dmac, and they looked each to seat about 4 people inside. They looked far too small for Dmac; it was hard to imagine people used those every day. Far more interesting to Dmac was the house beside the cars. It seemed big to Dmac, but compared to the skyscrapers he had seen from afar in cities, it was small. The area seemed secluded; compared to the houses he'd seen in Kanto, this house had privacy. There were trees behind Dmac, and all around the house. It had a front grassy area, and a sidewalk leading to the front

porch from the cars to the side of the house. It must have been fall; all the trees had leaves different colors from yellow to orange to one particular tree whose leaves were deep red. Leaves covered the ground and crunched underneath Dmac's feet as he walked toward the porch. He climbed the stairs, and saw that there were *two* doors to the house: the first was metal, and had a large screen which let air through. The other was wood, and had three small glass windows which let only light through. The metal one resisted when Dmac opened it; its springs kept it closed. The wood one was locked; apparently to keep people out, despite the house seeming abandoned.

*Is this the right place?*

*I believe so, if I have the right address.*

*How do we open it?*

Mewtwo's eyes glowed; he was interacting with the lock on the door. It was soon unlocked, and Mewtwo opened the door with his mind.

*I don't usually do that, but since the place is technically yours...*

*Thanks.*

Dmac walked in. The place was covered in dust; everything was cast in grey. Dmac didn't know how houses were laid out well, but Two explained.

*This seems to be a living room. There's the couch right in front of us, and a TV to our left mounted on the wall over a media cabinet. I can see a dining room from here; it's usually the only room with a table that big.*

Mewtwo floated in, but Dmac stepped in, disturbing the layer of dust on the floor and rug. On the table, he saw a piece of paper which didn't seem like it belonged there, but first he took in the rest of the house. He walked to the dining room, and recognized the kitchen to his left, and what seemed to be an office space to his right through a door. Mewtwo stopped by and opened a desk, finding something inside he wanted to show Dmac.

*This is a human computer. The ones we have on my world are similar; it seems like humans have developed the same technologies here.*

Dmac looked at the desk; inside, at about eye level, the monitor rested on the desk surface. It had a black, textured screen which Dmac assumed displayed information. In front of the monitor there were what Dmac assumed to be input devices, if he thought about where he would be sitting in relation to the monitor, the devices would be placed about right for him to use with his paws. Looking at them, though, he didn't think he could use them effectively. One was a board with many small buttons with letters on them; there were too many buttons for Dmac's paws, and they were all way too small for his fingers. The other was something Dmac assumed humans rested their hand on; it had two buttons which were again inconveniently placed for Dmac's paws. Underneath the desk, Dmac saw a black box with a number of strange symbols, buttons, and lights covering its front. He guessed that was the computer proper. The whole thing was a mystery to him, despite having seem Mewtwo use them before, and despite having some knowledge of their existence.

*What does it do?*

*All it does really is perform calculations. It's just really good at doing that, so it can do them quickly, and it can do many at a time.*

*If that's all it does, how does a human interact with it?*

*It can take in information and output information too. Primarily, it calculates, but it also reads information from input devices and sends information to output devices so humans can use it.*

*Oh.* Dmac felt like it should all have gone over his head, but for some reason he had an innate feeling for it. Everything clicked together in his head, and it seemed obvious to him that a computer should do that. He started to lose interest, though; Mewtwo could show him a computer any time, but this might have been the first and last time Dmac was going to see this place. Mewtwo closed the desk, and looked down the hall to their right.

*Those are probably bedrooms down there; I don't think we need to see them.*

Dmac didn't need to; he'd seen and felt enough. He felt oddly detached, and a bit like he was intruding. This was supposed to be *his* home, but it didn't feel that way. He couldn't say what being home felt like, but he likened it to the warm feeling he had whenever he and Draco returned to their base. He had never thought of that as his home before, but now that he had come to the *original* home, he wanted to be back there. It was comfortable, safe, and familiar; Dmac figured that's what

home was. He felt ready to make up his mind, but he was stuck on how Lucario reacted the night before. To him it felt selfish to leave again when he could make Lucario's life better by just remembering the things he was supposed to be remembering anyway. It made him ask: Was it really him? Is he really him, or is he just a borrowed life from someone else? Did he owe David his life? He hoped the paper on the table would answer that for him, but he also dreaded that answer. If it said "Let yourself go and remember," did Dmac have any right to deny David his life? After a moment of indecision, Dmac decided that if that's what it said, that's what he'd have to do. He tried to push the terrible feeling in his stomach down, and picked up the piece of paper.

It was written in a language Dmac knew, and it had his name on it; it was obviously meant for him. He opened it up, and started to read:

"If you're reading this, you're probably unsure whether you want my memory back or not. I understand. I'm sure you've developed friends, beliefs, and feelings -- an identity -- all your own and you don't want those things to be lost.

It must seem unfair of me to ask you to give everything up to let me live again.

I agree.

I've thought about this carefully, and I've decided that it's time for me to move on. I've lived far too long -- thousands of years -- and it's begun to show. I am weighed down by my experiences; and over time I have lost my identity. I did not know who I was, at least until I was faced with a decision: did I want to lose it all again to help protect your world again from destruction? I realized that over all my different lives: human, automaton, Time Lord, dragon, I was at my core the same human who tripped, fell, and needed cybernetic replacements to keep me alive.

You have a chance, something I don't have. You are a pokemon, and you can identify as a pokemon. That is who you are, and your outward appearance matches who you are inside. You can go, live beside pokemon like you. You can be part of a world that is your own; something I don't have anymore.

I've gone through this before, but last time I chose to remember. This time -- I hope you choose yourself. I do not believe it is right of me to give you this chance to throw off all the baggage I have collected and then expect you, even ask you, to give it back up just because I want to bear this burden longer.

You might feel bad, having met my friends. You might feel like the cause of their anger, or sadness, but you are not; you're the symbol of what makes them angry or sad, the person they can get angry or sad at in my place. I chose to do this thing that I knew might hurt them; do not feel like you have to deal with those consequences.

I'm rambling somewhat, and a bit illogical in my organization. I'm having all these thoughts, and I want to get them down, but sometimes they don't connect into each other so well. Usually I get to a part which summarizes everything I'm thinking into two or three succinct, powerful sentences. I guess this is that part. What I really want to say is this: I don't want you to feel like you have to do anything to fix what I've done. You have chances, and wants, and desires, and I don't think it's fair of me to ask you to give them all up. I want you to forget about me, forget you ever were me, and I want you to live an exciting life of discovery with friends you love.

-David  
”

Dmac felt a huge emotional relief reading that letter. He looked at Mewtwo, and Mewtwo smiled, having perceived the contents of the letter through Dmac's reaction. Dmac was grateful; he didn't know what sort of person he was before he lost his memory. For all he knew, David could have asked him to give up everything because he had no right to live David's life as his own, but he didn't. Instead, he encouraged him to forget him. Dmac couldn't help but start crying; he didn't realize how much emotional stress he was under until it was all resolved. Mewtwo hugged him, careful of his spikes, in an effort to comfort him. It really helped.

*It's for Mewtwo, Lucario, and the others to deal with David being gone. You don't have to fix that for them. You have as much a right, if not more, to your life than David does to his. I'm sure he knew it was likely you would want to stay you, and he chose to forget anyway.*

It stood out again in Dmac's mind: Mewtwo knew David, but he never thought of Dmac as David. He always respected how Dmac felt separate from David, and he was the only one who was able to comfort him when he could've had David back.

*I'm thankful to David for everything he's done for me... in some ways I feel like I'm paying him back by helping you. I care for you, but for you, not for David. You're still so innocent; I wanted to protect that. I would never have forced you to choose to do one thing or another, but I'm glad you chose this. Once we*

*inform Lucario and the others, we can get you back home, if you want.*

Home sounded good, but Dmac felt like he was going to miss Mewtwo. Mewtwo was the only friend he had formed outside his world, and he felt like he cared for him, too. It helped knowing they were permanently connected to each other; Dmac hoped that connection would hold across universes.

Dmac looked back at the letter, and found at its bottom another portion. It was addressed to Lucario, but Dmac figured it was in some way meant for all his friends. Lucario did seem especially close to David; he was especially hurt by him leaving, seemingly intending never to come back. Dmac folded the letter back up, and intended to give it to him when they returned. It made sense that David would write his goodbye to Lucario and the others in his letter to Dmac. He couldn't say goodbye in person, because he wasn't sure what Dmac would choose to do. If he'd said a definitive goodbye, and then returned, that was unfair to his friends, so he had to delay his goodbye until Dmac had decided to remember or not. Dmac hoped that this extra portion would help to comfort David's friends and help them to move on, but it also put a question in his mind.

*If David was so prepared for me to choose to stay myself, what would he have done if I'd chosen to become him instead?*

*I think David would've remembered you. Maybe not the details of your life, but he would remember your sacrifice, and he would try to value his life more in thanks to you.*

It almost made it difficult again... Dmac had a hard time knowing that he lived off of another's sacrifice, but thinking through it, he couldn't think of it that way, because David had made it clear it wasn't a sacrifice to him. David was probably enough like him too that he would have a similar time, perhaps a harder time, knowing that Dmac chose him despite his wishes. He didn't want to do that, so it seemed like staying Dmac was the best option for both of them. Neither option felt completely right, so Dmac chose the one both he and David truly wanted. He would stay himself.

*Are you ready to go back?*

*I guess. If I'm me... this place doesn't really have meaning to me anymore.*

*Let's go, then, Lucario might be waiting.*

OK.

Mewtwo pulled out his teleporter, and in a flash, they were back in the field they had left. It was still daytime, but it was getting later. They traced their steps (or their nautical miles) back to where they found the Lucario pack, and tried to sense out Lucario so they could see him directly. He wasn't around, so they sought the leader instead.

*I'm sorry, do you know where Lucario is?*

“He went looking for you. He had something on his mind, he wanted to tell you before you left.”

*Thanks.*

Dmac and Mewtwo turned around, but before they left, the leader called them back.

“Wait! I should say something too.”

Dmac turned his attention back to the leader along with Mewtwo.

“I was probably too harsh on you last night. You're a good fighter, it's impressive you learned so well from a pokemon who's a different type than you. You can do some impressive things with your aura, too. Don't stop experimenting, just realize that when you play with aura, you are messing with your own and others' life forces. You're lucky to be a Lucario; regarding aura you are far more resilient than any other living being. Realize then that others can't handle the same fluctuations and drainages and bursts you can. And you're lucky Mewtwo is so strong; that's why your bonding worked and why it didn't have any negative consequences.”

*Thanks, Lucario.*

The leader nodded, and Dmac and Mewtwo returned to their search. They found Lucario brooding alone a relatively long walk away; after last night, it seemed like he wanted to be alone with his thoughts.

*Lucario?*

“You came back? I thought you had left last night.”

*We did, and we went to David's home this morning, but we found this, and we thought you should read it. It has a portion addressed to you.*

Dmac handed Lucario the letter, who turned around to read it to himself. When he finished, he held it to his chest. Apparently whatever it meant to Dmac, it meant more to the Lucario in front of him. This letter granted Dmac life; what could it have done for Lucario?

After a moment, Lucario tried to recompose a bit of himself, and turned around to speak.

“I wanted to apologize for last night. I looked for you, but when I didn't find you, I'd assumed you'd gone home. Instead, it looks like you went looking for answers. Thank you, I wouldn't have had this if you didn't. I realized that I have no right to be mad at you for something my mate did. Now that I have this, it seems kind of silly what I did last night. It might be hard, but I'll be OK. I'll show this to Mewtwo and to the others, if I ever see them again, unless you want your portion of it?”

Dmac wanted his portion. It meant a lot to him, and he didn't seem to have a photographic memory. Lucario felt this, so he carefully ripped apart the letter, handing Dmac the half addressed to him.

“My part explains your part, so I don't really need it.”

*I never read your part, I figured it wasn't meant for me.*

“Thanks.”

Lucario continued.

“Ever since last night, I found myself intrigued by this bond you have with each other. I was just jealous of it last night, but when that passed, I'm more and more interested in what it's like.”

That was that thing people sometimes do, when they ask a question without actually asking it. What Lucario meant was, ‘what is the bond between you like?’ but he felt awkward saying it so instead of asking it he just ‘hinted’ that he was interested in it. For some reason it really bothered Dmac. Lucario noticed, so he continued again.

“Sorry. I mean, do you mind explaining the bond you share?”



Dmac didn't mean to make Lucario feel bad; it was an irrational reaction which wasn't really fair, but Dmac didn't really know how to deal with it. He just moved on, hoping Lucario would understand.

*It's hard to explain. I don't know what it is, really. The biggest thing is that it feels like Mewtwo's a part of me. I can sense his thoughts and feelings clearly, and I think that if we were to break apart, I wouldn't feel whole anymore.*

“You must be relatively compatible with each other. It's been theorized that the compatibility of the partners had an effect on the strength of their bond; pokemon who don't like each other wouldn't bond well. Have you tried using each others' powers?”

*We can do that?*

“Well, nobody knows. Most Lucario find it too dangerous or disrespectful to try.”

*I still don't understand how it's disrespectful.*

“I don't know if you have to; maybe you should ask other Lucario from your own world. My pack leader would say that aura is a precious resource to everyone, including Lucario and Riolu. Your aura is your life, and for most the aura they have is all the aura they will ever have. He'd say it's disrespectful and arrogant to play with and jeopardize the lives of others.”

Dmac agreed, but it seemed like there was some leeway in there where one could interact with others' auras *without* risking hurting them.

“It's alright if you disagree, just respect the lives others have and can't get back if you make a mistake with their aura.”

Dmac didn't plan on doing much else with others' auras; he didn't want to chance hurting anyone.

*That's probably wise.*

*I wish I'd thought about that earlier; I should've thought more about your safety before I did that.* Dmac said to Mewtwo. He was feeling foolish, and blamed himself for risking Mewtwo's life in bonding with him.

*I'm glad you didn't. Otherwise, you would've been lost, and I don't know if I would've been able to find you.*

Dmac was surprised to hear that from Mewtwo, but touched. He hadn't realized before that Mewtwo cared as much about keeping Dmac with him as Dmac cared about staying with him.

"Are you two talking to each other? I can almost hear your voices."

That shocked them both out of the moment. They always thought they had privacy when they talked that way.

*Sorry. How does your pack work?* Dmac replied.

"We're a group of Lucario who share interests and ideals; we think somewhat alike. We have a leader who helps to organize us, resolve disputes, and keep order, but otherwise we work together as equals to survive and protect ourselves, each other, and others."

*You mentioned you didn't quite agree with the pack leader, though?* Dmac continued.

"I still respect him. I don't question him or challenge him unless it really matters to me, and that I do privately. Travelling with -- David -- changed my perspective, but this pack was gracious enough to accept me anyway." Lucario almost said *you* there, but caught himself.

*Are you enjoying yourself?*

Lucario thought for a bit, planning his words carefully.

"Don't worry yourself about that. You don't have to worry about me or anyone else here anymore. We'll be fine as long as we know you're fine."

Dmac could feel Mewtwo's relief; he didn't even realize Mewtwo was concerned. Apparently he still had to get used to the bond he and Mewtwo had, or else Mewtwo wasn't as transparent to him as he'd originally thought. Dmac trusted Lucario, but he still wanted to help in some way, and he thought he saw a way to do that.

*I think perhaps you should go see Mewtwo -- the one you know. He's isolated himself from everyone else,*

*and I don't think it's good for him. I don't think it's good for either of you to continue to be angry with each other.*

“You care a lot about the pokemon around you, don't you?” Lucario glanced at Mewtwo, making him feel embarrassed. Dmac didn't know how to respond; he didn't know what normal amounts of caring were.

“Don't worry, it's nothing bad. It's good, actually.”

Dmac took Lucario's word for it, and tried to forget that part of the conversation.

“You two should leave soon; there's not really anything else here for you anymore.”

Lucario was probably right, but Dmac almost felt sad to go.

*He's right. The more time you spend here is more time away from your friends. You already spent longer than you meant to, and we don't know how time relates on your world.*

*Is that it, though? Is it time for me to go back? Didn't you want to train me more?*

*I don't think there's anything else for me to teach you. You have the skills, you just need to put them together and develop them. Trust yourself, and I think you will be fine.*

*But I almost killed the first pokemon I fought, and I embarrassed the second.*

*You can protect yourself; that's what I wanted to teach you. Everything else will come eventually with practice.*

Dmac thought about home. He'd been excited to go back for most of his time with Mewtwo, but since their bonding, he realized he truly enjoyed being with Mewtwo.

*What about our bond, though?*

*I'll always be there if you want me, but it might be best for you to try to ignore me to be with your friends.*

Is... that what Mewtwo really wanted? Dmac wasn't sure. He thought about it further... he had to go

back; he didn't want to do the same thing to Draco that David had done to Lucario and Mewtwo.

*I guess I have to go back.*

“Hello?”

Dmac had almost completely forgotten about Lucario.

*Sorry, I was thinking.*

“Thinking along with Mewtwo, it seemed.”

*Yeah...*

“Goodbye, Dmac. I hope you have a great life on your world.”

*Goodbye, I hope the same for you.*

“Thanks!” Lucario smiled, then walked away. Just like that, it was over. Leaving Mewtwo wasn't going to be so easy.

*Let's go back to the lab first; it will be safest to send you back from there.*

OK.

Once again, everything around them flashed out of existence and was replaced this time by the familiar walls of the practice room in which they had spent so much time. It brought back memories, which suddenly felt like a lifetime away even though Dmac had only spent a couple weeks with Mewtwo. Looking over those weeks, thinking about losing Mewtwo, something clicked in Dmac's mind; he connected numerous things he'd noticed over the past week that didn't make sense to him before.

*You really care about me.*

Yes.

It was hard for Mewtwo to admit, especially since Dmac was about to go away.

*You don't want me to go, do you.*

*I want you to be happy. If you're going to be happiest elsewhere, then that's where I want you to be.*

*But you want me to be happiest with you.*

*I'm not the one who matters here.*

Dmac hadn't thought about it before, but being perceptive sucked. Before he met Mewtwo, he wouldn't have been able to understand all this, but now, it was all clear to him.

*What if I want to stay?*

Dmac didn't want to hurt Mewtwo. Would he be willing to stay and hurt his old friends for Mewtwo's sake?

*I don't think that's true. You should go home, Dmac; you told them you would.*

*What if you came with me?*

*I don't belong on your world. I'm a human creation; there are no people on your world.*

*But you're still a pokemon just like me.*

Mewtwo just shook his head.

*No, I'm not. There aren't pokemon on your world who have done the things I've done. Nobody on your world has had the problems I have had. It's not my place, it's yours. This is my place, here.*

*Are you sure?*

Mewtwo looked like he was almost trembling; he obviously wasn't.

*Goodbye, Dmac. I won't matter so much when you see your friends again.*

Dmac wasn't sure that was true, not if Mewtwo was acting this way. Dmac wanted to say no, but... Draco expected him and Mewtwo wanted him there. If that made them both happy, then that's the only thing Dmac could do.

Goodbye, Mewtwo. Thanks... for everything.

*Thanks, too. Sometimes I need a reminder that I don't have to be self-absorbed all the time. You've taught me some things; I'll be sure to put them into practice.*

*I'll keep practicing, too. One day I'll be able to fight well like you.*

*You can beat me if you tried.*

*Yeah, but you can fight others without worrying about hurting them.*

*I still worry, Dmac. That's not something that stops. The trust you develop in yourself will help you to control yourself so you know what is and isn't too much.*

*I'll try to keep that in mind.*

*Just ask anytime if you need a refresher.*

Mewtwo joked about it, but they both knew they planned on never communicating with each other again. If they separate from each other, the separation should be as complete as possible. Otherwise, it would just prolong the pain.

Mewtwo readied the teleport one final time, and Dmac prepared to see Draco again. He couldn't deny being excited despite the hardship with which he was leaving Mewtwo.

*Don't isolate yourself like the other Mewtwo did. It's not good for you.*

*Don't worry.*

Mewtwo looked at Dmac one last time. This was hard for him; Dmac could see that now. Dmac understood too that Mewtwo couldn't stand asking Dmac to do something that would eventually hurt

him.

*Thank you, Mewtwo.*

Mewtwo smiled, and pressed the button, then collapsed into a sobbing mess.

Dmac appeared outside of Lively Town, where he had originally left. Everything looked slightly different -- how long had it been? Dmac ran into the town; he could feel everyone's surprise at seeing him. He sped toward the exploration HQ, expecting to see Draco waiting there for him. The place was open, but the looks the pokemon outside were giving him were cautionary; they would stop him if he tried to enter. He didn't remember the place being so hostile, but then again, he'd never been an outsider. He slowed down, and approached the building more calmly.

*Excuse me, is there a Charmander named Draco in there?*

He just got looks, and not much else. He hadn't changed that much since leaving, had he? How threatening could he seem? He thought about it; he was in a distressed state. He read the auras of the pokemon he had spoken to; it seemed like they didn't know who Draco was, so he moved on. The only other place Dmac thought Draco was likely to be was...

Draco spent the night on his favorite spot -- the one he'd shared with Dmac so many years ago, at the top of a hill overlooking their old home, Serene Village. He'd gotten over Dmac's disappearance years ago and moved on, but every once in a while he wondered. Did Dmac get lost? Did he get hurt? Did he die? Did he decide to remember whoever he was before he came to Draco? Draco usually said he stopped caring, and usually that was basically true, but it was the anniversary of the day Dmac left -- it was hard for him not to wonder especially when this time came. Draco had to move on from the exploration guild when it seemed like Dmac wasn't coming back, but he was able to find comfort in his old home. He settled down, and found work nearby, and eventually found a mate who didn't mind his periodic musings. She was sleeping, but Draco couldn't that night. He usually didn't on this night, so he stared up at the stars in the sky, remembering and wondering and hoping.

Serene Village wasn't nearly as far away from Lively Town as Dmac thought it was when they first made the trip. Of course, he hadn't been able to run extremely fast the first time. Dmac navigated the

Mystery Dungeons with relative ease, using his aura to avoid any pokémon who might think to attack him. After experiencing Mewtwo's world, the Mystery Dungeons felt tame where before they were always somewhat scary, even when he and Draco had experience navigating them. They were a conundrum, but not nearly as mysterious or as seemingly dangerous as the humans Dmac had met. He never realized anybody could have an ability to be so selfish, or to be so evil -- it made him shudder even as he saw Serene Village in the distance. He couldn't even be sure Draco was there, and despite his quick progress, it was well into the night, so surely Draco wouldn't be awake. Dmac considered this, and thought to stay just past the last Mystery Dungeon and wait until morning, but he thought about the hill Draco loved so much, and decided he wanted to visit. He approached the village, but circled around it so he didn't disturb anyone inside. As he approached the hill, he was surprised to feel somebody already there. It kind of irritated him -- he didn't expect anybody to be up this late and he thought he'd have the place to himself to think -- but he pushed that feeling aside; he could still go up and enjoy the view anyway. As he got nearer he recognized a Charizard; Dmac never remembered any Charizard in Serene Village. He scaled the hill, and sat at the top, pulling one foot in and resting his arm on his kneecap. He'd forgotten how calm this world was. Or, rather, he didn't realize how calm this world was when he first lived in it. He didn't know anything else then, so the problems he had all felt like big problems. The stars above sparkled, unhindered by human lights, and the plains around him were quiet, unencumbered by human roads and vehicles. It all had a peaceful quality, but Dmac couldn't shake the feeling something was missing, that it wasn't enough anymore. He could feel the Charizard was interested in him; eventually he inched over to talk with Dmac.

"What brings a Lucario here in the middle of the night?"

*I came from Lively Town, looking for somebody. I just arrived, and I wanted to see the village.*

"You're a telepathic Lucario? I never knew Lucario could be telepathic"

Dmac didn't notice that he was speaking mentally; he'd gotten so accustomed to it with Mewtwo that he did it naturally now. He started to think maybe that's part of what scared those pokémon earlier. He continued doing it; Charizard didn't seem to mind.

*That's a long story. I was surprised to see you too; as far as I know, most pokémon usually sleep during the night.*

"I couldn't. Something was on my mind."



Dmac knew that, but he didn't say anything.

"Whoever you're looking for, I hope you find them."

*Thanks, I hope you find some solution for whatever's bothering you.*

"Thanks, but this is something that has stuck with me for a long time; I don't know if it will ever be right. When it hurts, coming up here helps, though."

*It's a nice view.*

"It's my favorite."

That was a huge flag to Dmac if nothing else was. It shocked him to hear; was this Charizard next to him really Draco?

*Draco?*

"How did you know?"

"It's me."

Draco took a moment to get it, but he put the pieces together too.

"Dmac?"

Dmac nodded slowly.

"You said you would be a few days at most! You said you were just visiting! What took you so long?"

*It was only a couple days.* It had only been a couple days that Dmac had spent visiting the actual world he'd meant to visit, but of course he'd spent much longer on Mewtwo's world.

"Then where were you for five years!?"

*Five years?*

Dmac didn't imagine it would've been that much different... it seemed impossible that it would be, but he'd already experienced it: the year at most he'd spent with Draco was much longer to Lucario and Mewtwo. Why didn't he think of that sooner?

*I got sidetracked, Draco, but it was only for a couple months. From my perspective, I've been gone less than a year, one at most.*

"Less than a year? Is that what you call it?"

*Time is different in different universes. Time moves slower on some than on others, and apparently particularly quickly here. It doesn't mean anything when I'm here, but when I was on other worlds, while time felt normal to me there, it was going by quickly for you. I didn't realize that time was moving so fast here.*

It also meant that Mewtwo was running about one fifth Dmac's speed. It had been hours for Dmac, but... it probably still felt to Mewtwo like Dmac had just left.

"That doesn't make any sense! What were you doing all that time, anyway?"

*I met somebody who taught me how to protect myself. I understand my abilities, now, and I can use them.*

"And that has to be five years to me? What does that mean, anyway?"

*I can sense, Draco. Your emotions, I can see them clearly, along with what you're thinking if I concentrate.*

"So, you disappear for five years, but it's only a few months to you, and in those months I'm supposed to believe that you just figured out how to read other people's minds?"

... Yeah.

"You were going to go check on your friends and come back!"

Dmac couldn't take it any longer; Draco was being unfair; Dmac *did* come back. It happened to be

much longer to Draco than it was for Dmac, and Dmac was sorry for that, but he couldn't do anything about it.

*Draco, calm down, you're not being fair.*

“Not fair? What isn't fair is that I had to wait five years! I thought you'd deserted me, or died, or couldn't get back. Today is the day you left, did you know that? That's why I couldn't sleep, because every year around now I start thinking of you again. I quit the guild, Dmac, when you didn't come back. I came back here, found work and I eventually evolved and found a mate. That is my life now, so maybe you should go back to wherever you were and be with the friends you left behind, because I learned to get by.”

Draco stormed off to release steam, probably relatively literally given his typing. Dmac was struck to the core -- not just because of the harsh things Draco had said, but because he saw that in their entire history together, he always cared more about Draco than Draco did about him. *He* was the one who fought for Draco to return to him, but when Dmac disappeared, Draco moved on relatively easily. He felt foolish, too; he'd left Mewtwo behind, and he could feel that Mewtwo was having a hard time letting him go. Deep within him, even across universes, Dmac could feel Mewtwo's pain. Why did he let that happen?

He felt obligated to Draco; that's why. He'd promised he'd return, but that didn't mean anything now that Draco had moved on. Perhaps Draco was right; Dmac could see that he was just being a bother and a disturbance now. Dmac couldn't return to his old life, but at least he could return to Mewtwo, and hopefully he could help Mewtwo be happy again.

Dmac felt almost stupefied, but he tried thinking through it carefully. What did he really want? He thought it was Draco, but by coming back, he angered Draco, and he'd hurt Mewtwo at the same time.

He knew he was supposed to forget about Mewtwo, but he couldn't get him out of his mind. The thought of him crying, which he seemed to be doing, pained Dmac deeply, and he had to endure it five times longer than Mewtwo. It felt like he was extending Mewtwo's pain by being away, even though he understood that Mewtwo was experiencing his time the exact same way Dmac was experiencing his. He didn't want Mewtwo to feel that way, so it just pained Dmac that he would have to endure that far longer than Mewtwo did.

If Dmac felt more bad about Mewtwo, and if Mewtwo was the one Dmac was thinking about, his place

was with him. Draco didn't seem to care as much for him as he did, and Draco seemed to have moved on readily. Dmac coming back was just uprooting Draco's life again, and not necessarily in a good way.

Dmac didn't feel like he could live with himself leaving Mewtwo the way he was; that alone pretty much made up his mind. It helped that Draco seemed to be doing fine without him. Dmac wasn't sure how their bond would work across universes, but he decided to try talking to Mewtwo anyway.

*Mewtwo? I want to come back.*

The response wasn't immediate, but Dmac heard it in normal time, like there was some interdimensional buffer which held back Mewtwo's thoughts while they travelled across their bond.

*What? Are you sure?*

Dmac couldn't help but feel Mewtwo's growing excitement and feeling of hopefulness; it really helped Dmac feel like he was doing the right thing, and he started to be excited, too.

*Yes, I want to go back.*

Again, Dmac had to wait again for Mewtwo's reply. If Dmac had to wait for Mewtwo's reply, was Mewtwo getting what Dmac said *before* he said it? It was too hard to think about.

*Give me a moment.*

Dmac supposed that was so Mewtwo could reconstruct himself, and perhaps so he could ready whatever teleportation device he needed. Whatever time Mewtwo needed, Dmac keenly felt that he would need to wait five times longer until it happened. He trusted it was happening, though, so it was just a matter of waiting. It just made him anticipate getting back more.

When the familiar flash surrounded Dmac with its change in surroundings, Dmac practically jumped into Mewtwo's arms.

*I'm sorry, Mewtwo, I should never have left you.*

*What makes you say that?*

*It was five years for him. He'd moved on, and I couldn't help but think of how you were feeling. I'm so sorry, I didn't want to make you feel that way.*

*It's alright, Dmac. I would've gotten over it eventually. I would've been glad either way; I didn't want you to stay with me and regret never going back.*

*Yes, but it would've taken you five times longer to get there for me.*

Dmac started crying; a release of all the emotions he'd been feeling since he left Draco the first time. It was over, and it was time for Dmac to let go of Draco. Mewtwo was there for him, and he was finally going to be there for Mewtwo. Mewtwo was just crying himself, but he put his arm around Dmac to try to comfort him.

Dmac eventually calmed down, but neither of them bothered moving. They were still standing there, hugging, Dmac's face planted in the taller pokemon's chest, but leaning forward so his spike didn't stab him.

*Mewtwo? I don't think I want to be Dmac anymore.*

*Hm?*

*I think I want to be called something else. It reminds me too much of my old life. How about... Ri?*

*Short for Lucario? That works.*

*And I think I should call you something too, so we can differentiate you from other Mewtwo we might meet. How about... Two?*

*I think I could get used to that.*

By that, Two meant he liked it. He'd never thought of taking a name, but with the newly-named Ri saying it, it felt perfectly natural to him. It was kind of... cute, too. He and Ri were both nicknamed shortened versions of their full names. They went together.

*I care for you, Two. I don't want to hurt you like that again.*

*Same here.*

*Does that make us...*

*Do you want to be?*

*I don't think I could imagine caring for anyone else like this.*

Two couldn't either; that seemed apparent to both of them.

*Then we're mates.* Two stated, with a finality that pleased both of them.

Two bent down and kissed Ri on the forehead. Ri looked up and into Two's eyes; that was perhaps the most overtly affectionate thing Two had ever done, and it was probably the only time he ever would. It made the gesture special, and it certainly meant a lot to Ri. He saw something in the cat's eyes, something he didn't usually see; a tenderness which betrayed Two's caring nature. Ri knew that caring nature was largely reserved for him; and likewise Ri's was now reserved for Two. They wouldn't stop caring for others, of course, but they cared for each other *first*. They finally let go of each other, beginning to become accustomed to their new lives.

The prospect of living with Two was exciting to Ri, but they didn't really have anywhere to live.

*Two? Where are we going to live?*

*We could just live here; no one else is using this place.*

*What about the gym?*

*We could apply to be its gym leaders.*

*Then we'd have to accept gym battles?*

*Yeah, but Kanto needs its seventh gym. No one else is going to take it if we're living here.*

Ri had met other gym leaders in his travels with Red; they seemed like imposing people. They had to

be able to protect the people around them, but also deal with disagreements in the community, and they had the all-important job of judging incoming trainers to decide if they were worthy of a badge or not.

*What makes a human a good trainer?*

*We can think about that later. Let's just enjoy being together for now.*

That sounded good to Ri.

They ate together, then went straight to sleep. Instead of sleeping apart in the room they had been, they decided to try sleeping together in another room which had a bigger bed after sniffing at it carefully to decide that it was clean. The next day, they went to train like usual, but Two wanted to do things a bit differently than they had before.

*I don't want to think of you as my apprentice anymore; I consider you my equal. When we train, let's just have fun and get stronger together.*

*Sounds good.*

They went to the practice gym to train, but found themselves distracted and decided to put it off for a little while. Ri also wanted to know about the world around him, and Two realized that he had much to learn, too. Instead of training, Two brought Ri to the closest thing they had to a living room, and disappeared to retrieve something. A couple minutes later, he returned with a number of books he'd found who-knew-where, and placed them in Ri's lap.

*I think we should study these together. You have much to learn about the world around you, this world specifically, and you yourself. I know a bit more than you, but still, I have a lot to learn. I think reading these will help us understand the world better, and in turn maybe we'll be better equipped especially to protect ourselves, others, and maybe to judge pokemon trainers.*

*What are they about?*

*History, math, science, music, literature. One of them is specifically about computer programming and computer science. I'm interested in that one, but it might be advanced for you.*

Two didn't mean that Ri wasn't smart enough for it; he just meant that Ri didn't know the fundamentals he needed yet to understand it proficiently. It was something he'd work towards. Ri was particularly interested in the one Two said was about music; he had an idea what the others were about, but that one confused him.

*You said, 'music?'*

*Yes. Don't you know what music is?*

*No.*

Two was dismayed and surprised; it seemed to him like something that should be innate and common to all people and pokemon.

*Here, let me show you, or at least try to.*

Two went over to a nearby computer in another room, and tried interacting with it clumsily. Eventually, he brought up a screen, and having seemed to find what he was looking for, he started playing something on its speakers. Ri assumed it was music. He heard a deluge of pitches all happening together and in sequence, but it wasn't cluttered and chaotic like a busy city might sound, they were all organized. There were many tones at once, and while some of them seemed to clash to Ri's ears, none of them clashed in a way that *displeased* him, and the dissonant tones were always followed by consonant ones that were pleasing to hear. Ri could hear numerous independent sounds playing at once, but none of them were talking or saying words; they were tones, but none of them were pure; they all sounded like lots of tones at once, even though the sound was dominated by a particular pitch. All the pitches Ri could hear above one particular sound at one particular pitch seemed to collapse into it, giving it a sound different than the other sounds that were playing. The different sounds melded together, different colors of each other with different expressive qualities. This music was complex, and Ri started to delight in it, and he wanted to understand it more so he could know and comprehend what he was hearing.

*You can start with that one, if you want. I'll start with the math.*

They started with their respective books. Ri was interested in what he was reading, but as he read it, he could sort of see what Two was reading, too, and he wondered if he should've started with the math book. It seemed that music had all to do with math. Everything was math from rhythm and the



division of time to harmony. It didn't stop Ri from reading, but it annoyed him that he'd have to wait a bit to understand exactly everything that was happening. He tried reading about music history, too, but it was just as confusing as the math part was. It was obvious to Ri that he didn't have the fundamentals necessary to understand music yet, so however irritated he felt, he put that book aside and switched over to the history book. He would have to read the others first, and save his excitement for the music until later.

After a couple hours, Ri and Two both started feeling burned out. They had both taken in a lot of information, and that information was seeping across their bond; they were both absorbing both math and history at the same time. They stopped to eat, and decided to enjoy themselves the rest of the day. Before they went to sleep, Two proposed a new idea of something they could try the next day.

*I know I said I wanted to train differently, but I've been thinking that maybe I can teach you to resist psychic attacks.*

*Is that possible? Isn't fighting inherently weak to psychic?*

*I'm not sure, but I think the bond we have will give us a unique chance to find out.*

It wasn't going to be like before; Two wasn't teaching him basics anymore. They were exploring new ideas together; that was much more exciting.

*That sounds good.*

They slept together, cuddling because they wanted to be near each other. They enjoyed each others' company; Ri didn't remember feeling anything like this with Draco; it helped reinforce that he'd made the right decision.

A couple days later, some human showed up at the door. Ri answered it, and was surprised by the guy. His aura didn't seem to match up with his being human; no human Ri had ever seen had that much aura.

"Hello, this is the home of one Mewtwo, right?"

*Yeah?*

“I’d just like to ask you some questions.”

*About what?*

“You are a Lucario, right?”

Ri felt Two behind him; he felt better having him there.

*You can trust him, you used to know who he works for.*

*But why is he asking me these questions?*

*They think I’m a threat to them, their world, or this world, so they monitor me. Now that you’re living with me, they want to see if you’re a threat, too.*

Ri didn’t imagine how they could threaten anybody.

*We’re powerful. They think they are more powerful than us -- they have magic, which can be considered to be like pokemon powers but more versatile, and they think they can contain us if they decide we’re a threat.*

*Can they?*

*I’m not sure, but if they can, it’s going to be a much harder fight for them than they think it’s going to be. They underestimate us; they don’t know how versatile our own powers are.*

“I’m asking you questions, here?”

Ri thought he and Two talked relatively quickly to each other, but apparently they still had some speeding up to do before it was unnoticeable to other people.

*Yes, I’m a Lucario.*

“Fine, Lucario it is. How powerful would you say you are in relation to Mewtwo?”

Ri felt it was getting a bit personal, and Two did, too, but he generally trusted, if disliked, the person standing in front of them.

*Pretty powerful, I guess?*

“Can you hold yourself in a fight against him?”

Yes.

“How long?”

*I don't know, I've never tried fighting him longer than a couple hours.*

“A couple hours? And you call yourself ‘pretty powerful?’ Analysis says that most pokemon don’t stand a chance against Mewtwo; it’s quite exceptional that you can fight him for hours without losing.”

The guy should’ve sounded surprised, but he just seemed disinterested. He was just writing on a clipboard, not even looking at them.

“Do you plan on continuing your residence here, or are you living here temporarily?”

Ri was about to answer, but Two cut him off.

*Look, the stuff you're asking is our business, not yours. I know you've been watching me. I haven't said anything because you haven't been a threat to me, but now that you know, I don't like it. It's not right of you to pry into our lives like this.*

The human looked genuinely shocked this time; Two wasn’t happy about it.

*You thought I didn't notice your cameras? Your spies? You're not nearly as covert as you think you are; I'm surprised not everybody in the world knows you're here. You're lucky there aren't Lucario around here; they would find you out the first time they see you.*

*He's not human, is he?*

*No, he's not.*

“Look, I’m just doing my job. It’s my superiors who ordered me to come here. They want to know if this Lucario is a possible threat or not. Some have said you should be brought in and contained immediately, and they wanted to do experiments on you; you’re lucky that some of my superiors still care about what Nightshade believed in.”

Ri was confused by what the not-human said, until he decoded it from what Two was sensing. Whoever Nightshade was, it was *him*, and it was part of why Two was so upset.

“Here’s the deal. I’ll try to appeal for you, because some people at DAPA still believe you deserve the same rights as everyone else. I have no power, though, so if it comes to it, we will continue monitoring you. If you show yourself to be a threat, we *will* contain you and strip you of your powers. And Lucario, because you have associated yourself with this Mewtwo, we *will* do the same for you.”

Two was genuinely angry; it was something Ri had never felt from him before -- except when it was directed at him after the incident with Charmander.

*You wouldn't be saying that if you knew who this Lucario was.*

The not-human got defensive, and prepared to call for backup.

*Stop, let me explain.*

The not-human was scared; Ri saw that they were genuinely terrified of Two. If only they knew they were provoking him... Two forced himself to settle down.

*Your leader, he disappeared years ago, right? He left behind a successor, meaning he intended to leave for a while.*

“Yes. What does this have to do with this Lucario?”

*What if, over the course of years, Nightshade came to a point where he lost his memory? What if he, trying to understand his past, explored various worlds? What if he decided to settle on one of those worlds, but he chose not to recover his memory?*

The not-human was completely confused by how this related to Ri.

*Lastly, what if when he lost his memory, he changed form, and, chose, let's say, to be a Riolu who would later evolve into a Lucario?*

“So... you're saying this Lucario is Nightshade?”

Yes.

“What proof do you have of that?”

*The microchip in his head is still the same.*

“What?”

*What?*

*I'm sorry, I meant to tell you today. I didn't before, because you didn't need to know before; it would've been a connection to your past you didn't need. Now, you might be able to use it, but I planned on letting you know gently.*

Explaining things helped Two to calm down again, but that bit at the end made him feel a bit shamed.

*It's alright. If it helps get these people off our backs, I don't mind.*

“Hey, you're saying *this* is Nightshade?”

Yes.

“We're going to have to check that.”

*How are you going to do that?* Ri hoped it wouldn't be anything invasive or anything that hurt.

“Won't be hard, I just have to pull out my handheld computer.”

The not-human reached into his pocket, and pulled out some sort of tablet. It seemed to have a screen like the computers Ri had seen inside, but he interacted with it by touching its surface.

“I see a microchip with a signature that looks like Nightshade’s, but I can’t connect to it. How do I know you’re not emitting a fake signature?”

*Do you think I have the technology or the ability to do that? You’ve been monitoring me, and I don’t have access to your technology. What I do have is years behind what you have, and I barely know how to use that. So what’s more likely: that I’m telling the truth, or that I’m playing elaborate tricks?*

The not-human was inclined to believe that Two was lying to him, but he couldn’t deny that Two didn’t know how to use the computers he had, and he knew that Two didn’t have the technology to fake the complex signature. It was Nightshade; the not-human admitted it to himself.

Suddenly, the not-human had a change in attitude. He was embarrassed, and he felt apologetic for his behavior.

“I’m sorry, Nightshade, I didn’t know it was you. I will report this as soon as possible, and I will make it clear to my superiors who you are. If you find this Mewtwo trustworthy, I’m sure that my superiors will not go against you.”

Ri didn’t understand what just happened. What did he do to deserve such treatment?

*David was their leader for a long time. They flourished under his command and had a long period of inward peace and harmony. He chose to leave, and left behind someone who he trusted, but it seems that others who had different ideas have found their way to power. I’m sorry I put all that on you suddenly.*

Ri didn’t really care. It wasn’t his life anymore; he just cared that Two seemed to care most about his safety. Perhaps they would be left alone; that’s what mattered, not that Two was forced to reveal things about Ri to practical strangers without letting Ri know first.

*I remember now, you said to me a long time ago that who I was will influence how others think of me. I don’t understand what I did to deserve this, but I’m glad that you were able to convince him I’m... he said Nightshade, right?*

Yes. Two sighed in relief. He was happy he'd gotten rid of DAPA, and he was glad he didn't hurt Ri doing it. Ri noticed it was something that had been on his mind for a while; he must not have noticed it because Two was sufficiently distracted while Ri was around.

*We can talk about it later, maybe.*

*And we should talk about this microchip, too.*

"Am I invisible to you, or?" Nobody picked up on Ri and Two talking to each other like this not-human did. He didn't understand, though; it just seemed like they were ignoring him and doing nothing.

*Sorry. We were talking.*

"You can talk to each other telepathically?"

*Well, we can talk to you telepathically.*

It logically followed that they could talk to each other telepathically, too, no need to tell him about their bond. The way it seemed, the less these people knew about them, the better.

"I'll go and report to my superiors, and I'll try to convince them to respect your privacy."

*Thank you,* Two answered.

The not-human turned around, and walked away. Ri and Two stood there watching him, calming down and processing what happened.

*Who was that?* If the not-human wasn't human, Ri didn't know what he was.

*A dragon. A being from another world, the one Nightshade -- David -- came from. He brought them here shortly before he left them and went to live with Lucario and his other friends. They care about him so much because he was the first successful genetic experiment of theirs to turn potential not-dragons into dragons.*

Ri remembered David's letter to him. It mentioned he was a dragon, and also Time Lord, among other things.

*Don't worry about what that means; I don't know. I don't think it has any bearing on the present, so maybe it's best left forgotten.*

Ri agreed with him.

*About this microchip, what does it do?*

*I'm not sure, David never explained it to me. DAPA might be best equipped to help you understand it, but it might be best to avoid them.*

Ri was OK with that.

They continued with their lives after that. Ri and Two both read through all the books they had pulled out relatively quickly. Ri devoured the music one especially quickly, delighted and excited that he could finally understand the complex concepts it offered. Now when he listened to music, it wasn't just a barrage of strange pitches, it was an art Ri appreciated and wished to replicate. The other things interested him too, but nothing like the music. Two was the same for the computer science. Ri had nearly the same understanding for it Two did, but not the same passion, and likewise with Two for music. Two checked for hidden cameras, and was happy to see that they disappeared. They kept training, growing stronger together and better able to work together. They grew to understand their bond, and found that they could use each others' powers to a weak extent. It was second nature for them to understand what the other was thinking. Two taught Ri how to cook, but Ri largely let him do that, while Ri found an interest in coffees and teas. Two had to be careful with the caffeine, but Ri found that he could drink large amounts and not worry about poisoning. Two explained to him that his steel typing prevented him from being poisoned. Slowly, Two taught Ri how to think like him, and Ri found himself being able to resist psychic attacks. They didn't confuse him nearly as much, and they didn't hurt him as much either. It was a big thing, according to Two, but they weren't sure if they could replicate it in other pokemon.

A couple days after the incident with the DAPA representative, they received a letter in the mail which Two let Ri open, saying that he would know what it said in a moment anyway, but he thought Ri should open it. It was details for a bank account; a concept Two had to describe to him. For some reason, DAPA was sending them large amounts of money, citing something about a 'salary' which Ri didn't understand. Apparently, part of the agreement with David was that they would fund him constantly after his agreeing to take part in their experiments, and apparently they had decided that it



still held up even though Ri didn't remember agreeing to it, saying something along the lines of "despite your changed form and your lack of memory, and despite the discontinued status of the genetic program, your continued existence still provides helpful data which may aide further research into the program." Whatever that meant, Ri wasn't going to complain about getting money for doing nothing as long as he was being helpful and the people at DAPA didn't mind.

It seemed like DAPA really wanted to change their relationship with Ri and Two after the incident; they got a letter just a couple days later which offered to help them renovate their gym and supply them with current DAPA technology. Ri and Two had a hard time not accepting their offer; they needed to do something about their living space and the deteriorating gym. They accepted, and a couple days later a team of dragons and people appeared at their door with supplies. This time, they weren't scared of revealing themselves, and Ri was able to see the dragons for what they looked like. They looked like pokemon, but they talked, and had anatomies which more closely approached that of humans'. Two was right; they had magic, and they seemed to use special staffs with crystals fixed at their tops to focus it. Ri didn't know how strong those crystals were, but he supposed a Force Palm could shatter one, and if he did that, then the dragons would be powerless. A couple dragon scientists offered to help Ri use his microchip, and after a couple days, Ri was pretty familiar with its function. It was almost the same way he used his aura, but instead of focusing on himself, he focused on the part of himself that felt open-ended, a feeling which the dragons compared to the prompt Ri might see on a computer terminal. His and Two's studies of science, math, and technology not only helped Ri understand his microchip, but it helped both of them be able to talk comfortably with just about any dragon about any topic. They helped solve engineering problems and helped make aesthetic choices; their home was going to be exactly the way they wanted it to be. In the end, everything was set in a cool dark grey like the dragons preferred; Ri and Two didn't mind it either. The gym was brand new, and the most technologically advanced of any of them, with a holographic projector which showed the stats of a battle in 3D above the battlefield. They built a study which had in it two computers, one for each of them, opposing a wall of books with a nook in which they could read together. Besides the grey, the rooms and halls were accented with blue and purple; Ri thought the lines of emissive color running through the hallways and the gym were especially cool. They remodeled the master bedroom, making it bigger and making sure that it was comfortable for both of them. They remodeled the kitchen, supplying Ri and Two with state-of-the-art cookware and appliances. They broke out the walls between a couple of the 'guest' bedrooms and built a proper living room, complete with couch, and space-age television.

It all seemed like too much to both Ri and Two, but the dragons suggested and made most of the improvements themselves, and they both certainly enjoyed everything. They were very thankful, but

the dragons didn't seem to want anything in return, so they simply accepted it graciously. The dragons connected them to their own network, which connected them to the world wide web of David's world, too. Suddenly, they had access to two worlds of information, and the dragons helped them design interfaces which they could both use. Ri could use his microchip to interface with any DAPA computer, but Two needed a special psychic interface for his.

Once the gym was renovated and the dragons had left, Ri and Two felt confident to apply for gym leadership. They were visited by the Kanto Pokemon League, who were very confused by their application, but after weeks of deliberation, and after they proved they were able to keep from being captured, they were considered citizens, and were afforded special protections that they deemed were important for them. They received ID cards in the mail, and were told that they were official gym leaders. Ri and Two both appreciated the backing of Kanto's government and their relative readiness toward accepting them, though the cards were meaningless to them since they couldn't carry them around. What it did mean was that they could accept challengers officially, and they were promised a supply of gym badges which resembled whatever trait they wanted to see in a trainer, their typings, or even themselves if they wished.

They used the equipment they were given to design and build their own machines. They were able to harness the dragons' technology to build research equipment which they used to prototype then build new technologies. Ri learned to use music production and composition software, and started composing and producing music. They continued training together, learning to work together as a team. Ri realized he could teleport, and he started discovering other things he could do with his aura, too, including an aura 'pulse' which didn't affect him or Two, but seemed like it could kill others if misused. It terrified Ri, so he chose not to pursue that particular ability further, at least until he was completely confident he could control himself.

Once word of their gym being open had spread, they started having the occasional challenger. Kanto soon discovered that they would be tough gym leaders, but also that sometimes, for whatever reason, they would award a badge to a challenger they had beaten. There were stories sometimes too of pokemon disappearing after a battle with the Cinnabar gym, but they were generally credited to abusive trainers who didn't take care of their pokemon properly.

Ri finally started to feel comfortable while battling; he developed his sense for his opponent's ability and his own ability to match it. Two was pleased to be right that his mate was a good fighter, and that

he was a pokemon who cared about the feelings of others. Ri was grateful for Two's continued care and support, and he felt privileged that Two considered him an equal and trusted him when he had a hard time trusting others. Two was thankful Ri had chosen him, and confessed the feeling of jealousy he had felt when he realized Ri had lost his close relationship to Lucario. Now that he had Ri, he felt shamed about feeling that way, but Ri readily forgave him.

The best part of it all was that they were able to experience it together.