

Blind, P.I. in... A Cold Shock

Content Warnings: Constant mentions of cold conditions, mentions of death, mention of vomit, brief moment of suicidal ideation.

Chapter 1

Cold. Colder than cold. Freezing. Maybe even colder than freezing.

Blind shivered violently. Her whole body was numb and wet and screaming in agony. Not much longer until she wouldn't even be able to breathe.

Just a little longer. Just a little longer.

No. Now.

Blind burst out of a thick pile of snow, gasping for air.

Silver pulled her away from it and threw a nice fire warmed blanket over her.

"H-H-How long was th-that?" Blind asked.

"A few minutes better than your last attempt." Silver smiled. "Before long, you'll even be able to withstand the cold of the north pole."

Blind panted, holding onto the blanket for dear life.

"No more for today." It said. "Good work, let's head back."

Silver carefully picked up the tightly wrapped Blind and threw her onto its back and walked home.

It stepped through the flap door of its personal yurt and laid Blind in front of the fire. Before long, she stopped shaking and started stretching out to relax her very tense muscles.

She looked around the yurt. It was decorated with stone carvings and metal ornaments. Most notable of all was a very intricately decorated gold horn with the same woven patterns that covered the yurt's walls.

Silver noticed her looking and brought it over for her to take a closer look.

"This belonged to my father." It explained. "A decorative horn is the symbol of our tribe's leader. This one is cast in gold because that was his name."

Blind now noticed how many of the ornaments and patterns were in fact, in a golden yellow hue.

"Was this his place?" Blind asked.

"Yes, but also mine." Silver said. "It's fallen to me, so you and your mother can stay at any time. No questions asked."

Blind thought about that. A little home away from home that was rightfully hers, always waiting for her to come back.

"Maybe." Blind smiled. "I might come by now and then, whenever I want a break from it all."

Silver smiled back.

"It would mean everything to me if you did." It said. "Since training is over, let's take the rest of the day to just recover."

It pulled a light blue ribbon with snowflake patterns, clearly inspired by Glaceon, off its shelf and put it on.

The ribbon tied softly around its neck with a big pretty bow on the back of its head.

"I'll be with Auntie Titanium if you need me." It nodded and left.

Blind stayed where she was, resting and keeping warm until she felt well enough to go back outside.

Θ - - - - - Ο

Blind looked around what was left of the Rock Horn village. The old yurts were torn down to expand the three now standing. One for Silver, one for Titanium and one for guests, like the occasional visiting tribe diplomat.

Most of the rest of the village was taken up by a graveyard with the rest of the tribe below it, and a plot of berries that normally grew well in the snow. They were weak and dying. Blind frowned. There wasn't much that Titanium could do about that, since she couldn't bend down to mulch or water them. The cold was just too much.

Blind stepped into Titanium's yurt where she and Silver were talking in Rhydon. Blind was slowly learning it, but it was an incredibly difficult language to learn.

So many words were practically identical, but still she'd managed to pick up a few. Just barely enough to hold a conversation.

"Rhy rhy." Silver said.

"Rhy Rhydon rhy." Titanium said.

Something about the cold, maybe winter.

Winter had been on everyone's minds lately, because it refused to end. The constant cold was starting to really take its toll on the world and even already frigid places like this were suffering.

Silver was paranoid that the berry farm was about to die and Titanium wouldn't be able to feed herself. Blind didn't want her to have to leave her home again either. This was personal.

Blind signed up for a guild mission to find the source and spent her spare time training to endure the cold, hoping it would make the difference.

"Rhy... rhy?" Blind said.

"Close. Rhy rhy." Silver said. "So when are you leaving?"

"Tomorrow." Blind nodded. "I'm gonna be staying the night here."

"Good." Silver smiled. "I have something for you. It'll be ready before you leave."

Blind smiled back. She slipped out of the yurt and spent the rest of the daylight tending to the berry farm.

Helping out Titanium felt worth it despite how incredibly boring gardening was.

Θ - - - - - O

Blind woke up the next morning from Silver gently rocking her.

"Wake up." It said softly. "It's morning."

She grumbled as she rubbed the sleep out of her eyes and stood up.

"Ugh. Morning, Dad." She said. "You better have breakfast ready."

"Spiced berry salad." Silver smiled. "You'd be surprised how good we are at finding flavour up here."

They ate together. Blind found herself licking every drop out of the bowl.

"Yeah, holy shit." She muttered. "What's in this?"

"A few rare plants we learned how to cultivate. I have a few growing back at Jewel, and I keep some spice mix in my travel bag at all times." Silver grinned. It passed her a bulging pouch that smelt delicious. "Here, take it. I made one extra for you."

Blind tucked it into her own travel bag.

"Thank you, this should make the mission rations actually edible." She smiled. "Was this what you wanted to give me?"

"Oh, no. That's over here." Silver said.

It reached into a chest and pulled out a gigantic gold scarf with the tribe's patterns embroidered across the edges with silver thread.

"This was something my father wore, but I'd like you to take it with you." It said. "It's warmer than it looks, and it's incredibly sturdy."

Blind threw it over herself. It was in fact, very warm.

"Thanks." Blind smiled. "I'll keep it safe."

"I hope it keeps you safe." Silver smiled back. "Safe travels, Blind."

The two hugged before she set off.

Chapter 2

The Guild base in Jewel City was eerily quiet. Almost every member was out trying to help towns and tribes deal with the endless winter.

Everyone still present was in the lobby, ready to go. Alakazam was speaking with Arcanine and Braixen while Aromatisse sat a distance away when Blind arrived. Alakazam turned to her and nodded.

"Thank you for coming." It said. "We need every free hand to deal with this situation."

"I trained for the cold before getting here." Blind nodded back. "So what do you want me to do?"

"The unseasonable cold is coming from the central mountain range." Alakazam explained. "I want you to assist the team I am sending to investigate however you can. I would like to go as well, but I must stay to keep the Guild running as best I can."

"Alright." Blind said. "You can count on me."

"I know. I trust your judgement, Blind." Alakazam said before teleporting away.

Arcanine strolled up with a huge grin while Braixen shoved her snout back into a huge book.

"Hey." He said. "Been a while, huh?"

It had. Blind spent the time after her previous break focusing on clients over guild jobs, which had lightened her workload somewhat.

"Yeah, kinda." Blind shrugged. "But I don't work for you, I'm just for hire."

"That blows." Arcanine scoffed. "You got a fiery spirit, I'd love to train you myself."

"I'm good." Blind said. "I like my job as is, and my training works for me."

"Boring." Arcanine sighed. "Hey, Braix! Got any ideas yet?"

"I have a route and a destination for the base camp from there we can begin investigating." Braixen muttered, not looking up.

"Great." Arcanine smiled. "I'll carry the tent and the supplies."

"What's uh, their role?" Blind asked, looking over at Aromatisse.

"Homemaker, gardener, professional magician and amateur soap crafter." She said, standing up. He twirled towards Blind with a rosy scent. "I set up the tent and keep it warm and cozy."

"A detective, a scholar, a rescuer and a maid." Arcanine smirked. "Well, if we can't figure it out, I doubt anyone else can."

"I think we were just who was left." Braixen muttered. "Regardless, I am ready for the challenge."

"I've got all the supplies ready to last double the expected trip, just in case." Aromatisse winked.

"Sounds like we're set." Blind nodded. "Whenever you're ready."

Braixen closed her book and sighed, pushing her glasses back up her snout.

"Let's get this over with." She said.

"I'm all set up." Aromatisse giggled.

"Alright team, let's go." Arcanine grinned.

The roads out of Unity were colder than they ever had been. The grass had a layer of frost on it like Blind had only seen up on Mt. Rockfall.

It was snowing on the horizon, too.

Not only did winter refuse to end, but it seemed to be getting worse as it went on.

Blind looked up at Braixen who was wearing a maroon parka and still reading a giant book.

Blind herself was wearing Gold's scarf tied around her into a cloak.

"Any idea what's causing this?" Blind asked.

"My guess is some very strong Pokemon has gone absolutely berserk." Braixen answered. "If this was a natural phenomenon, there would be some record of it happening before. None of my research points to that, not even delving into ancient tribe texts."

"A Pokemon? If it's an Ice type, I'll kick its ass." Arcanine laughed.

"For that matter, we know it isn't an Ice legendary like Articuno or Kyurem." Braixen added.

"Really? How?" Blind asked.

"Alakazam asked them." Braixen snickered. "The only Ice type Legendary not accounted for is Chien-Pao and this is far from its modus operandi."

"Anything less than a legend, I'm able to take on." Arcanine grinned. "I'll bring it down once we find it."

"You haven't ruled out something supernatural?" Blind suggested. "Maybe it's some kind of Frosslass curse."

"Good point, but that's for us to find out when we get there. Regardless, keep your guard up." Braixen smiled. "Natural, supernatural, force of god or force of Pokemon, it's dangerous and we need to be on high alert once we reach the mountain."

"You got any experience with mountains, Blind?" Arcanine asked.

"Yeah, I was training on one yesterday for this." Blind answered.
"Mt. Rockfall."

"Interesting." Aromatisse said. "That place is rather inhospitable already."

"Most of it." Blind shrugged. "The passes are pretty nice, there's a bit of green and it's where the tribes tend to stick around."

"I've been." Braixen nodded. "It's rather beautiful."

"Oh, really?" Blind asked.

"Yes." Braixen chuckled. "Don't think I didn't notice the patterns on your garment."

Blind laughed back.

"It's part of why I'm here." She said. "I figured that I have some experience that might help."

"That makes one of us." Braixen muttered under her breath.

Chapter 3

Blind curled up in a corner of the tent. It was thankfully big enough for her to find room in even with Arcanine's huge size and Aromatisse's tiny kitchen.

A dinner of rations was less than nice to look at but it smelt divine which massively improved the taste as well. Plus it filled everyone up which is what mattered most of all.

Blind stretched out and stepped outside to clear her head and take in some fresh if freezing air. They were definitely far closer to the epicentre of the storm than before.

Aromatisse followed her, looking up at the snowy horizon.

"Looks bad out there." He commented. "If I wasn't so close to Arcanine the whole trip, I'd be freezing my feathers off. Do you think he'd let me ride up top if I asked?"

"Fat chance." Blind scoffed. "What are you doing here, anyway?"

"Hey, keeping the base camp running is a valuable service!" Aromatisse protested. "There will come a point you need to retreat and that's when you'll need me."

Blind grunted.

"Sure, whatever." She mumbled. "Just don't hold us back."

"Gosh, you're quite nasty when you're tense." Aromatisse whispered. "Was he like this too?"

"...He?" Blind asked.

"They say there's no real personality differences between genders, but since you used to be a male and I wonder precisely what that's impacted." Aromatisse pondered.

"Wh- How the fuck do you know about that?!" Blind demanded.

"Oh it's quite simple, Blind. I never forgot anything." Aromatisse giggled. "I've been to both Violars, and the odd world that some of us fell to in between. That was very fun."

Blind took a step back.

"You're a fucking liar." She growled.

"Am I? I didn't talk to you much, but I did see what you used to look like." Aromatisse smirked. "Your scar was this way instead of like this now, and obviously you had a male looking tail, and the other telltale signs of masculinity."

Blind grit her fangs. They were right.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?" She muttered.

"Not sure. I'm just special, I suppose." Aromatisse giggled. "I don't mean any harm by it. It's just nice whenever I see a familiar face."

Blind glared at Aromatisse before taking a step closer.

"You knew him?" Blind asked. "The old me?"

"Like I said, not well. We met maybe twice but it was hard to forget such a striking look." Aromatisse smiled. "Not that I forgot anything, but you know what I mean."

"Ah." Blind sighed. "Well... what was he like?"

"Hmm.. I'm not entirely sure. You see, around Absol he was always so quiet like he was scared of speaking up around her." Aromatisse recalled. "But I bet if you got him alone, you wouldn't stop him from talking shit. I think you're like that too. You clam up when it gets intense?"

Blind shook her head.

"Sometimes. Not always." She said. "I'm getting better about freezing up against danger."

"Well, whatever happens, I hope you find a you that you're happy with." Aromatisse smiled. "I'm headed to bed, are you coming?"

"Not yet. I want to clear my head first." Blind sighed.

Aromatisse went back inside and she sat there in silence before she went back in too.

Θ - - - - - Ο

A few days had passed by the time the party finally made it to the foot of the mountain range. Now they were trudging through heavy snow as the mountain was cloaked by a constant blizzard.

They took the climb slowly and carefully, taking an entire extra day to reach one of the lesser peaks.

"This is the spot." Arcanine said, panting. "Let's get this set up already, I hate it up here."

"S-s-says the guy with the thickest fur..." Aromatisse shivered.

The tent went up again, and everyone took shelter inside. Arcanine warmed himself up, finally free of the pelting winds and that spread heat through the whole tent. Braixen sat down and took her coat off, nearly passing out on the spot. Aromatisse sat against Arcanine and Blind laid down until she felt comfortable.

"Alright, I'm going to see if I can find anything out there." She said. "I'll be back before it gets dark."

"Don't get lost." Arcanine said. "There's no rescue up here for us."

"I know." Blind nodded. "I'll be super careful."

Braixen handed Blind a twig she found along the way that resembled the kind that Fennekin usually keep.

"Mark your path." She panted

"The snow alone is too easy to get lost in."

Blind took it and slipped out of the tent back into the frozen wilderness. She took the cold the best out of all of them, especially with Gold's scarf tied around her.

She used the twig to make an elaborate pattern in the snow, one that wouldn't easily be covered up by including a huge pile that would be seen for a distance, and set off.

The peak's snowy pass was barren. The rock formations were intriguing but there weren't any caves to be found. The blizzard wasn't coming from anywhere around here, as hard as it was coming down.

Blind followed the path she drew in the snow back to the base camp.

Everyone else was asleep, but Aromatisse left some rations out for her that smelt of her favourite food, freshly baked chocolate donuts. She couldn't eat them fast enough, not leaving a crumb behind.

She curled up in her corner, wearing Gold's scarf like a blanket.

It was so comfortable, she distantly wished that she got to thank him for it.

Chapter 4

The next morning was horrible. The blizzard had gotten so bad that it was completely impossible to see past the howling wind and snow, so Blind stayed in the tent curled up in the scarf.

Aromatisse shivered on the floor.

"I... I don't feel too well..." It said. "I think... I think I'll just... take a nap."

"Ugh, no!" Braixen yelled. "Fight it you imbecile or you'll never wake up!"

It was too late. Aromatisse was unconscious. Braixen started stumbling, falling first to her knees and then to her side.

"Hey... I can't... Breathe." She whined. "B-Blind, help..."

Arcanine looked over them and started wobbling too.

"I... I can't... I have to... save them..." He gasped. "B-Blind, r-run. Go get Al... Ala... Nnghf..."

And then he collapsed too.

Blind panicked, tying the scarf on and rushing out of the tent, looking around frantically.

Everyone was done for. They were going to die here, and she had no idea what to do.

She couldn't make it back to Alakazam in time, wherever the hell it even was.

Panic overtook her and she started just yelling out for help.

"HELP! HELP!" She screamed into the snow. "SOMEONE HELP US! HELP!"

She screamed for what felt like hours, tearing her throat to shreds.

Then finally at last, a figure emerged from the snow.

It was-

It was-

It was Luxray.

Blind was petrified with fear, barely able to even breathe. She wasn't shivering from the cold anymore. She wanted to run, but she couldn't abandon the others. Not to being Luxray's frozen dinners.

Luxray ripped the tent pegs out of the frozen dirt, bringing the whole tent down on top of them, then grabbing a corner with its mouth and pulling, slowly dragging them away.

She wanted to scream at him. To stop. To fuck off. To die. To leave. To help. To help. To please, please help. But she couldn't make a sound past a pathetic, raspy squeak. She couldn't even move to try and stop him.

A voice came from her side. A voice that was as icy cold as her surroundings.

"If you want them to survive, help us save them." It said.

She broke free of her petrification and turned to face it.

Chien-Pao stared back at her.

"I understand you're deep in shock but please listen to me." It insisted. "Help us, and I promise they will all live."

Blind nodded, unable to reply and helped Luxray and Chien-Pao drag the tent with everyone still inside it over the snow, pulling with

all her might. Luxray and Chien-Pao knew the way, and she followed their lead.

The blizzard seemed to intensify as if furious at their audacity, but the scarf and Luxray's thick fur on top of the heat generated by exertion kept her warm as they dragged the tent over the pass to a other mountain peak, one with a large cave dug into it.

She collapsed as soon as they dragged the tent past the threshold of the warm cave.

Θ - - - - - Ο

Blind woke up to a familiar smell. It was the kind of tea that Silver and Titanium drank that grew on Mt. Rockfall. It must grow on other snowy mountains too.

She was safe and comfortable in a warm, well constructed wooden bed with a blanket and a pillow, holding onto Gold's scarf bundled up in her paws.

Chien-Pao walked in, setting a tray aside with a steaming teapot and multiple cups.

"Good to see you awake." It said. Its voice was still icy cold and stern, but still able to express empathy. "I was worried about you."

"I'm fine, just..." Blind muttered. "Why did it have to be him?"

"I'm aware of the history you share with Luxray." Chien-Pao said, serving the tea. "I don't expect you to forgive him, but do at least understand that he is no threat anymore."

Blind growled quietly.

"Uneasy peace is fine." Chien-Pao chuckled. "Drink some, Blind."

She did. It helped her sore throat and returned some much needed vitality.

"Thanks." She grunted.

"Don't get up yet. Save your strength." Chien-Pao said. "Your companions are all alive and recovering too, so take your time."

Blind nodded and rolled over. She needed some time to think about how she felt.

Obviously being near Luxray was a problem. She still hated him deeply for hunting her down and treating her like a piece of meat. Literally.

Still... that felt like forever ago. So many Pokemon as disturbed as he was managed to settle down and find peace.

She decided to give him a chance, but at the first sign of danger? She'll kick his ass into the snow.

A few hours went by and Blind felt strong enough to walk, so she wandered around the cave. It was several rooms that were carved directly into the rock, warmed by inlaid fire stones and a few fireplaces here and there that vented out of the mountain.

Arcanine, Braixen and Aromatisse were still unconscious, resting in warm beds.

"They won't wake up." Chien-Pao said, emerging from the doorway behind her. "You were lucky to not end up the same way."

"Oh fuck... What the hell do I do now?" Blind whined.

"That is something we will discuss." Chien-Pao nodded. "With me, Blind."

Blind sighed and followed Chien-Pao to the central dining room where Luxray leaned against a table, resting his face on it.

"Hello." He muttered.

"Hey." Blind grunted.

"I'll bring you up to speed on the situation, Blind." Chien-Pao said. "An enraged Abomasnow has climbed to the top of the tallest peak and is trying to freeze the entire world. I challenged it myself, but I found myself unable to do anything against it without resorting to methods I refuse to apply."

Blind knew that meant Ruination.

"I tried it alone too, no luck." Luxray added. "I don't have the strength by myself."

"You and Luxray though, you together stand a real chance." Chien-Pao continued. "I'll stay behind to keep a careful eye on the hurt. Do you have any concerns?"

"I don't like having to work with him but I can't sit by and do nothing." Blind sighed. "Everything is at stake here."

"Very brave, Blind." Chien-Pao smiled.

"We leave whenever you're ready to go." Luxray nodded. "I know the way, should take us less than a day at most."

"I'll let you know when that is." Blind said.

She stepped away from the table and went back to bed.

Chapter 5

Blind trudged through snow nearly as tall as she was. Luxray walked beside her so they wouldn't lose each other.

"Just know that if you try to sneak up on me, I'll make sure both of us regret it." Blind growled.

"I'll keep that in mind." Luxray said.

"I almost can't believe a fucking sick freak like you can be rehabilitated." Blind sneered.

"That's understandable." Luxray nodded.

"...So are you?" Blind asked.

"What?" Luxray said.

"Have you really been trying to get better?" Blind clarified.

"Yes. I have." Luxray sighed. "It's hard. At times it was impossible. I've only recently managed to get control over my urges."

"Oh." Blind said.

"For what it's worth, I'm sorry." Luxray said. "I'm sorry for scaring you, I'm sorry for hunting you and I'm sorry for threatening to kill and eat you over and over."

"How the fuck did you even end up like that?" Blind asked. "Wo-Chien barely interacted with you as far as I know."

"Hatred is a very powerful emotion, Blind." Luxray muttered.
"Explaining it will take a while."

"I have time." Blind said.

Luxray nodded.

"I was a stupid kid. I wanted to be a rich and famous bounty hunter, just like my heroes." He explained. "It was a dream come true when I was finally let into the guild. Back before there was the option of old and new."

"That's when you met Tepig, right?" Blind frowned.

"...Y-yes." Luxray said, stuttering. The name seemed to make him uncomfortable. "We were friends at first. Two guys who just had fun being rookies. The losers at the bottom who cleaned up the rescues nobody wanted."

"Friends? You two?" Blind gasped.

"Yeah..." Luxray smiled. "Tepig was... kind and brave. The very picture of a hero. He'd put his life on the line to save anyone, and everyone loved him."

"Except you." Blind spat.

"He insisted that we had to keep doing rescues even if the Old Guild paid dirt for our work." Luxray muttered. "Tepig said that it was his dream. I insisted we had to actually make some money with bounties to get any respect."

"What, too good to live poor?" Blind sneered.

"The Guildmaster had quotas we had to meet or be fired." Luxray growled. "More than that, it was an insult to me. He refused to put in the effort all of the rest of us did to train and made me pick up a mountain of slack for him."

"So you grew to hate him." Blind said.

"We grew to hate each other." Luxray corrected. "Every morning was snide remarks and every night was loud arguments about how I was a greedy bastard who only cared about the money. About how

I became just like everyone else when we were supposed to be better than all of that."

"How long did that last for?" Blind asked.

"I endured as much of it as I could." Luxray answered. "Months of being the bad guy and dragging him along so that at least one of us could live out our dreams, even if the two of us were so crushed by everything that we were both hoping to just never wake up again."

"And then it finally happened." Blind muttered.

"We were chasing a nasty Graveler but it got the drop on us and buried us in a dank cave. I had some spare supplies for exactly that, but I wanted Tepig to suffer so I hid them." Luxray said. "We starved for a long time. I don't remember just how long but I was told it was days. When I thought he'd finally learned his lesson and I went to get the food, that's when he broke."

"He broke? How so?" Blind asked.

"He started screaming. Every little frustration he had across his entire life, he directed right at me." Luxray whined. "Everything anyone had ever done wrong to him, it was all my fault. His throat went from scratchy to hoarse to just an angry rasp by the end."

"And..." Blind said apprehensively. She had an idea to what came next.

"I didn't yell back. I wasn't angry. If I had to describe it, it was like I wasn't really there anymore. But..." Luxray said. "I know what I did. I hit him with absolutely everything I had. He... He didn't feel most of it. He was gone long before I stopped."

"Ugh..." Blind groaned.

"I felt really... happy. It was the happiest I'd ever been. I finally had my revenge." Luxray quietly spoke. "I won't say what I did next. I... I don't want to remember it anymore."

Blind loudly gagged and took a moment to settle her stomach. Luxray sighed.

"You're so fucking disgusting." She coughed.

"I know. I know. It made me really sick, too. Some of my fur fell out and the rest turned green and felt gross." Luxray muttered. "I was stuck in bed for some time, I don't know how long. Everything stopped making sense."

Blind slowly nodded.

"I wasn't fully myself for years." Luxray said. "I heard what everyone said about me about me but I was too far gone to even care, just completely psycho. Then one day, I finally, well... woke up."

"The day Wo-Chien was defeated, right?" Blind said.

"I think so. Because that Shinx beat me up, I was too hurt to join the guild war." Luxray nodded. "Good thing, too. When I came to, I ran to the bathroom and threw up for ages. My throat was so burned, I couldn't talk for days."

"Wait, so what was Alakazam doing?" Blind asked. "I saw it hypnotising you that day."

"Helping. It knew I was going to refuse therapy so it made absolutely certain I wouldn't... hurt anyone else." Luxray admitted. "Then it sent me somewhere it knew I would be alone to process everything."

"And you ended up here." Blind noted.

"I ran for somewhere so remote that there wouldn't be anyone around that I could hurt." Luxray nodded. "That's when Chien-Pao found me. It's been teaching me how to live for myself again."

Blind looked away.

"You've been through a lot." She muttered.

"But so have you." Luxray said. "Don't forgive me if you don't want to."

"I won't." Blind whispered.

Luxray just nodded.

"But Pokemon as fucked up as you are have found peace." Blind said. "If this is what keeps you alive, so be it."

"Thank you." Luxray smiled.

"Don't fucking mention it." Blind scoffed. "Like I said, I don't forgive you."

"That's fine." Luxray said, tail flicking happily. "I have my peace."

Blind huffed with a smile on her face.

The nerve of this asshole. What a-

...No. No, Blind, your heart is racing because you're fucking cold and the altitude is making you delirious.

Don't look at his surprisingly charming smile and his beautiful and long, not gross fur and his actually huge muscles and his-

STOP IT!

Blind crashed into the snow on her face.

"Are you okay?" Luxray asked.

"The air's thin up here." Blind noted. "We need to be careful."

"I'll keep that in mind." Luxray said.

Chapter 6

As they approached the tallest peak, Blind and Luxray breached the eye of the storm where the snowfall was just a gentle sprinkle and the bone chilling cold subsided just to regular freezing cold.

Abomasnow stood on the mountain's tip, snarling with anger as she blasted out ice and snow.

"Die... Die... Die, die." She mumbled. "Freeze. Freeze. Freeze, freeze."

Blind studied her carefully. Abomasnow looked strange and dangerous. Her huge form lumbered as giant icicles weighed down her back, yet her overgrown shaggy fur grew still around them. Her eyes were wild and furious and they focused on the intruders.

"FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU!" She screeched. "DIE! DIE! FREEZE! FREEEEEEZE!"

Blind stayed still and shot Luxray a look to do the same.

"Hey, it's okay. I'm not here to hurt you." Blind assured. "Please, try to calm down."

Her eyes flitted to the strange gem lodged in Abomasnow's forehead. From the colourful embers that flowed from it, it was most likely the cause of her mutated form and obscene power.

Luxray looked down at Blind and back at Abomasnow.

"We can help you, you just have to stop this and come with us." He said as carefully as he could. "Please. It's not a trick."

Abomasnow roared loudly and she stopped blasting the world with snow. Instead, the blizzard focused directly on the mountain's peak.

"DIE! DIEEEEE!" She screamed at the top of her lungs.
"FREEEEEEEEEEZE!!!"

"We tried." Luxray said, standing between Blind and Abomasnow.
"Can you boost me?"

"Uh, y-yeah." Blind said. "I'm not good at it but I'll do what I can."

She focused her energy into Helping Hand to start strengthening Luxray while he set up an Electric Terrain, causing fizzles of lightning to jump from snowflake to snowflake in the air.

Abomasnow roared again and sent a powerful icy blast at the two, which Blind managed to defend herself from with Protect instinctively. Luxray was hit hard but still far from fainting.

Luxray responded in kind with a devastating, critical Thunderbolt that knocked Abomasnow to her knees.

Blind kept up the Helping Hand, setting Luxray up to make Abomasnow faint.

Abomasnow screeched again and the temperature harshly dropped as an absolutely brutal Sheer Cold blew through Blind and Luxray.

It was the same kind that made Arcanine, Braixen and Aromatisse faint. Luxray fainted too, but Blind didn't.

She cowered against the scarf, then stood up when she realised she was just fine.

Something Silver said came back to her.

"It's... sturdy." She gasped.

This was her chance.

She took in the situation. Luxray was unconscious in the snow, and that was extremely dangerous. His strength and long fur bought him time, but how much?

This needed to be finished fast. Blind grit her fangs. Abomasnow was attacking again.

Blind used Protect, anticipating a different attack. She was right and managed to completely block the Razor Leaf that came next.

It was an insane gamble, but Blind had a good feeling about it.

She charged at Abomasnow with Take Down and smashed her head into the gem on her forehead. It seemed to come a little bit loose, but Blind wasn't sure. She closed her eyes and braced, and another Sheer Cold entirely passed her by.

Blind grinned. It time to roll the dice and see if she could bullshit her way to saving the world. She threw up Protect and blocked a Blizzard crashing against her.

Take Down again, and it hit Abomasnow just as hard, dislodging the gem a little further, getting Blind to notice that it was working.

So she worked up all the courage she had and adapted to the pattern.

Protect, Blizzard, Take Down, Sheer Cold.
Protect, Powder Snow, Take Down, Sheer Cold.
Protect, Razor Leaf, Take Down, Sheer Cold.
Protect, Blizzard, Take Down, Sheer Cold.
Protect, Powder Snow, Take Down, Sheer Cold.
Protect, Razor Leaf, Take Down, Sheer Cold.

Blind was starting to feel the strain. Keeping up with it was taxing, and Abomasnow was absolutely far stronger than her.

But time was wasting.

Protect, Blizzard, Take Down, Sheer Cold.
Protect, Powder Snow, Take Down, Sheer Cold.
Protect, Razor Leaf, Take Down, Sheer Cold.

Luxray can't survive this like forever. This fight needed to end, and now.

Protect, Blizzard, Take Down, Sheer Cold.
Protect, Powder Snow, Take Down, Sheer Cold.

Protect, Razor Leaf.

Blind charged towards Abomasnow and slammed all her weight into her gut, sending the two over the tip of the mountain and they crashed into a gully below.

Abomasnow was half buried in a huge mound of snow and Blind landed on top of her, struggling to get back up. Blind dodged Abomasnow blindly swiping at her while she rushed for her face and bit down on the gem, pulling hard on it. Abomasnow screamed and flailed harder as Blind yanked and yanked and yanked, finally ripping the gem free.

It came off into her mouth and she coughed it back out, grabbing it before Abomasnow could. Her body was engulfed in a blinding rainbow flash and returned to normal. She slowly sat up, utterly bewildered.

"Where... Where the hell am I?!" She yelped.

"You turned into a giant freak and tried to kill everyone!" Blind shouted in exasperation.

"WHAT?!" Abomasnow gasped.

"I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS!" Blind yelled.

Abomasnow blinked and looked around, trying to figure out what even happened and where she was.

Chapter 7

Luxray woke up and was too weak to do anything more than slowly drag himself away, but he didn't even do that. This was a nice place to die.

Then he heard quick footsteps in the snow.

"LUXRAY!" Blind cried out. "LUXRAY!"

Oh. She came back for him. That's... sweet.

He opened his eyes to see her frantically checking on him. His body was lukewarm to the touch.

"It's... It's okay." He said faintly. "You did it? You stopped her?"

"WE did it!" Blind screamed, starting to panic. "WE stopped her! Don't start talking like you're dying, please just get the fuck up, do something!"

"I can't." Luxray admitted. "I'm too weak. Too cold. I'm already dead, Blind. Just leave me behind and go find Chien-Pao."

"No!" Blind yelled, finally starting to cry. "I won't leave you! I'm not going to leave you!"

She slammed into him, her warmth just enough to keep him from getting any colder.

He struggled and struggled, getting a paw over and onto her back.

"I thought you hated me." He whimpered.

"I don't hate you so much that I want to see you die if I can help you." Blind sobbed. "Not if you can be okay. I can't leave you like this."

Luxray conserved his energy and laid there, embracing her.

"Then let a sad man whine a little longer, if you would be so kind." He said.

"Anything." Blind sniffed.

"It's always been my fault." Luxray sighed. "If I wasn't so stubborn and petty, he wouldn't be dead. If I'd just cut it off, he would've found the New Guild and been the hero that I didn't let him be."

"Luxray..." Blind muttered.

"I want to tell him that I'm sorry." Luxray whispered. "I want to cry and beg at his hooves that I'm so fucking sorry. I don't need to be forgiven. I just need him to know how much I regret what I did."

"I hope he understands." Blind said.

"It's enough that you do." Luxray smiled.

"I do." Blind whined. "I do..."

The blizzards were over. The cold had begun to relent.

Winter was finally over.

Luxray used some of his stored energy to use Charge, saving up some electricity to warm himself up, sharing it back with Blind.

Blind held him tighter. They weren't safe yet, but it helped more than it hurt.

"Thank you." Luxray said. "Thank you for caring about me."

"I still don't like you." Blind said back. "But you've proven that I don't need to be scared of you anymore."

"I don't want to be scary anymore." Luxray agreed. "I'm fine just being... normal."

"Yeah. Then... Violar would be happy to have you." Blind nodded.

"Yeah... Yeah..." Luxray smiled back.

The two laid there. Weak, freezing and delirious, but alive. The two saved their strength.

Θ - - - - - Ο

Blind looked up as she heard a voice calling out for her.

"Hey! Hey, is anyone there?! Blind?! Luxray?!" A voice called.

"Help... is coming." Blind shivered.

Luxray said nothing, conserving all that was left of his strength.

"HERE! OVER HERE!" Blind called back.

Loud, heavy footprints raced through the snow towards them.

"Blind! Luxray!" Arcanine shouted.

He immediately, precisely used Fire Spin and breathed out a ring of fire that burned all around them, melting the snow and warming up the rock underneath.

"It... It burns..." Blind whined. "I'm burning alive."

"It feels like it, but you're okay. Just stay still, I'll be back to get you back to Chien-Pao's very soon." Arcanine said. "Hold tight, the fire will keep you warm."

Blind held Luxray tight, shaking. The heat on her fur felt horrific, like she was roasting.

"Luxray..." She whimpered.

He held her tight, smothering her in his fur.

"Don't worry, Blind. We're going to live." Luxray smiled.

"We're... really going to live?" She asked.

"We did it. We saved the world." Luxray chuckled.

"We... did it..." Blind said.

Finally sure that she was safe, she passed out among the heat of the flames and let destiny happen.

Θ - - - - - Ο

Blind climbed to her feet. Her paws met ash, not snow. She knew where she was.

"Huh? How am I here?" She wondered aloud.

She walked forward, trying to find the mirror. It wasn't there, no matter how long she looked.

Instead she found Darkrai looming in the darkness, floating before a wide lake. The lake's surface was pitch black without any light.

"Hey... Darkrai." Blind said nervously. "Have we met?"

"We have." Darkrai nodded. "We battled and I granted you my shard. You fought admirably."

"What am I doing here?" Blind asked.

"You're having a nightmare right now, but I tore it away before you could see it." Darkrai explained. "You are fully lucid and able to perceive the realm below."

"Wait. So this is hell?!" Blind gasped.

"That's the crass mortal term for it." Darkrai nodded. "It's not a world of suffering and death, but one beyond your understanding. Some of your kind would refer to it as abstract, others as liminal."

"So... it's a place that doesn't make sense." She noted.

"One location can take many different forms. Pathways twist and overlap and end with no explanation." Darkrai said. "And then you arrive here. At the mirror, which reflects your past self back at you."

"I haven't seen him in a while." Blind muttered.

"If you were curious, the realm above is the same way, but where these worlds are dark, they are bright." Darkrai smirked. "Too bright for me. I prefer it down here."

"It's quiet too." Blind said.

"...Yes. It's calming to me." Darkrai smiled. "Did you want to see your old self?"

"If you're fine with it." Blind nodded.

Darkrai took her by the paw, and led her through the dark wasteland.

In less than a minute, the two stood in front of the mirror.

Blind's past self was in the reflection, and Darkrai was not.

He smiled up at her.

"Hey! Are you doing okay?" He asked. "It's been a while."

"Kinda." Blind shrugged. "I nearly froze to death but I think I've been rescued."

"You have." Darkrai said.

"Yeah." Blind smiled. "So I'm gonna be okay."

"That sounds really scary." Other Blind frowned. "I'm glad you're okay, though."

"Yeah, me too." Blind sighed. "It was awful. How are you holding up?"

"I'm just fine." Other Blind smiled. "Nothing really changes on this side of the mirror. It's okay, though. It's peaceful."

"Sounds boring." Blind frowned.

"Uh... not really." Other Blind said. "A lot of the time I'm not really... all here, anyway."

She slowly nodded.

"Ah. Yeah. Sorry about... all of that." Blind sighed. "Life was really hard for you."

"It was, but that was forever ago. I've come to peace with it." Other Blind said. "I've been here for a long time. A really long time."

"I wish there was something I could do." Blind whined.

"There is." Darkrai said.

She looked up at Darkrai. The dark wasteland got even darker until the world comprised of just the two.

"NOBLE will come to kill you to claim the last shard." Darkrai said. "When it does, you have to run here to the deepest pit of hell. Then your destiny will finally greet you."

Blind nodded.

"I underst-"

Chapter 8

Blind woke up. This time, she remembered the dream with Darkrai, but most of it was hazy. She remembered it explaining that they fought when it gave her its Black Shard.

She remembered that what was culturally known as hell to her was actually a strange abstract world called The Realm Below. Heaven was the same too. The Realm Above.

NOBLE would chase her down for the last Fist Shard for some reason and kill her. She had to find a way down there while she was still awake.

A tall ask, but... maybe that's what the Black Shards are for. Why she keeps bumping into dark type legends.

Whatever plan someone had set in motion for her, it seemed to still firmly be on its rails.

Wherever that led, she wanted to be there. She wanted to meet what destiny awaited her.

Ugh. Time to actually get up.

Blind tried to move and found herself way too tired and sore to even lift a paw.

Never mind. Maybe nearly freezing to death was more taxing than she gave credit for.

Hearing her strain, Chien-Pao strolled into the room.

"You're awake." Chien-Pao said.

"Yeah." Blind muttered. "But I can't move."

"You did a very brave thing, Blind." Chien-Pao smiled. "Fighting alone against an impossible threat? You have all the makings of a hero."

"No, I was just in the right place at the right time with the right move." Blind sighed. "If Arcanine had my scarf, he would've taken care of it right away."

"And yet that trait is what heroes are most defined by, isn't it? Luck." Chien-Pao chuckled. "You deserve the credit for the sheer audacity alone."

"Whatever." Blind grunted.

"As you might expect, I have a gift for you." Chien-Pao said.

It set down an ornate wooden box on the bed where Blind could see it and opened it up. Inside was an onyx black leather cuff inlaid with a round rainbow gem, which contained a flame like emblem that gently swayed side to side. In front of the cuff were three incredibly rare, beautifully polished crystals.

Gardevoirite, Lucarionite and Absolite.

And of course, another teardrop shaped Black Shard sat behind it all.

"Whoa. Are you sure?" Blind asked. "These are like... super expensive. You'd be a millionaire if you sold them!"

"Money is just a distraction." Chien-Pao scoffed. "Nothing on Violar is worth more to me than my peace and my comfort. I have that here."

"I'll take good care of them." Blind smiled.

"As long as you use them when the time is right." Chien-Pao laughed.

It walked away, letting her recover more.

Θ - - - - - Ο

Arcanine peeked into the room where Blind and Luxray slept before walking back to the dining table where the rest of the slapped together rescue team sat with Chien-Pao and Abomasnow.

Abomasnow stared at the table, struggling to cope with the weight of what happened.

The conversation continued now that Arcanine was back. Braixen slid her glasses back up her snout.

"So you're saying the process of Mega Evolution without a stabilising force causes a form of violent psychosis." Braixen said.

"That's correct." Chien-Pao nodded. "It's a horribly traumatic experience of course, so I expect that will be taken into account when dealing with Abomasnow."

"Obviously." Arcanine nodded. "Our duty is to help, not to condemn."

"Good." Chien-Pao said. "I'll summarise this information for the detective too."

"How is she, anyway?" Arcanine asked.

"She was very lucky you found her when you did." Chien-Pao sighed. "She'll make a full recovery but it's doubtful that she'll be able to make the return trip with you."

"I don't want to just leave her here." Arcanine muttered.

"We don't have a choice." Braixen shrugged. "Alakazam will meet with her family to tell them she's okay. Nothing more we can really do here."

"It's not like she's in any danger here." Aromatisse assured. "You'll take care of her, right?"

"To the best of my ability, on my honour as a legendary." Chien-Pao smiled.

Arcanine grumbled.

"Alright, we'll set off when we're ready." He said.

"I wish you good luck and a safe journey." Chien-Pao nodded. "The mountains are peaceful again, so the trip down will be far from perilous."

"Thank fuck." Braixen muttered under her breath.

Θ - - - - - Ο

Blind laid in front of the roaring fireplace, sprawled out on her back.

"Hey, can we talk?" She asked.

Luxray looked up, doing much the same, just further away from the fire.

"Sure, what's on your mind?" He replied.

"So... about all that stuff I said..." She whined.

"...Oh, um." Luxray blushed. "Look, it was stressful up there. I understand if you said something you didn't really mean."

"I don't like you, and I think you're a fucking moron." Blind huffed.

Luxray slowly looked down.

"But... I don't know. Maybe we could be friends." Blind muttered.
"Like... If maybe you wanted to get a coffee sometime..."

"I'd like that." Luxray smiled. "But no pressure if you decide that it was just altitude delirium."

Blind grunted.

Unfortunately for her, he was still hot. She thought about him blasting an incredibly powerful thunderbolt and how the air crackled from the Electric Terrain.

She thought about how strong and huge he was, how he towered over her and how easily he could-

"Yeah, don't worry. I'm thinking about it." Blind snickered.

"How are you feeling, anyway?" Luxray asked. "Is the medicine helping?"

"Yeah, mostly." Blind shrugged. "I'm pretty much fine now."

"Oh, good. Chien-Pao said that it got someone to escort you somewhere more comfortable, too." Luxray said.

"I wonder who." Blind said. "Probably someone I know, right?"

"I would presume so." Luxray nodded.

The two went back to laying on their backs and enjoying the fire.

Θ - - - - - Ο

Blind stretched out, wandering towards the conversation between familiar voices.

"She's remarkably tough." Chien-Pao said. "Her recovery has gone well but I thought it was best for her to rest further under your care."

"Thank you." Dia said. "It means a lot to me that you think so."

"Mom?" Blind asked.

Dia looked over and pulled her daughter close into a psychic hug.

"Hey! There you are." She smiled. "You really scared all of us, you know?"

"I know, but I did what I had to." Blind whined.

"I understand that more than anyone else." Dia sighed. "I'm very, very proud of you."

Blind leaned against her, comfortable.

"Thank you for everything you've done." Chien-Pao smiled. "Please write if you ever need my assistance."

"You're really not like everyone says." Blind laughed. "You're really sweet."

"You know what they say about assumptions." Chien-Pao laughed back. "Safe travels."

"You ready to go?" Dia asked.

"Yeah, I got everything." Blind nodded. "So... how are we going home? We're not walking, are we?"

Dia pulled a sparkling Teleport Gem.

"Alakazam and Metagross helped me create this as a favour." Dia smiled. "It'll take us back to Jewel right away."

"Is that safe?" Blind asked.

"I wouldn't have suggested it if I wasn't completely sure." Dia nodded.

"Alright... Let's go." Blind winced.

She climbed onto Dia's back. As Dia focused, her eyes and forehead gem shone with the Teleport Gem and the two warped away.

Chapter 9

The two landed in the living room of Dia and Silver's home in Jewel City. Blind wobbled around as she got off Dia and collapsed on a lounge.

"Sorry about the mess." Dia apologised. "I really should clean more often."

By mess she meant a few unwashed mugs on the coffee table and a few stacks of books here and there.

"It's fine." Blind groaned.

"The nausea will wear off soon." Dia said. "Would you care for some coffee? I put on a fresh pot before I left."

"Yeah, sure." Blind nodded. "So what have you been up to?"

"I've been enjoying my retirement." Dia giggled. "To pass the time I volunteer at the city library. It's a fun job, and my skills transfer very well."

"Volunteer, huh." Blind laughed. "I'm surprised they don't hire you outright."

"I turned it down when they tried." Dia laughed back. "I want my free time, but when I am working I usually have the sorting done in minutes."

"Not nearly half as messy as Zoroark's reports, huh?" Blind grinned.

"Oh, you don't know the half of it." Dia sighed, remembering the exasperation. "It was important work but it was maybe the most dull thing I've ever had to do."

"Day in, day out." Blind said.

"Now I have so much time I barely know what to do with it." Dia said, returning with a hot pot of coffee, a jug of milk and a bowl of sugar cubes. "Reading has been nice, and I've been helping Silver document its tribe's history and culture. Us two and that one helpful journalist, Horatio."

"Horteno." Blind said.

"Right. Horteno." Dia smiled. "That was it. Odd fellow but very friendly. Helped us track down some documents the Rock Horns shared with other tribes long ago."

"That's great." Blind smiled. "I do wanna know more about uh... about us."

"Oh! Yeah!" Dia gasped. "I forgot to mention that I read your interview."

"Fuck, I forgot all about it." Blind said. "What do you think? Did I look good?"

"Yes you do." Dia nodded. "You came off as smart and educated."

"I guess I owe you for that after all." Blind muttered. "You taught me how to focus on important stuff, what to look out for when investigating. It's everything I needed to even have my job."

"Oh, well..." Dia smiled. "Thank you, but you really don't need to give me that credit. Your perceptiveness is your own strength, I merely gave you some pointers."

"I guess." Blind shrugged. "But you still taught me plenty. Even if it was as my boss, not a mother."

Dia looked away.

"I did want to bring up that topic too." She mumbled. "I want to say something, even if it comes off rather poorly on me."

Blind tilted her head.

"I'm sorry about Honchkrow." Dia continued. "I wish I got to thank her for spending the time I didn't to raise you."

"She was great." Blind whispered. "I don't remember much but she always made sure that I was cared for. It was probably a nightmare to raise a kid that doesn't act anything like you."

"Um..." Dia muttered. "Do you...?"

Blind looked Dia dead in the eyes. She didn't try to pull away.

"Do you think she hated me for giving you up?" Dia asked, twitching from how tense she was.

"I don't think so." Blind sighed. "She probably would've wanted you to take responsibility, but she didn't regret it."

"I... I see." Dia said, taking a long breath out. "Thank you for being honest."

"You want to make up the difference to Honchkrow, do something for her daughter Diva." Blind said. "She loved her every bit as me."

"I'll figure something out for her." Dia nodded. "I'm... aware that the two of you are close."

"It's a long story and it's not weird." Blind bristled. "We barely knew each other back then, and never really saw each other as family."

"You don't have to justify anything to me." Dia giggled. "If she makes you happy, that's good enough for me."

"Uh. Yeah, she does." Blind blushed. "I like how she spoils me. It makes me feel really wanted."

"I know what you mean." Dia nodded. "Your father makes me feel the same way."

"It really seems like you two don't spend that much time together." Blind noted. "Especially since it's always up there with Titanium."

"I suppose it does look like that." Dia shrugged. "We're both the type to go days without talking so spending time apart doesn't bother us, especially since we cuddle a ton when we are in the same place. Sometimes it comes back here, sometimes I go up there. It really depends on how we each feel."

"I see." Blind nodded. "Rotom's kinda like that too. She's quiet and a little cranky during the day but super cute and cuddly at night."

"She, now?" Dia smiled, raising an eyebrow.

"Yeah, she finally came out." Blind laughed. "You called it."

"It's like I'm psychic or something." Dia laughed back.

Θ - - - - - O

NOBLE clutched at its arm. One nasty slash had torn most of it off, and what was left was hanging only by a wire.

Zacian stared NOBLE down and held her blade tighter. Challenging it to try again.

NOBLE cried out and ripped the arm off entirely to stop the distraction. Zacian's eyes widened and that moment was all it took.

Weapons clashed again, and this time Zacian lost. She dropped her sword, reverting back to her weaker form.

"So you truly are as strong as you say." She said. "Few can go against both me and my brother at once and win."

Zamazenta panted, still lying on the ground.

"Your strength is unmatched but you lack discipline." He said. "Drop this quest of yours and become our pupil. You could become the strongest Pokemon there is, and have no need to prove yourself worthy."

"I didn't ask for your opinion." NOBLE seethed.

"I'm sorry for injuring you." Zacian bowed respectfully. "Is that repairable?"

"It is, but it won't be quick." NOBLE said. "I'll need to find more metal, too."

"We can get some for you." Zamazenta suggested.

"What are you two playing at?" NOBLE growled. "Do you really think I'd trust you, knowing that you all fight to near death to stop me?"

"...Near death?" Zacian asked, tilting her head.

"I'm far from that weak." Zamazenta added. "I can still walk, I'm just resting."

"You-" NOBLE started before cutting itself off instantly. "Don't mock me. I'm not going to stop until every single one of you is a stain on my blade."

"Be that as it may, we have a sworn duty as knights to uphold our honour." Zacian said firmly. "I insist you rest, and we'll bring you what you need to recover."

NOBLE snarled, taking a step back.

"I'm not falling for it. You're going to kill me when my guard's down." It muttered. "You'd be stupid not to."

"You don't believe that." Zamazenta grunted, finally standing up. "That may have been how it was on Old Violar, but this world is more than domination and violence. You've proven that."

"If you didn't believe that those you've bested won't seek revenge, why have you refused to take a soul?" Zacian asked. "You don't have to spin lies to deny yourself the possibility that you are in fact, noble like your name implies."

NOBLE took another step back.

"Fuck you." It growled. "Give me my shards and LEAVE ME THE FUCK ALONE!"

"So be it." Zacian and Zamazenta said in tandem, giving up their shards together.

NOBLE grabbed them and its severed arm, limping away.

"I just can't help but worry." Zamazenta frowned. "If we fell, the Swords of Justice stand no chance either. It will get its wish and kill us all."

"I know." Zacian sighed. "But Prismus has allowed this to happen. She made sure that the mortal was prepared to play her part in it."

"Violarus was never so difficult to read as she is." Zamazenta growled. "Insidious as it was, you could trust it to be predictable."

"Truer words have never been spoken." Zacian scoffed. "We fought admirably, so let's go rest."

"Truer words." Zamazenta chuckled.

Θ - - - - - O

The excitement in the air at the outdoor cafe table was palpable. Blind couldn't even stop herself from smiling long enough to take a sip of her coffee.

Lucario and Gardevoir sat across from her, holding hands under the table and wondering what Blind was so happy about.

"Ah, I can't guess any more!" Lucario howled. "Come on, spill!"

"Alright, alright. Check this shit out." Blind grinned.

She opened the box and showed off the rare gemstones inside.

"Whoa. No way." Lucario gasped.

"Are those all real?" Gardevoir asked.

"Sure are." Blind winked. "Go ahead, take a feel."

Lucario very carefully picked up the Gardevoirite, feeling its surprising weight. She sensed its latent power with her aura.

"That's real. That's actually real." She muttered, amazed.

"That's incredible." Gardevoir whispered. "Where did you even get this?"

"Gift for saving the world." Blind laughed. "So... I kind of have a favour to ask."

"Sure, what is it?" Lucario said.

"It's guaranteed at this point that NOBLE the killer robot's going to try and hunt me down and kill me." Blind explained. "I'm going to try and ambush it and lead it somewhere it won't be able to come back from. I want you two to be there to back me up, with these. My cuff here will keep you from losing it while you go mega."

Gardevoir thought deeply. Lucario folded her arms and sighed.

"What do you think?" She asked.

"I want to. It's risky, but we can't sit by do nothing." Gardevoir nodded. "We'll do it."

"You gonna get Absol in too?" Lucario said. "That's a hard sell."

"I think I can." Blind nodded. "She's usually up for a good fight."

"Good luck." Gardevoir sighed. "I remember she was impossible to talk to, but you two always got along on account of your shared incident."

"Yeah. Plus, Shinx and I write all the time." Blind smiled. "Nothing to worry about."

She took a long drink of her coffee.

It really was nothing to worry about, right?

The End