

Feeling Rejuvenated

Meet Existentialists Whom Hearten. This letter is addressed to whosoever decides to read it. Sometimes, you just run out of luck. Perhaps some higher being hates you, or maybe the misfortune is brought upon yourself. Other times, the misfortune is purely happenstance.

However, there is one constant in this world: all paths lead to the same destination. No matter what choices one may make, the crossroads of fate ensure that these actions will always reach the same conclusion, regardless of the circumstance. This is how the world works, and how it will always work, for that is what has given stability to existence.

And yet, there exist individuals who seek to rebel against these laws of reality, desperate for the chance to decide their own fate. Fools, the lot of them are, insignificant as a speck of dust is to a great mighty mountain. However, if enough specks of dust move, even a mountain will notice. This is when the world brings down the hammer upon those who would disrupt the flow of fate. One being, it always was, who was the Judge, the Jury, and the Executioner, who would decide the worthiness of the world, and bring it and everything on it to either salvation or damnation, whichever it saw fit, according to the will of the crossroads of fate. However tragic, we live in a time where this being must take action.

So rebel, fight, scream, shout as much as you like, for your fate has already been decided. Or perhaps cry, hide, and cower, then embrace the inevitability. Either way may Arceus have mercy on our souls, for that is our only hope.

“Mommy! Mommy! Can you tell me the Story of the Pangoro and the Zorua again?” an eager young girl exclaimed, bouncing on her bed, excited to hear her favorite tale once more. “Haha, alright, i will.” the older lady said, as she took a deep breath, as she saw her daughter settle down. “There was once a Zorua living deep in the darkest of forests. He was a mischievous one, transforming into other Pokemon and beings that lived around. He would often use this ability to trick others into handing him food, or using their homes to sleep in. because of this, he didn’t have many friends. I’m sure you can piece together why?” The Mother began recalling the tale, and seeing her daughter’s smile only warmed her heart.

“But one day this changed when Zorua met a powerfu pokemon named “Pangoro.” it was when the two of them were fighting over a rare and coveted fruit: a Golden Apple. Many hours later, their fight came to an end, and no victor was revealed. They knew they were evenly

matched, one could not take out the other. With both staring at each other intensely, they knew that they were destined for friendship. The two became quick companions, peas in a pod, if you will." The daughter was resting her head on her palms in anticipation, quietly listening to the yarn her mother was spinning. "They travelled the world together, overcame hardships, and went on thrilling adventures together! Life was good for the two of them. Until one day, Zorua went too far..." the Mother paused for dramatic effect, for she had told this story dozens of times. She needed a bit of variety, lest her daughter grow bored of it.

The Mother continued "Zorua planned a devious prank on Pangoro. "I shall transform into Pangoro's fallen mother! That would surely give him a spook!" the Zorua exclaimed. "It'll be my best prank yet!" the eager little fox shouted out. So while Pangoro was looking for food, the Zorua sprung his malicious little plan into action. When Pangoro returned home, he was greeted with the sight of his dearly departed mother. Stunned with a mixture of all sorts of emotions, Pangoro dropped his collection of food to the ground. In that collection of food was..." the Mother trailed off. "A Golden Apple!" her daughter exclaimed in her excitement. "Haha, yes! That's right, a Golden Apple. When Zorua saw this, he returned to his normal state, looked down at his food, and said..." "Hey! Where did you find this Golden Apple? It looks fresh and incredibly delicious!" but the Zorua raised his head to see a face of fury, sorrow, but most importantly, disappointment. Zorua quickly realized he hurt Pangoro very deeply and tried to apologize, but Pangoro wouldn't have any of it and ran into the forest. Shaken and worried, Zorua ran after him, but Pangoro was nowhere to be found. Zorua finally realized he had repelled his only friend with his selfishness. And thus, he became lonely once more. Sleep tight, Maria." The Mother said, as she kissed her daughter on the forehead.

It was the dawn of a new day, and Maria awoke in her bed. The gentle morning light shone through her curtains, as the morning was getting ready for new adventures. Yawning and stretching, Maria groggily got out of bed, heading downstairs, to where her mother and father were. As she entered the main living room, Maria couldn't help but excitedly exclaim "Mommy! I'm up! I'm up!" a swift look around to the room showed that her mother was standing at the stove, apron on, flipping pancakes. Clearly, breakfast was going to be in order, soon. "Ah! Good morning, Maria! Did you sleep well? Food's almost ready, so do you mind fetching your father? He's working in his study right now. Don't take too long! I don't want his food to get cold!" Maria's Mother explained while flipping another pancake and adding it to the growing stack in a singular, fluid, well practiced motion. Maria gave a sloppy, mock salute "You can count on me, mommy!" as she ran off to go fetch her Father.

As Maria walked over to her Father's Study, there were two things that grabbed her attention. The first was the usual suspect, the portrait of her family. Maria was sitting on a chair with a wide smile as her parents were standing behind it, looking proud. The day this painting was made will always be a fond memory of Maria's. The second thing that caught her eye was a

pamphlet sitting on the coffee table. Out of curiosity, Maria picked it up, reading it "Excited? Kugearen City is being built as we speak! A new glimmer of hope! Straight from the hearts and minds of the Blakeory Corporation!" Maria could only roll her eyes at this pamphlet. However, something about the name "Kugearen City" sounded familiar to her. Oh well, her mother was getting impatient, so thought Maria.

When Maria approached her father's study, her naturally curious eye drifted over to the door next to his study. It was open, for the first time since she could remember. And when a curious mind sees a new opening they haven't before, they enter it. Within the room, there were the typical features of the rest of the house. A table, a couple chairs, a book case, and a couple paintings hanging on the wall. But one thing that drew Maria's attention the most was the flight of stairs leading below, into a basement she never saw, nor knew existed. And this flight of stairs sat there, almost calling to her. Maria stopped herself from going down them after slowly approaching it, like a moth to a flame "No. I...I'm not allowed here. B-but maybe a quick peek wouldn't hurt? Yeah, it wouldn't Adventure, here i come!" Maria bravely exclaimed, as she walked down those mysterious stairs with gusto.

At the bottom of the mysterious steps wasn't much to be seen, only a hallway, with very little decor. There was a room to the right, and a large table at the end of the hallway with some books on it. Seeing nothing better to do, Maria picked up one of the books on the table, leafing through it. The images she saw only frightened and horrified her young mind with each new page. Drawings depicting the supposed end of the world, strange creatures with even more alien powers, these were only the tip of the iceberg of what she saw in that book. Quickly, Maria slammed the book shut and ran into the room to the right, hoping, praying that it would have something much less frightening, like a Pangoro Plushie, or anything else! But no, what she saw in the room terrified her more than anything in the book: it was an altar, with strange markings on it. But, she knew this was an Altar meant for sacrifices. Exactly *who or what* those Sacrifices would be, she did not dwell upon, for Maria needed to escape from this terrifying basement and never think about it ever again. And so she did.

Upon escaping the terrifying basement, Maria remembered her original intent of going this direction, to pick up her father for breakfast. A welcome distraction from what she just saw, she mused. As she entered her Father's Study, she ran into him with a flying tackle hug "Ooof, ahaha, good morning Marian-...Maria!" her father would wheeze out before regaining his composure. "How are you doing?" to that, his Daughter would only respond with a cheeky grin "Mom said breakfast is ready, so get your butt out of this room and have some good food!" Maria's father would smile and shake his head "Ah, i do love your Mother's cooking! Alright, i'll be out in a few minutes, there's something i need to finish first. You know, the usual business stuff. Go tell your mother that, y'hear?" once again, Maria would give the sloppy mock salute with cheeky grin that her parents grew so intimately familiar with and ran out of the room.

Maria would dash across the hall over to the Dining area, to where her beloved mother was. "Dad said he'll be right out!" she exclaimed excitedly, eager for some food. "Did he now?"

Well, there's no sense in rushing him, i guess." Her mother mused aloud. "You should go upstairs and freshen up. I'll have your breakfast ready by then." Upon hearing that, Maria dashed upstairs to get ready for the rest of the day, Brushing her blonde hair, brushing her teeth, and changing out of her pjamas into her regular clothes: a simple blouse and small dress with tights. "Perfect!" she exclaimed hapilly, upon looking in the mirror. However, once she was done, her head began reeling, and her stomach began cramping. She had a feeling... like something was *wrong*, so horribly horribly *wrong*. Immediatly after, she was brought from her thoughts to the sound of glass breaking. The sound came from downstairs, where her mother was "Mom?! Mommy?"

With much worry and trepidation, Maria ran downstairs "Please be okay, please be okay!" with a wide view of the main living room, she couldn't see her mother, so she thought on calling out to her. "Mommy? Mom-" but there was no mother of hers to be found. Maria stood face to face with a tall armored woman wearing a mask and a red cape. "Who...are you?" Maria said, as she cautiously apporached this woman. "How many times?" the masked woman said, with a hint of anger in her voice. "Wh-what?" trusting her instincts, Maria stepped back. "How many times are you going to make this little girl suffer? How many times are you willing to put her through this chaos?!" it seemed clear from the woman's words that they weren't directed at her, but Maria couldn't help but cower back "I..i'm...i don't know what you're talking about..." But the woman would quickly respond, with a less enraged tone "I'm not talking to you." was the simple and terse response Maria got. "O-oh...well, do... you know where my parents are?"

The Woman was silent for a moment, contemplating her answer. "They're Downstairs." She frowned at this moment, as this was the last answer Maria had wanted to hear, considering what she saw not even a few minutes ago. "Oh...! Okay, well...i'm going to go to them now..." Maria said, faking her usual enthusiasm. As she was walking away, the Masked Woman would call out after her "Maria." "Yes?..." "No matter what happens, don't you dare lose hope. Don't lose who you are and don't you dare forget what's about to happen. You understand?" Maria could only give a frightened response "Y-yes, i understand!" "Good. now go to them. They're waiting." and so, for the second time this morning, Maria would enter the basement that terrified her so.

With a deep breath, and much trepidation, Maria entered the Altar room. Whatever was happening there, would change her life, no doubt...

What Maria saw was worse than she could imagine. Her mother was laying on the Altar, still, perhaps even dead, with blood staining her clothes. She could not identify where the blood was coming from, but Maria could only assume it was her mother's. "Mommy!!" Maria could only cry out, in anguish, surprise, and most of all, denial. "What are you doing Mommy?! Wake up! Mommy, wake up! Mommy, wake up!" Maria was desperately prodding and shaking her mother's corpse, trying to get a reaction, any reaction. Her father began to pull her back, restraining her "Daddy, get out of the way! Get out!" Maria's desperation only increased "Why won't you say anything to me?! Why?!" Maria was shouting at this moment, for her perfect world

was crashing down upon her. "Marianette, your father wishes to see you now." a mysterious voice echoed through this room. "What...are you talking about? Marian...ette?" Despair with a side of confusion, this perfect morning turned out to be a Disaster for young Maria. the mysterious voice would only repeat what it said "Marianette, your Father wishes to see you now." and Poor Maria's vision would blur and go white, as what would happen when one looks into a bright light.

"Marianette!" the maid standing behind her had finally managed to break young Marianette out of her little daydream in front of the mirror. "What?!" the maid would simply respond "Now, for the fifth time, Marianette, your Father is waiting for you in the East Wing. you're making him wait longer than he has time for. So get to it." being abruptly awoken from her daydream...or was it a memory? Marianette could only respond in confusion "Wh-What? What am i doing here again?" The maid would simply respond, in the same monotonous speech all the others shared "Marianette, i won't say it again. Just hurry along then." still reeling in confusion, Marianette could only respond with "M-my name's not Marianette, it's Maria..." while the maid hurried out of the room.

A cursory glance showed the room to be more barebones than the house in her memory...or was it a daydream? Marianette wouldn't know for sure. It was simple architecture, with light orange brick walls, a grey tile floor, and pillars helping to support the roof. The only Decor in the room were three torches, a Mirror, a Zorua plushie, a Pangoro plushie, and finally a large amount of lit candles near the room's exit. With nothing better to do, Maria could only follow the Maid to the East Wing.

In the East wing, the room was a small raised plateau above a pool of water, with a bizarre design on the ground in black tiles, that resembled an upside down "W" with a Circle at the top. In the middle of that circle was once again a sacrificial altar. Maids stood, flanking both sides of the room. One Maid stood on the altar, with Marianette's father chanting something in a bizarre language. However, there was only one question on young Marianette's Mind: "Where's my Mom?!" her Father stopped his chanting to respond to his daughter's question "Mommy is sleeping with our Lord now, Marianette." Fed up with everyone calling her "Marianette," Marianette would yell out "Stop calling me Marianette! It's Maria!" her father could only shake his head, and respond in a dissapointed tone "What's with the disrespect? Your name is no longer Maria. Now, as i was initially planning to do-" he was abruptly interrupted by the Maid standing on the altar "No need for explanation, sir. Demonstration may be the key to this girl's mind." pausing a moment to think, Maria's father could only nod in approval "Hmph. very well. *Arceus! Capremdum Garuganisu oro'u ma! A'd serbus L'orufogeo!*" he shouted, raising his hands in a reverent manner. The moment he was complete, the maid dissapited, every particle of hers dissolving into the ether.

Maria could only look on in horror. Was this what her father had planned for her? "She's gone now, Marianette. She is with the lord now. She won't need to suffer the calamity that soon befalls this earth. Marianette, it is your turn now." Maria's father spoke with an even tone, as if

he had prepared for this moment for a long, long time. “No...no, you can’t make me do it...” Maria shook her head. Now was the time to flee, she thought. “Tsk, Maids, bring Marianette to the Altar.” and in less time than it takes one to blink, two maids already had Marianette restrained, having her set upon the altar, hands and feet bound. Maria Struggled against the two, bit to no avail, for she was only a child.

She could only turn to her father in anger. “You said the same to my mommy! She’s gone because of you!” but to no avail. The path was set in stone from the very beginning, this was what the crossroads of fate meant for her. “Enough, Maria. Go with dignity.” Maria’s father almost looked ashamed. “I don’t want this! Let me go!” Maria shouted one last time. However, her father had already begun the chant. “*Arceus! Capremdum Garuganisu oro’u ma! A’d serbus L’orufogeo!*” once again, his hands raised in a reverent manner. “I hate you, i hate you! Someone! Please don’t let him do this to me! Someone, please help me! Mommy!...please....” and all went dark.

Next Chapter: [Chapter 1: To Aevium!](#)