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Chip for reference:



Creature...

Two birds of a feather

A story about AncientDandelionShipping

Across the seas and skies, here I come, Paldea!

This story is about a fellow professor of a faraway, mostly unknown region. Their name was Chip, and they resided in a region called Eievuis. Such a magical place it was, the original

home of Eevee, the island's power allowing it to evolve into a vast variety of evolutions. Even long-forgotten climate variations and legends roamed the land, protecting the island and its peace. Most of the land's population was the Veevee family, being worshipped by the humans who lived with them. These tribes didn't use Veevees for battling; instead, they were their most precious pets and partners, ruling the land together!

But a few hundred years ago, tragedy struck. Outsiders broke into the region, raiding all its towns and villages, kidnapping as many Eevees and their evolutions as possible, and mass breeding them to spread them all over the world, whilst also experimenting on them and their DNA. The region's legendary, worshipped as the "mother of all Pokémon," or so people there believed, closed up the region to protect it. The fog rose, blocking anyone from getting in or out, slowing time for the region in the process.

But the land's people never forgot. Another evil team rose up, which invaded all of the stranger regions, stealing thousands of Veevees back, even those that were caught by trainers already. The legendary Constelleon called upon a foreign trainer to restore peace in the region and world. But that's a different story to tell.

Chip is very dependent on their home region; they can't help but feel like they would be betraying everyone if they ever left, especially after all that happened. They were there to witness it all, despite it being hundreds of years apart. The reason for that was the region's odd sense of time slowing down both theirs and everyone else's ageing. They couldn't just leave, though maybe they just wanted to stay out of spite since their family had left them. It's been nearly 5 years since the fog disappeared and the region reappeared to the outside world once again. Chip and the entire region had a lot to catch up on when it came to technology. Being practically stuck in time for hundreds of years with no contact with the outside world was detrimental.

Chip was sitting at the beach, drawing on their tablet as waves crashed onto the shore. Their parents took the opportunity to leave the island the second it was possible, leaving Chip behind. They happened to become The Professor as the previous one granted them the position a little while after the fog disappeared. They moved into the lab shortly after, the place having a house connected to it where Chip would live.

"Mrrrrrr..."

"Hm?" Chip looked at their Vaporeon as it leaned against them, rubbing its face into their shoulder. "Time to go? Alright." They lazily got up and dusted themselves off before slowly walking back home, their Vaporeon happily following them. The region's main lab was located in their hometown, making it a hotspot for all kinds of people and Veevees alike. They sat down at their desk and recklessly placed their tablet on its surface, letting out a loud huff, 'I hate walking. Finally, we can sit and rest.' they thought to themselves. Their office was messy; one corner was used for their mobility aids, and that was probably the only decently well-kept part of the room. Papers everywhere, equipment stacked up, the room was hard to breathe in as Chip often forgot to open the window. But it was comfortable; they wanted their office to feel nice, so there were always pillows or emergency blankets all over the place.

Their peace was quickly interrupted as their assistant came into the office, "Miss, someone from overseas wants to see you." She smiled.

Chip mentally groaned, "I see... May I ask who?" Their voice was all of a sudden significantly quieter now. Their partner, a Vaporeon named Cora, swiftly brought them their

crutches, making sure they had a good grip on them. "Good girl." Chip smiled as they pulled themselves onto their feet.

The assistant hummed as she thought for a moment. "I'm not entirely sure, but he says he has an irresistible offer for you?" Chip squinted. "It better be a brand new Veevee, cause if it's not that then we have a *vastly* different idea of what an irresistible deal is." They only got a chuckle from the assistant.

Chip made their way into the main hall; Cora led them to a couch where they sat down. After a while of waiting, a young professor approached them, and Chip got up to greet him. He introduced himself as Professor Malve from a faraway region.

"And you must be Professor Chip, correct? Or would you prefer a different name right about now?" Chip smiled shyly, using their hands to sign 'Chip is fine regardless of who I am'. Malve blinked, trying his best to sign 'deaf?'. Chip stared at him for a moment. They literally answered one of his questions; how would they not be able to understand? Oh well. Chip shook their head, 'Speech problems, what did you want to tell me?'. Malve smiled and began explaining a job offer of traveling all over the world, studying Eevees individually within said regions. Their history, how they evolved, et cetera.

"Isn't it a dream come true to have an opportunity to visit any place within the world, free of charge, may I add... learning something new about the Pokémon you studied your whole life?" Chip's expression remained unfazed, they signed 'I see... no— not really. It's a great offer, no offense, but I don't know if I'm interested in leaving. Especially since I became a professor barely 5 years ago.'

They weren't exactly interested in leaving their home, their so-called comfort zone. The professor hummed, giving them his number, "Let's see if you'll change your mind, but remember! You only have time till morning!" he gave them a cheeky smile. "It's always good to try out new things." he said as he walked away, leaving the building.

Chip casually returned to their office, shoving the letter into their pocket to possibly forget about in 2 hours. Their assistant was in their office the entire time. She greeted Chip again, setting a fresh cup of tea on the desk in front of them, "So? What was it?"

Chip muttered, leaning forward in their chair, "An offer to explore... the 'outside world'!" They threw their hands in the air dramatically. "I declined it..." They proceeded to pick up the teacup. They were slightly surprised to hear their assistant's reply, "What? Why? That's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, no?". Chip was silent for a moment, looking away before explaining their reasons. "It— it's not for me. Plus like... the food— I heard everything is different anywhere else, I don't know how I'd adjust to that. And it's just too much change at once.", Chip's assistant reassured them, but telling them that in the end it's their decision to make.

Chip was once again sitting outside, on a bench swing, watching the sunset. Their Pokémon, an Espeon named Mirri, lay beside them, resting peacefully. Chip pulled out the piece of paper with the numbers again. Usually, by now, they would have forgotten about it, but that seemed to be impossible with this in particular. They huffed, tapping their foot against the ground, "This is torture—". Their Espeon noticed their movements and raised her head to look at them, then started sniffing the note. Chip watched her as she carefully observed the note, considering it, "Hm? What do you think, Mirri?"

"Espil!" Mirri chirped, swinging her tail slowly. "Oh, absolutely not." Chip dismissed the idea once again, which upset Mirri. "Esp-ee! Esp!" she growled softly as she tugged on Chip's coat, not too hard, but not gentle. "Hey, cut it out!" Chip tried to get her to let go, only for Mirri

to hiss at them. Chip mumbled something to themselves before sighing, finally giving in, "Fine, fine... I'll consider it. Happy?", "Espel".

Mirri and Chip ended up going home. As Chip lay in bed, Cora resting around their legs, Chip thought to themselves. Talking in their mind, many voices interrupted each other. Maybe it's the thrill to meet new people, catch new Pokémon, learn about other cultures, or maybe... just maybe they'll meet someone special. The voices slowly got quieter as they fell asleep.

The next day, as Chip was waiting for their hot chocolate, they contemplated texting the number. Being afraid to show interest, because it felt embarrassing to change their mind like this. They sighed, gathering courage. They wanted to show their family that they can be happy without them.

They texted the number from the letter and received a pretty cheerful 'Hello!' Yep, that was Malve. "Hi, professor. I want to take on the offer." They inhaled, waiting for his answer. After a few seconds, they saw a reply, "I knew you'd come back eventually. Happy to hear that you're interested! I promise you won't regret it." Chip shuddered, feeling embarrassed that they forgot his name already, "So what do I do now?", "Ah, yes... please be by the main deck at 9 pm. You'll be gone for a long time, so bring as much as possible. Don't worry, your things will be nice and secure on the ship! Plus, you'll be given some money to start with to take care of groceries and other necessities." Chip could almost feel his cheerfulness through the phone. They thanked him and turned off their phone.

They had their mediocre breakfast and bought themselves some of their safe foods just in case they got hungry on the way, and during the afternoon, they finally started packing. Their Eeveelutions helped them not forget anything.

"Okay, let's see... two suitcases for the clothes... one suitcase for the plushies and hobby stuff... all my meds and electronics are in my backpack. Mobility aids... food bag— I think we're good to go! Hopefully I'm not forgetting anything." They were out of breath by the time they were done, having to lie down as they got pretty motion sick.

"Mrr?" Cora jumped on the bed, inspecting Chip. Chip huffed as they stared into the ceiling, taking deep breaths. Cora purred as she rested beside them, occasionally licking their face to help with the sickness. After around 30 minutes of lying down, they finally got up and went to change. Chip stretched before putting on the clothes that they had put away earlier.

"Well... this is it. Time to go.", they put one of their bags on their rollator, their backpack on their back. Their two Espeons, one shiny, were carrying everything else with telekinesis. "I asked the neighbour if they could watch over the house and clean it from time to time, they were happy to do so— so we're good to go." Chip smiled nervously, even if they were talking to their Veevees, they definitely were reassuring themselves more than anyone else. Chip stepped outside, taking a deep breath. Their hometown wasn't far from the deck, so they didn't have to walk for long. During their way there, though, they pondered about if they're going to regret it... But it was too late to turn back now.

As they arrived at the deck, they stared into the sunset once again. Actually being here, the anxiety started to set in. They started to doubt themselves and their abilities, not to mention the fear of travelling alone. But they inhaled sharply, calming themselves down. They wanted to prove their family wrong; they can move on, too.

The sound of the ship startled them as it approached from a distance, eventually stopping at the edge. "No turning back now..." they repeated to themselves before making their way onto the ship. After barely an hour, the ship picked up speed again. Leading them into the wilderness of the outside world. Just them and their zero knowledge of it.

They looked around the main deck. They were supposed to meet Professor Malve on board, but they forgot where exactly they were supposed to meet– or maybe they just had terrible navigation skills. "Am I even on the right floor... okay, yes I am—" they sighed. They jumped as a hand was placed on their shoulder, "Looking for me?" It was Professor Malve. Chip jumped, 'You scared me!' they signed with shaky hands. They sighed, 'Where were you?'. Malve chuckled in reply, "You do realise you can go outside, right?".

Chip blinked a few times in disbelief before facepalming themselves. Malve patted their back, signalling for them to follow him. Malve took leave, stopping at the railings before waving them over, "Well, what are you waiting for? C'mon!" Chip quickly nodded, speed-walked to him, and almost tripped over their own feet. They stood next to him, waiting for him to say something. "Do you need to sit down?" he tilted his head. Their hands moved again 'No-no, it's okay— so...', The professor smiled, "Professor Malve.", 'Right. Sorry—' Chip looked to the side, embarrassed. They heard a quiet chuckle escape him before sighing, "No worries, I understand. I wanted to thank you for taking the offer. I knew you'd be interested!", 'Well, I had to think quickly and I sort of panicked,' they huffed. "That's fair, but sometimes making crazy decisions is a good thing! But also— I guess, I kinda lied, cause truth be told, the opportunity would still be open to you even if you didn't call back by the morning buuut-, I knew this would be an easier way to get you to agree." Malve chuckled. 'You what?',

"ANYway—" Malve jumped into the conversation, Chip frantically moved their hands trying to talk over him, "—about the plan itself." Malve gave them a cheeky smile as they glared at him. "What you will be tasked with, is that you'll go around each of the regions, exploring them. Whenever you finish researching one, you'll move on to the next as you see fit!" Chip sighed and started to listen carefully, trying to memorise everything, '...Okay... then what?' Malve continued, "There's no specific time or deadline you have, so by all means you could spend a few months in one region and a year in another! You're the one who decides how much time you wanna spend and how you wanna spend it. But don't worry, all costs are covered alongside food on the ferries. Your destinations were picked ahead of time based on how close they are, but each one, except for the first one, is subject to change based on what you need more of. Just make sure to let us know at least 3 days beforehand, sounds good?".

Chip seemed to have zoned out for a second before they snapped back to reality, 'Right, right, 3 days- got it. What happens if I don't stick to that?' The professor hummed, "Well— if it's an emergency, I guess it could work. But otherwise, please make sure to let us know early. It takes a while to prepare a whole new route with a vastly different length." Chip nodded, 'Uh-uh, and which region is first?'.

The professor then proceeded to point into the horizon, "In that direction, there's a region called Paldea." he sighed. "What a beautiful region indeed. It's the home of the Terastal phenomenon." Chip blinked a few times, clearly confused. "Terastal! It's a power-up Pokémon can receive thanks to crystals that grow there. You'll be working in the very centre of Paldea, called Area 0. The region's professor was already notified of your arrival and will be expecting you tomorrow evening. You've already been granted access, so no need to worry about legal stuff!", Chip hissed awkwardly at that, not being the biggest fan of socializing. But the professor reassured them.

"Trust me though, it'll be more than worth it! People *dream* of this opportunity! And who knows... maybe you'll discover something brand new, something... truly special." Chip just chuckled at the absurdity 'That's impossible, I know all there is to know about Eevee!'. The professor just laughed, muttering an 'If you say so'.

The professor soon went back inside, and Chip was left on the deck, staring into the night as slowly all natural light disappeared. They felt themselves dissociating for a moment, only tiredness dragging them back to reality. They got sleepy and decided to leave as well, heading straight to their room to call it a day.

Their room was quite luxurious and comfy; they were shocked the first time they saw it. Being on the very top floor of the ship, in first class, not even business class. They looked around the huge room, "This is excessive for one night– that's probably ungrateful of me to think that. Am I the only one who thinks this is excessive?" they looked at their Eeveelutions who just tilted their heads or looked at each other, "Right... can't talk. But eh– now that I think of it, at least there's space for all of you." they quickly flopped themselves onto the giant bed, their Sylveon pulling the covers over them. Chip yawned, drifting off to sleep.

They woke up early in the morning to an announcement, "Attention passengers, within the next hour we will arrive at Paldea's main port, Porto Marinada!". Chip groaned, "...What time is it...", one of their veevees raised its head to look at Chip as they got up, stretching their back. They packed back up, recalled their eeveelutions before making their way into the main hallway. As soon as they stepped off the ship and got their luggage, they called a flying taxi to head to the League building.

They tasked their two Espeon with guarding their luggage, while in the meantime, they met up with Geeta and another league representative. They gave them a warm welcome, giving them some documents and a card for entering Area 0. As soon as they got out of the building, Chip let out a heavy sigh, "I hate socialising– and that wasn't even the worst part yet.". They sat down on the ground, taking a breather. One of their Espeon nudged them, "Esp!!", "I know, I know... I'm on it." Chip mumbled, calling themselves a flying taxi again, and soon enough, they all arrived at the Area 0 gates.

Hello Professor... Times two?

They passed through the gates, flying down into the core of Area 0 on one of their Pokémon. "Why don't they have a God dang elevator?" they signed.

They looked around, and it was nothing like they imagined; it looked oddly beautiful... yet so quiet and eerie. "I kinda expected the professor to be here... I guess not?" Chip hummed as they slowly went down. They pretty much forgot where they were supposed to go, but figured they'd find it one way or another. With their veevees by their side, they knew they'd be okay no matter what.

Chip was definitely not excited about the moment they'd have to climb back up this nightmare of terrain. They quickly ran out of breath, most of their body weight resting on their crutches. They, thankfully, soon arrived at the first research station, "Oh! This looks smaller than I—" they jumped back as the automatic doors spooked them, "—thought." Chip took small steps inside, looking around carefully. They looked around the lab, not seeing anyone. "Sheesh, there's dust everywhe-he—" they sneezed almost immediately, groaning in annoyance. They turned around to leave again when they heard a voice that made them freeze up: "Who are you?" The voice was stern and cold, causing Chip to shiver. Their breath got stuck in their throat. They frantically looked around, but saw no one.

They quickly heard a second voice whispering something before the first one spoke again, "Ah... you're professor Chip, correct? The lab you're looking for is at the very bottom." There was a quick pause, "Don't take long.", and the voice disappeared in an instant. After a moment of Chip staring blankly, they tried to call out to the voice again, "Wait—!", but received no response. They sighed, slightly annoyed as they left the lab.

They continued going down, having to take a lot of breaks to recharge every now and then. Soon enough, they finally got to the main building, but the door was closed. They looked around for a doorbell or something when suddenly the door opened out of nowhere, almost making them fall backwards. Thankfully, their Pokémon caught them just in time.

When the door opened, there was an empty hallway. They huffed and moved forward. Their Espeon carefully followed them. On guard, they peeked over the next corner and finally saw someone. A woman with ashy blonde hair and a lab coat. When the woman spotted them, she waved them over, a soft smile on her face. Chip quickly walked up to her, giving her an awkward wave before trying to sign 'Do you understand sign language?' Chip was clearly out of breath. The professor smiled and nodded, but before she could even ask anything else, Chip continued, 'Speech issues— I'm sorry for my late arrival, I didn't expect such a long walk.' They smiled shyly. The woman shook her head, one of the only movements Chip saw her make; otherwise, she seemed... perfectly still. "No, no... it's okay, I understand. I hope you're not hurt, do you need to sit down?". Chip laughed awkwardly. 'Nah, I think I can survive a few more minutes— though you're nothing like I imagined from the voice I heard?' Chip offered a hand to shake.

The woman chuckled, shaking their hand, making Chip flinch at the cold, metallic feel of it. "I think you noticed... truth be told, that wasn't me you heard. I'm simply an AI replica of the professor herself that she made in order to help her in day-to-day tasks and general work.", 'Well, that's creepy—' Chip muttered to themselves within their own mind. The AI grinned awkwardly, "I get it must be quite a shock, the original professor asked not to be disturbed, so I was tasked with greeting you instead! Hope it's not too big of an inconvenience... Perhaps I can help with some of your bags?". Chip felt a little sad about that, but tried to understand the professor's point of view. 'Nono, it's okay—! Could you show me where my room is though?'

The AI nodded and proceeded to lead them into their room, which was upstairs across Sada's room and next to the AI's recharge station. She was even mindful enough to take the elevator route instead of taking the stairs. "Make yourself feel at home, and when you're ready, just come find me so I can give you a tour! I can't have you getting lost, it's a big building after all.", 'Oh no, I'll be okay! I'll find my way around. But thank you!' Chip waved her off. The AI, even if a little bit surprised, nodded and smiled, "Understood. But something that you should know, I'm usually the one who cooks here as the professor's too busy to do it herself. Do you want me to cook for you as well?". Chip smiled softly, shaking their head again 'I would rather cook for myself, actually... I have issues eating food from other people, no offense. But if you could make something for my veevees from time to time, I'd appreciate that!' The AI gave them a thumbs up, "I'm guessing 'veevey' is a nickname for eevey?", 'And its evolutions, yeah.'. The AI blinked, "Noted. Well, let me know if you need me. There are small tablets all around the building you can use to call me or display a small map." The AI gave a small bow before leaving.

Chip spent some time getting settled in before heading downstairs into the kitchen area to get something to eat. They sneakily took some cheese from the fridge and started nibbling at it. "Is that all you're gonna eat?", a now distinguishably robotic voice came from behind them, "That's not a sustainable form of nutrition.", 'Don't judge me, I just like cheese from time to

time.' Chip's nose crunched up, a little embarrassed. The AI shrugged and started moving around the kitchen, preparing a simple meal.

Chip sneaked in some glances, watching her curiously. 'Do you always make food for the professor?', "Hm? Ah, yes... I can't let her starve now, can I?" the AI replied in a monotone and stern tone. Chip decided not to question any further. They grabbed some more food and afterwards headed back upstairs, leaving the AI alone.

Chip lay in bed, thinking about what the AI said. They wanted to know more about the professor. It's been a few hours, and they didn't even see her once, only heard her voice, which was... clearly unfriendly. Thinking about tomorrow, they slowly fell asleep.

The next day, they woke up pretty early, looked at the clock, which said 5:50. They quietly got up, making sure not to wake up their veevees, dressed up, and left their room, determined to meet the professor that day. Maybe if they wake up before her, they'll see her coming downstairs!

They walked by the woman's office, only to hear the quietest sound of a pen being dragged against a sheet of paper. Chip raised their brow. Was the professor already awake? I guess it wasn't far-fetched to think about, considering they were as well. They knocked on the door, no response. Knocked again, no response. They huffed to themselves and decided to just open the door and walk inside. As soon as they did, the professor gave them no reaction whatsoever. She was still hyper-focused on the stack of papers lying in front of her, she was uncomfortably bent over the desk, had messy clothes, messy hair, and it was impossible to see her face.

Chip walked closer to her. They stared at her for a moment before tapping the desk to get her attention. "Just ignore her and she'll go away..." the professor mumbled, quiet enough for Chip to not hear. Chip ended up tapping the professor on the shoulder, which finally granted them a reaction from her. She groaned, clearly annoyed, "Can't you see I'm busy? Go bother the AI or something." Chip got scared off, clearly not assertive enough for this, and ended up leaving her office, not even getting to introduce themselves.

Chip sat in the dining room, ranting to another Vaporeon of theirs named Rain, "What's her problem? Acting like I killed her entire family.", "Mrr..." Rain snarled, looking pretty uninterested. Little did they know the AI was listening. She quietly approached Chip, "The professor is not exactly... fond of physical contact." Chip stepped back, immediately going silent. "Your voice is nice," she kept a gentle, perhaps concerned smile on her face, "it's okay, you can sign if you need to." Chip blinked a couple of times, gears turning in their head before shaking their head. Their hands moved, 'Wait, how did you know I...' they stopped for a second, then continued, 'Never mind.', "I have my ways..." the AI mumbled. 'I'm really sorry about that, but you don't mind it yourself? And I thought you were perfect replicas of each other.' Chip hugged their legs. The AI huffed and sat down next to them, "Even if I am one of the most advanced AIs as of now, I'm not capable of replicating everything. Things such as... mental health, personal trauma, triggers, humour, empathy, some emotions, and much more, I can understand them as much as any other person, but I can't ever experience them. I can pretend, many AIs know how to act really convincingly based on their knowledge, but they don't truly feel it. That's why her struggles never affected me." Chip felt bad; they had no idea. 'I just wanna be friends with her. I don't know if I ruined my chances now.' They looked down in shame. The AI chuckled, "One slip up or a bad first impression won't haunt you forever." She looked away, whispering to herself, "Not like she'll remember it in a few hours anyway."

Chip continued staring at the floor. And... something sparked within them, an idea. 'I got an idea, thank you for the talk, but I must go now, bye!!' They got up and headed into the main

lab. In the meantime, the AI thought to herself, raising her hand to her chin, "I need to talk to Sada.", and headed into Sada's office.

She knocked on the door before entering. She knew Sada wouldn't answer her, so she was used to just barging in unannounced. Sada groaned, "Lady, I already told you— oh, it's you— ... Never mind then." She did a mental facepalm before turning back to face her desk. "Their name is Chip... not a good first impression, I'm assuming?" the AI tilted her head. "Ah... um... I guess I never let her— them— what do they use?". AI Sada glared at her, "You'd know if you weren't being a meanie.". Sada rolled her eyes, "It's not a big deal, they can introduce themselves another time.", "Why not then?". Sada hissed, "Well, they were annoying, can't they see I'm trying to work? And who comes to someone's office uninvited?? That's diabolical!". The AI raised a brow, "...I'm flattered to be the exception, ..." she cleared her throat, "... but you shouldn't be so hard on them. They're a newbie here after all, and from what I've been told, they have a lot of trouble with socialising or reading basic social cues... should be familiar to you. Plus, it was quite rude from you as well to not introduce yourself *or* let them introduce themselves." Sada looked away, slightly embarrassed, and the AI continued, "I'd say they could be great company, no?" Sada brushes it off, "You know I work alone. The company is just a distraction. On that topic, I need to get back to work." she turned her back towards her. The AI then proceeded to explain a bit of Chip's abilities, explaining their job back home, etcetera. Sada slowly grew more interested, especially when the AI mentioned Chip's experience in biology, "They also studied the anatomy of humans and Pokémon, earning a medical licence at a young age.". Sada hummed, thinking about how to use such talent to her advantage, "Alright, I'll give them a chance.".

The AI hid her own excitement as she led Sada to the main lab, "This'll be a wonderful opportunity to make a new friend, don't you think? You wouldn't be so alone anymore, plus human interaction is healthy for the mind!". Sada scoffed, not replying or making eye contact.

Chip didn't notice her as she walked into the lab, hyper-focused on their work with headphones in their ears. Something they often wore even if they weren't listening to anything. The AI walked up to Chip, gently tapping their shoulder to get their attention. "Huh?" Chip turned their head to face her, quickly lowering the volume of the sound in their headphones. They waved happily, signing 'Can I help you?', "We're just curious if you found anything interesting yet." the AI replied calmly, smiling. Sada was clearly confused. Chip nodded, getting up excitedly before leading the two towards a table full of their findings, 'These are all the ones I left for Sada.', they huffed, stretching, 'Since I'm here only for eevee and its evolutions, and honestly I'm a total amateur when it comes to other species of pokemon, I don't wanna accidentally damage any of these... so I'll leave them to the professional!' they chuckled, clearly hinting towards Sada. Sada's brows furrowed, her glance shifting towards the AI. The AI quickly noticed, "Oh, they have trouble talking. They left anything non-eeveelution related." She turned to Chip once again, "Can you show us?" Chip nodded, then stepped aside, letting Sada check the findings out.

That's when Chip finally piqued her interest. "Olé!" Sada said to herself, her eyes sparkling as she started picking some up to inspect them closely. After a while she realised she got carried away and she cleared her throat, "How did you find these? I would have sworn I studied every little centimeter of Area 0 by now—" she looked towards Chip, "Especially in such a short amount of time, are you magic??" she squinted her eyes, but she obviously wasn't being serious with the question. Chip smiled. They were about to sign again when they remembered Sada did not seem to understand them. The AI chimed in, "Don't worry, I

can translate it for you. Go ahead." Chip was grateful for that and began explaining with the AI translating it.

"I'm unfortunately not magic, but in fact, I had Pokémon to help me! Many of my Pokémon are, by nature, amazing diggers, some that even the archaeologists and scientists within my own region use." They lifted their finger up, signalling they weren't done yet, before pulling out a love ball from their pocket, sending out a strange-looking eeveelution. They continued, "We civilians are often trained to know how to handle these things without technology, as we just recently got introduced to modern technology. Even if I'm not as physically capable as I should be. I still can't believe it's possible to create an entire replica of a human being myself!" They looked at Sada, who was staring at their Eevee the entire time, clearly confused, as if she wasn't even listening. "AI, can you open the dex entry for this Pokémon?" She asked, not letting her eyes off of it. "I'm sorry Professor, this species isn't registered in any of our known pokedexes." the AI explained, trying to look at it from different angles to no avail. Chip signed, 'Oh, no need for that, this is Arideon, a ground-type evolution of Eevee.' They had to spell out the name, knowing not even the AI would understand that part. Sada raised a brow, "That doesn't exist-", Chip sighed, 'Yes... but actually no. It exists in my region because of our Legendary's energy! That is something other regions don't have, making this evolution impossible outside of Eievuis.

But let's get back on track. Ari, my Arideon, is a great digger and her great smell can track all kinds of things deep underneath the ground.' Chip smiled brightly, clearly proud of themselves. The AI translated it once more, and Sada was pleasantly surprised. Sada gave them a small smile, giving them a small bow with her head. "Gracias... could you perhaps bring me some more overtime?" Chip nodded eagerly, 'Of course! We'll do our best!' They quickly realised the mistake they've made and panicked slightly. The AI remained calm, "They said they'll do their best." as if she hadn't even noticed.

Chip sighed in relief, returning to their work. Secretly, Chip wasn't simply doing it out of politeness but also wanted to get closer to Sada, since they would be working together for some time.

Lukewarm beginnings

This is how it looked for a couple more weeks. Chip always left any non-eevee-related findings to Sada, and she then came to collect them. Nothing much happened between them as neither was actively pursuing some kind of relationship. Chip was shy and didn't want to be a bother, whilst Sada just wasn't interested in befriending anyone and wanted to be left alone, the AI being an exception because she was her assistant.

The AI was concerned about Sada's health and wanted to try and get them closer together, but in the end resisted, knowing they'll come to it on their own. Chip, one by one, noticed things that were strange about Sada and grew worried for her as a result. The way she moved or spoke, clearly tired and disoriented, often tripping on pretty much nothing. Her messy hair, bags under her eyes, always cold, it was eating Chip from the inside.

They watched the AI as she cooked another meal for Sada, just like the previous one that was currently sitting in the trash. The AI spoke after a while of Chip watching her, "You're staring... is there a reason for that?" She noticed it long ago but didn't mention it until then.

Chip's eyes widened, turning red from embarrassment. "Can I help with anything? I can make you some as well." The AI looked towards them, only to see Chip shake their head, "I see, hm... is this about Sada perhaps?". Chip sighed, nodding 'Yes, sorry— I don't like being nosy, but I'm simply worried. I mean, has she even eaten anything yesterday?? I saw you make one meal, and based on my knowledge, it's smelling like rotten fish in the trash.' Chip pointed towards the trash can. "Oh... my apologies, I'll take out the trash after this.", she huffed. "About your question... no, in fact. She hasn't eaten a thing. No matter how hard I tried to force her, she wouldn't budge. Sada struggles with sleep, hygiene. I'm surprised her immune system is still as strong as ever, though I'm afraid that may not be for long." Chip was in disbelief, and they were silent for a good long minute. The AI tilted her head. 'Why does she dislike physical touch?' Chip signed. "I'm afraid that's not my story to tell, but she'll open up about it eventually, trust me." she smiled. Chip thought for a moment before turning to look at the AI again, 'How do you care? From what I understood from our conversation yesterday, you aren't able to feel empathy.' The AI chuckled, her calm demeanor never disappearing, "Ah... so that's what you're confused about? Well, it has a pretty interesting explanation. I'm programmed to analyse and pay attention to one's physical and mental health, it's not that I feel empathy for the person in particular...". Chip nodded, taking in the answer pretty well.

Then the AI saw their face lit up. She let out a small chuckle, "I see that there's something on your mind. I have no doubt that you will succeed; there's something special in each and every one of you." She winked and turned her attention to cooking again. Chip wanted to say something, but in the end decided against it.

Chip, that day, decided that they wanted to help Sada and actually started pursuing a relationship with her. It started with small gestures such as bringing her food or helping her with simple tasks. Sada noticed the behavior change, but she was too busy to worry about it. The sound of glass tapping across the table echoed through the quiet room as Chip placed a plate of freshly cut vegetables near Sada. They knew if they were gonna get Sada to eat, it would have to start small. Giving Sada food that is more complex to digest may result in her getting sick instead due to her previous eating habits. Sada looked over at the plate. She saw that there was true effort put into it. "Thank you...? It's nice." she stared at the plate. Her eyes quickly moved back to Chip as she noticed some movement. Chip's hands moved to say something, but Sada didn't understand. She tilted her head in confusion as she tried her best to remember anything she could about sign language. Chip eventually realised their messages weren't going through, feeling a bit embarrassed. They were told that Sada didn't understand, but completely forgot about it until that point. They frantically looked around and found a blank sticky note, writing 'Enjoy your meal! Or what the people of my region say, *dobrou chut!*' They stuck the note at the edge of the plate, a shy but soft grin on their face as they then disappeared back into the hallway.

Sada started to enjoy their company, and around the second month, she even started engaging in conversations, later starting them herself. The language barrier was detrimental, but Sada was above asking Chip to use other means of communication. She never asked why Chip couldn't talk; maybe she should've, but she never got around to it. One thing she knew, though, in the end, it was her own fault she didn't understand sign language. Sada decided to use simpler sentences that Chip could easily answer with just nodding or shaking their head when possible. Even if she hated to admit it, deep down, there was something that wanted to learn Chip's language.

What Sada didn't expect was to see Chip warming up to her, which resulted in their first-ever 'true' conversation. "That's when I dug out my first ever fossil. It was truly an amazing feeling! Unfortunately, I wasn't exactly permitted to do what I was doing, so I had to give my findings away— a bummer, but totally worth it in my opinion!" Sada grinned. She would've raised her head proudly if she weren't just inspecting a type of tera crystal with a telescope. Chip had their eyes on her, listening carefully. They chuckled quietly at Sada's comment, probably one of the very few noises Sada would get out of them every now and then. But then there it was. "Sounded like it was fun though." Chip smiled, their voice barely above a whisper. It was soft, loud enough for Sada to hear but quiet enough to be mistaken for a mumble if you weren't paying attention. It was clear that they still weren't fully comfortable talking at full volume, but comfortable enough to at least be capable of talking. Sada at first thought she was imagining things; she almost didn't believe her own ears at first, "What?" She looked towards Chip, blinking a few times. Chip froze up slightly, going quiet once again. They didn't know what reaction they were expecting; they didn't really think it through. "Oh, sorry! Sorry! Didn't mean to scare you. Your— your voice..." Sada paused for a moment, "...It's very pretty." The gentle compliment caused Chip to smile, a bit flattered. Sada was in awe; it felt oddly amazing... special even. And the last thing she wanted was to screw it up. After a few moments of calculating her response, she spoke up again, "I'm sorry that you had trouble communicating with me, I guess I never knew how much I would need sign language— but that's not an excuse.", she trailed off "I never truly asked you, why do you have trouble speaking? Is it anxiety? Or something else?". Chip looked down at their feet, not knowing how to respond at first. "I guess... I never truly figured it out. It's like a mental block. It's so easy to talk around people I trust— I can be a huge talker at times, but anywhere else? It's like I lose my voice." they muttered under their breath. Sada nodded, understanding of Chip's situation, "I see... Well, don't think that you being able to talk to me now means I will stop learning sign language. I gotta be prepared in case you ever need to communicate something without using your voice, don't I?" She looked straight at them. Chip raised an eyebrow, "You are learning sign language? Since when?" Sada stuttered, realising she ratted herself out on accident, "Dammit— it was supposed to be a surprise. But yeah, I really wanted to find a way to properly understand you. You listen to me ramble 90% of the time, but I know almost nothing about you. You know?" she scratched her neck. "I see... yeah, I can see that." They returned the smile. "Exactly, so no need to worry! In enough time, I'll be more fluent than you can imagine." she joked, giving Chip a slight wink, which made them giggle. "Thanks... I appreciate it."

There was a moment of silence before... "Hey, Sada?". Sada turned to look at them, "Yeah?", "Why do you dislike physical touch?". Sada went silent; she didn't know how to answer such a question. She looked away, contemplating. "It's okay, you don't have to answer.", Chip didn't wanna push her; it's not something she needed to know immediately. "No, no, I want you to know. I... I guess I was never lucky in relationships, and over time, any sort of physical touch made me... uncomfortable. I have no better reason why except that it makes me feel way too vulnerable." she muttered. Chip nodded, understanding, "I get that, sorry if I triggered anything when we first met.", "You didn't. It's okay, thank you."

Though Chip wasn't the only observant one, as Sada began to notice things about Chip's behavior as well. She saw they didn't act exactly like a normal person would, and there were clearly physical issues they had that they weren't clear about either; she wanted to know more about it. They seemed so unique, so interesting, and... so unlike anyone else. She never fully noticed, as many clues were hidden in their speech. Sometimes you never truly

realise just how much you can hide if you just don't talk. Over the course of a few months, she continued observing them. At the same time, Chip also began opening up more. The more they could actually understand each other, the more Sada could learn about them, and she did.

One day, when they were sitting in a smaller lab, a floor above the main one, discussing some things, Sada decided she was gonna go for it and ask Chip about themselves. Sada put down the pen she was writing with before looking at Chip, gently tapping the desk next to them to get their attention. Chip didn't notice it; they were in a trance, something that happened pretty often, as Sada noticed. She sat next to them, trying to get their attention. Then Chip finally spoke up, "Huh? O-oh, I'm sorry I just– ...", they blinked a few times as they took in their surroundings, "dissociated...". Their cheeks turned a light shade of pink out of embarrassment.

"Are you okay? You can take a day off if you're feeling unwell." Sada tried to bring up the mood a bit. Chip just shook their head,

"Nah, this is pretty normal for me. Is there something you wanted?". They turned towards Sada, smiling softly. Sada didn't know exactly how to start, but went for it anyway.

"Well, um– we've known each other for a couple of months now, no?", "...Why are you asking?" Chip blinked. "I was wondering perhaps we could get to know each other a bit more– how was your life before you got here? Any reason behind why you became a professor?" Chip raised a brow, "Why are you suddenly so interested?" They smiled, mocking her lightly.

They both laughed, Chip playfully rolled their eyes, "My life isn't all that interesting though.", only to be met with puppy eyes from Sada, "C'moon, am I not allowed to get to know my own co-worker?". Chip sighed, smiling shortly after "Fine, fine, you win–", they started explaining parts of their story, trying their hardest to remember. They clearly left some parts out, but Sada didn't push them to talk about those.

"Ever since I was young, I wanted to be a doctor. I wasn't actually all that interested in Pokémon at first. I never got a true starter, no matter how badly the adults in my life tried to sway me into getting one. Well, one day, I met a very unique eevee, she looked similar to our legendary but had a pitch black colouring with faded accent colours. I kept her a secret for the longest time, bringing her food, hanging out with her. We grew close, so close that she wanted to become my Pokémon. She was my starter..." Chip smiled, a light blush on their face, "She inspired me to study Eevee and its evolutions. Its history, pretty much everything. Eevee was suddenly so interesting to me; I wanted to know why it had so many evolution options. I decided I wanted to study evolution in general. I spent my whole life catching every single Veevee, multiples of each, shinies... My mentor ended up being the original professor. And I was the one to inherit that job after his retirement." They started explaining the history of their own region, Sada listening the entire time. Chip huffed, their body wasn't thanking them for sure.

"Are you okay? Do you need some water?" Sada immediately grew concerned. Chip scratched the front of their neck, "It's alright, just not used to talking so much. I can get myself a drink–" they were about to get up, but Sada beat them to it. Sada handed them a glass of water, and they took a sip, "Thank you... Should I continue?",

"If you can, I'd appreciate it!". Chip chuckled, "Okay, okay, uh... what else..." they hummed, "Oh! Well, I absolutely love to draw and write, and I create little weird characters for my art pieces. All in good fun, of course. I've only recently been introduced to digital art, but already I prefer it so much over traditional art– for some reason.", "¡Que Increíble!" Sada exclaimed, Chip could have sworn Sada's voice was high pitched at that moment. Sada found it

endearing and didn't hesitate about making that be known. "Actually, I'm an artist too! Not a digital artist but a painter. As a young teen, I loved the ancient styles of art and paintings, and I trained to be able to paint like that." Chip's eyes sparkled, "Seriously??? Show me, show me! Maybe we could draw together!" Chip started hopping up and down ever so slightly. Sada laughed, "You know I don't have time for that– but... maybe someday." Sada hummed, turning her focus onto Chip again, "What about your aids?". Chip panicked, going quiet which caused Sada to silently panic herself, "I-I'm so sorry, is that a sensitive subject? I just wanna understand you better." She frowned, concerned. Chip looked forward, "No– sorry, I thought you asked because you thought I didn't really need them– or something.", "What do you mean?" Sada was genuinely confused, which surprised Chip, "I don't exactly look disabled enough to have them–". Sada immediately started swaying her hands, "Qué?? Oh nono!! I would never! I mean, I did want to ask why you had them, but only because I wanted to know how else I can make your work easier. Walking up and down all over the place can't be easy for you." Chip stared blankly at her, in confusion. It took them a few minutes to snap back to reality, "Well... I generally have trouble standing up or walking for long periods of time. Stairs or even a small hill are my biggest enemies at this point. I get out of breath easily to the point I sound like a dehydrated Vaporeon... asthma– and other stuff. But no need to worry!"

Sada squinted her eyes at them before pulling out a Poké Ball from her pocket. She placed it into Chip's palm, "Here's my Koraidon, Thorn. He'll help you move around.", "Whoa whoa– I get you're trying to be nice, but I can't rob you of a Pokémon!! And... Koraidon?". Sada persisted despite their protests. She instructed them to let the Pokémon out, Thorn letting out a roar as it looked around. "Whoa." Chip stared at it, mouth slightly open. Sada giggled. Thorn happily greeted Sada before snapping its head towards Chip. He approached them, lightly tilting his head as he sniffed them. "Don't worry, he won't eat you." Sada couldn't help but laugh a little. "Are you sure about that??" Chip tried their best to keep their calm. Thorn huffed before nuzzling Chip's face, licking it. "Ew ew ew ew." Chip shivered slightly, dead staring Sada as she continued laughing.

After a short while, Chip finally agreed and took Thorn's pokeball, but not before Sada lectured them on Koraidon, pulling out a huge whiteboard. Sada ended up explaining what paradox Pokémon were and where they came from, giving each species an equal amount of attention.

"I see... so what you're saying is you built a whole time machine? All by yourself???" Chip was reasonably bamboozled, not believing her at first. "Yup! One of my greatest creations!" Sada clapped excitedly. "Any specific reason you created it? Or you're just that obsessed with dinos?" Chip raised a brow, perhaps teasing a little. "Well, yes, but that's not the main reason– that's something I can't share, I'm sorry." Sada frowned for a moment before smiling again. Chip nodded, respecting her decision.

After she finished talking, she moved on to other things. She wanted to bring up Chip's odd behaviour but didn't wanna seem threatening, "Aaaaanyway– oh! When I was younger, I used to be obsessed with psychology. Like that was the only thing I would talk about– it was a huge time of self-discovery for me, and it's one of the reasons I am now diagnosed with autism and ADHD. I learned so many new things, everything was so interesting to me. I wish I could someday meet the people I read about. They seem so unique, and as knowledgeable as I am on this subject, I'm never gonna understand these people perfectly. Especially if I don't know someone who has these problems in real life." she sighed. Chip hummed, "Yeah, the books are a huge hit or miss half the time... kinda disappointing.",

"That's why meeting people would be the best way to learn! There are definitely things I'm highly uneducated about, thanks to stereotypes and all that... so yeah, simply told— you can trust me to not judge you. I may ask a couple of questions if you'd be okay with it, but otherwise I won't think any differently about you." Sada gave them a big, toothy grin. She was definitely hinting at something.

Chip took a few minutes, taking a deep breath "Well... I guess there are some things, nothing much. My service Veevees are also trained to deal with more mental health-related issues." They were definitely jumping around the topic, avoiding a lot of things with Sada listening. Sada interrupted them for a split second, "You can be honest with me, there's no need to dumb down things for me. I need to know so I can treat you accordingly and make a comfortable workplace for you based on these things. But of course, no pressure in the end."

Chip mumbled something under their breath. Silence fell upon the room. Chip wanted to be honest, but parts of them fought against it. They froze up, not knowing what to do. What would she think? What if she never spoke to them again? What if she reacts badly or believes stereotypes? So many things that could go wrong... but then.

"You have DID, right?"

Those words felt like a shot right through the chest; it hit right where it hurt the most. "No— I mean—" Chip tensed up. Sada realised the mistake she's made, she didn't wanna rush them to tell her the truth. She acted before thinking even twice about whether it was a bad idea or not. Sada couldn't have even imagined how scary that must have been for them at that moment.

"Hey... It's okay, you're okay. You're safe and no one's gonna shame you... Do you have it?" Sada kept her distance so as not to seem threatening, just keeping eye contact. "How'd you know?" Chip muttered.

"I had my ways... and maybe an AI who's also really good at observing even the slightest differences in behaviour." Sada smirked, but kept her gentle smile as well. Chip sighed. There was no point in hiding it. "...And BPD.",

"Yeah? Alright, that's good to know. Good job." she wrapped her arm around their shoulder, a comforting embrace, "Thank you for being honest with me."

"I-I'm sorry—" Chip frowned, looking away. Sada immediately reassured them, "Please don't ever apologise over something like this, it's not your fault. I am sorry that there have been things that have happened to you in your life that would result in something like this. I can't even imagine it. And I would never see you any differently either, I have no reason to. You're not broken." Her expression was firm but filled with genuine concern and affection.

Interestingly enough, maybe that's something Chip needed to hear at that moment. It provided them with comfort. They nodded, leaning more into Sada's embrace as they remained quiet. All that could be heard at that moment was their breathing.

Chip's fear eventually died down, and they felt like they could breathe again. Sada was interested in hearing more about their conditions and looked like an excited little kid whenever they would answer her questions. Chip felt heard and accepted for one of the first times in their life. Sada actually treated them with respect and understood their boundaries. It was validating. Sada studied DID and BPD and generally knew what to do and how to behave. She was always open to criticism and gave them tasks accordingly, so everything went smoothly for them.

Chip did try doing the same for her, asking about her own well-being a couple of times, but they never got a clear answer. Chip wanted to stay longer and longer in Paldea, both out of concern for Sada and because she seemed to understand them, unlike anyone else.

The least Chip could do for her instead is make sure she was taking care of herself. They would order food, make toasts, bring some fresh snacks, etcetera. And Sada seemed to be improving.

An artist's dream

All of these things are scattered throughout multiple months, the length of their conversations getting longer each passing day, and at times they even lost track of time as they got so hyper-focused on each other. Hours could pass by, and they wouldn't even know. Just chatting the entire time. The only thing that was capable of snapping them back to reality was whenever Chip would get tired, having a strict mental sleep schedule, getting sleepy around 11 PM or midnight at the latest.

Chip and Sada sat in a small library that had a reserved corner in one of the labs. It was clearly messy from books being repeatedly taken from it, but at the same time, it felt abandoned. The sitting area and small tables continued to collect dust, but otherwise looked brand new. Everything wasn't used in years, making it look unlively. Sada was sitting on the main bean bag, reading out to Chip, whilst they rested their head on a pillow over a fluffy carpet. Chip previously told Sada that they're not a huge fan of reading and they prefer to avoid it, but they like listening to others.

"Vamos no me jodas! Who thought it was a great idea to buy this book?" Sada hissed.

"What's wrong with it?",

"Look at this awful stereotype! No ancient Pokémon looks like this! Even a baby would know that." She crossed her arms only to hear Chip giggle. "Fair, but I think saying even a baby would know that is an overstatement. Look at you and your terrible knowledge of eeveelutions." they mocked her lightly.

"What? That's totally different!" Sada protests. "Is it tho?",

"Totally!!" But they both ended up breaking into laughter soon after.

The AI, working in place of Sada, felt relief for the first time in years as she heard their laughter. She sighed, chuckling quietly to herself as well.

Another time, they planned out a drawing 'date', where they would draw together. You could call it a date, but neither of them knew it was one to begin with. They chatted as Sada led them into a small lab in one of the upper levels.

"Well, here we are... After you." Sada gave them a charming smile as she opened the door for them. "Oh, don't flatter me." Chip giggled, stepping inside.

The lab was clearly used more as a painting room than an actual lab, with paint and art equipment everywhere. It looked fairly unused; all the open paint was dried out. Sada muttered to herself, "Hopefully at least some of the paint is still usable...".

Chip's eyes sparkled as they walked around the room, admiring the amount of art tools and already finished art. One of the walls was fully covered in art pieces and paintings. Chip couldn't help but observe, "Did you make all these??",

"Yup— but they're nothing special... My peak was when I was working at the academy. I no longer have those pieces, though." Sada scratched her neck, slightly blushing. "You're saying you made even cooler ones than these?! Sada, you're so talented!" Chip quietly admired each and every one of the paintings before coming across a photo of Sada from

when she was younger. "Is this you from when you were still a student at the academy? I could have never guessed that you had short hair! You looked so cute!" Chip picked up the frame only for Sada to quickly snatch it from them, slightly embarrassed. "Well— I used to cut my hair really short when I was younger. I guess... as time went on. I completely forgot about it and let it grow out.",

"Long hair is prettier on you anyway." Chip gave her a cheeky smile before flopping themselves onto the couch in the corner of the room and pulling out their tablet from their handbag. They got comfortable as Sada prepared one of their old easels, placing it close to the sofa where Chip was. Sada stood in front of it, not knowing where to start. As Chip quickly found something to do, she barely remembered what she was supposed to do... where was she even supposed to start? Where is the paint? Does she even know how to draw anymore? Sada groaned in frustration and Chip looked up at her from their tablet, "You okay?",

"Yes, yes... just... I guess I kinda forgot how this is supposed to go." Sada sighed, bumping her head against the blank canvas. "Well, you could first pick up a pencil and a notebook to start on a sketch?" Chip smiled as Sada nodded and went to find a notebook. She found a pretty old one, cringing at the old drawings as she flipped through the pages. Finally, she found an empty one. She grabbed a pencil before finding a comfortable place to sit to start sketching, aiming to draw a paradox Pokémon. Her eye twitched in frustration when, after doing multiple sketches, nothing looked like what she imagined. Ripping the failed sketches from the book and throwing them into the trash.

"Don't rush it, you'll get burnt out if you do..." Chip mumbled, mindlessly dragging a pen over the screen of their tablet. One thing was for sure, it's gonna take some time to get used to it again. It was noticeable that Sada didn't draw for a long time, at least nothing that was supposed to be turned into a painting and not be a mindless doodle. She sighed and continued trying.

After an hour or two, Chip put away their tablet, stretching themselves, "I'll take a break— my butt hurts from sitting down for such a long time.". When Sada didn't respond or even nod her head, they looked at her, "Hellooooo? Sada?" They tried getting her attention. When they waved their head in front of her face, that's when Sada snapped back to reality. "Huh- wha-oh, um- sorry, what were you saying?" Sada looked at them. Chip laughed, repeating themselves, "I said I'll take a break, I need to stretch my back. How's the sketch going? Here's what I made so far!" Chip then proceeded to pick up their tablet, showing an unfinished outline of a cartoony full body drawing. Sada blinked a few times, looking down at her sketchbook, only to see an incredibly detailed, actually very beautiful and realistic sketch of Chip that she had drawn subconsciously.

Sada froze for a few seconds, her cheeks turning red. Chip waited before speaking again, "I'm sure it's not bad!" which is when Sada panicked, throwing the page crumbled up into the trash, "Yeah no- no- absolutely horrible. I completely zoned out and just drew random lines everywhere ahah-" she quickly changed the subject, "Yours is incredible though! I could never draw on a tablet—" she thought for a moment...

"Do the alters have different art styles? Or do you all draw the same?". Chip didn't buy her lame excuse to escape the previous topic, but they decided to leave her be. "It depends on the system, but we all draw the same and..."

Little does Sada know that the AI later that day went into the lab and pulled out the sketch from the trash, uncrumpling it and taking it with her.

Happy birthday, Professor!

Another thing they did was celebrate each other's birthdays. Chip didn't care for a big party of their own as they rather had cake and hung out with their loved ones. Which is exactly what they wished for. They and Sada would try baking a cake together, having the AI by their side making sure they didn't burn the kitchen, and afterwards spent time with each other doing whatever they desired. They mostly stayed inside though, playing video games, reading, etcetera! Sada tried getting Chip gifts, which were mostly handmade trinkets she crafted from things she had laying around. But that was no problem for Chip as they adored them!

For Sada tho, it was a little complimented. She barely remembered her own birthday, Chip only knew the exact date thanks to the AI telling them. So Chip made it their goal that Sada would have one of the best birthdays.

The two days before Sada's birthday, Chip was preparing a small, but in a sense, also big celebration. Making Sada's favorite snacks and getting her a few gifts. Everything else would be on Sada to decide where she wants to spend the day.

Chip sneaked into Sada's office, trying to not let Sada notice them. They then covered her eyes with their hands, their hands slightly above Sada's face so as to not directly touch her "Guess whooo~" they chirped, giggling. Sada laughed, looking up at Chip, "You know I'm working, right?" she mocked them.

"Oh, I know and I don't care. Today's special after all!". Sada raised a brow, suspicious, "Okay okay... as long as it's not some kind of prank.". Chip's eyes sparkled, signaling for her to follow them and leading her out the door, "Promise!" Chip happily led her into the dining room which was now nicely decorated.

"Arceus mio—" Sada mumbled to herself, amazed yet confused. "Well, I may have found out about your birthday and it turns out... It's today! And knowing you don't exactly celebrate it, I wanted to do something special for you." Chip held their hands together, doing little happy hops. "That's today??? I could have sworn it was like in 5 months at least." Sada immediately checked the calendar,

"That's not important now, I wanna make sure you have the best day today!" Chip grinned. Sada truly felt like crying for a second, but she toughened up. She opened her presents and had a piece of cake. She hugged Chip "Thank you..." Chip nuzzled their face into her shoulder "No worries, Sada! What do you wanna do? It's your choice to make today.". Sada struggled coming up with anything as she didn't expect this, but then got an idea "Perhaps we could just go outside? Get some fresh air? Koraidon would protect us from any wild Pokemon. Oh— and don't worry, you won't need to walk too much.". Chip nodded, touched by Sada's addition. After they got ready, they met in front of the lab's main entrance where Sada offered something strange... "Wanna try something dangerous, but cool?",

"If you can reassure me I won't die—" Chip chuckled. Sada signaled for Chip to give her Koraidon's pokeball back for a moment and Sada sent out Koraidon. "Do as I say and you won't." she hopped on, offering her hand to help Chip get on as well. Chip almost took her hand before taking it back, hesitant "I don't want to make you uncomfortable— I promised myself I would avoid physical contact.". Sada was touched by that, smiling a little "It's okay, you feel... different. I feel like I don't have to be on guard around you." she insisted. Chip nodded and got on with Sada's help, sitting behind her "Okay... What now?",

"Hold on tight, as if your life depended on it." Sada smiled softly. Chip hugged her, pulling themselves towards her. They held on as if their life depended on it... and suppose it kinda

did. Sada resisted the urge to hold their hand, her cheeks a light shade of pink as they buried their face into her back. "Your hands are freezing cold... Are you sure you don't need gloves?" Sada looked over her shoulder at them. "Nah, they're always cold." their voice muffled. They teased a little "I thought you'd know that by now?", "Ah... well... I forgot..." Sada chuckled, "...but I'm simply checking up on ya.". Sada took a deep breath, as much as she didn't want the moment to end, it would get suspicious quickly. After Sada made sure they were secured, she called out to Koraidon "Thorn, vamos!", Koraidon then spread its wings and flew up into the sky. Chip's grip on Sada tightened so much, it was getting painful, feeling genuinely terrified. "Just a little further... You're okay." Sada tried to soothe them, making the way up as smooth as humanly possible. Finally... The movement and pressure came to a stop as Koraidon's feet pressed firmly against the ground. Chip gasped for air, they didn't even realise they were holding their breath up until that point. "Feeling alright? Are you sick?" Sada looked towards them as soon as she got Koraidon to lay down. "I-I'm fine— probably died once or twice there." they leaned exhaustively against Sada, catching their breath. Sada slowly got off Koraidon, "C'mon... let me help you." she held Chip's hands, supporting them and keeping their balance as they slid off Koraidon. She led them to a nearby rock where she sat Chip down. "Take your time, I'll spread out the blankets for us!", "I'm sorry I can't help—" Chip mumbled. "Please do not worry about that, okay? Just make sure you don't collapse for me." she tried to lighten up the mood a little with a semi-joke, patting Chip's back. As Sada spread out the blanket and made sure all the corners were weighted, Koraidon snuggled up to Chip, licking their face and purring loudly. Chip giggled as it laid its head on their lap. Sada looked at them in awe. "You wanna know something interesting?" she asked as she helped Chip get up and walk over to their newly spread out blanket. "Mhm?", "Well— truth be told, Thorn doesn't exactly like humans. Especially not strangers. But ever since he first saw you, he didn't show any aggression towards you and was in fact quite friendly." Sada mumbled as she pat Koraidon's snout, feeling the vibrations of its purring. "Really? I guess I just assumed it was that friendly to anyone... makes me feel special!" Chip grinned, feeling pretty warm and fuzzy on the inside. "Interesting, huh?", "Oh, totally." Sada sat across from Chip with Koraidon guarding them from any wild Pokemon.

They brought some snacks and drinks, mostly those that Chip made for them plus a few extras. They talked pretty much the whole day, sometimes getting up and just walking around before returning back to the blanket, looking at the sky, comparing the clouds to familiar shapes and pictures. Chip pointed to the sky happily, "That one looks like an eevee! Can you see it?" Chip chirped, looking towards Sada, but all she was looking at was them... and their smile. Sada panicked, quickly looking up into the sky "Oh— yes of course—", "Did you find any?" Chip sat up, stretching their arms. "No— I got distracted. I'm sorry, I wasn't paying attention." Sada fidgeted with her fingers, but all Chip responded with was a chuckle, ruffling her hair playfully. "Hey! I thought you didn't like it when my hair is messy.". Chip hummed "Yeah, but not when it's fluffy. Those are two different things.", they laid back down.

They didn't even notice that the sky slowly got dark, the stars appearing one by one. Chip sighed, which caught the attention of Sada "Are you alright?", "Hm? Oh yes, I just haven't seen the stars in such a long time... They're always visible at home, but I guess when you see something all the time— you don't realise how much you'd

miss it when it's gone. Does that make sense?" Chip stared into the sky. Sada smiled softly, "Yeah... I get that. If it'd make you feel better, we can go outside more often.",

"Woah woah. You? Going outside? I thought your work had you at a chokehold." they mocked her, hitting her shoulder gently only for Sada to return it quickly after "I'm trying to be nice!", Chip laughed. They stared at the stars, making up constellations within the sky "Do you guys have constellations too?",

"Oh, yes, for example the Tauros constellation represents... well a Tauros. It's one of the star signs." Sada tried to remember all the constellations she knew. "Tau- what?",

"It's created by 9 main stars. It's uh..." she laid side to side next to Chip, to make it easier to show them where exactly it was "There's the body, and a tail.", Chip's breath hitched at the closeness, they didn't even notice that their cheeks heated up. "Wait, that one? We call that one Leafy— as a reference to Leafeon. What about that one? It has a chunky body and a big tail. We call it Stella as a reference to our legendary." Chip pointed towards the constellation, trying to direct Sada's eyes to it. "That one's 'Ursaluna' to us!", Sada thought for a moment "Wait there might be one we have in common! It's the one I know the most personally— the constellation of the twins, Tamao and Eifie. It's Umbreon and Espeon!",

"Is it the one there?" Chip pointed towards the sky. Sada hummed, gently taking their hand to direct it slightly to the side "There.",

"Woah— yeah, we have that one too!" Chip chirped excitedly, "It's one of my favourites after Vaporeon's and Flareon's! But they're all very pretty, I'm just slightly biased. Maybe very biased.",

"Well, neither are as beautiful as the star I get to see everyday." she didn't realise she was directly looking at Chip, immediately turning her head away as they made eye contact. Chip's cheeks turned red as they looked down, smiling shyly. "Well— I meant—" Sada tried explaining herself only to be met with a giggle from them, which made her laugh too.

After some time it started to get cold, even if it was really warm everywhere else, Area 0 was fairly cold at night due to the fact it was surrounded by mountains. Chip blew onto their hands, trying to keep them warm. They didn't want to complain or make Sada worry, so they endured it, but Sada noticed... Sada closely studied their body language, she wasn't easily fooled "Are you cold? Why didn't you tell me? You could get sick.", Chip looked down in defeat "I didn't wanna worry you— I always underestimate the weather.". Sada didn't hesitate before sliding off her coat and pulling it over Chip, making sure it was covering as much of their body as possible. "What are you doing? You got nothing covering you now! Now *you're* the one who'll get sick.", Sada pinned it up as they protested "Shush. I worked in labs for years now and trust me, they get cold. I'm used to it, and I rarely get sick anyway. My sweater is enough to keep me warm and cozy... is this better?" Sada smiled, her thumb softly caressing their shoulder. "Mhm..." Chip just hummed, nuzzling their face into the faux fur collar. They pretty much buried themselves into the oversized coat, which Sada found cute. Another hour passed by of them just talking. Sada got up to stretch her legs and arms, "We should return to the lab, I know you value your sleep and I don't want you to be cranky tomorrow." Sada grinned, obviously teasing. She was met with no response, "Chippie?".

Turned out she didn't notice Chip had already fallen asleep. They were laying down the whole time so she had no idea. Sada thought for a moment about what to do, then she decided to pick them up, "Please don't wake up— please don't wake up—" putting them onto her back, she carried Chip back into the main building. Koraidon was carrying all their things for them, following them slowly whilst warding off any wild Pokemon. Once they got back inside Sada turned towards Koraidon signaling to put the things on a nearby table. She whispered as Koraidon did so "Good boy... you can go rest now.". Sada left Koraidon alone,

walking upstairs, only to meet with the AI. The AI raised a brow, "...I'm assuming you're busy.". Sada panicked, speaking in slightly louder whispering, "I'm just carrying them to bed, I didn't have the heart to wake them up—! You know, classic sleepyhead ahah...". The AI tilted her head, "Is that so?" completely missing the joke. "If you continue I will not hesitate to transfer your brain chip into a toaster." Sada glared at her, red faced. The AI stared at her blankly, it was an awkward stare down. The silence was broken by sleep mumbling coming from Chip, tightening their grip on Sada. Sada let out a shaky breath, not saying anything. "I'm guessing you had a good day, though?" the AI remained still. "Yes... it was amazing just— they fell asleep right as I wanted to go back." Sada's eyes wandered off. The AI let out a pleased hum, nodding her head before stepping aside for her. Sada quietly walked into Chip's room, making sure to not step on any of the sleeping veevees, but it was incredibly dark. She barely noticed an Umbreon staring at her before it lit up its rings for her. She mouthed a 'thank you', using the new dim light to make it to Chip's bed safely. She tucked Chip in, pulling the covers over them. "Que linda..." Sada whispered almost subconsciously. She patted the Umbreon, scratching it behind the ear before making her way out of the room. Closing the door behind her. Chip ended up wearing the coat the next day, returning it to Sada in the afternoon. Sada tried to hint towards them keeping it, saying she has a secondary one, but Chip didn't catch up on that.

In sickness and in Health

They also cared for each other's physical health. Whenever one would get hurt, the other would immediately panic, running to their side with a med kit. Chip was the one who got hurt 80% of the time. As much as Sada was reckless, she had insane pain tolerance and even Chip started to think she was invincible.

Chip was reckless AND clumsy, but far from invincible. They got easily hurt and in the dumbest ways possible.

Sada hummed a melody to herself as she used a telescope on a small fossil, sighing as she had trouble finding anything significant. "Chippie? Can you help me please? I can't figure this out." she called out to them and they gave her a thumbs up. Chip got up, quickly having to catch themselves by the table as they got up too quickly, getting a little dizzy. "Careful— don't faint!" Sada almost got up to check up on them, but in the end didn't as Chip returned back to reality after blinking a few times. "I'm okay- just became blind for a moment." Chip shook their head, walking over to her desk. They looked over the problem, and after a moment, "I may know what the problem is... Let me find a different telescope." Chip walked to the corner of the room where a wall of cabinets was standing. They took the wrong step, walking too close to a table with junk underneath it, and scraped their leg. "Ow— Kurva." Chip hissed, catching themselves before they could fall. "Did you hurt yourself?", "No no- just a scratch, I'll just disinfect it later." Chip slowly hopped to the shelves where the equipment they needed was and that's when Sada noticed their bleeding thigh "Dammit— stop moving.". Chip sounded a bit irritated, "Sada I'm fi-", "Yeah, with blood dripping down your leg." Sada got up, running over to them so she could lead them to a nearby couch, "Stay here. I'll go get the med kit. Hold this against the wound for now." She handed Chip a cotton cloth and they pressed it firmly against their knee. Soon

Sada returned with a first aid kit in her hands. Chip looked at their wound and got genuinely sick from the amount of blood, having to lay down to not pass out. "Could you perhaps roll on your stomach instead?" Sada patted their head, trying to comfort them. Chip nodded and turned around "It's starting to hurt.". Sada hummed in response "Yeah... Seems like your adrenaline ran out. Don't worry, it'll stop soon.", she began cleaning up the wound, gently wiping the blood away.

She talked to Chip in the meantime in order to distract them in the meantime, "I thought you were a doctor? What's with the blood sickness?". Chip whined quietly "It's different when it's coming out of your body and not someone else's—",

"I see... that's okay. No one's perfect after all..." Sada disinfected the wound, soothing Chip as they hissed in pain, "Shh... It's alright... just a little more.". Sada then started bandaging the wound, placing a cotton pillow on the wound itself before wrapping a bandage around it.

"Do you want a bow?" Sada joked, laughing. "A bow? You think I'm 10?",

"Of course not, but you're never too old for one~" Sada stuck her tongue out playfully, wrapping the ends of the bandage into a neat little bow, "You're getting one either way.". Chip laughed, sighing. "How is it now? Better?" Sada helped them sit up, but not before making sure the bandage was holding on and wasn't soaking in blood, "Yep, a lot better, just a little dizzy." Chip was quiet for a moment, "...Sorry for being so clumsy— but don't worry! I can still help!". Sada smiled, helping Chip back on their feet, holding tightly onto them so they wouldn't fall "You sure? I don't think you'll be able to stand without my help.". Chip leaned against Sada as it was hard to walk with an open wound, "I guess— I can still do like-paperwork or something.",

"Nah. Take a few days off to rest, okay? Let it heal.". Chip felt bad, because it meant Sada would have no one to help her aside from the AI, "Only if you take a break as well.",

"Chip—",

"Pleaseeeeeeeeeee!!!"

After some convincing and puppy eyes Sada finally budged, she sighed "I can't say no to you... Dammit.". Chip laughed in response, "Maybe I should get hurt more often if it means that you'll take a break!". Sada just rolled her eyes.

This goes on for about 7 more months.

Chip and Sada basically did everything together, even celebrating holidays. Chip even taught her about some of their home's traditions and they were pleasantly surprised about the similarities between their vastly different cultures. Chip even offered to take Sada to their homeland someday for the holidays, so she could experience it first-on.

They had a chat they sometimes used when one was too overwhelmed to speak or had a dead social battery. It mostly happened with Chip, it took them a while to get used to being around someone 24/7. Sada understood it and gave them their space when needed, the chat was, in fact, her idea. Sada never minded it and appreciated their efforts to communicate regardless. Well, as much as possible by her standards.

Chip would often spam Sada, especially when she didn't do as told.

For example, if Chip's efforts to get Sada to shower or wash her hair failed, they would spam her for tens of minutes with reminders of what they wanted her to do. Eventually Sada would lose it and finally went to shower, eat, or whatever Chip wanted from her. Of course, Chip only used it for Sada's own well-being.

Similar messages would be 'It's dinner time', 'go eat', 'where are you', 'I'll eat all the food if you don't come down here', 'I know you see these', 'SADA', 'I'LL COME FOR YOU', 'Sada I will spoon feed you if I have to.'. Even throwing sentences into a translator to talk to her in

Paldean, completely butchering it half the time. Sada chuckled as she saw the horribly translated sentence, she instantly knew they used a translator. 'Usar un traductor es indigno de ti... Mi querida' she responded, teasing them. Chip typed out 'I tried my best 😞' which made Sada laugh.

Chip's hygiene wasn't the best either but they cared about Sada. Whenever Chip did get Sada to shower, they'd sit and gently brush out her hair afterwards. Chip loved the feel of her hair when it was clean.

Chip and Sada were found outside, studying some tera crystals and after a moment of silence Chip asked about Sada's home life.

"You know... I always wondered, what's it like with your family? I hope this is not a sensitive subject, but you never mentioned any parents, friends or even a lover?". Sada's breath hitched at the mention of a family, not responding. Chip continued "I saw you had photos around the lab of someone, but I thought you'd mention them someday.". Sada hesitated, not knowing how to reply. "Well– that's actually... my son. I only have a son... and..." she thought for a moment before shaking her head, "...no other family besides that...". Chip raised a brow, growing reasonably suspicious. "And you never mentioned any of that?" they had so many questions... The entire time of them being there, Sada hasn't visited her son once and even if for some reason she couldn't leave Area 0, she had and still has the power to give her son permission to enter Area 0 legally to visit her. Or what about all the holidays she's gone without her son? But they knew asking all these questions would only cause stress and potentially make Sada defensive. Sada bit her lip, not knowing how to reply. She responded out of panic "I-I forgot... he's out of the region studying overseas. He barely has time now... as he is an adult. And all.", Sada's heart pounded in her chest, she felt overwhelming guilt for lying to Chip. Chip seemed to understand a little bit more thanks to that "Maybe you could invite him here when he has more time?". Sada nodded "...He rarely has time so... who knows? I'll try though. Yeah...", Sada seemed a bit down, Chip just assumed it was because she missed him. It made sense, right?

"Do you at least talk to his father? Or grandparents?" Chip tried to change the subject, but it didn't do much. They'd say it made the tension even worse than better. "No... he left after Ar-my son was born. He just disappeared." Sada sat down into the grass. "You sure nothing happened to him?",

"I mean, he's certainly alive– Appeared in another region a month or so later. By that time I had no energy nor need to interact with him. He made his choice... and there's no grandparents to speak of, I grew up in an orphanage.". Chip frowned.

They tried to comfort her by placing their hand on her shoulder, but Sada flinched, pushing it off. "I... I'll go back inside... I need to clear my mind... Sorry—" she gulped, leaving Chip alone as she slowly made her way back into the lab without another word.

They grew extremely worried. Maybe they did something wrong, they didn't wanna hurt her. They wanted to panic... they would've if something didn't stop them. Not a word came out of their mouth in the end, not even the sound of their breath. They just stared blankly into the distance.

When they returned back to reality, Sada was already gone and they had no memory of what happened, like their memory was wiped. Feeling an upcoming headache, they decided to return to their room and lay down.

A few hours have passed. Even without the memory of what happened a few hours ago, Chip knew something wasn't right. They then decided to write her a message that they would send through their chat so they respect Sada's boundaries, but are able to ask her if she's

okay at the same time. Chip turned on their phone. It didn't take long for them to find the chat, as it was on the top above anything else. They wrote a simple message of 'Are you okay? You know you can talk to me, right?' before sending it to her. It didn't take long for Sada to see it, but she ended up leaving Chip on read. Chip decided to send a secondary message 'Did I make you mad? I'm sorry'. They were relieved as they saw Sada typing. Sada responded with 'No, you didn't, it's not you' and she seemed to be typing something else, but then the 3 dots disappeared. Leaving the first response to be the only one. But it was enough to ease Chip's anxiety. No matter how upset Sada would be, she wouldn't want Chip to think it was their fault and possibly cause them to have a panic attack. She still tried her best to be caring and gentle with them, which was just a minor 'inconvenience' if she could even call it that. She never minded going the extra mile for them.

Nightmare become Reality

Another 5 months have passed by this point.

Sada just got out of the shower that was in the bathroom, connected to her dorm room, drying herself and her hair before putting on some fresh clothes.

She exited the bathroom, walking over to her bed. She let out a soft sigh as she sat down on the edge of it. "Oh Sada, you're back!" Chip smiled. They were waiting for her, taking residence in Sada's armchair. "Yup... and feeling like a newborn baby." Sada laughed, grabbing a book from her bedside table and sitting with her legs crossed. "I take that as I can brush your hair again?" Chip's eyes sparkled. "If you want, but if not, I'll do it myself later.", "Nonsense, you know you're too lazy to do that." Chip grabbed a brush. Sada felt movement behind her as Chip sat behind her. "...Fair point." she mumbled as Chip started brushing her hair. Sada hummed a quiet melody. "Your hair is really soft, and fluffy..." Chip muttered, but Sada didn't respond. Sada seemed to be lost in thought. As much as she hated to admit it, it felt nice, she liked getting her hair brushed. It's such a huge distraction, but she didn't have the heart to stop Chip... plus Chip enjoyed it. Chip muttered something under their breath as they slowly brushed out a few tangles, pulling dead hairs out along with it, "You're losing a lot of hair...",

"Is that bad?" Sada focused on Chip. She felt pretty embarrassed. "No no, it's okay. Sometimes things like hair loss can be caused by stress... Seems like that's what is happening here." They ran their fingers through Sada's hair before putting the brush aside. "Well we're done! I'll go put the dirty laundry into the washing machine now." They got up, stretching, "And you better get ready for bed."

Sada was almost upset that the nice feeling ended so quickly, but she hid it. "R-right... Got it.", she felt Chip get off the bed and proceeded to watch them as they walked away.

Sada instead though, zoned out, already missing the feeling. She daydreamed, pretending Chip was still there brushing her hair. Sada rested her head on her palm and closed her eyes. She was soon taken out of her dreamy state as Chip tapped her shoulder, "Hey... bedtime. Okay? You look like you'll pass out any minute.". Sada was a little surprised to see them, "Sorry... I thought you went to the laundry room, though.". Chip smirked, "Yes, but I knew you wouldn't listen to me so I went to check up on you. Now, time for bed." They took

her hand, dragging her deeper into the bed. Sada laid down, sighing "You know me too well."

Chip hummed, pulling the sheets over Sada, letting her get comfy, "Sad you can't trick me anymore?" they booped Sada's nose which made her laugh, "Damn I feel like a child... needing to be tucked away and all." Chip took her hand, sandwiching it between their two own, making her shiver slightly from their coldness, "If you don't wanna be treated like a child, you better stop acting like one." Sada hummed, "Mm... no promises." she interlocked their fingers, going silent to just enjoy the peace. Chip brushed their thumb over her hand, letting go of it eventually, "Well... time for bed. Goodnight and sweet dreams." They got up to leave, stopping in the doorway, "Don't let the scatterbugs bite~" before finally leaving and closing the door behind them.

Sada zoned out for a moment, feeling her hand warm back up. She couldn't help but miss the coldness of their hands, but soon enough, sleep took control over her. She drifted off to sleep.

Sada woke up in a dream. She opened her eyes for a short while before immediately closing them because of the bright light around her.

After her eyes adjusted, she looked around. It was a blank space. No walls, no ceiling or floor, just an endless white room. Was it even a room? "What the..." she mumbled, but then she heard giggling. "Who was that?" she immediately turned towards the source of the sound, where she spotted familiar faces. "Arven? Chip, Assistant... Turo? You're all here!" she attempted to run up to them but when she got close, it was as if the ground underneath her fell apart. She fell, seeing the figures fade in the distance, "Wait wait- no!!" She tried to reach them, but failed to do so. Slowly the figures disappeared into the background, getting out of her reach as she fell further down. "Plea-", "He-" she tried calling for help, but all her screams and begging turned into choked up muffles. It felt like she was under water. She finally hit the ground, but she didn't feel any pain upon impact. As soon as her body hit the ground, everything around her quickly turned pitch black, depriving her of any light source.

"Someone- anyone-" she tried to stand up only to be pushed back onto the ground by something, or maybe... someone. She looked up to see Arven looking down upon her, "Arven?" her voice trembled as she tried to reach him, she attempted to hold his hand only to be shoved back onto the ground, "Don't you dare touch me!! After all you've done you think you can just act like nothing happened?" he snapped. "N-no- Arven I-", "Leave it!! You're a horrible mother. You let Mabosstiff die and you cannot do something as simple as give me a father!". Sada tried stepping back, only to bump into Turo. Sada looked up to look at him, immediately trying to back away again. "You're a disappointment." he mumbled, his voice cold, "You're a terrible and unlovable person, who would ever wanna be a part of your life? Why'd you think I left?". Sada raised her voice for a split second, "Don't you dare talk to me like that! You left us! You left him-" only to get interrupted by Turo "Who do you think you are?! I knew I should have taken Arven with me. In fact, why won't I now?". All the colour drained from Sada's face with her eyes widened "Y-you wouldn't... right?", a few seconds of silence passed... "Turo- please-" her heart dropped as Arven took Turo's side at that moment. With breath stuck in her throat, she spoke again "N-no Arven- mi tesoro... please let me explain.". Turo's smile sent shivers down her spine, Arven hissed "There's nothing to explain. I hate you, Sada.". She wasn't worth even being called mother by her own son, she was truly the worst person to exist.

She stood frozen in shock, feeling unable to breathe. And when she looked around again, she saw that Turo and Arven turned around to leave. She attempted to grab Arven's hand, only to fail "NonO NO please!! Please, I can explain! Arven—", she started sobbing "I'm nothing without you!! Turo you cAn't— pLEaSe don't take my baby away from me!! PLeAsE. ARVEN!!!", she felt like she was being pulled back, unable to reach them. "No... why..." she sobbed, dropping onto the ground again as they disappeared into the distance.

After a moment of crying she felt presence behind her. She looked up to see the AI, and suddenly, for the first time, she didn't feel binded to the ground. She got up, running up to the AI, "Please- you gotta help me— Arven— he— I—" her voice broke, shaking, "I don't- what do I do..." she looked up into its soulless eyes, unable to read its expression. The AI's stare was cold, emotionless... "You failed, professor." Sada swallowed the lump in her throat, "N-no. I couldn't have. I'm still not done— I-I can fix this. The Paradise will happen! Everything will be okay— I just need to finish it." Sada grew defensive which only amused the AI, "Really? Oh, Sada... I'm created based on your thoughts and feelings, your memories and desires... I think I know better than any that you failed. And you will continue to fail. You're nothing but a selfish monster. You're nothing but a waste of space to everyone." Sada lets out a shaky breath "T-that's not true... Chip would understand—",

"Oh but would they? After all... you lied to them. Why would they trust you ever again? After they learned to trust you... don't you think that'll break them?",

"I just need to explain it to them— they will understand!" Sada was shaking, hyperventilating. The AI just chuckled in amusement, "Would they?" she stepped aside to reveal Chip.

They were glaring at Sada, but their expression was unreadable... Anger? Disappointment? Distraught? Sada immediately ran up to them, taking their hands into hers, "Chip please let me explain— I was scared I— I panicked! I'll tell you the truth, whatever you'll want just please..." a tear ran down her cheek, "I can't lose you too... not now...". Chip scoffed, pushing her away, "Oh, how sweet... you let yourself be vulnerable around someone after so long... but you cannot lose someone who doesn't love you, can you? How do you expect anyone to love someone like you?" they crossed their arms, "I think it's time for me to return home, Sada. This is a goodbye.". Sada's eyes widened once again "Nonono- Chip please—", she tried to reach them, but each time they seemed to be further away. "Chip I beg you pLEaSe don't do thiS— I nEEd yOu— Chip please I love—" she sobbed. The ground beneath her fell apart again as she tried to reach Chip. Dropping her into even deeper darkness.

They're right...

What a fool she is to start liking someone again, has she not learned anything? She's running out of time. She slowly ran out of air, drowning within her own dream.

Wake up Sada.

...

Sada.

...

Wake up.

Sada jolted awake, gasping for air. She was covered in cold sweat and shaking like a wounded animal. She immediately started sobbing, hugging her legs. After a couple minutes

of her crying, she finally had a chance to calm down for a bit. Her tired eyes focused on the clock, it was 4 AM... she still had time. It wasn't too late yet. She still can fix this. She wasted no time getting up, almost tripping over her own feet as she clumsily put on her lab coat. She sprinted out of her dorm, heading straight to her office. Her voice shaky as she failed to catch her breath, "I need... to fix this. Now.". She paced around the room, she herself not knowing what she was trying to find, "Uhh... oh— Coffee coffee coffee... where the fUck is it?!" she accidentally knocked over an empty mug, getting startled by the noise of it shattering. "That's fine... it's fine." she brushed it off, grabbing a different mug and letting it fill with coffee. She stumbled over to her desk as she quietly cursed herself out, "Fucking moron... moron... idiot... What were you thinking?! How could you get so distracted? You worked so hard... We sacrificed everything. I can't just abandon it now. Not after everything I have done..." she hesitated as her shaky hands hovered over a stack of papers. Is this really what she wants? What Chip wants? Arven... wants? She cares about them, right? Sada groaned loudly, pulling at her own hair "Shut up shut up shut up shut up.", she took in a shaky breath, "What are you doing?! You cannot allow yourself to feel again. You let this stranger get too close to you just like that?! Would you let them influence you?? They're just a dumb distraction." she gripped her chest, tears running down her face. She didn't truly think that... Right?

"No no... They're just trying to help— they just don't understand the whole situation! Yeah! AhAh—" she winced in pain, gripping her chest harder. What was this feeling? It felt like dread, but not at the same time... it was different than that. One thing was for sure, though. Whatever that weird feeling was, it only made her work harder even if she had to sacrifice for it. She'd sacrifice anything, even the progress she made on her health.

The AI was in sleep mode when suddenly her sensors caught wind of a strange noise. She didn't take long to get up on her feet.

She walked outside of her station when she heard another noise. She knew it was from the main lab. It's like she sensed what it was about, but wanted to tell herself it wasn't true. She hoped it wasn't true. "Sada don't tell me—" she slowly made her way into Sada's office, where she saw a very distraught Sada. Bags under her eyes, messed up hair, shaky hands as she pinned different pictures and photos onto her pinboard. The AI was in disbelief. To say she was shocked would be an incredible understatement. She thought Sada was improving, she was doing so well. What happened? What went wrong? It just didn't sit right with the AI, no matter how much logic she tried to find in it.

The AI placed her hand on Sada's shoulder, "Professor?". She didn't even react to the touch. The AI tried to get her attention "Hey, Sada. *Sada.*", she couldn't even process it properly as she almost fell down onto the ground. Sada just pushed her.

"What is going on with you? You don't normally act like this. At least you haven't in the span of an entire year and a half." the AI kept her distance. Sada's glare seemed to disappear for a moment, transforming into an almost creepy, insane stare... "Ohh assistant! I'm sorry, I don't know what's gotten into me lately... but no worries! I'm getting back on track! And I can include *them* in the Paradise as well!", that just shocked the AI even more, "Who? Please don't tell me—",

"Chip, of course! It's perfect!! I can prevent them from leaving like the rest. Isn't that great?" Sada smiled, completely ignoring the AI's shock.

"Just a little more, and we can all live happily! A world without worries or hurt... a Paradise." She shook her head, turning back to her whiteboard.

Wicked King

Suicide attempt warning

Knocking could be heard coming from the hallway. Another knock after another. Chip groaned, opening their eyes, "Yes—?" They sleepily sat up, looking up at the clock. 5 AM. "Chip? It's the AI. There's an emergency. Meet me in the hall, please." She didn't give Chip much time to protest before leaving.

Chip sighed and got up, getting ready before heading out the door. Chip yawned as they quickly but wobbly made their way downstairs. Soon their eyes met with the AI. "Oh, Chip. There you are. It's about Sada." she spoke. Chip tensed up as their sleepiness was slowly overcome by anxiety, "Is Sada okay? Is she hurt? Did something happen? I left her in her room yesterday I—",

"Chip, please listen." the AI raised her voice ever so slightly to earn their attention back. Chip nodded softly.

"Sada's has gone mad out of nowhere. I haven't seen her like this yet. I tried to stop her, but everything I tried and worked in the past, no longer does. I trust that you can figure something out, she was having steady improvement only because of you. Please... you need to try something.". Chip grew worried and immediately headed straight to the main lab where Sada was residing. They looked around, scanning the room when they saw Sada, "Bingo.", they slowly approached her, tapping her shoulder, "Sada? Is everything okay?" but they got ignored. "Sada, please answer me... Did I do something wrong?".

Sada ignored them. And Chip felt the same way they did the first time they ever spoke to Sada. They looked at her and they saw old Sada, not the one they got to know and grew to like.

Sada ended up pushing Chip away. She wanted to go back to fully focusing on her work. It was like she completely cut herself from the outside world. She could only hear her own thoughts, the voices in her head were louder than ever. One of them was begging her to reconsider... But it was outnumbered.

And Chip was no help in this either, as much as they were trying, it was still hard to talk to Sada about any of this. They wanted to make sure she was okay, but it's easier said than done. They were afraid of being annoying, they didn't wanna make her feel even worse. They were used to being a bother and people often get angry with them, it was hard to unlearn that. They tried their hardest to get her to snap out of it, to no avail.

Sada abandoned logic and forgot how to think rationally. Her Paradise was the only thing on her mind, work was the only thing on her mind, the possibility of her failing was the only thing on her mind. But while all this was happening on the inside, on the outside it just looked like she thought her work was more important. She would snap, be rude, if you tried to help.

Chip was hurt by this, she thought Sada cared, she did care... but now they were questioning it. No matter how hard they tried to deny it, they knew better, but they were slowly starting to think Sada did all this on purpose. Tricked them into getting close to her, playing with their feelings. Maybe she wanted them to let down their guard and become vulnerable. But why? They struggled to figure that out and had to accept that they'll probably never know.

Either way Chip still tried to get her to talk, they were concerned and worried for her. Despite all their dark thoughts, they tried their best to not let those influence them. They believed they weren't true... They couldn't have been the truth.

The next morning Chip came into Sada's office, attempting to talk to her once more. The clinking of glass could be heard as Chip walked through Sada's messy office, a tray with cups of fresh tea in their hands. "Good morning, Sada... I brought some tea." they cleaned off a nearby desk, setting the tray there. Sada ignored them. "Sada c'mon. Work can wait, no? What's so important there that you're willing to abandon everything for it?" Chip stares at her, sighing after receiving no response "Your ignorance hurt me y'know... it still hurts me. I don't understand why you'd—",

"Chip stop! Stop trying to act like you understand. Cuz you don't and you never will. You're just trying to take my dreams away." Sada hissed. Chip company froze up when Sada raised her voice, like a helpless scared child hoping it won't get hit.

Didn't take long until Sada noticed Chip's terrified expression and immediately shut up. "Oh no... Chip I-I'm so sorry, please I didn't mean to—" she tried to reach them when suddenly the AI stepped in-between them. "That's enough." she glared at Sada. "Assistant, it was an honest mistake— I didn't mean any of it.",

"Sada stop. You'll make things worse." the AI stood her ground, glancing at Chip for a moment. "Wait here and don't move." she glared at Sada again, wrapping an arm around Chip's shoulders to lead them away. Once they were out of sight she met Chip's height "Hey... you alright?", Chip blinked a few times, before meeting the AI's gaze despite their blurry vision, "...What?". The AI huffed, seeing Chip clearly wasn't in the mental headspace to handle the situation, "Let's go, it's better for your well-being to not be a part of this anymore. Consider resting to cool down... I'll take care of everything.".

The AI led Chip further into the building, stopping in front of their room and letting go of them. Chip stayed silent, staring blankly at the AI. She sighed, "You two should talk once you're both calm. But that's not now..." she opened the door to Chip's room, "Go rest up, you need it.".

Chip nodded and entered their room without another peep. The AI closed the door before walking away, "Rest well." She made her way back to Sada's lab. Sada was sitting on her chair, staring at the ground like a guilty child who just got into trouble. "So? Explain." The AI stood next to Sada's desk. "Look, I'm sorry— I didn't mean it! But I'm so close to finishing this, I can fix everything and do so much more than that!" Sada got up from her chair, the AI just sighed, "Sada. I'm sorry, but you're delusional. Your work is making everything worse and ruining your relationships. You're not helping anyone.",

"Like you know anything...",

"Excuse me?". Sada scoffed, "You know... Maybe because you're not even human? How can you understand anything I'm doing? You have a basic black and white view on the world, how do you know what's right or wrong?! You've done nothing but try to distract me from my work, I lost track of everything and I have to catch up because of you! Accepting Chip's offer to work here wasn't even my fucking idea!". The AI frowns, "Right, so the relationship you've built with them has been for nothing? Or is that also a waste to you? You're heartless.".

They argued, Sada kept throwing all kinds of excuses. The AI had enough, "So when are you going to tell Chip you lied to their face? You have no remorse for doing that, do you? What do you think is gonna happen when they find out on their own? They will never trust you again.". Sada snaps, "THEY WON'T FIND OUT!"

“...Sada?” is all that could be heard at that moment. Chip stood in the doorway, their voice shaky and looking like they were seconds away from breaking down. They both looked at them in shock.

Sada's eyes widened. “Chip— it's not what it looks like—” she approached them, trying to hide her panic. Chip's gaze from hurt turned into anger almost in an instant, immediately pushing her away the second she got too close, “Don't touch me!!” Chip eyed Sada down, studying her body language, “Is it true? Is what the AI said true? Did you lie to my face??”, “Chip I—” she stuttered, she had never seen Chip so angry before, let alone angry enough to yell. “Is it a lie or not?!” Chip's voice trembled. Sada sighed, looking down in defeat. She nodded, “Yes... everything I said— I made up.”,

“Tell me the truth,” Chip hissed. “Chip—”,

“NOW.” Sada inhaled shakily, “Arven is 16 and is currently living with a good friend of mine within the academy. He's not an adult, nor does he work overseas... He used to live with me, but because of my carelessness, his Pokemon got hurt. I gave him that Pokemon to keep him company while I worked. And I ended up hurting it.” She teared up, “I panicked— if that event played out any other way, my son could have been killed that night. I sent him away, somewhere where he would be safe. I couldn't go with him. Not now.”.

A couple minutes of silence passed, Sada waited for a response, but got none. “Chip, I'm so... so sorry. Please—”,

“Please what?!” Chip snapped, “How dare you feel pity for yourself after you left YOUR OWN SON for a stupid job!! Does he mean that little to you?? So you rather lie to my face because you can deal with your own fucking guilt?”. Sada tried to fight back, “Chip no- no that's not true— I panicked!! I wanted to tell you I—”,

“SAVE IT.” They stared her down before huffing. “...I was wrong about you. I thought you cared. Cared about me.” Chip hissed at her, their eyes tearing up.

They left in a pit of rage, slamming the door behind them. Chip ended up leaving Area 0 shortly after. Flying elsewhere to get their mind off of things.

The AI glared at Sada, “Happy?” before leaving as well. Sada opened her mouth to say something, but nothing came out. Sada snarled, getting back to work.

She ended up spiraling into even deeper insanity now that there was no one to distract her. She started going completely crazy. The panic set in the moment when she realised

Chip didn't return into Area 0 for 4 full days. Were they hurt? What if something happened to them? What if they died?

“Where are they??” She begged the AI for answers. “I don't k-”,

“I can't lose another one. Not now— not when I'm this close!” She felt guilty for yelling at Chip, but that guilt only transformed into a deeper desire to make her dreams come true. If she could finish her work, she could show Chip, she can help them understand.

Sada muttered things under her breath as she rummaged through papers on her desk, trying to piece her thoughts together. Her words were interrupted as she focused on a smudge on the corner of her eye... Chip?

Chip slowly walked into the lab, their shoes tapping against the floor as they met each other's gaze. Sada immediately teared up, “Chip?!” She ran up to them and hugged them. Their body was cold. “Oh Chip, I missed you so much. I'm so sorry I—I...” she inhaled deeply, trying to calm down, “But... you're here now. That's what matters.” She immediately took Chip's hand, dragging her around the lab as she explained everything to them. Chip just nodded and smiled. Their smile was cold.

“Sada?” A confused voice came from the doorway. “Oh assistant!! Look who came back! I told you they would!” Sada gestured to Chip, who smiled and waved. The AI raised a brow before immediately growing concerned, “what do you mean?”, “Oh, don't act like you've forgotten them already!” The AI frowned, “Sada I don't thi—” “Now! Where were we...” Sada completely ignored her, taking Chip by the hand again. After a while Chip brought Sada a cup of fresh coffee, “This'll make you feel better...” Sada took a sip, humming softly. She turned to face Chip again, frowning “Are you sure everything is okay? I-I know you said I've hurt you and I... that's the last thing I want.” Her breath hitched as Chip cupped her cheek, going silent for a moment. Their palm was cold. “It's alright, I understand you just want the best life for your family... is that right?”. Sada swallowed the lump in her throat, looking down “Yeah... pretty bad at it though...”. She heard a soft chuckle, “Nonsense. Just give it some time, yeah?” They smiled. Sada felt her cheeks heat up, leaning into their palm. She sighed, “Chip I—” she seemed to struggle to find the words, “I think I love—” She was awoken from her daze by the sound of glass breaking. She knocked over her cup of coffee... Oh... what a mess. Should it be? The cup was empty. “Huh—?” She looked at the pieces on the ground, until she noticed she could see them right through Chip. They weren't real.

Chip left area 0, walking around Paldea aimlessly as they contemplated on what to do next. Some wanted to leave, others wanted to stay. Perhaps they preferred to stay blissfully unaware, pretending that everything was going okay. They didn't wanna yell at her, they knew their brain was just trying to protect them. They cared for her so much, they didn't know if all of it was just a lie. They were also afraid that Sada would end up getting hurt if they left. In the meantime they stayed at cheap motels, not wanting to return to Area 0 just yet. They did keep in touch with the AI, just so, at least, she knew they were okay. They didn't know what to feel, disappointment? Sadness? They just suddenly disappeared and Sada hasn't texted them once. It's like she didn't even care. Wasn't she worried? They did tell the AI to not tell Sada where they went, maybe she told her anyway... they didn't know anymore. Part of them felt guilty for putting Sada through that but another part of them wanted to make sure Sada cared enough to look for them. They just dissociated quietly. But their greatest fears were confirmed when they tried to contact Sada, only to get ignored. Did they cause this? Maybe it's their fault and Sada just cut them off. They were too blind to realize what was truly happening. After careful consideration, a few more attempts to contact Sada with no success... they ended up deciding to return to Eievuis, forever. They wanted to go home. To their naive, narrow view of the world, it's safer and nicer being clueless. Love is too much pain, maybe it's easier to be alone forever. Chip did feel different about Sada, but never really noticed it until then, the way it hurt way more than anything before. Daydreams of what could have been fogged their mind as they dissociated, trying to deal with the amount of strong emotions. Chip returned to the lab 3 days later. They bumped into the AI relatively quickly, as she was in the kitchen again. “Oh, Chip. You're back! Feeling better?” She seemed to smile for a moment. Chip remained quiet, signing, ‘Yeah but not for long. I guess I'm fine?’ They sighed, ‘I'm returning to Eievuis. I'm sorry, this just wasn't meant for me.’. The AI, even though upset, respected their decision. “Okay... I'll be waiting in front of the main entrance for a goodbye.”. Chip nodded, heading upstairs.

They slowly walked down the dim lighted hallway, memories flowing in as they made their way into their room. The door creaked as they opened it, looking around the messy room before entering. They felt overwhelmed with emotions. They took a deep breath in before packing up. The room slowly lost its life and it became empty again. They stopped by their bathroom for their hygiene products and went out into the hallway again. They wrote a goodbye and resignation letter for Sada, leaving it on Sada's dorm door.

They stepped outside, where they saw the AI, "Safe travels.". Chip was on their way to leave before stopping in their tracks. They looked back at the AI, their voice barely above a whisper, "Do you ever feel trapped?".

The AI was taken aback, she did not expect such a question from anyone. "What do you mean by that?" She took a step forward. "Do you have the concept of free will? If you wanted to leave Area 0, could you?" their expression remained unchanged. The AI quickly shook her head, "I'm not advanced enough to experience such thoughts. I have one job, one my coding is centered about, therefore I do not experience any desire for anything else..." she muttered. Chip mumbled something under their breath, something the AI didn't quite catch. They approached her, giving her a quick hug, mouthing a 'sorry' before running off. They called a flying taxi and soon were gone.

Sada was going crazy, her paranoia spiking each day. She didn't know what was real or what was fake. She stopped talking to the AI, she stopped responding. She couldn't trust herself anymore.

It was late in the evening, Sada's mania had slightly calmed down by then. She got out of her office to get something to drink. She saw the AI in the kitchen. She was waiting for her. "Oh, assistant- hey-" she gulped, trying to walk around her. "Chip left you a note. I picked it up for you so you wouldn't have to." She held it in-between her fingers. "R-right they did-" Sada huffed. The AI sighed, "If I can see it, are you sure it's fake?", "Well—" the little voice in Sada's head screamed, she wanted to run away, she wanted to hide. But a second side of her needed to know what the note held. Sada grabbed the note, immediately reading it.

'Dear Sada,

I'm sorry if I ever caused you any trouble. I see that we both have issues and us being together only worsens them. I'm afraid I'm a bad influence on you. And at the same time a lot of your own actions hurt me in return.

I don't believe our relationship could ever be healthy, at least not now, I'm sorry.

Please take care of yourself, you're loved.

Love, Chip.'

Panic set in. The letter fell out of her hands as she ran around the lab, "CHIP!!" She entered their room, "Chip- nono- no-" she ran outside, but there was no trace of them. It was too late, Chip left hours ago.

Sada went to the second person that came to her mind, the AI. "Assistant please. You can still contact them right? They still have to be here- it cannot be too late!" The AI's brows furrowed, "They tried to contact you multiple times... but you ignored them." What? But she didn't mean to? Yes, she saw those messages, but she thought they weren't real. "No... nono... but I thought- I... I didn't... Did I?"

She spent the entire day trying to get a hold of Chip, but she couldn't. No matter how hard she begged, it didn't work. And it was all her fault.

She sat in her chair and just started sobbing. She was so frustrated with herself, everything happened so fast, she wasn't thinking clearly. "Why? Why? Why again? Had I learned nothing?!" Her breath hitched. Anyone who tried to get close to her, she ended up hurting. She didn't mean to, but it was like a curse following her. She growled, letting her frustration out by ripping up meaningless papers. She walked around the room, trying to control her anger. "Why can't I just be a good person?? What's wrong with me?!" She picked up a notebook and was getting ready to throw it when she stopped herself. She looked at the front cover, it was Sada's sketchbook. She used it to destress when she couldn't focus properly or was getting overwhelmed.

Sada sat back down, sighing as she opened the book. She flipped through the pages, almost every single page was filled with sketches of Chip, sometimes even with their Pokemon. She was always way too shy to ever show any of these to them. She wiped away her tears,

"The only way to fix this is to finish The Paradise."

Had she learned nothing? She saw the damage but she still decided against her better judgement? Maybe she was truly better off alone. Just a determined lonely scientist, that's all she ever was... and probably ever will be.

"Sada you cannot do this!! This is detrimental to Paldea!" The AI exclaimed but Sada quickly shut her up, "I know what I'm doing. It's a worthy sacrifice for a world my family can live in. At least... what's left of it." She shook her head, turning towards the time machine. She started it up again, bringing in Pokemon from the past at a rapid, alarming rate.

The room was chillingly cold, flashing lights reflecting from the walls as the time machine continued spewing out more masterballs. Sada was at the top of it, right where the masterballs continued to fall.

Sada chuckled breathlessly, messing with the time machine as she pressed random buttons controlling it. Master balls slowly piled up beside her as it kept dropping them. A cold feeling ran down her spine, she was used to it by now but... this was different.

Something was watching her.

"Go away assistant, I'm busy" she didn't even turn around to look at them. That's when her vision distorted, all the buttons blending together. "What the—" Her eyes widened as she heard whispering. It slowly got louder and louder, it didn't have a source, it was everywhere. She covered her ears, but it didn't get any quieter. She quickly looked around, until she spotted Chip. They were uncomfortably still, but immediately as Sada spotted them, they smiled. Their expression changed into a happy apologetic one,

"Sada! I missed you..."

"Chip?" She almost believed it, but she couldn't let it fool her. She rubbed her eyes, trying to make them disappear, "No! You're not real!! Stop mocking me!" Her breathing sped up as the figure slowly approached her, it felt like every time she blinked, they were closer.

Their face was... unsettling. All the colours were drained from their face, taking in more of a blue shade, their eye bags more prominent. Their hair... soaked? ...

"What happened... to you?" Sada breathed out, her body stiff. She shook her head, trying to stay focused as she tried to back away. That's when it charged at her. She screamed, backing further away to the edge. She was cornered. Does it want to kill her? But as soon as it got to her, it disappeared.

Sada immediately grabbed the nearest thing to stop herself from falling off the edge. She immediately got down afterwards and ran towards the elevator. Her pace sped up as she sensed someone behind her... running after her. She ran into the elevator, trying to close the door as fast as possible. But before the door finished closing... she saw it. Turo? Something like it?...

She leaned against the elevator wall, gasping for air. She immediately pressed the button for the elevator to go up but... it didn't. She clicked the buttons again, nothing. She hyperventilated as she tried to get the elevator to start moving. She jumped as something started banging on the doors. Each time a little more aggressively. "G-go away!!" Her voice trembled.

AI Sada appeared behind her. The elevator arrived at the top floor long ago and the AI got to her as soon as she heard the screaming. "Sada?" The AI muttered softly. Sada flinched and immediately looked towards her. She took a run for it, escaping out of the lab.

They were following her. They were after her. They wanted to kill her. She aimed to hide in the 4th research station, quickly opening the doors, but before she got the chance to step a foot inside, that's when a group of arms grabbed her. She screamed, trying to make them let go of her. She escaped at last, closing the door behind her.

She left the time machine on... no one's watching over it. No one's making sure everything is going as it should.

Something growled within the shadows...

The sound of waves crashing onto the shore could be heard as Chip stood at the main deck. They were there the whole day. They knew the boat would arrive, at best, tomorrow evening due to such short notice, but they needed some time to themselves at that moment. They left their luggage at a cheap motel room, having most of their Pokemon guarding it.

But in the end, they didn't care, they didn't wanna stay in Area 0 for another second. They just wanted to go home.

Their eyes followed the ocean waves, lost in thought. What if they failed Sada? Where did they go wrong? Should have they paid more attention? Done more to help her?

They thought...no. They knew they had wronged Sada in some way, but going back meant dealing with conflict. Chip was scared of what could happen. Confrontation never worked out for them, all that they've learned in life is that if they do something wrong they will be shamed for it. What if they get yelled at again? Berated again? Was it even worth it if they're gonna make the same dumb mistake again? Might as well save them the time and just leave.

They knew running away wasn't a good option either but it felt like the safest... plus they wouldn't have to bother anybody.

They felt so stupidly guilty for just disappearing without a trace that day. What were they even thinking? Of course no one would want to talk to them after that. They put her through essentially torture and they don't even apologise? What kind of a person are they?

Maybe it was all their fault.

They stared off to the horizon, as the sun set, just like it did when they were waiting for their boat here. They breathed the fresh air of the ocean, the breeze gently blowing their hair.

Everything seemed to go silent. So peaceful yet... not. Their body moved on its own, walking closer to the edge. Breath got stuck in their throat as the usual fear set in again, but like they were too numb to properly process it. They approached the railing, looking at their reflection in the water, seeming to be unable to look away.

Railing small enough to climb over, they wanted to step forward, just have it be over.

Were they willing to go that far because of what happened with a stranger? But that was no stranger, it was someone who grew to trust them but now they betrayed her. They felt so selfish for wanting to leave everything behind. Sada loved them and now they're willing to put her through even more pain? It felt so hopeless.

What was even the point of everything? Of them? Their entire life they wondered if they even had a purpose to begin with. If they're needed by anyone.

But who would ever want them if all they're capable of is hurting people and then shifting the blame onto them? They don't mean to, it's like they lose track of who they are as a person, their brain starts seeing in black and white, shutting off each time they feel even a little threatened. It's impossible to think critically if you're in fight or flight mode. They can't help it. Maybe it's another defense mechanism, or perhaps self sabotage. They'll never know the answer to that. They'll never know why they are the way they are.

Maybe it's a test to see which person can stay the longest, which person loves them enough to endure everything, endure them. Which person can fix them?

Maybe after everything they automatically run at the slightest sense of danger. Even if it's something easily solvable. If they self-sabotage, it hurts less.

Maybe they were just broken from the beginning. An impossible puzzle that's only good for throwing away. An unfixable toy no child would ever want to love or adore. A computer with a deadly virus that will only continue to spread.

Who's gonna want to take care of a brain who jumps at the closest opportunity it gets to harm itself? There's no saving grace for them. They're a lost cause.

You... are a lost cause.

You are a pathetic good for nothing.

You will continue to hurt people.

You are too much to manage.

You are a waste.

You are nothing...

You are nothing but a bad person.

.

..

...

A loud splash could be heard, but no one seemed to notice. There was nothing left after them, only their shoes and glasses, neatly stored on the edge. Their vision blurred as they sunk deeper. Was this really the end? Did it really have to end like this? Was this really the solution?

They couldn't breathe anymore. Their mind went blank. Their consciousness began to slowly fade away as their body fought for survival on its own, but to no avail.

They accepted it.

It was better like this for everyone.

...Suddenly a jolt of electricity ran through their body, instantly waking them back up. They gasped for air out of reflex, inhaling salty water instead. They didn't see anything, they were lost. But there was this one strange feeling... Without even thinking twice about it, they fought. They fought to swim back up to the service. Was it free will? Or maybe something was leading them? They didn't know, but there wasn't time to think about that.

Their hands found a solid surface, gripping onto one of the dock's pilings. And they climbed up. They took their first breath out of the water, coughing frantically as they tried to keep hold of the edge of the dock. They were so weak, so out of breath. Arceus knows how they were able to make it.

Some people noticed them hanging on and helped them pull themselves back onto the dock. Chip was still coughing up water, their body shaky.

The people's voices fell upon deaf ears, Chip didn't hear anything. They sounded like muffles to them, nothing they could actually understand. They stared at their feet, shivers running down their spine as the feeling quickly returned to them, "...What..." they muttered, their voice raspy. They looked around for the first time, their consciousness seeming to slowly return. Then everything got loud. They covered their ears as they started to ring. They opened their eyes, everything was blurry. They could recognise some faces in the blurriness, they saw... concern, fear maybe. They felt a terrible sense of dread as if something was supposed to happen. Something was about to happen.

They had to go back.

They rushed to get up. The people around them tried to stop them but their efforts were useless. Chip, ignoring the horrid pain in their body, ran to their things. They tried to find Koraidon's Pokeball, "Nono right... I left it at the lab." Chip looked around frantically, spotting a flying taxi landing for someone. "Wait!!!" Chip immediately ran over, getting on. "You need to get me to Area 0, please this is urgent!",

"Wait lady- you can't-",

"Get me to Area 0, NOW." Chip hissed. "What the hell? Wait your turn!!" The customer tried to argue, but was quickly shut up by Chip's glare. The rider sighed, apologising to the customer and flew away. Chip couldn't help but check every few seconds on their current position. "Miss, I'm not permitted to fly into Area 0.",

"Then find a way!!" They almost growled. They wouldn't even let the taxi land properly and they'd already be off.

They ran to the bottom of Area 0, they were completely out of breath by the time they got there, ignoring the need to cough and the pain in their legs and chest. They needed to check up on Sada. Sooner than later. Shivers ran down their spine as they heard a loud angered roar coming from one of the research stations. They spotted Al Sada, but she seemed to have shut down. "Nonono- Sada what have you done?" They pulled out their Pokemons' pokeballs just in case they'd need to fight, before running into the lab.

And there it was.

Sada was on the ground, struggling to breathe as a Koraidon stood behind her. The Koraidon whined, immediately backing away from the source of the threat, another Koraidon. The opposing Koraidon roared. As it was about to deal another blow it got distracted by a scratchy voice familiar to Sada, "SADA!!". The koraidon snapped its head towards Chip, now its focus on them. Sada was too weak to escape anywhere or do anything, she could only watch in shock. Chip sent out their pokemon, "Keep it busy. It'll buy me some time." They

waited for them to start attacking the vicious Koraidon, giving them enough time to try and attempt to call for help on their phone. They struggled to dial the numbers as their hands trembled, finally managing to do it before coughing up some more water.

Their Veevees were still doing their best to keep Koraidon distracted. "C'mon C'mon pick up pick up.", they heard someone pick up the call. But at that moment it was already too late.

Koraidon, whilst shooting for one of Chip's eeveelutions, instead struck Chip with a Tera blast. Them taking the blow right into their right eye and getting knocked out.

"Hello? Miss? Miss!!" But no one could answer them anymore.

"..Chip..." Everything went black.

Picking up the pieces

Help arrived a few minutes later and they fortunately were able to fend off the Koraidon to rush Sada and Chip into the hospital.

Sada was greatly injured and Chip was... a special case. Both ended up in a coma. Sada was on the verge of passing away and she would have if it weren't for help arriving so quickly.

Chip woke up in a containment about 2 days later. "My head..." they winced in pain, their voice raspy. Their body felt... off, they could clearly breathe again but there was something else. They blinked a few times as they tried to get their eye to focus on the room around them, "Huh... why can't I..." they touched the right side of their face where their eye was.

"Oh nononono- I can't see-!! I can't see!!"

They quickly sat up in a panic, ignoring the pain of their whole body. That's when the panic truly set in. They saw the state of their body.

"W-what..." they felt them, they were real... ears, tail, misshapen legs, all following the same terastalized pattern. For a while they stared in shock, after it set in, they started screaming.

Suddenly coloured smoke filled the room. It only worsened Chip's panic. They tried to escape, but couldn't as the straps around their body suddenly tightened, holding them against the bed. They inhaled the smoke, feeling it choke them for a second before growing sleepy. Their muscles relaxed and they went limp.

For a second, their blurry vision spotted people in strange suits, but they passed out shortly after.

They woke up 2 hours later, having to let their blurry vision focus once again. Everything felt like it was in slow motion. The smoke still had its calming, sleepy effect on them, which helped them not to fall into panic again. They mumbled something as they swung their tail, so it was indeed real... They felt ears, but no matter how hard they tried, they couldn't see them. They looked around the room, their body still strapped onto the bed. The mattress and wall were covered in scratches, perhaps from their panic attack earlier.

As soon as one of the nurses on watch spotted they were awake, she called into the main office. Chip got startled as they heard knocking on glass, snapping their head towards the source of the sound. It was a huge window separating their room from the outside world, "No need to worry! The doctors will check up on you."

Chip waited for about 30 minutes before hearing the doorknob twist. It took a while before they could pry open the sealed door. When they did, Chip saw doctors with strange suits on

them. They moved slowly and carefully, as if approaching a wild rapid animal. Chip just stayed still.

"Hello miss, can you understand us?" One of them asked. "Yes..." Chip responded, a little confused. The other doctor immediately started writing something down.

"How do you feel? Can you remember anything?" they continued. "I can tell you after you release my body.",

"Miss, I apologise but we cannot do that yet. Now... how do you feel?". Chip was quiet for a minute before sighing "...Mostly a migraine. My body hurts, but it's minor. Though my skull feels like it got torn apart—". It took Chip a while to recollect their memory and understand what happened. "The last thing I remember is just pain— and blinding light.". The doctor nods, writing it down. "Well, we think we have a theory.",

"What happened to me? Will I be able to leave? ...Oh my Constelleon, I left my Veevees at a motel room the day that everything happened!! Are they okay?!"

The doctor stopped them, raising his hands into the air "One at a time. It looks like a powerful Tera Blast hit you in the right eye, it used the easy entrance to enter your bloodstream, spreading Tera energy throughout your entire body. This energy mutated parts of your DNA. Your body grew extra bones and flesh that replicate Pokemon body parts.

The reason it feels like your skull has been ripped apart, is because it was. But the Tera energy immediately healed the wound right as it was made. We aren't exactly sure why all this happened, because under normal circumstances none of this would be possible. But we theorise your DNA was already pretty unstable beforehand. The terastalized marks are a temporary side effect, but the Pokemon parts may be permanent—" he cleared his throat, "Of course... It's all too soon to tell, but these are our educated guesses. We can't let you leave until those energy levels drop. We still need to do more tests, but that was hard or even impossible to do when you were unconscious."

Chip was terrified, though that would be an understatement, "And my Pokemon?",

"The Pokemon we assume you used to protect yourself later lead us to the rest. They are currently being taken care of at an emergency daycare whilst your things are being kept safe in a locked room. We did beforehand give them a proper check up for any injuries and were quarantined for a day. Now... are you consenting to our tests? They'll be painless and just used to collect more information on how to help you. You'll be entitled to stop any or ask for painkillers if needed."

Chip looked him up and down, "Right— but before that, why those suits?". The doctor scratched the back of his neck, "No one really knows the full extent of your powers. And for all we know, it could be contagious.",

"So the league is terrified of me... just great." Chip mumbled to themselves. "Fine, but only because I wanna prove that I'm not dangerous.". The doctor nodded, rummaging through his notes, "Oh and— we found ocean water inside your lungs. Of course, the hospital took good care of that and that should no longer be an issue. But we aren't exactly sure where the water came from— is there anything you want to share?"

Chip blinked, memories rushing through their mind. They looked away, just staring at the ceiling as they calculated their response. "I was a bit too reckless while swimming..." they muttered but their eyes didn't meet the doctor's again. The doctor nodded and all of them, aside from Chip of course, left the room.

For the next couple days, Chip had to endure tests, some were as simple as testing their reflexes or senses. All were proven to be stronger than what was ever recorded before. But some tests were a tad bit more complicated...

“Alright. Today we will have you meet a Pokemon face to face. Don't worry, they're trained and won't try to attack you no matter what, even if you show fear or aggression. If things get out of hand, it'll be returned to its Pokeball.” The doctor stated. “Is this why you didn't let me see my own Pokémon?” Chip raised a brow. The doctor nodded, “Yes, but that's not important right now... Let us begin.”

Shortly after his speech an Umbreon was sent out into the room, a white shiny collar around its neck with what seemed like a camera.

“The Pokemon was picked based on what would be more familiar to you but also safer.” The collar flashed with blue as the voice spoke, it coming out of the collar. A microphone was connected to it.

“Well, this will be simple— c'mereee! Čičičiči” Chip kneeled down, their tail swinging gently behind them. The Umbreon blinked a couple times and what was supposed to be a yip came out more like ‘hi human? At least I think you're human, your scent isn't one of a human though’ or at the very least something similar to that.

Chip's eyes widened, they knew what it said? But how? “I'm sorry what?” Chip muttered, the Umbreon looking at them confused. It chirped again, Chip only getting more anxious, “H-hey this isn't funny. Who's doing this?!”

“What's wrong, miss?” the collar spoke again. “The Umbreon talks!!” Chip took a step back. The Umbreon got excited, seeming to understand them better as well. It wasn't a hallucination, it was very real.

Chip panicked, the shock and stress caused them to shapeshift into an Umbreon. Their entire body covered itself in crystals, showing an Umbreon as they fell apart again. They hissed at it as the Umbreon kept approaching them, wagging its tail trying to calm them down. Chip hid in a corner, poisonous sweat scattered around the room from them and the fur on their back spiky. They looked like a terastalized Umbreon but without the significant crown.

Quickly afterwards the Umbreon ended up being taken away, leaving Chip alone in the room again. They got a chance to calm down, taking deep breaths.

They soon turned back, but they ended up fainting out of exhaustion shortly after. They had to be moved back onto their bed by nurses.

Their body wasn't used to such a big amount of unfamiliar energy, making it easy to wear Chip off. Combined with stress and anxiety, fainting during tests wasn't uncommon.

They went through more tests, learning more and more as time went on.

At first the form they took depended on the pokemon around them, so a water type would cause them to develop Vaporeon features, like ‘first instinct’. Around two or more different types at once it was either randomised or even combining different parts. Their forms were limited though, finding out they only had one for each type. But it wasn't certain whether type combinations were possible.

They also showed a few animalistic behaviours, for example if stressed or under pressure hissing or growling. Their intelligence and knowledge was unaffected.

The levels of Tera energy within their body began to go down. The league was scared of them regardless as they still didn't know what they were truly capable of. Chip at the very least hoped Sada was okay. They tried asking the doctors, and thankfully they told them. But all they got was that she was in a stable condition... there was nothing else to say to them.

Sada woke up a week later in the middle of the night. Everything hurt and she could barely see anything in the darkness. She could barely move, any movement caused her immense pain.

"Ow ow ow ow..." She looked around, "Hello?? Is anyone there?" her voice was raspy, unable to yell completely. "Hello-!!"

That's when a nurse rushed into the room, "Oh my, miss! You're awake!",

"Where am I? What happened? Where's Chip??" Sada tried to move again, but the nurse gently pushed her back onto the bed, "Please stay put. You're in a hospital, your body was greatly injured in a Pokemon attack, it's still healing. And don't worry, the doctors are taking good care of Miss Chip.",

"What happened to them?! Take me to them this instant!!". It was a shock to the nurse to hear this. "I'm sorry, miss, but this is not a decision that I can make. You need to wait until morning for the doctors to check up on you and give you their opinion... besides, your body needs sleep and I'm sure your partner will appreciate a good night's rest as well."

Sada huffed, clearly stressed out. The nurse hummed, "I'll make you some tea, it'll help you calm your nerves." She walked off for a couple minutes, Sada just sat in silence. When the nurse returned, she helped Sada drink from it, "There, nice and slow. It may take you a while to regain control of your own body, so it's gonna be better to have a friend or family member help you with some daily tasks." Sada sighed, "Right...",

"I can see you may have a lot of questions— the doctors will answer them for you, but it looks like you'll have to stay with us for a couple more months." The nurse smiled as Sada nodded.

In the morning a bunch of doctors rushed to Sada's side, almost startling her. The doctors immediately started checking her heartbeat, breathing, etcetera.

"How are we feeling?" but the only thing they got from her was "Where is Chip? I need to see them.". The doctor shook their head, "You need rest, it's not a good idea to move around now.",

"Figure it out. I NEED to see them."

Despite their protests against it, Sada insisted and wouldn't change her mind. The doctors finally broke under the pressure and allowed it. Luckily her bed had wheels incorporated into it. "Just make sure to stay put..." The nurse mumbled, leading Sada to the giant window that led to Chip's room.

"Why can't we go inside?",

"The doctors forbid any skin to skin interaction. They..." the nurse went silent as she noticed Sada staring through the window. To say she was shocked would not be enough to explain what she felt, "What...",

"...They have massive levels of Tera energy within their body, we're waiting for them to drop so it's safe to interact with them again.". Chip was laying down, assuming to be sleeping, their tail wrapped around their legs.

The nurse filled Sada in on Chip's condition, leaving her dumbfounded.

"Chip..." was the only thing that left Sada's mouth. Chip's ears twitched, snapping towards the direction of the window. Recognising Sada's voice, they immediately turned around.

"Chip!!" Sada called out to them, trying her best to not start crying. She studied Chip's features. Chip quickly got up, running over to the glass, their tail wagging happily. They tried saying something but it couldn't be heard. "I...I can't hear you, Chippie." Sada mumbled, Chip looking a little disappointed. Chip could hear her but she couldn't hear them... but they seemed happy to see Sada, glad she was okay and awake.

All their anger at her disappeared, they were just so glad to see her.

Sada frowned, looking at them for some time before raising her hands up. She tried signing, 'Are you okay?'. She saw Chip's face lit up, which made her smile. Chip grinned like a kid, 'You can sign?'. Sada chuckled, 'I didn't have the chance to tell you, I'm sorry.' She frowned again, 'Are you in pain?'. Chip's brows furrowed, but then they responded, 'I'm feeling okay, don't worry!' They smiled, not wanting to worry Sada too much. Sada deep down knew they were lying, but didn't comment on it.

Sada placed her palm onto the glass, a worried expression on her face. Chip put their hand on the glass just right where Sada's was, giving her a reassuring smile. "We need to return back to your room, miss...",

"what? Already?? Please, I wanna stay a little longer." She turned back as she heard Chip knock on the glass to get her attention.

They tried to show that it was okay, 'Go rest, it's alright. I'll make sure to visit you when I can.'. They gave her a thumbs up, watching her get taken away again.

When Sada was dropped off at her room again and left alone, she couldn't help but break apart. All the bottled up and buried emotions came crashing down upon her and she couldn't stop crying. She felt horrible. Repeating aimless apologies to herself. She was a terrible mother, friend and a disgusting person in general. Why did it take her so long, why did it take a person being possibly destroyed forever for her to snap back to normal? She finally opened her eyes for the first time in almost a decade.

Answers and Apologies

Self-harm mention / scars warning, discussions of the acts in Wicked King

Another week or so later the levels of terastal energy in Chip's body significantly decreased, at least to a point the doctors considered okay, and most of their body returned to normal. All except for their eye, their tail and the fact they could shape-shift. Their right eye was covered by a bandage and they were allowed to leave and go back to a relatively regular life. Truth be told, Chip's life would never go back to normal after all this, with a huge tail following their every step... powers? They'll be viewed as a freak by everyone, if they weren't one already, they're no longer human.

After a whole life of wishing they could be something else, they got it and didn't know how to feel. Happy? Scared? Their dream was now a reality, and it was horrifying. But it wasn't all bad.

They were now able to communicate with Pokemon and some people even adored them for what they were now, especially younger children. Maybe it won't be that bad.

Maybe they'll be okay...

For Sada, she was still recovering by the time Chip was out of the hospital and still had a long way to go on her journey. Completely burned back, the left side of her body pretty much packed with bandages, her left eye. Pretty symbolic. She struggled to walk, her whole body shaking under any pressure due to how long she spent just laying in her bed. She needed help in order to eat or do anything in general.

Chip used their claws to draw a picture on the wall, when they suddenly heard footsteps. They looked towards the door as a doctor came to Chip's room, now unusually dressed in normal attire unlike the usual contamination suit.

"Good morning, miss! Good news today, you're free to leave.". This early? But they... Well, they decided not to comment on it despite their confusion. They made it their number one goal to find and visit Sada. Just wanting to hug her, hold her... Tell her that it's going to be okay.

They softly knocked on Sada's door, opening the door but not stepping in just yet. Sada looked at them with wide eyes, she didn't expect Chip to visit her after all that happened. Chip smiled softly, "Hi Sada, can I come in?" Sada immediately nodded her head, reaching her hand towards them. She was so glad Chip was okay, "Chip! You came back... Oh, seeing you back to normal is one of the best things I could have seen today.". Chip walked in, taking her hand and gently squeezing it, "I'm okay Sada, no need to worry about me, okay?".

Sada asked about their condition and Chip answered any question she had. Around that moment Sada noticed Chip still had a tail, "Are you sure you're okay...?". Chip looked at it as well, "Oh, that! Well, that's the only thing aside from my terastalized eye that I cannot get rid of unless I focus on it real hard. Which is kinda annoying... but could be worse!" They grinned. Sada didn't find it funny though, she frowned.

She thought that they went fully back to normal but in reality she caused actual permanent damage to their body. SHE did that to them, because of HER they're gonna have a harder time living in the world.

Sada's breath hitched as she teared up. She started sobbing again, "Oh, Chip... I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry." She repeated apologies over and over again. "I feel horrible. I'm so terribly sorry... Can you possibly ever forgive me?" She stuttered. "I understand it'll take you a long time to forgive me... or you may not forgive me at all—", "Sada—"

"—but I'll respect your decision e-either way I—" she kept sobbing.

"Sada!!" Chip finally got her attention. Sada sniffled as she looked towards them, only to see Chip was on the verge of tears as well. "Oh no... nonono, please don't cry. I'm sorry." She tried getting them to stop crying. She wiped away their tears with her thumb, having Chip lean into the palm of her hand as they let out a deep sigh.

"I should be the one apologising. I left you in the dust, just disappeared. You had no idea if I was even okay, I caused you anxiety on purpose. I'm... I'm so sorry. I don't know what got into me.". Sada frowned "Chip no... you didn't... I mean...", but Chip continued "I wasn't there for you when you needed me the most. I promise I'll be there for you from now on, I'm so terribly sorry for leaving you behind."

They hug, Chip making sure to be as gentle as possible, "Are you feeling better? Does anything hurt?",

"...Not anymore, thanks to you."

A day later before Sada's bedtime, they were hanging out together.

Sada had issues with sleeping, often waking up in the middle of the night in tears from another nightmare. Medication kept her from going manic again or having hallucinations but it didn't make the dreams any less terrifying.

Chip gently held Sada's hand, studying the bandages and what patterns they made when overlapped. Sada watched them, she didn't mind the silence. It wasn't awkward, it was peaceful... It made her feel safe.

Chip sighed, "I need to get back home... It's late, plus you need to get some sleep." They smiled. Sada immediately frowned, "5 more minutes...?".

Chip giggled, kissing the knuckles of her hand, "I'm sorry, but you know I can't..." Sada, though disappointed, nodded and watched as they got up. They squished her hand one last time, "Good night, I'll be here right before you wake up tomorrow... like always." They turned around to leave, but not before giving her one last smile.

Sada inhaled, mastering all her courage, "Chip wait!!" She tensed up as Chip glanced at her again, "Please stay... Please. You can sleep here... right?"

Chip looked around the room, confused for a second. Chip thought for a moment, a smile creeping on their face as they softly laughed, "Awh, do you need cuddles to fall asleep?"

Sada's eyes widened, burning up, "I didn't say that— um..." she sighed, giving up on hiding it, "...Yes... I'm... afraid of passing away suddenly in my sleep." Sada looked down, a bit embarrassed, "I-I know we aren't like— but— kids do sleepovers all the time and it's not romantic so—".

Chip crawled onto the bed, sitting next to her, "I know... it's okay... I understand." They caressed her forehead. Sada laid down, Chip now resting beside her. Chip pulled the covers of them, resting their head on her shoulder, "Does this hurt?"

"...No..."

"Good..." Chip yawned. Sada wrapped her arm around them, softly side-hugging them. Chip gently snaked her arm around Sada's waist, feeling her flinch, "I'm sorry... Did that hurt?"

Sada inhaled, "My side—". Chip pulled up her shirt ever so slightly to see, they instantly knew what spot she was talking about.

They relaxed their breathing, closing their eyes as they tried to focus. Sada opened up her eyes, alert, when she heard a faint sound... almost like... purring.

"What—?" She looked towards Chip, for sure it was coming from them but she thought she was hearing things. "Shhh... just relax." Chip mumbled, their thumb gently caressing Sada's side where the pain resided. Sada swallowed the lump in her throat and nodded. Like magic, the pain seemed to go away. She was truly at peace at that moment. "Chip?",

"Yeah?" Chip looked up ever so slightly.

"Will you be here if I... you know..." she muttered, almost hesitating. "I'll be here, and nothing's gonna happen to you, okay? Not while I'm here, not while I'm away. You're gonna be okay.", they hugged her gently, nuzzling the side of their face against her chest.

Her heart was racing, but they didn't mind. She muttered, "We don't speak of this, you hear me?",

"Hush," they chuckled as sleep soon came over the two of them. They did this a couple more times, soon Sada seemed to need it less and less... But deep inside she longed for it.

Around 2 weeks later, Sada regained some of her mobility. She was able to hold most light things on her own and drink without spilling anything.

Chip was resting their head on Sada's shoulder as she read to them once again. Sada took the opportunity to lay her head on Chip's in return.

"Do you want me to read to you for a change? Besides, you still need a lot of rest." Chip looked up at her as she chuckled softly, "No need to worry your little head, okay? I love reading for you. I longed to have this opportunity again." she booped their nose playfully, laughing when they sneezed as a result.

As they tried to clean off their nose, Sada noticed their bandages were coming off, "Your bandages are loosening. C'mere, let me help.",

"Huh?" Chip looked at their arms and panicked, messily wrapping them around again,

"Sorry— I didn't realise.",

"There's no need to apologise... That's a minor thing." Sada smiled, but she couldn't help but wonder about it.

"Hey— I hope this is not a sensitive subject, but why do you wear bandages? You never struck me as the athletic type and after so long of knowing you... there seems to be a deeper reason behind it." Chip went silent, not knowing what to say. After a while she spoke again, "No pressure, of course. How about I turn around so you can rebandage it?" She felt a small sense of relief as they nodded.

She turned around, letting Chip take them off and put them back on in peace. She just wanted to make them feel comfortable and safe. Sada would rather wait for them to open up than force them. She had her own suspicions, but she wouldn't bring them up. It was something that stayed within her mind only.

"You can look again." they mumbled, resting their head on her again. Sada wanted to say something but decided against it at the last second.

She soon returned to reading, Chip noticeably hiding their arms a lot more than before the entire ordeal. After a while the doctor arrived to tell Chip visitations were over and they ended up leaving. Wishing Sada goodnight.

Sada waited for Chip to close the door before pulling out her laptop. She spent the whole evening researching mental health and how to approach a person who may be struggling with them.

She was so confident that she knew everything and knew how to approach someone but now that she was actually being faced with it, she realised she didn't know anything from what she learned when she was younger. She maybe knew all the illnesses and symptoms, but how to deal with suicide or self harm? She had no idea. She hoped that it wasn't it and that she was simply exaggerating and being paranoid, but she had a feeling...

She decided to give Chip a week to confess themselves and if they wouldn't, she would ask about it. She didn't wanna push them but at the same time didn't wanna risk wasting time if by any chance they were harming themselves and possibly were still doing so.

Nearly a week has passed and Sada was slowly mentally preparing herself to talk to Chip, practicing in her own room.

She groaned in frustration, "I'm not ready, I'm not ready..." She knocked on her own head "Sada think.". Suddenly she heard a knock and immediately went silent.

There came Chip, looking incredibly nervous, "Um... Sada? Can we talk?" Sada nodded, scooching to the side of her bed to give Chip a spot to sit down.

"Of course, do you wanna sit?" she patted the spot next to her, smiling when Chip made themselves comfortable next to her. "I-I wanted to come clear about the... the bandages. I have wanted to ever since you brought it up but I was absolutely terrified to do so." Chip hugged their legs, their tail wrapping around their right leg. "Hey... you know I wouldn't judge, right? I made sure to remind you every now and then." Sada brushed her thumb against their shoulder.

Chip took a deep breath, taking a few minutes before starting to take off their bandages.

Sada, as if out of reflex, looked away.

"You don't need to look away... I want you to see." Chip mumbled, trying to position their arms in a way that would make them visible, but that probably just made their position look unnatural instead. "Are you sure?",

"I'm sure." Sada inhaled softly and looked back at them.

Her suspicions were correct, they were scars. Those types of scars. Thankfully no fresh cuts but the amount of scars saddened her regardless.

She attempted to touch them but stopped herself at the last second, "...Can I have a closer look?" She waited for Chip to nod before gently picking up one of their arms. She ran her fingers over the scars and bumps, "These look fresher than all the rest...". Chip looked away, their expression filled with guilt, "... I relapsed after our fight um... I haven't done it in months up until that point and I haven't done it again since.". Sada felt a pang of guilt. Chip looked back at Sada "I'm sorry—",

"What? You have nothing to apologise for!" She clears her throat, "I'm happy and proud that you stopped again. Progress isn't always gonna be a straight line and that's okay, that doesn't mean it's any less valid." She gently hugged their arm, "Do you have them anywhere else?",

"Yes, but I'm not gonna be sharing those— um— a little too revealing.". Sada nodded, not wanting to push them. "Are you comfortable sharing the reasons why you started in the first place?"

Chip thought for a moment before sharing some things about their life. Their parents and childhood. "I'm sorry I... I can't remember much. It's all nothing but a blur now...". Sada growled, angry at the people who wronged them, "Those people better hope they never come across me.",

"In this state?" Chip teased. "Hey I was able to pick you up and throw you across the room if I wished." Sada laughed, putting on a serious face again. "I won't let anyone hurt you like this again, alright? I'll protect you. And I'm sorry for our fight." She grabbed their hand, pulling it softly to her lips before grinning which made Chip blush.

"How did the doctors not notice?",

"Oh, well, the scars were hidden by the Tera crystals that covered my whole arms, by the time they were gone, no one was inspecting me anymore." They shrugged, but then they went silent. They clearly just remembered something and Sada saw it, "There's more to it isn't there..?".

Chip looked back at their arms, then looked into the distance, "They found water... in my lungs.". Sada was confused at first, "What? How?". Chip took a deep breath in and out, "Before I returned to Area 0 that day I... I tried killing— myself. I tried to drown but— something woke me up and made me swim to the surface, the same feeling that told me something was going on with you... I... yeah..." there was nothing but silence. It didn't take long for Chip to tear up and start crying, the guilt was overbearing,

"I'm so sorry—"

Sada didn't waste time wrapping herself around them, hugging them tightly as she whispered gentle words to calm them down, "Shhh... shhh... it's okay...",

"No it's not—" they continued sobbing. Sada tried her best to wipe away their tears, "Honey, no... it's not your fault. You shouldn't apologize for hurting."

She made them face her, her gaze softened at their red puffy eyes, "Now now... breathe... it's okay," she cooed. Making an example out of herself as she watched Chip copy her breathing. "There we go, that's good." she smiled, caressing their face. Chip just laid their head on her chest in defeat, not saying anything. Sada continued holding them, even slightly rocking them, as much as her body allowed her to do so. "Do you still have those thoughts now?" She kissed their forehead. Chip looked around, letting out a soft huff, "s Sometimes, but no actual urge to do it... if that makes any sense.",

"It does, don't worry... and I'm glad." she picked up their chin, making them look at her again,

"We're gonna get you someone who you can talk to about it, yeah? You're gonna be okay, I'm here now... and I'm not letting you out of my sight." She smiled. Chip frowned "What if

they'll take me away? Lock me up like a crazy person...". Sada's brows furrowed "That won't happen, and I'll make sure of it. I'll keep you safe... yeah?". Chip nodded, "Mhm... Thank you... um—

Do you think any less of me? I honestly never wanted to tell you, because of the amount of stress, anxiety and responsibility it brings having someone like me as a friend or loved one. I can be a lot to handle sometimes and I am draining, I've grown to accept that. But it still worries me— though hiding it wouldn't be fair towards you.". Sada let them talk it out, waiting a few seconds after they stopped to talk herself, "Chip you'll never be too much to me. Quite the opposite, I honestly cannot get enough of you! You're fun to be around and easy to connect with." She was happy to see the smallest smile appear on their face. Sada smiled back before frowning again, "You're important to me, don't forget that."

Chip sighed contently, still smiling.

"Can I hug you?" Sada tilted her head. "Of course." Chip hugged her, Sada wrapping her arms around them.

She wanted to squeeze them but she still didn't regain enough arm strength to do that, "Just pretend I'm squeezing you—" which made Chip laugh. They ended up hugging for a very long time. Sada even gave them a peck on the forehead, "Always come to me if you have any urges, bad thoughts or you just need to vent, okay?". Chip's cheeks turned slightly red, smiling, "Same goes for you." And in response Sada added "If you're willing to be honest with me, so will I, hm?

Can I help with the bandages?" She was pleasantly shocked by Chip's response to that, "Nah, I don't need to wear them around you anymore."

The next day, Sada doodled with safe markers on Chip's arms. They didn't have the heart to hide these drawings by bandages so they decided to not wear them until the doodles wore off on their own.

Sada's recovery was going relatively well. Her back scar was still extremely sensitive so she had to take care of it daily. She couldn't reach it though, especially when her arms still hurt a little, so instead, Chip helped her.

Chip and Sada returned back to Sada's room after being out for lunch. "And here we are!"

Chip pushed Sada's wheelchair, stopping right next to her bed and then helping Sada get up and sit onto it.

"Finally... Now I can—" Before she got to lay down Chip stopped her "Don't get a hold of yourself. We gotta treat your back scar again." Sada groaned, "Already?" She hated having it done because of how much it hurt. "I thought you said you weren't a softie?" Chip smirked. "What?? I'm not of course I'm not! Fine, let's do it." She agreed, turning her back towards Chip.

"Okay... shirt up" Chip mumbled, getting stuff ready before turning to Sada again. "Ow ow ow ow—" Sada hissed as her clothing brushed against the burn scar. "It's okay- just a little more..." Chip pulled Sada's shirt up, keeping it on her shoulders, "Now hold it there for me." Chip applied some numbing cream first before adding the prescribed healing one onto her back, making sure to be gentle. They then proceeded to bandage it in order to not let the cream brush off but to also make the wound less painful when clothes rub against it. Chip pulled the shirt back, ruffling Sada's hair playfully. "See? That wasn't so bad, huh?" Chip teased her, Sada just rolled her eyes in response. "Shut it..." she smiled, cheeks red.

Chip sat into an armchair next to the bed. They hummed, "What do you plan on doing after you're released? You don't seem too fond of the possibility of you returning to your job?"

Sada fidgeted with her fingers, "I don't really know— I guess I don't really have anywhere to go otherwise.",

"What about Arven?" Chip saw Sada tense up at the name, not responding.

They inhaled, "Truth be told... I guess I wasn't exactly honest with you in this, but Arven has been visiting you ever since you were brought here.",

"That's impossible. I haven't seen him once!" Sada sat up. "Yeah, because he only came when you were sleeping. He... didn't wanna deal with the awkwardness I suppose." Chip hugged their legs, not meeting Sada's eyes. "Why didn't you tell me?",

"...He visited me once and we talked. It's just what Arven wanted at that time and what was generally advised by doctors to keep you as calm and stress free as possible, your body needed time to heal and additional stress at that time wouldn't be good first your recovery... I promised him to keep it a secret." They sighed, "I let him know about everything that was happening the past 2 or so years before we got here, he didn't give me a response to any of it though."

Sada felt guilty, staying quiet for a moment. Chip continued, "I know this is probably not the best time to bring it up again, but your lie... really stung. I thought I could trust you— I still do, but..." they looked at the ceiling, "...I don't know."

Sada frowned, "I'm genuinely sorry. I won't excuse it or try to explain it, I'm sorry." Chip stayed quiet for a moment, then took a deep breath,

"I have a daughter."

Sada's eyes widened, looking towards Chip in shock. At first she didn't even know if she heard correctly, "I'm sorry— Can you repeat that?". Chip huffed, "I have a daughter.",

"What... what happened?"

"Sorry this is... out of nowhere..."

I had to send her away, I couldn't safely take care of her at that time. I wish I could've but things got messy and... she was no longer safe in my arms..." they looked down and then shook their head, "... but there's nothing stopping you. You don't need to keep your distance. So please. Don't miss your chance.", they then hugged their legs.

Sada looked around the room, she was lost in thought as Chip silently dissociated for a brief moment. Sada's brows furrowed,

"I... do wanna fix things with Arven.",

"Really?" Chip was puzzled for a moment, they expected a bit of a fight but it turned out there was none.

"I wanna talk to him, and if everything goes alright— preferably attend therapy with him. I wanna be better, to you and him..." Chip couldn't help but smile, giving Sada a hug, "You're such a dummy... thank you."

The next day, Chip managed to get a hold of Arven and convinced him to visit them to talk. Chip stayed there by their request to watch over the whole thing.

He arrived at Sada's room in the afternoon.

Sada froze up as she heard a knock, "Oh noo— I'm so not ready—" Chip squeezed her hand, "Hey, you'll be okay." before turning towards the door, "Come in!"

Arven opened the door, stepping in. There was silence for a few seconds, it was incredibly awkward as none of them knew what to say. Sada took a deep breath, "Hi Arven— can you sit down, please?" He nodded and took a seat.

"Arven I... I'm so sorry. I swear on everything that I didn't mean to hurt you the way I did— everything got so messy... but no matter what, it's not an excuse and won't erase what you felt at those times." She looked away, honestly too ashamed to look into his eyes, "When

Mabosstiff got hurt, I panicked. All I thought about at that time is the possibility of you getting hurt instead— ... you could have ended up being the one hurt, or worse, killed. I was scared, so I sent you away... I wanted to protect you, and I'm sorry for not going with you.” Arven was looking at her the entire time, studying her to see if she was being genuine. His gaze turned to his backpack which was sitting on the floor by the front door, all his Pokemon's pokeballs were there, including Mabosstiff's.

“It really felt like you were kicking me out. Thinking back, I... I have no memories of you ever playing with me as a kid. You had a job, a dream you devoted your attention to... I'm still trying to understand why?”,

“I wanted to create a world for you to live in, for us to live in. A paradise where Pokemon and humans are equal... So unrealistic but I believed I could make it work. It felt like each day I was closer to it, yet so far. I thought we could all live there together.” she muttered quietly. Arven nodded, not asking further.

Then suddenly he sent out Mabosstiff, who was quick to recognise Sada and jumped on the bed... which he didn't expect whatsoever, “Wh— Mabosstiff—!! Get down from there!” Arven panicked as he tried to get him off. Sada just laughed off the small pain of having an oversized puppy on her recovering body. “Mabosstiff, you're okay!! My, you even evolved!” She began scratching Mabosstiff behind the ear, “Still just as adorable, have you been taking good care of Arven for me?”, and Mabosstiff woofed, his tail wagging happily.

Mabosstiff eventually got off of her lap, letting her take a breath. Arven smiled a little at the cute reunion, it quickly faded once again though. “How have you been? You seem... different.” he muttered. Sada scratched the back of her neck, calculating her response, “I've been on meds for some time now, I don't know if Chip told you. I'm assuming they did— uh... they've been helping a lot. I do feel pretty at ease, probably for the first time in a decade. My mind isn't as loud anymore...” she smiled shyly. He nodded.

Finally, Sada asks him the final question. “Hey Arven? Would you be willing to— start over? Or at least... try to? I want to improve, I wanna be better. But I need a fresh start—” Arven didn't know what to say to that, looking away. Sada sighed as she thought that meant no. As much as she expected it and respected it, it didn't make her any less sad.

“What are they to you?” Arven suddenly asked. Hinting towards Chip as he looked at Sada again. Sada didn't know how to answer, her body tensing up. Honestly, she didn't know. She cared about them deeply but she didn't know how to explain it, at least not yet. “Well... they started out as my co-worker but slowly became a very dear friend to me. Someone who believed in me and as a result... saved my life. Despite how horrible I was towards them, they didn't leave me hanging. They don't want me to throw my life... you... away. And I want to make it up to them by taking their advice.”.

A small but genuine smile appeared on Arven's face, she was finally talking about something else than her work... *someone* else. And that was a huge relief. “Will you move back to the lighthouse?” Sada froze up, not a huge fan of that idea but she fought against it. “Yeah, as long as Chip doesn't mind me leaving them in Area 0 like that.”,

“I don't, it's okay.” Chip waved it off. Arven smiled brightly, surprising Sada with a hug. “Then yes. We can try a fresh start. Don't fail me, okay?” Sada hugged back, burying her face into his shoulder, “I won't, I promise.”,

“I missed you, mom...”

There was a moment of silence, before she heard sniffing. “Are you crying?” Sada chuckled, almost on the verge of tears herself. “No.” He mumbled, but it was noticeable as his voice started breaking. Sada hugged him as tightly as her body let her, rubbing circles into his

back to comfort him. "Shhh... It's okay... It's alright now." She cooed, but couldn't help but let a few tears slip herself.

"I love you, mi tesoro."

They continued talking a bit more, catching up on life, Arven's school life, friends and more.

Sada even showed him her scar on her back, he looked absolutely horrified.

Sada and Arven started attending therapy together, sometimes even including Chip. It wasn't all smooth sailing though, no journey is perfect. For example, Arven knew nothing about his father and Sada wasn't exactly comfortable with opening up about that yet. Their shared therapist did help them the best they could, but it is on Sada for when she'd be ready to open up.

About 4 months later, Sada ended up making a full recovery. She still had to attend rehabilitation sessions to regain strength in her body, but otherwise she was healthy again.

About Chip... they started attending therapy of their own. They got some medication, of course, carefully selected as Sada knew certain types of pills such as antidepressants could potentially mess up Chip's DID system and she did not want that for them. Fortunately they got the right medication for them and started to feel a bit better as time went on.

Repressed feelings

Sada and Arven were sitting on the edge at the top of the lighthouse, their hair flying softly in the morning breeze. They were catching up on things a bit more, just bonding.

Sada laughed, sighing contently, "Ah... How much I missed this. We used to hang out here all the time!" Arven nodded, smiling at the fond memories. "I had to prevent you from walking off of the edge multiple times, you loved peeking over the edge and scaring the hell out of me." Sada grinned, nudging him. He laughed, "I was a baby— I didn't know any better." he quickly nudged her back.

Sada continued "So... anything new to tell me? Any special someone?",

"Mom—" Arven cringed on the inside. She just chuckled, "Sorry, I couldn't help myself."

Arven rolled his eyes, "It's not— not really my thing at the moment. I'm not in a rush for these things, also it's a tad bit too cheesy for me.". Sada raised a brow "Too cheesy? At your big age?",

"Mom." he glared at her which made her laugh. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry," she giggled, "... of course I fully respect that. It's your life. But I am determined to be there from now on.". Arven smiled, "Thank you... but how about you? If that's not um... weird to ask. You've been happier lately. I'm curious.",

"Hm? Nah, I don't think there's anyone yet." Sada returned the smile, waving the question off. Arven looked around, not meeting her eyes for a moment, "Not even Chip?",

"What do you mean by that?" she tilted her head, now he had her full attention. "I'm not the only one who noticed, y'know? You're close with them and it feels like you get closer each and every day. But ironically you two are the only ones who are oblivious to it." He rested his chin on his palm. Sada looked away, her expression unreadable "You're exaggerating—".

"Not when even the doctors thought you were a couple. Chip only got information about you because they thought that. Not to mention how it became a huge rumour around the region—" he proceeded to throw his hands into the air. "A rumor?" she squinted her eyes.

"Oh— right. You don't know... It spread outside of the fast. Soon enough, everyone thought there was something between you two. Especially within the academy— You can't just spend years of your life alone, insisting you're a loner and then one day out of nowhere show up with a mysterious co-worker. I guess... I'm just trying to understand right now."

Sada thought for a minute, guess she never considered that. She remained silent. Arven saw she was getting uncomfortable and decided to change the topic, "I know there's still things about dad but— sorry, um— I didn't mean to be invasive. Where did Koraidon go by the way? I noticed you no longer carry his pokeball." Sada was quiet for a little longer before speaking up again "Oh, he's with Chip. Even if he's still my Pokemon, I'm glad he can help them move around easier. If using their mobility aids gets too complicated, they can just fly, you know?" she chuckled awkwardly.

Sada checked the time and immediately got up, "I'm sorry, I promised Chip to take them to the fields today, the ones that many Leafeons call home, you know?" She scratched her neck and Arven waved her off, "Of course I know." He chuckled.

"I'm gonna go now, bye Arven!" waving bye to him before running off. He sighed, smiling as she left his sight. He mumbled to himself quietly, "You deserve someone who will care about you... but why won't you talk about it? I don't get it..."

Sada waited for Chip outside of the lighthouse, smiling, stimming slightly out of excitement. She smiled and waved them over as she saw them in the distance.

"Ready to go?" She asked and Chip nodded cheerfully. They both quickly set off.

"Are you sure about it all though? We can always go get ice cream or something instead... or go look for a different eeveelution." She was concerned, considering Chip's allergy to pollen. Chip patted her shoulder, "Sada, I told you already!",

"But—"

"Sada, it's just a minor allergy. It's not severe at all!" Chip sped up their walking. "If you say so— hey wait up!" She ran after them, both of them laughing.

They talked a bit more, Chip ended up sending out one of their Pokemon, Sylveon, to keep any aggressive wild Pokemon away. Their hands brushed against each other a couple times, but both were too embarrassed to say anything about it.

"Aww aren't you two just the sweetest!" an unfamiliar voice echoed around them. It was a group of friends walking past them.

"What was that about?" Chip muttered as they went out of earshot. Sada just shrugged, but deep down she knew... That's when Chip's Sylveon decided it had enough and used its ribbons to make them hold hands. "Ryuu! You can't do that—!" Chip panicked, their cheeks red. Sada just laughed, blushing herself. Their fingers intertwined.

"Jeez, relax your arm, it's okay."

"Sorry I do it subconsciously—" Chip squealed.

They soon arrived at the field, sitting down in the grass under a tree. Sada made sure the sun wasn't hitting Chip's eyes due to their light sensitivity, carefully looking for a good spot. Chip let out their Leafeons and Sada's Koraidon out of their pokeballs so they could freely run around while they talked.

"You only took Sylveon today and the rest of your party are Leafeons?" Sada chuckled.

"Heyyy— no judging. I'm a dedicated collector. Plus, who wouldn't love them?" Chip gestured towards them, "They keep the air fresh which is good for your worried butt, cuz it means less pollen!". Sada rolled her eyes, giggling.

While Chip was distracted with their Pokemon, Sada walked off, collecting all kinds of different flowers from the field, making a small bouquet out of them. She sat back down,

tapping Chip on the shoulder to get their attention. "Woah—" Chip was surprised but in a good way. "I promise to make you a fake one when I can so it lasts forever and doesn't trigger your nose as much." She grinned, offering them the bouquet. Chip gently took the small bouquet, their eyes sparkling in awe. "It's beautiful!!" They smelled the flowers, sighing happily.

Sada's brain probably glitched out as she then proceeded to kiss their cheek, immediately backing away after realising what she just did. She turned red, looking away. Chip hid their face in the flowers, but they couldn't help but smile.

A fellow wild Leafeon made home in Sada's lap, crawling onto her and spinning around before lying down. "Arceus mío, what do I do—" Sada squeaked. "Stay calm, try petting it," Chip signaled, looking down at it and back at her.

Sada hesitated but then attempted to pat it. She smiled brightly as the Leafeon started purring, enjoying the affection. Chip looked at her, giggling softly, "She likes you!" Which made Sada giggle as well, "You can tell the gender?"

"Mhm! It's quite simple. Males have way more fur to attract potential partners."

"Hm.. I see." she smiled.

Sada hesitated but then took a deep breath, "Have you... heard of any rumours?". Chip turned to look straight at her, "About?",

"About us. There have been rumours about us being together." she muttered quietly.

Chip didn't exactly know how to respond to that, it was unexpected and a surprise to them. They also didn't wanna upset Sada by saying something wrong.

"I see... Does that bother you? We can always try to put out something to let others know the truth about us." they offered, smiling softly. "What? Nono— that's not what I meant. It's not that big of a deal honestly... I was curious to know what you thought about it." Sada shook her head.

"Hm... I dunno, really..." they huffed, leaning against a tree as they thought.

The AI was tasked with taking care of the lab whilst they were on their hiatus, making sure it stayed clean and brand new. Sada did inform her about her new living situation right after her initial conversation with Arven, asking if the AI was okay with that as she would be left to take care of the lab at night essentially alone, maybe sometimes with Chip's help if they were able to handle it.

The AI didn't mind whatsoever and was happy, overall she seemed... happier. Chip would still be living in Area 0, so they wouldn't exactly be alone either. Sada and Chip eventually returned to their job and the AI was more than happy to see them all well and healthy.

This goes on for about another month. Chip and Sada slowly grew closer, often getting caught hugging for long periods of time or just being close to each other in general. Chip was usually seen wearing Sada's coat or jackets, liking the smell and warmth of them.

Chip stomped into the lab, immediately heading to their 'office'. Curiosity overtook the AI and she slowly followed them. Before they could close the door, she appeared in front of them, "Good morning to you too, Chip." she smiled softly.

Chip panicked slightly out of embarrassment, bowing as an apology, "Sorry, sorry— Hi—" they hissed awkwardly.

"What happened to hit you off the rails so bad?" she tilted her head. "I was going to the market to restock on snacks and a couple people approached me and started complimenting me on... 'mine and Sada's relationship'. I-I don't know, it was awkward. They were also

super invasive like who asks someone if they had their first kiss yet?" they threw their arms in the air.

The AI hummed, shrugging "Yeah, I get how that can be uncomfortable.

Are you... angry about the fact people think you're dating Sada?". Chip looked away, thinking for a split second, "W-well I don't think I have a direct problem with that I suppose. But it's so awkward when people ask me about it and it feels like we are actually together, even if we aren't. I'm probably talking nonsense.

But we're friends, at least you're aware of it if no one else is." they mumbled, clearly flustered which the AI noticed.

"You know... Friends do not steal each other's clothes so often it becomes their second wardrobe." she teased. Chip's brain glitched. They looked at themselves, noticing they were still wearing Sada's coat. They completely forgot it was there in the first place. They smiled shyly, "Ahah– Oh, silly me I forgot it existed. Um– I'm on my way to return it...

Also since when do you care so much?" they glared at her, hiding their face in the fur collar of the coat.

The AI put a finger to her chin, then shrugged, "I have felt a bit more... free recently, like I can express more. Could be that new update the professor did." She tilted her head as if trying to appear cute on purpose. Chip squinted their eyes and mumbled something under their breath, "Right– Imma go return this to Sada.". The AI hummed, "Whatever you say." and waved goodbye to them as they then ran off.

They looked around for Sada, spotting her in her usual place, her office. She seemed so hyperfocused, drawing something on a whiteboard. Chip stared at her, not wanting to interrupt her focus. But then they heard her chuckle, she knew Chip was there watching her and she made it known.

"Hi, Chippie! It's okay, what's up?" she smiled gently, immediately dropping whatever she was just doing. She was in awe seeing Chip in her coat, they looked so adorable.

Chip approached her, "I wanted to return the coat–" and began taking it off only for Sada to stop them, "Woah, wait! I want you to keep it! I have too many of those anyway.". Chip frowned, quietly muttering to themselves "Když to přestaneš nosit, tak už nebude vonět po tobě...".

Sada tilted her head in confusion causing Chip to panic and shove the coat into Sada's arms. Sada sighed before letting out a chuckle, "Alright, alright. I'll take it." and then ruffled their hair. She then took the coat from their hands, catching a glimpse of an odd sparkle within their eyes.

It didn't take long for it to turn dark and it was time for Sada to return home. She knocked on the desk next to Chip to get their attention. Once Chip looked up at her she smiled "It's getting pretty late so I'm gonna be heading home, yeah? Just so you know.",

"Already?" they blinked. They looked at the clock, then back at her. "Shoot I didn't know it was this late– see you tomorrow then." They tried to hide their disappointment, waving goodbye.

"Don't worry, we'll see each other again! Goodnight Chip." She hugged them goodbye but didn't leave just yet. She proceeded to take off her lab coat, pulling it over Chip, "I know you mentioned having trouble sleeping with the lab being so empty now... hopefully this can comfort you a bit." she caressed their cheek, causing them to blush ever so slightly.

"Maybe... we can have a sleepover someday? When I fix up the lighthouse a bit more? It's a bit rusty and you deserve only the best!" she grinned. Chip playfully rolled her eyes, "I'm no royalty.",

"Hm, but you are in my eyes." she giggled, causing Chip's blush to darken even further.

They nodded, returning the smile. "Hehe... Goodnight then." they pressed their lips against her cheek to give her a soft peck. Sada's smile brightened. She waved goodbye and then left.

Chip did, in fact, have some sleeping problems. Not that they were afraid of the dark, more so of the unknown. It had an effect on their sleeping habits and schedule, often just looking around their own room when they couldn't sleep. They started clinging onto AI Sada whenever the actual Sada was away and the AI made note of that.

Chip was always close with her but now it was more frequent. They would try to work wherever the AI was at that moment even if it would be impractical from a work standpoint. They sat on the floor, tapping the keyboard of their laptop.

The AI watched them closely. She couldn't help but feel a sense of... empathy? Pity? Her old self would be more morbidly intrigued and logical about the situation but now? She knew a part of her actually cared for them. At least as much as was possible for her fake brain.

"You've been oddly... clingy... each time Sada clocks out, is there a reason for that?" She met them at their height, her expression calm and gentle.

Chip blinked a few times, they expected the AI to ask at some point but they weren't quite prepared for it yet. "It's a bit embarrassing—",

"Why is that?" there was a hint of innocent curiosity in her eyes. "For my big age." Chip muttered.

"I see... Well, you're never too old for things... May I know what is bothering you?" she sat next to them on the floor.

They sighed, "Area 0... without Sada I mean... feels oddly eerie and scary. When she was here everything was fine, company helps me feel safe and calm. The lab is huge, anything could be anywhere and paranoia gets to me.". The AI listened intently "Is this why you shuffle in your sleep? You aren't usually this restless.", she hummed as Chip nodded.

Chip scratched their neck, laughing shyly more so out of embarrassment, they didn't realise they were that obvious. They tend to move around a lot when they can't fall asleep, trying out different positions, putting their pillows on the other side of their bed, sleeping on the floor, even getting sleeping pills, but their room just felt different at night.

"If I potentially stayed in your room until you fell asleep... would that help?" she looked away,

"Like a body guard mayhaps? Protecting you from any monsters 'under the bed'..." she

joked, giggling. Chip laughed along, "Yeah... that would be nice... but you don't have to—",

"It'll be my pleasure. It's still my job and in my programming to make sure you, and Sada, are in tip top shape. Whether mentally and physically." she insisted.

The AI hummed seeing Chip's sleepy eyes, "C'mon, let's get you to bed...". She slowly led Chip to their room, making sure they were comfortable before taking a seat on a nearby couch. She laid down as well, even if she herself didn't need sleep, it was less creepy than it would be if she was just weirdly sitting up in the dark.

They laid there silently until Chip broke the silence, "Sada seems happier...". The AI looked in their direction, "Hm? Oh, yeah she does. She has everything she could've wanted, her son and a... very good friend." she chuckled, not wanting to outright call Chip Sada's girlfriend.

Chip just looked away. She hummed, now curious "Did something happen between you two?". Chip was a bit taken aback at first. "What? No— No. We're okay— uh... she invites me to things, even as simple as walks in the park or getting ice cream. She's really nice to me, I care about her a lot."

The AI nodded, "Guessed so, then what's upsetting you?" she continued looking at them, "Is it because Sada's paying more attention to Arven now?". Chip tapped their fingers on top of

their chest, "No... of course not. Arven is very dear to me. I just... I can't help but feel jealous of what they have between each other as mother and son."

"I'm afraid you contradicted yourself there, dear." the AI hummed.

"It's not like that! I just..." they sighed, "I... I have a daughter that I'm no longer in contact with and... I just wish I had that kind of relationship with her too. But I can't."

The AI went quiet for a minute before speaking up once again, "There aren't any mentions of children in your records... How come not even I know about this?". Their face scrunched up "I had to give her away, legally per se... she isn't my daughter anymore.",

"I see." she hummed, "I take it as... you haven't told Sada yet? What about your therapist?".

Chip turned to lay on their side facing the AI's direction, "Not entirely— she knows that I have a daughter but that's pretty much it. It's hard to talk about right now... the same for my therapist."

The AI nodded, understanding of their anxiety, "Of course, no one's gonna force you to open up when you're not ready to. Especially not Sada." she smiled softly. Chip hummed, it eased their worries ever so slightly.

As others would say, a breath got caught in the AI's throat "Anyhow... how has therapy been holding up? I don't see you hiding your arms like before.". Chip looked around "It's been good... the medication is doing its job. Have... have the scars been bothering you?",

"Hm? No, of course not." she muttered, "I think they're pretty... if that's alright to say. They tell a story and are a sign of victory."

Chip smiled, letting out a soft chuckle "Thank you..."

"My pleasure. You should go to bed now though, yeah?" And smiled as Chip nodded.

"Okay... Goodnight. Don't let the scatterbugs bite." she muttered, turning off the lamp on their nightstand. Soon Chip drifted off to sleep and the AI didn't leave the room until very early in the morning, not minding that she had much less time to recharge because of it that night.

In the meantime, Sada just returned home. She huffed as she approached the front door and unlocked it, already tired from a big day of work.

"Hi mom!" a familiar voice rang through the small building. A comforting feeling washed over Sada as she saw Arven. He was cooking dinner, the wonderful smell surrounding him. "Hi, dear. Watcha cooking? Smells delicious." She hung her coat by the door before walking over to him. "It's a surprise! But I promise you'll like it!", he raised his head proudly. She chuckled, ruffling his hair.

"Anyway... how was work?" he hugged her. "Pretty good, like always. Just very tired... I'll probably head to bed early today." she stretched, yawning.

They had dinner, Sada helped him clean up and then she was on her way to bed. She noticed the nicely made bed, she remembered leaving it pretty messy that morning as she was in a rush. Who was the child in this household again? She chuckled, knowing Arven was there to help her with anything in his free time. She took a shower, brushed her teeth and flopped herself onto her bed. It didn't take long for her to completely pass out.

Sada never had many dreams... well aside from nightmares. She knew she probably had normal dreams as well but never remembered them.

Arven was always there to comfort her if any nightmares got too much for her. He never stopped liking cuddles, like he hasn't grown up at all. Like he was still that little boy running to his mom after a bad dream.

Recently though, she started having dreams, vivid dreams. They were more frequent as time passed and she remembered every single one, every single moment.

Dreams that made her heartbeat raise and blood rush to her cheeks. But she has managed to stay silent about them.

Sada inhaled the comforting scent of the ocean as she saw a sunset, she was on a beach. She heard a familiar sweet voice, turning to see Chip sitting closely next to her. She didn't quite catch what they were saying, all of their words seemed like gibberish, but she could perfectly understand it at the same time.

They talked, laughing together. Almost like without thinking, her arm wrapped around them, pulling them closer. She nuzzled the side of their face, planting soft kisses there as they giggled. They faced each other again, a soft smile on their face. They leaned in... and so did she.

Then she woke up. Sada inhaled sharply, her face immediately burning up. She buried herself into her pillow, kicking her feet out of frustration... or perhaps fluster.

It was around 5 in the morning when Sada arrived at Area 0, a whole hour before her shift was supposed to begin. She frantically looked around until she finally stumbled upon the AI in the apartment building.

The AI quickly noticed her, "Woah there— There's people still sleeping here. Or... I guess 'person' is better. But still, you cannot stomp around like that." she huffed. Sada chuckled nervously, immediately fixing her posture, "Sorry— um—".

The AI sighed, "What are you doing here so early anyway? Your shift is a whole hour away.", "I really need your help with something. I don't expect any good advice but I have no one else to talk to, most of my friends I ghosted years ago and it would be very weird to contact them now out of all times just to spill a life crisis onto them.". The AI blinked, Sada was completely out of line, pretty much panicking.

She hummed, "I suppose that's a fair point but... what about Chip or Arven?".

"It's about them." Sada admitted. The AI nodded "I see... okay, just give me a second.", she walked towards one of the tablet screens in the wall, leaving a note for Chip that they'd get when they would wake up. Then she left with Sada to her office where they could have some privacy.

Sada sat down and waited anxiously, tapping her foot on the cold flooring as the AI got a chair to sit across from her.

"Alright, spill." she muttered, her voice monotone. Sada took a deep breath, looking away slightly "I have— I like Chip. A lot.",

"That's it? I knew that already." the AI blurted out. "Nono— just— wait what." Sada glared at her in disbelief.

"I'm technically you, I know everything." She crossed her arms, "And your cheesy thoughts...". Sada stared at her for a moment before looking away, "Oh my Arceus this is embarrassing.",

"Uhuh." she muttered, then sighed "Anyways... continue..".

"Ah right.", she inhaled sharply "It's... mostly about Arven. I don't want him to think that I'm trying to replace his father. I'm well aware nothing will ever fill that spot and I'm worried that even if unintentionally I'm trying to replace that anyway. What if I'm a bad mother for moving on? Maybe he can't imagine me with anyone else. Let alone a..." she shook her head,

"Nevermind. I really do love Chip but I doubt that after everything that they'll love me back. Having them as my friend is already way too much to ask for. They... they almost committed... because of me." she hugged her legs, trailing off "I just wanna protect them,

they've suffered so much already... I hate myself for making that worse. What if confessing would ruin our friendship?"

The AI let her talk, she didn't know how to respond. She wasn't made for this... for feelings. If Sada didn't know what to do, how could she?

She sighed, "I think you should talk to Arven first... I think some of your worries about Chip can be solved if you talked to him. You need to take it one thing at a time. Panicking over everything at once isn't gonna help."

Sada hissed, "Absolutely not."

"Then why did you come asking for help if you don't want any??"

"Well...", Sada crumbled "Fine fine... you're right..."

She met the AI's eyes, "You're handling this a bit differently than I expected— Overall you're... different. Are you malfunctioning?". The AI raised a brow "Would you want me to say 'Well that's your problem, not mine.' or something instead?". Sada shook her head "No— I didn't mean that. Your tone and how you handle stuff just feels... different."

The AI chuckled "I get that a lot surprisingly... I suppose I feel more like I can be my own person, you could say... It's strange, I feel envious. Of your ability to feel different things about other people. No amount of artificial intelligence can replace the love you have for Chip... don't throw that away just because of past guilt."

Sada looked away, she was right... she took a deep breath "Okay."

"So?" the AI tilted her head. "I'll go talk to Arven. I'll take a day off today, can you let Chip know?", to which the AI nodded.

Sada quickly left the building afterwards.

Chip crossed paths with the AI when they were on their way to get breakfast "Something wrong? I got your letter.". The AI shook her head "Just wanted you to be aware that Sada will not be attending work today. She has some important... family business..."

Sada on her flight home rang Arven, "Hi Arven... are you still at home or have you gone to the academy already?",

"I'm still at home, why?" he muttered, probably getting his backpack ready in the background. "Can you stay home today? I— We need to talk about something." her fists clenched nervously. "Alright, I'll wait here then." he agreed, even though he wanted to ask further he decided not to push, assuming he would find out at some point.

Sada arrived home, sitting down with Arven on the couch in their living room.

She took a deep breath, "I need to talk to you about uh... your father." she didn't meet his eyes, looking down on her feet, "I'm sorry. I know you've been asking a lot about him these past couple months. You deserve to know I just... I was scared. I do not want to sour your view on your father, ruin your perception of him." she sighed,

"A part of me wanted to pretend those things never happened. I buried them deep down, I'm sorry."

Arven frowned, not knowing how to exactly respond. He had so many questions. "I'm sorry for pushing you, I had no idea. I should have been more self aware. Is there... a bigger reason why you wanted to bury it? If you're comfortable telling me what happened?" Arven mumbled, meeting her eyes.

Sada chuckled nervously "Well... those years weren't the happiest of my life. Mainly because of my relationship with your father. He wasn't mean to me or anything, we had a pretty good relationship in general, it's just... I feel like I was in a rush to do certain things. I was too quick to jump into relationships, not even realising if one made me unhappy. I kept

going, thinking that maybe one day I'll feel the... spark... everyone's talking about. It never worked out that way.

I was naive... and that resulted in my suffering.”, she fidgeted with her fingers “I don't think I ever loved your father... romantically... I guess I thought I had to? But uh... I realised it's not my thing.”, she didn't know how to explain it, perhaps dodging the subject at hand.

Arven didn't ask further on what she meant, instead shifting the conversation slightly, “Is this why he left? What happened to him? I don't have a single memory of him— I don't even know his name or what he looks like.”.

She sighed “I wish I knew. He left shortly after you were born, he wasn't even there during it. I felt so alone...” , she shook her head “I gave up on trying to figure it out.”. Arven turned towards her, “Is he okay? Maybe something happened to him.”,

“Oh trust me, I considered that option. I was worried at first but he's perfectly fine. First the divorce papers and then I was notified by someone who saw him in a completely different region. Seriously, who has someone deliver divorce papers for you so you don't have to attend, that's insane!” she groaned.

She crossed her arms, essentially hugging herself “So instead I decided I was gonna take care of you myself. I need no man. At least... I tried.” she mumbled.

Arven took a bit to process that.

Sada looked at him, “I'm really sorry, this is why I didn't wanna tell you! I don't— I didn't want to ruin anything for you. I don't want you to hate him, Arven. I'd gladly and happily allow him back into my life if it meant giving you the father you always wanted. I'd look past my own feelings if that meant you would be happy...” ,

“But you would be unhappy!” he argued. Sada shrugged, “Okay— fair point, but my point still stands. You come before me. And I'm determined to keep that promise now.” she smiled gently.

Arven frowned “You really did care...”

“I always have... I'm sorry if I ever made you doubt that, mi tesoro.” She kissed his forehead and he leaned into it.

After a moment of silence he spoke up again, knowing there was more on Sada's mind “I can feel that that's not it though... is there anything else you wanted to tell me?”. Sada shuddered, not knowing what to say.

She hissed nervously, “How... would you feel if I found someone else?”. He expressed clear confusion, raising a brow “What do you mean? This is not my decision to make—”,

“I-I know, but I don't wanna seem like I'm trying to replace your father. What if I was wrong about things? Didn't try hard enough to make us work? Can you even imagine me with anyone else?”.

Arven didn't know how to respond to that, as much as he wanted to help her, it was a lot to grasp. Maybe he was slightly shocked, it's none of his business and he had no right to control his mom's relationships. He'd try to like anyone she would bring home. He knew she had her own issues and he wanted her to be happy.

But then it came to him. He knew what... or who this was about. But he didn't wanna dive head first into it and ask her, afraid she would panic and end the conversation.

He wanted to try to get her to confess on her own.

He inhaled sharply, “I want you to be happy, mom. And if that means being with someone else, so be it. I... just got you back and after learning about everything you went through... I don't wanna be the source of any of your troubles.”. Sada frowned, “Oh honey... you will never be that. You never were that. You're my pride and joy, got that?”,

“Mhm...”.

She huffed “So I take it you... would be okay with it?”, and he nodded. She then went silent again before mumbling a simple sentence “I like Chip. A lot.”, he signaled for her to go on and she did “They make me feel like no one else ever before... with any man I was constantly uncomfortable but them? They make me feel safe, I cannot get enough of them. Maybe this is what I've been searching for back then, I was simply searching for it somewhere where I would never find it.”, she sighed with a shaky breath “I love them and I want to take care of them, but I'm afraid. I've hurt them so much, maybe it's selfish to even expect them to like me back.”.

Arven frowned, he felt terrible. He didn't want his mom to feel this way about herself. He had no idea how to help her, what should he even say?

He inhaled once again, “If they thought of you like that... don't you think they would've stopped talking to you by now?”,

“Maybe they don't wanna make things awkward—” Sada muttered back.

“But they can leave at any time, yet they didn't. They have the option at hand to leave the region without money being an issue but they essentially dropped the idea of travelling the world... for you.” he insisted and Sada huffed, “I— I suppose fair enough...”.

They both went quiet.

After a while Arven opened up himself, “You could say I kinda knew about this for some time already. Or at least I had a feeling. I see how you treat each other and how much you enjoy each other's company. It's not just you... it's them too. They're even trying really hard to strengthen my friendship with them, they had no reason to do that, but they still did. Because they wanna be a part of your life. And I can't imagine a reality where they wouldn't wanna be with you.”.

Sada hugged him, but didn't speak just yet. He wanted her to enjoy her life, to find a treasure of her own. She should follow her heart.

She nodded, wiping away her teary eyes, she barely noticed her eyes watering this whole time “I'll try to figure out how to tell them... and I suppose mentally prepare.”. Arven kissed her forehead, which made her laugh a little, “Hey, that's my job. I'm the mother.” she grinned. She pulled him into her lap, rocking him gently. Arven chuckled “I'm too old for this—”, “Nah. Never too old to be my baby.” They laughed. They stayed there snuggling for some time, later on going out for some fresh air.

A new family, a new beginning

Sada and Chip were in one of the labs in Area 0 working. Sada couldn't help but sneak glances at Chip every now and then, her eyes dreamy and a soft cheeky smile on her face. Chip didn't notice her stares, but then the AI appeared.

She leaned over Sada's shoulder, whispering “Am I interrupting something?”. Sada got spooked, almost falling off of her chair. That's what finally caught Chip's attention, making them turn towards the two “Are you okay?”. Sada immediately sat back up, straightening her back awkwardly “Yeah! Absolutely okay! Sorry— uh— one moment.”, she then dragged the AI into a different room, leaving Chip confused “Okay?”.

AI Sada was chuckling, finding the situation a bit funny. “My... you're like a whole other person now that you're aware of your feelings towards them.”,

“SHH. Shut up— they'll hear you.” Sada hissed nervously. The AI closed her mouth, but kept her grin. Sada glared at her, “You look like this is insanely entertaining to you.”

“Uhuh, it is.”, but then the AI cleared her throat “Anyway... I wanted to let you know that there's a broken pipe in the apartment section that needs to be urgently fixed because it deprives half of the building of water.

I rather not keep Chip in a building with no water nor possibly wake them up in the middle of the night while I work on it. Could they stay over at your place for one night?”,

“Don't we have extra rooms where they could—”

“Yes or no.” The AI's expression remained stern. Sada didn't have much of a reaction, she didn't know whether she was doing it on purpose or not but didn't care enough to question it,

“Alright alright, I'll let them stay over.”.

Soon enough she returned to the lab where Chip was waiting “Where'd you go? You were acting suspicious—”. Sada sighed before smiling “Sorry, AI Sada has informed me that the apartment building has some water issues and asked me if you'd be interested in staying over at my place for tonight? Or however long the fixing might take.”, she thought for a moment before continuing again “Arven will be there as well so maybe we could have a nice sleepover and/or movie night!”.

Chip's eyes lit up “Yes!!! Of course! What about the food though?”

“It's okay, I'll inform Arven and in case anything happens I can cook for you instead.” she reassured them. Chip smiled, their worries disappearing.

The day flew by almost in an instant and Chip was leaving work early in order to pack up and prepare. They packed sleep wear, hygiene products and of course a few plushies, something to cuddle is always needed!

Sada was already waiting for them near the lab's exit. They said goodbye to the AI and they were on their way.

“Do you want to take a taxi instead? I don't wanna torture you with Koraidon again.” she grinned shyly and Chip chuckled “Yeah that would be nice, thanks... Sorry if I'm complicated.”,

“Oh no! You're perfectly fine! Whatever makes you most comfortable.” Sada insisted.

Eventually their taxi arrived and they flew to the family's lighthouse. Sada unlocked the door, stepping aside, “After you.” she bowed lightly, perhaps slightly teasing. Chip giggled as they entered “Why thank you!”.

They have been in the lighthouse countless times before for visits but nothing more than just for lunch or dinner. They didn't really get an opportunity to look around the house more up until that moment.

Chip looked around the main entrance, one of the rooms that they actually recognised from previous times. They heard footsteps coming towards them, it was Arven.

“Oh hi Arven! Long time no see.” Chip chirped. Sada waved, giving Arven a quick hug.

“Same here! I wanted to cook dinner but I was told to wait until you arrived, what would you wanna eat?” Arven smiled, excited as ever. Chip went quiet, that was a complicated and slightly stressful question.

Sada rubbed their shoulder “I know! What about pancakes? That's simple enough and hard to mess up. What do you think?”, and smiled as Chip nodded. “We can all cook together! It'll be a nice and ‘family’ experience.”. Arven smiles “Awesome! I'll go prepare everything while you settle down.”,

Sada nodded and led Chip upstairs.

She showed them around the lighthouse, arriving at a guest bedroom where Chip could be sleeping... then Sada turned towards Chip "Sooo— Actually, I had an idea. You can sleep over here if you want or maybe we can have a sleepover? I have a couch that converts into a bed! Of course, your decision though.". Chip lit up "Sure! I'd love to!".

They headed to Sada's bedroom instead, Chip admiring her bone collections and a few artworks on her walls, "Woah. So pretty..." they muttered. Chip left their things there and then they gave each other some time to change into more comfortable clothing.

Chip stretched as they walked out of the bathroom, now wearing a cute Umbreon and Espeon themed shirt and shorts instead of their usual attire. Sada's cheeks burned up at the sight, they just looked so cute and their Espeon tail just added onto that "You're so pretty...". Chip tilted her head, "Oh? Thank you, hehe..." they giggled shyly. Sada panicked, she didn't mean to say it out loud "OH UH— Anyway let's get back to Arven!", and she ran downstairs. Chip laughed, swiftly following her.

They once again met downstairs where Arven was waiting on them with ingredients and appliances all ready and prepared for cooking. They each took a different section or 'job' to work on. Sada worked on the batter as Chip was used to how she made pancakes so it would be easier on them, Arven was preparing all the different kinds of toppings like cutting up any sort of fruit and Chip was preparing all the plates and the table itself.

"Arvie, can you hand me two eggs please?" Sada called out to him as the eggs were closer to him than her. He hummed "Chip? Can you help mom for me please?".

Sada raised a brow, was he trying to set them up? Chip nodded happily, immediately handing Sada the eggs. "Thank you, Chippie..." she muttered, feeling a little shy around them all of the sudden. They helped her make the batter, getting her the ingredients or even just standing there keeping her company.

"Can I taste it?" Chip wagged their tail happily. Sada laughed, letting Chip taste the batter with a spoon. She then began making the pancakes, laughing each time Chip stole a sip of the batter "Hey! You sneaky little.", which made them laugh too.

Arven gave Sada a sly smirk, perhaps teasing them, she glared at him in return. Arven started decorating the freshly cooked pancakes "What do you want Chip?", "Just strawberry jam, thank you!" They smiled.

They soon sat down at the TV, each one munching on their pancakes. Sada looked towards Chip "Are the pancakes good?", and chuckled as Chip nodded eagerly, their mouth full. Chip was too focused on their food to notice Sada staring at her with heartfelt eyes. She almost forgot about her own food, breaking from her daze when Arven cleared his throat. She smiled shyly and continued eating.

Arven was taking his time, deciding to place it down for now "I'm pretty curious, Chip, what is your favourite food? You never told either of us.". Chip wiped their mouth, "Oh uh, it's a foreign food from my home region. I never saw it served anywhere else. It's called 'langoš', it's like fried bread with toppings on it! My personal favourite is ketchup and cheese." they happily explained.

Arven was fascinated "Oh! I gotta try that someday, it sounds delicious. Maybe I could try making it myself someday!" He hummed just imagining it.

His eyes remained on Chip for some time before he spoke again "Actually... I know this is very out of topic and maybe a little invasive— but I always wanted to point out how you remind me of a friend of mine.",

"Oh?" they blinked.

"She nearly has the same hair as you, and the same Eeveelution special interest. It's pretty cool!" he grinned.

At that Chip went silent. Their expression was unreadable. Were they thinking? Sad? Or just surprised? It was hard to tell.

Sada crumbled under the tension in the room, quickly finishing her food “Imma go clean up and then we can watch some movies, how about that?”, and they agreed.

Eventually they all finished eating, put away their plates and went ahead to watch some movies. It didn't take long for it to get really late and Arven headed off to bed in the middle of the 3rd movie. He would need to sleep for school the day after.

Halfway through another movie Sada noticed Chip getting sleepy. She absolutely adored their sleepy expression and how they seemed to become slightly cuddly and clingy.

She chuckled “Don't fall asleep on me.”, she booped their nose “I think it's best if we go to sleep as well, sounds good?”,

“Mhm...” they yawned.

They walked upstairs to Sada's room, Sada preparing Chip's bed, giving them all the pillows and blankets that she could.

Chip soon laid down, sighing contently. Sada sat down on her own bed and they chatted a little more before bed.

“Before we go to sleep... Did you have a good time? I only wanna be the best host to you.”

Sada muttered. Chip perked up “Oh, of course! It was so much fun and the pancakes were delicious.”. Sada smiled, relieved.

She turned towards them again “I wanted to ask— You took a day off yesterday because of your therapist visit, how'd it go? I haven't checked in lately.”,

“It was good, I got refills on my meds... Nothing new otherwise.” they fidgeted with their fingers.

There was in fact more to it but those things they couldn't share with her. Their therapist has been suspicious of them lately and if they may have any underlying feelings for Sada. But they weren't ready to tackle that yet.

Sada nodded, changing the subject, “If you couldn't sleep over at the lab yet tomorrow, you're always free to sleep over here.” she muttered.

Chip smiled, finding the offer sweet “I'd love to. It feels so nice and homey here. Does that make sense?”, they yawned once again “Perhaps... I had some trouble sleeping at the lab ever since you left, so this is a nice and comforting change.”.

“Oh, yeah— you've told me already.” Sada smiled. Chip's cheeks turned light red out of slight embarrassment,

“Sorry, I forgot—”

“It's okay, it's okay.” Sada chuckled, “No worries. Though about that... I never asked you why?”.

Chip looked away shyly “Like... if you're there it feels... safer? I'm afraid of the unknown and being the only— human— in there feels strange. You're comforting.”. Sada felt both guilty and endeared, her chest fluttering at their reasoning. “I'm sorry... I promise to sleep over sometimes, yeah? Arven will understand. I hope that the AI doesn't scare you much” she joked.

Chip shook their head, giggling.

“Maybe we could have a sleepover in Area 0 someday! Maybe in one of the labs? We would probably sleep terribly but it would be a fun night, what do you think?” Sada looked back at Chip to see them already fast asleep. Sada smiled, humming softly at the sight.

She sneaked up to them, checking if they're truly asleep before pressing her lips against their forehead for a light peck. She then returned to her bed, finally lying down.

Sada thought at that moment, wanting to confess but not knowing how. That's when it came to her and she grinned, quickly falling asleep after that.

Over the course of a couple days Sada spent her time learning how to make Chip's favorite and comfort food. Unluckily for her, it was a pretty complicated one, pretty much only known within Eievuis and not anywhere else. But she pulled through and one day cracked the code. Sada invited Chip into the lighthouse, when Arven was out for a couple days, for dinner and some movies, also offering the guest bedroom to them so they didn't have to return to Area 0 late at night.

Chip rang the doorbell, waiting patiently. Despite the fact Sada told them to wear something comfy, they still made sure they looked at least decent. Make-up was beyond their skills but they at least put on a simple sparkly black dress.

When Sada opened the door she stared at Chip for a moment, blush appearing on her face, "Wow um– there was no need to doll yourself up for me, Chippie," she chuckled. "Oh no no, I wanted to look pretty!"

Sada cleared her throat, "If you saw so, but before I forget..." she greeted Chip with a warm hug, "Thank you for coming!",

"It's my pleasure." They hugged back.

Sada stepped aside, letting them inside. Chip entered the lighthouse and went silent. A quiet gasp escaped their lips as what they saw was their favourite food on the table.

"What? How?? Where did you get it?" Chip immediately started asking questions, "I'll tell you, but when we sit down. I know you like your food warm and luckily for you I put them here just before you arrived!" Sada smiled, pulling the chair out for them.

Chip sat down, excited, "Good idea– Thank you!". Sada pushed their chair towards the table before walking to the other side and sitting across from them.

Chip immediately started eating, their eyes sparkling at the taste. "This is delicious!!", "Careful now, don't eat too fast" Sada smiled, "I made them, it was a pain in the butt, but nothing that I wouldn't do for you." She picked up hers and started eating as well.

"Seriously?! You should cook more." the flirt completely flew over their head.

It didn't take long for Chip to finish the whole thing. Sada giggled, pointing to her own cheek, "You got something here."

She found it adorable as Chip tried to wipe it off, failing.

"Excuse me—" they got up, heading to the kitchen to wash their hands and mouth at the sink.

They came back shortly after, "How is it now?"

"Yep, perfect." she said, still giggling softly. As soon as Sada finished hers, she went to put the dishes into the dishwasher. She washed up from the oil before joining Chip on the couch.

"What movie do you want?" Sada picked up the TV remote. "Cartoons, like always~" Chip rested their head on Sada's shoulder as she picked out a movie, though that proved to be useless as they got distracted anyway. They started chatting, looking back at some old memories which they giggled about.

Chip curled up, using a blanket to make themselves into what essentially was a cozy burrito. Sada smiled, staring in awe. "Cute..." she whispered.

"Hm? What was that?"

"Oh, nothing." Sada looked back onto the TV, "Hm, do you want popcorn? I got the butter flavour!"

Chip gasped, "Really? Gimme!!",

"And hot chocolate?"

"GIMME!" they replied very cheerfully, their tail wagging. Sada laughed, patted them on the head and got up.

"Do I pause the movie?",

"Nah, were we even watching it this whole time? I don't think so." They both laughed.

Sada hummed to herself as she waited for the popcorn. She held a small note in her hand, reading it all over and over again. She wanted to confess to Chip but she was so afraid of messing it up. What if they say no? She didn't wanna ruin their friendship over this.

She was brought back from her daze as the microwave started beeping. She took the popcorn out, putting it into a big bowl.

Afterwards she went ahead to make the hot chocolate. She came back into the living room, placing the popcorn and drinks onto the small table in front of them.

"Yippie!! Thank you!" They got up, snatching some of the popcorn with their tail swinging behind them. They spent the rest of the first movie in silence, at times getting up to go to the bathroom or get some extra snacks.

During the second movie they started talking again.

Sada decided to finally go for it, "So... are you enjoying yourself?" Chip grinned, "Of course! How is that even a question?" They rested their head on her lap semi-jokingly, "And what about you?".

Sada booped their nose, "I could say the same thing... I'm always happy to spend time with you. Because... It's like I can be my true self around you." They matched Chip's gaze, who had sparkles in their eyes, "You're special to me after all. Everything that happened these past few years I... it just made me like you more. You get along with Arven, he adores you. I'm just so lucky to have you in my life."

She looked a couple times back into the note which she was hiding in her left palm out of Chip's range of vision.

"Awh Sada... I could say the same thing!" Sada took a deep breath, "I have one more thing to say... well... I guess multiple."

"Mhm?" Chip tilted their head.

Sada helped them sit up again, sitting directly across from each other so Sada could look into their eyes. "Look at me... please— this is important." Chip nodded, chuckling nervously, "Now you're scaring me." Sada shook her head, grabbing both of their hands to hold them in hers, "No no, it's nothing like that. But it is something I've been meaning to tell you for such a long time. But I never found the right words or the right way to go about it."

She breathed out before inhaling again,

"This is terrible and cheesy— but— truth be told, I can't imagine my life without you... If it weren't for you, I wouldn't even be here anymore. But not only that you've saved my life, but you brought me back to Arven... and made me feel whole again. You helped me break out of my obsession, you cared even when I was being unfair to you... despite everything, you never lost hope in me. You never abandoned me. Thank you..."

She blinked a few times, trying to keep her composure "I wanna do the same for you. I wanna be the very someone you can trust, rely on. I wanna be there to hold you when you need a shoulder to cry on. I wanna be there to protect you from anyone that would ever want to harm you. I wanna take care of you for the rest of your life. Arven wants you in his life too... And I— I want to make you feel loved..." she took a deep breath again,

"...Chip, I love you. I love all of you. Every single single little piece of you."

She stopped talking. When she opened her eyes again and looked at Chip, they saw they were on the verge of tears.

Sada offered them a hug and they quickly accepted, wrapping themselves around Sada. None of them spoke for a hot moment aside from Sada whispering sweet things to them, “Shhh... it's okay, calm down first...” She rubbed their back, smiling as they pulled away, “Better?”.

Chip nodded, still pretty lost for words. Sada understood, catching Chip's attention before moving her hands, ‘It's okay, no pressure. How about– if you feel the same, you take my hand and if you don't, you shake your head? I'll respect your decision either way.’.

Sada offered them her hand, smiling softly as she waited for Chip's answer.

Chip wasted no time taking her hand and pulling her into another tight hug. Sada hummed, wrapping her arms around them, squeezing them gently,

“Te amo, mi querida.”

She whispered a quick “That means ‘I love you, my dear’ by the way...”, giggling softly. “Oh, well in that case, taky tẽ miluji.” they giggled as well.

Sada hummed, pulling away slightly to kiss their forehead. She nuzzled the side of their face, “That tickles–” Chip laughed. “Oh c'mon, let me pamper you.”

Chip stuck their tongue out right after she said that, messing with her. “That's it, air jail.”,

“Wh–” Suddenly Sada stood up, holding Chip in the air. “Nooooo I'm sorry, put me down!”

Chip tried to free themselves, failing miserably. “Hmm... will I get a kiss afterwards?” Sada smirked, joking but not really. Chip pouted, “Fine.”.

Sada giggled, sitting Chip back onto the couch. Sada's hand made its way to their cheek, cupping it. They leaned in, sighing contently, muttering a quiet ‘I love you’ again.

They leaned forward, giving each other a sweet chaste kiss.

As they pulled away, they rested their foreheads against each other. “Sheesh... look at what you're doing to me.” Sada chuckled.

Chip smiled, yawning. “Are you tired?” Sada caressed their face, which surely didn't help with their sleepiness. “Mhm... but I wanna stay like this for a little longer– not wait until I fall asleep and wake up again.” They mumbled, burying their face into Sada's shoulder.

“And what if you didn't have to?” She then scooped Chip up, securing them in her arms. “Do you wanna sleep with me tonight? Or forever for that matter?” She grinned. Chip smiled, nodding before hugging her.

“Okay... better get into comfier clothes tho, where did you put your bags?” Sada looked at their sleepy face, smiling softly. “Mmm... that's too much woooork.” they whined. Sada playfully rolled her eyes and sighed “What if I borrow you some from my closet?”,

“Hm, that sounds better.” Chip smirked. Sada laughed as she turned off the TV and carried Chip upstairs, who was slowly failing to stay awake in her arms,

“You're lucky you're cute.”

She handed a shirt and shorts to them and let them change in the bathroom. She then also changed and they headed to bed. Sada flopped herself onto it, yawning now too. Chip made their way to her side, resting their head on her chest. “Comfy?”,

“Mhm...”

Sada smiled, pulling the covers over them. She hugged them close, pressing one last kiss against their lips as sleep came over the two of them.

Make a wish

Epilogue

A ray of sunshine flashed over Sada's eyes. She groaned, stirring away from the light, meeting Chip's limp body.

Sada opened one of her eyes, spotting Chip, who was still in deep slumber. Sada chuckled as she watched them lovingly, you could swear there were hearts around her head. She brought them closer to her chest, making sure they were all snuggled up.

She hugged them and hummed as she felt their warm body. She gently rubbed small circles and patterns into their back, relaxing once again.

Just as she was about to close her eyes again, she heard a very quiet yawn from underneath her. Sada chuckled, pressing soft kisses onto Chip's forehead to help them wake up, "Wakey wakey, sleepyhead..." She nuzzled her nose against Chip's cheek, smiling as they finally woke up, "Mm... good morning."

Chip yawned again as they opened their eyes, "...Morning..." and immediately buried their face back into Sada's chest.

"Oh my, that sleepy?" Sada teased. Chip mumbled, their voice even more muffled, "Too comfortable to get up...". Sada nuzzled her face into Chip's hair, "Aw, and I thought I'd get a good morning kiss..." Sada laughed.

"You're wayyyy too confident already," Chip playfully rolled their eyes, giving Sada a peck on the lips. She, though, immediately leaned in, stealing a more of an actual kiss from them.

"It's easy to tell I'm your first." she grinned. Chip blushed, looking away shyly, "Oh shut up—". Sada quickly shut them up with another peck, "Whatever you say." her grin never disappeared.

"Your voice seems deeper..." they muttered. "Yeah, it does that in the morning, what about it?" she grinned. "It's attractive—" they blurted out without thinking, "I mean— Well—". Sada laughed, finding their slight embarrassment endearing.

Sada's hand sneaked behind one of Chip's hair tufts, inspecting it, "What are these?", "Eh, who knows." They shrugged, leaning into her touch. She began scratching them right at its route, curious to see what they'll do. Chip completely melted into her arms, humming happily.

"Aww, you like that?" Sada grinned.

"Hehe... Feels nice..." they purred in response, their tail swinging back and forth behind them. That went on for a couple more minutes, just Sada pampering them. Chip started playing with Sada's hair, running their fingers through it.

Sada melted into them, "I love when you do this...". Chip chuckled. After a moment of silence, she felt a little tug on her hair. She looked down... to see Chip nomming on her hair.

"Can you explain what you're doing?"

"Crunchy."

"Fair enough."

They both laughed, Sada squeezing Chip with a strong hug. She sighed contently,

"Anyhow... How'd you sleep? Was yesterday satisfactory?" Chip smiled softly, "I slept well! Yesterday was amazing, I'm hoping you have some langos dough left over—" Chip made puppy eyes. Sada laughed, "Yes yes... of course I have. I'm so happy to hear that you enjoyed our time."

Chip giggled, wrapping their arms around Sada once again. Chip inhaled Sada's scent, closing their eyes halfway, "Also you snore." Sada laughed, "What?", "You're loud in your sleep." they grinned.

"My, I'm sorry, did it wake you?" she kissed their forehead.

"Though, you do purr very loudly yourself." she teased, "Sounding like a mini motorbike.", she began showering them with kisses which made them laugh. "Heyy... at least purring has healing capabilities!",

"Hmm... Excuses." she stuck her tongue out.

"Nuh uh!!" They stuck out theirs as well. She chuckled, nuzzling her nose against theirs, "Mmm... I do find it cute though."

They giggled, looking back up at her, "Does this mean we're dating?". Sada laughed at the absurd question. She gently picked up Chip's chin, humming softly as she studied their face, "Now, what kind of question is that? I love you."

"Haha, yeah..." Chip smiled lovingly. Sada muttered something under her breath, her hand moving to cup Chip's cheek instead. "You're beautiful, you know that? Your messy hair in the morning... how much I wished I could've been there. How much I wanted to hold you like this... I am truly lucky."

Sada's eyes met Chip's, her finger brushing lightly against Chip's skin. Chip looked away, all flustered, "I don't know how to handle compliments aaaa-". Sada laughed, finding it endearing, "No need to worry about that, your smile is enough."

Despite Chip's protests, Sada let go of their cheek. "How about we go get breakfast, hm?" Sada tilted her head. Chip just groaned, "I'm still sleepy though...".

Sada let out a soft chuckle, pretending as if she was preparing to get up. Chip immediately tried to stop her by laying on top of her, "No."

Sada didn't protest, instead, she wrapped her arms around them and easily picked them up, "Bad strategy.". Chip giggled as then Sada walked out of the room, carrying them downstairs. Sada gently set them down onto the couch, "There you go...".

Chip grinned, "Well, now I'm cold again." only to be met with 2 blankets being dropped onto them. "Get comfy while I make us something, alright?" Sada brushed her fingers through Chip's hair, smiling as they wrapped themselves in blankets.

"What would you want?" Sada made her way into the kitchen, preparing two plates. "Dunno, you know I don't do breakfasts." they shrugged. "Do fruits suit your liking?", "YESSS.". Sada hummed in agreement and started preparing their food. Not shortly after she noticed Chip was in fact staring at her. She laughed, knowing they were still watching even minutes later, "Not sneaky, are you?", "Not trying to be." Chip smiled.

Soon enough, she brought Chip a plate of strawberries, apples and berries, and a sandwich for herself.

She sat down next to Chip, scooching up real close to them before feeling comfortable enough to finally start eating. Chip happily chewed on their food, leaning against Sada. There was a moment of peaceful silence, just enjoying their food close to each other.

Sada put down her halfway eaten sandwich, looking towards Chip, "I've been wondering, how do you feel about nicknames?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well you know—" Sada scratched her neck, "like stuff those really corny couples call each other."

Chip laughed, "That would imply you want us to be a corny and cheesy couple.". Sada gently nudged them, "Well would that be a problem?",

"Nah, quite the opposite." Chip stretched, resting their head on Sada's lap, "How can I complain about something that's like straight out of a fanfiction someone spent too much time on?",

"Well that's specific." Sada laughed. She ran her finger down their nose, watching their expression, "Cheeky nicknames it is then...", which made Chip giggle.

Chip sighed, smiling, "By the way... how are we gonna go about telling Arven?". Sada put her hand to her chin, leaning against the couch, "We can call him once it's not so early in the morning."

They finished their food and Sada got up to put the dirty dishes into the dishwasher. "Maybe we could go out together? Stop by the market, get something good to eat... maybe get ice cream?" Sada gestured to the window, it was a beautiful day outside.

"Oh, totally! Let me go take a shower first!" Chip hopped back on their feet and immediately got dizzy.

"Ay ay, careful- you okay?" Sada immediately attended to Chip, holding them up. "Sorry- got up too fast. I'm okay!" They kissed her cheek reassuringly before making their way upstairs again.

Sada proceeded to use her time to clean up the room and then put on something nice but comfy.

Chip soon returned, except she was mostly in Sada's clothes, again. "You don't have your own wardrobe?" Sada raised a brow. "Yes, but this was too tempting." They grinned right back at her. Sada rolled her eyes, moving a stray hair from their face behind their ear to take a closer look, "Hmm... alright, you win, but just because I think you look just so pretty."

They put their shoes on, Chip took their rollator and they headed out. After their trip to the market, they stopped at a small cafe for lunch.

Chip huffed as got up from the chair of their rollator. "Hm? Ready to go again? Don't push yourself if you're still too tired though." Sada mumbled softly, hugging Chip from behind. Chip hummed, giggling a little, "I know, I'm okay though. Plus I'm hungry." They turned around to face her, hugging her back as their tail wrapped around Sada's legs.

They stood like that for a moment before moving on.

Chip sniffed, "...I smell fries... hhhh I'm hungryyyyy."

"Maybe they have fries here somewhere?" Sada looked around, soon spotting a fairly small but comfy looking cafe, "Bingo."

Sada took Chip's hand, slowly leading them to the cafe, "How's this?" Chip took a few seconds to read the small menu sign and immediately got hyped, their tail swinging behind them. It momentarily wrapped itself around Sada's legs as they searched for a nice spot.

Sada pulled the chair for Chip, "After you, mi tesoro." she smiled. Chip blushed, letting out a soft chuckle as they sat down, "Why, thank you.". Sada smiled and then sat across from them. Chip put their rollator next to their chair, making sure it wouldn't get in the way of anyone.

They looked back at Sada, only to see her staring at them, very much lovestruck. Chip immediately looked away, smiling shyly. Sada smirked, "You're adorable.". Chip waved their hand, "Aaa shush--",

"But I love making you smile..." she pouted, immediately giggling. "Us dating suddenly gave you a huge rush of confidence, don't you think? Last time I remember you were a nervous mess." Chip grinned.

Sada sighed, a little flustered now as well, "I didn't know how well you'd react is all—". Chip laughed, "Well you're way more charming now, that's for sure."

"And I love seeing your red face, it takes no effort to make you flustered." Sada smirked.

"Oh my Arceus, not in public—", and they both laughed.

Eventually, the waitress arrived and they made their orders. While waiting for their food, they made sure to video call Arven and tell him the news. Sada couldn't resist talking about the whole thing and both had to stop her from making the call last 10 years.

Arven chuckled, congratulating them. He said he'd be away for a couple more days, just so they wouldn't worry.

They all said their goodbyes and ended the call. Soon, they received their food.

A waitress put the plates down next to their drinks, "Apologies for the wait, enjoy!" They thanked her, she did a small bow and then left.

Both of them immediately dug in. After a while Sada brought up the question, "So... How do you feel in the lighthouse?". Chip looked up from their plate, "Hm? I mean— it's right up my alley. Minus the coldness of it.". Sada nodded in agreement. "Yeah... I wanted to ask if you'd be interested in moving in? You're staying in Area 0 currently, I still feel a bit guilty about leaving you there like that—" she smiled awkwardly, "Of course, we could talk about some repairs... make you feel at home? But I'm sure Area 0 isn't warm either." she joked.

Chip sighed, their eyes trailing off, "Yeaaaah... gotta wear two hoodies at once half the time.".

They looked back at her and smiled, "I would love to move in if Arven doesn't mind! But yeah, I'd happily invest in some heaters." They shivered at the thought.

Sada grinned widely, taking Chip's hand to kiss the top of it, "Of course, anything for you.".

Chip hummed, a faint blush on their cheeks.

Their hand moved up to cup Sada's cheek, "What about you? I know you haven't been in the lighthouse for years at this point... did you settle back in alright?". Sada inhaled softly, "I suppose it's been alright... Arven has been helping me a lot." She frowned, "I have both bad and good memories of that place, I guess it's a little hard not to think about the bad ones? I wish it wasn't...".

She shook her head, "But I don't wanna ruin your day with this stuff, I want us to have fun.".

Chip had a worried expression on their face, they thought for a moment before speaking again, "You know we promised to tell each other everything? Well that still counts, especially now.".

They gently squished her cheek, trying to lighten the mood, "We're here for you and we want you to be happy as well, okay?".

Sada took their hand, sandwiching it between hers again, "Each passing minute, I love you more and more.".

They finished eating. There was a faint sound of crystals, quiet but enough to catch Chip's attention, they knew those sounds. Tera crystals enveloped Chip's head, breaking to reveal Vaporeon fins, which were trembling.

"You alright—?" Sada muttered, concerned.

"I'm fine but— it wasn't supposed to rain today." They looked up into the sky, it was still clear.

"Rain?"

"Vaporeon's fins will tremble if there's bad weather on the way." They were still looking around for any dark clouds or clouds in general.

"Well, better get moving then!" Sada seemed completely unbothered, the same couldn't be said for Chip. They were visibly upset that their little date was cut short. "Awh... now why such a long face?" Sada picked up Chip's chin, gently moving it to have them face her.

"Wanted us to have a bit more fun is all..." they muttered back. Sada gave them a reassuring smile, giving them a couple kisses on the side of their face, "We can still have fun at home."

Maybe we can cook dinner together, play some games, just be in each other's company y'know?"

Chip giggled as the kisses tickled them, "I suppose you're right." Sada grinned, nuzzling her nose against theirs, "Pack up and I'll go pay, got it?"

"We're really acting like teenagers." they sighed, "I got it...". Sada booped their nose, "Can't complain about that, can I?" She walked into the cafe, paying for the service meanwhile Chip packed up. Shortly after they were on their way home.

Once they arrived at the lighthouse, the dark clouds finally started to appear.

They put all the groceries in their place and changed into comfier clothes. Sada suggested they could make sponge cake together as a nice little activity and Chip's eyes lit up immediately.

She started preparing the batter, pulling out a pan. Chip couldn't resist but sneak in to have a taste of the batter.

"Hey, who told you you could do that?" Sada playfully interrogates them. "Me." they stuck their tongue out. Sada laughed, squishing their cheek before pouring the first part of the batter onto the pan.

The weather kept getting worse, rain pouring at alarming speeds. "That came out of nowhere?? Thankfully we got home in time..." Sada muttered. The sky seemed to flicker before a loud thunder struck, loud enough to make Chip jump.

They became pretty scared of sudden loud noises after the Area 0 incident, causing them anxiety. Their tail tightly wrapped around their legs and Sada soon noticed.

"Hey hey, it's okay... c'mere." she spread her free arm for a hug, wrapping it around them. She showered them with kisses, whispering sweet things to them in order to comfort them, "You're safe, my darling..."

The thunder shook her up as well, but she made a decision to ignore it. Chip was growing paranoid, the rusty lighthouse making a lot of noise. Sada tried to reassure them the best she could.

They sat down to eat. Sada seemed strange, eating way slower than usual. "Is everything okay?" Chip put down their utensils, looking up at her. "Oh no, I'm okay! Just worried for you, darling." Her hand rested on top of Chip's. Chip smiled again, appreciating the love and care Sada had for them. They took their time to finish eating, Chip getting up to put the dishes into the dishwasher and start it up.

Chip shivered, the lighthouse getting significantly colder as the bad weather continued.

"Hey... Could we turn up the heater?" Chip grabbed one of the blankets off the couch, wrapping themselves in it. Sada checked the heaters, only to notice all of them were at maximum setting already, "They are..."

We really need to invest into new ones...

I'll get you some warmer clothes, okay? Get comfy." she patted Chip on the head before heading upstairs.

She knew Chip probably didn't have much packed that would help, so she was gonna borrow some from her own closet. She rummaged through the closet, grabbing some sweatpants and a hoodie.

A tree branch hitting the window caused her to jump, looking behind her. The same room that felt so warm and cozy the very morning, now was dark and empty, the rain and thunder only adding to how disturbed she felt. She tried to get herself to focus back on the clothing, when suddenly the power went out. She froze up for a moment but she had to get going.

She called over her rotom, it lighting the way up for her. She stacked the clothes up and slowly returned back to the living room, "Chip?" She found Chip curled up on the couch, waiting for her.

"Oh Sada, you're back!"

"Of course I am." She ruffled their hair, handing them the hoodie and sweatpants. Chip put them on meanwhile Sada took care of extra light and warmth, lighting up the fireplace.

"Feeling better now?" She sat next to Chip, pulling them into her lap to cuddle. "Mhm..." Chip muttered and hugged her. Sada covered them both in a fluffy blanket. She showered them with soft and comforting kisses. Sada held Chip tighter and tighter each passing minute, as if they were gonna disappear any minute.

After a while of silence, Chip was warm and comfortable again. Calm enough to notice Sada's strange behaviour. Sada completely zoned out, she didn't notice Chip staring at her, how much she was dissociating or the fact she teared up.

That's when she finally heard it,

"Sada... hellooo... Sada!!"

"HUH— what? Oh—" she immediately wiped away the tears, "Sorry I... I don't know what came over me." Chip frowned, "Sada, something is wrong. What is it?". Sada shrugged, but Chip persisted, "There must be something... at least a general vague answer?".

Sada inhaled and exhaled, "I... I don't know what's wrong with me. The lighthouse just... feels weird. It's dark and empty, it's uneasy. It looks so dead and empty, it feels the same way it did years ago. The times when I had nothing else on my mind other than work... I feel... alone, despite not being truly alone." She teared up once again as she talked about Arven and her neglective behaviour, "I just can't get myself to truly forget that...".

She still had a lot to work on.

Chip struggled figuring out how to comfort her, stressing out silently, "Maybe there's something we can do about it? I—"

"Hey hey... it's fine, it's not your job to comfort me," Sada smiled. Chip's brows furrowed, they sat up to meet Sada face to face, "Don't say that! That's not true. I care and if we wanna be together then it is gonna be my job to make sure you're happy just like you care for me! I may not know how to comfort people the way you do, but I care, Arven cares. You are not alone. We're here for you and we're not going anywhere. I love you... I love you so much and I am the luckiest to have you. You're the first person to make me feel like this, this happy... It hurts me to see you suffering."

Sada hugged them tightly in response, burying her face into their shoulder as she sobbed. Chip stayed silent, only rubbing gentle circles into her back.

Sada seemed to be calming down.

"Feeling a bit better?" Chip showered her with kisses, just like she would. "Hm... yeah... a little." she hummed, "Still bad at kissing though."

"Heyyyy." Chip laughed. Sada didn't let go of them yet. Their fingers slowly coned through Sada's hair as she hummed quietly.

Her eyes drifted from their face to their arms and legs, to their scars. "May I?" she briefly looked back at them, smiling as they nodded. She picked up one of their arms, bringing it to her lips. She peppered small kisses onto their scarred skin whilst rubbing small circles into it with her thumb.

Chip melted, humming contently "That feels nice...". Sada chuckled, kissing the top of her hand, "You're beautiful, my love... So perfect..." she whispered. "You're flattering me." they muttered, smiling. Sada chuckled, "Nah, I'm telling the truth. Your scars are beautiful. I'm so proud of you for being here now..." she cupped their face with her hands. Chip giggled

"You're gonna make me cry.", they looked into her eyes, leaning in to give her a sweet chaste kiss.

Sada immediately returned the kiss before playfully booping their nose "Boop.". Chip chuckled, grinning widely.

Sada gently picked up their chin "Can I ask you something a bit... invasive?". Chip tilted their head curiously "Sure—?",

"When you're ready... I'd like to have a talk about your daughter and in which ways I can help. Can you let me know when that moment comes? If ever...".

She was met with silence. She sighed and continued, "I'm sorry... I know it's an out-of-nowhere question but we've never talked about it, you only mentioned it once and never again."

Chip breathed out heavily, "Nono... that's my fault, I suppose I left you hanging, haven't I?... I don't really know where to start though." Sada kissed their forehead, "What about what happened to begin with?",

"Well... my region wasn't always exactly peace free, and one day that came to bite me. There's a lot of evil people in the world, and I would not be able to keep her safe in that environment." They blinked, almost motionless.

"I see... would you ever wanna see her again?" Sada continued caressing their face. "I mean, yeah. But I'm scared that she may not. A lot of adopted children don't seek their real families."

"That is very rare though, no?" She tilted her head. "Yes but... I don't know... I guess I'm just afraid." They hugged their legs.

Sada hummed, placing another kiss on their head, "I'm sure she'd love to see you, whether that'd be tomorrow or in the next 5 years. We can find her, if you're willing to look?". Chip exhaled softly, "I'll think about it.", and that was enough to soothe Sada.

The lights flickered as the power returned. They both laughed at the timing. "Are the lights being back on helping you feel better?" They raised their head to look up at her. Sada chuckled, nuzzling them, "Eh, wouldn't mind if they stayed off for a little longer... as long as you are here."

Chip got comfortable within her lap again, leaning their whole body weight against her, "We can still pretend the power is out and watch some scary movies!" Sada chuckled "But if the power is out, how would we watch movies to begin with?"

"Shhhh, you're too logical."

They shut down the lights, the only lights being the fireplace and TV.

There they were, snuggled up on the couch, nothing left to disturb them. The rain stopped, leaving a quiet night sky behind.

Chip noticed a twinkle at the corner of their eye, a falling star.

"You could make your wish now if you wanted," they teased. Sada rolled her eyes before kissing their forehead,

"I already got my wish."

Chip soon moved in with Sada and Arven. Chip, of course, took residence in Sada's room as it became their shared bedroom instead.

Their story isn't over, in fact, it just barely started.

Thank you, Sada. For everything.

