

Pokemon Mystery Dungeon: Team Desert Express

All That Shimmers

So here they were again, stuck in a situation that seemed like they would not survive. It was a good idea at first, but then when they hit rocky roads, things took a tumbling turn for the worse. They were looking back at the doom in the color of blood red that was glaring at them, holding its jaw open for them when the inevitable happened. They should have listened, but they didn't. Their air was running out and they were forced to breathe that terrible thing in, gagging and choking at it. It laughed at them as they choked and fell to the ground in horrible pain. Where were they exactly when they fell into this death trap? Let's begin from the start; it's always best instead of picking up from the middle.

The moonlight and stars of the night were lighting up the blackness of the darkness of space and the ground below them. The winds streaked across the barren wasteland of nothingness, picking up the dust from the ground and bringing it for a joy ride along the countryside. Desert winds like these were strong enough to reveal old mines that once were prosperous with life, but died down when the valuables inside started to disappear. Today was nothing out of the ordinary, the sand blocking the entrance to a new mine had drained out finally and it was waiting for any explores to come in and plunder the riches from inside. It was near the town of Electra, but not many were very aware of what happened in the night to this mine. Rod lived near this mine just a short walk about from his home, and when he noticed it, he peered his head into the dark mine curious of what treasures might be inside. The treasures and riches shouted out to him, trying to lure him into the mines depths. His eyes glimmered at the chance of new riches, and so he set off to Electra to tell the team of good news. Both Daemon and Darius were at the Dojo, training themselves on the practice dummies that Darius had been provided to use in the Dojo for all intents and purposes. They practiced their hand-to-hand combat skills with each other. It was a good back up to using their moves to defeat Pokémon that challenged them when they were out of power to use their moves. It was also good exercise for them. It didn't matter much for Daemon though, his fat stuck to him like Sharpie on pants. Rod emerged in the Dojo door, his heart filled with hope and dreams of fancy. "Guys! A mine just opened up near my house, we have to explore it before anyone else does!" He shouted inside of the Dojo.

"Another mine? Rod, isn't it a bit late for us to be exploring?" Daemon said stretching himself out from an earlier mission of the day.

"Yeah, my bones are still sore from beating down that Skarmory," Darius said taking a seat near his dummy.

However, Rod was mindset on exploring that mine. "Aw come on! I have still have plenty of energy to explore that mine!"

"Well we don't Rod, we want to sleep, and you should sleep." Daemon picked up a broom and started dusting the floor.

"Fine then I'll go in by myself!"

Daemon stared at Rod, "You know how stupid that would be? No way. Tomorrow, if we don't have any missions, we'll explore your mine alright? Don't go anywhere near that mine, ya hear me?"

Rod groaned to himself and stormed out of the Dojo. Daemon stopped his sweeping and held his head and laid his arm on the broom and spoke softly to Darius, "He's like a 10 year old sometimes... gives me a headache."

“Heh, now you see why I don’t like him sometimes.”

Daemon groaned and helped Darius clean up the Dojo for closing time. Rod was had a very Hasty nature, he made rash decisions that brought the team down sometimes, and he was also very stubborn sometimes. He followed all of Xatu’s commands, so why should he follow Daemon’s? He was just a weakling! A fat one too! He deserved a little exploration and he figured that he was pretty strong, so why couldn’t he explore the mine himself? Rod chuckled to himself as he got up to the mine entrance and stared down into the mine, taking a great whiff of the air... he could smell it – pure gold, deep within the mine, which could be worth fortunes. With one smell of the gold deep within the mine itself... the Pupitar known as Rod had been overcome by the feeling of greed. It took him over and battled him, and greed came out on top. He wasn’t coming back out till he had what he came for. So, foolishly, he stepped into the mine and not even reading the sign, Sierra Madre Mine. Rod noticed a lever in the dark the linked to all the lanterns that hanged on the wall. He grabbed a lever on the wall and pulled it down. If he wasn’t a rock type Pokémon, that lever would have probably sent 20,000 volts of power straight through his heart. The lights might have flicked on in the mine, but the lights in Rod would have flicked off, but that wasn’t the case. Amazingly, the lanterns on the wall came on and provide ample light throughout the mine. The lever sparked and crackled as Rod stared down into the mine. He noticed something down a bit of the slope and headed that way. It was an old mine cart that the miners use to use to bring out coal and such. He peaked into the cart and noticed two shining coins at the bottom of the cart. He swiped them up and hopped in the mine cart himself. Besides the rusting metal body, the mine cart looked like it was still in a usable condition however Rod didn’t take into consideration of the track condition that the mine cart stood on. It could have been broken off somewhere in the mine... but he couldn’t think about because his mind was already thinking about the possible gold that lay deep inside. He took off his hat because he already knew how fast these things went from a previous mine cart ride... that went badly because of how old it was. Rod stuck his hat in between the his legs and pulled the brake off which caused the mine cart to lurch forward and start to move down the gentle slope, slowly gaining speed as it went down. He laughed to himself and thought, *I’m gonna be the richest Pupitar in the whole world!*

The mine cart sped off into the mine somewhere and took Rod in as well, sparking and screeching the whole way down. Would he return? No one knew but himself. The next morning came bright and early for Darius as knocking at the door provoked him from his rest. He stretched out and looked at the time, 9:30 AM. He slept right through his mediation session of the day and it was already time for the first practice of the day. He rushed to the door and unlocked it... but only Daemon and Nina were waiting there. Darius invited the loving couple in to his humble home and gave them a seat on some crates he had, he was still expecting his students to arrive shortly. Nina sat down on her crate, trying to get as comfy as possible while Daemon strutted up next to her and took a seat on a crate nearby. She giggled as she patted his belly as he patted hers. Darius headed upstairs and came back down with a tray with tea cups and a teapot that was steaming hot from the spout. It was a special blend that Darius and Daemon made for themselves, just had the right spices in it to have a great balance. It was sweet, but sour, and tangy. It was delicious to them, but Daemon wondered if Nina would like it. She didn’t really react, but she did take a second sip to it. “That’s pretty good,” Nina said, “Maybe a little sweeter?” Daemon handed her the sugar bowl and patted her tum some. Darius chuckled, “So how long till her dad notices?”

Both Daemon and Nina blinked and then shrugged, staring at her gut. After Daemon and Nina’s first

attempt to um... “breed,” Nina’s father caught both of them and separated them for about a week, but he didn’t really keep this Romeo and Juliet duo apart. She snuck out and snuck into Daemon’s house at night while her Dad was asleep. There, they continued their “breeding” sessions and unfortunately but also fortunately, their last “breeding” session worked. About 3 days had passed since that session, and her gut was starting to expand and become visible. It was bad for Daemon in the fact that now Nina’s dad had an actual reason to kill him, but it was also good for him in that he now had a family. Nina saw it all as good, but did take into consideration of her dad being quite mad at Daemon. It also gave Daemon a reason to get out of the bar to be a responsible dad and maybe Nina’s father would start to like him for that reason, but Daemon sighed couldn’t help but think that wouldn’t work, but he digressed. “Xatu has given us the day off, said we’ve been working so hard that we deserve one,” Daemon began.

Darius blinked, “Really? Well, that’s good news for Rod. We can go explore that mine he wanted to see last night.”

“I kind of have a bad feeling about that mine,” Daemon shivered, “the last time Rod wanted us to explore a mine, we both nearly fell into a bottomless pit.”

Darius chuckled, “I warned you two about the mine cart tracks, but after my lesson with my students... we can go explore it.”

“If you want, but take your time. You know how Rod is when it comes to sleeping in on a day off.”

Darius agreed. The class lasted 3 hours, which Daemon and Nina sat through, and sometimes participated in themselves. Darius called upon Daemon to be a mighty foe for some of his students, and it proved to be a challenge for him. They were all fighters, how could he compete? When the class was over, Daemon and Darius cleaned up shop and locked up. Nina headed back to Daemon’s humble home and waited for his return as the duo set out. She gave Daemon a good luck kiss, and hoped for his safe return. Darius led the way to Rod’s house; Daemon had no idea where it was because Rod didn’t really tell him where he was set up. Darius tapped on his door and it slowly opened up creepily. Daemon and Darius looked inside, no one was around. They entered and looked about the whole burrow he had made for himself. They checked his bed. “Not even warm... he wasn’t here at all last night,” Darius concluded.

Daemon sighed, “So, this is just a guess... but, did he enter the mine when I told him not to?”

“Guess so, he said it was near his home right?”

Daemon nodded and exited the hobble as Darius followed behind. The description, near, wasn’t nearly close enough to how far the mine it was. It was buried in a sand mountain about 15 minutes from Rod’s home. They noticed the lanterns that lit up the mine were on, and concluded that Rod was definitely in here, but from the footprints inside of the mine, Rod never exited from it, so he was still inside. Darius pulled Daemon to the side when he noticed the name of the mine. “Sierra Madre... isn’t that... the rumored city of gold?” Daemon asked.

Darius put his hand on his chin, “According to legend, it was a city of death built on a blood red smog that slowly killed off the residents inside. It was a place where residents could reverse their fortunes and begin again, but ironically it was just a deathtrap for all that visited. That’s one exploration I would not want to go on.”

Daemon gulped, “So, this mine is death sentence basically.”

Daemon shuttered at the thought of going in deeper, but if Rod was still somewhere inside, they were going to have to pulled him out with all their might, so it was no time to be a coward because it was time to be a mighty warrior. He forced his legs to move forward into the mine of doom. Even Darius, the Dojo

master, always calm and never showing a sign of fear, had hesitated when moving into the mine. His head was glistening with the bright moistness of sweat. They followed the prints to the end of their trail, where Rod hopped in the mine cart and sped off down inside. They couldn't help but follow the tracks with their eyes and seeing the tracks disappear off into the depths of the mine. The tingling feeling of coldness shot down Daemon's spine causing him to gulp the saliva that was building up in his mouth from drooling over the treasures inside. Nothing more meant to him then getting out of that mine quickly with Rod either crying like a baby or hugging the treasure in his arms. Darius took the lead while Daemon moved no more than Rod's tracks. Darius grabbed him with his tail and put him on his back, he had never seen Daemon in such state of fear. He loved to take risks, but that legend... it was messing with his head and operation of thinking. Daemon normally heard that story of the Sierra Madre from crazy, drunk, old treasure hunters who passed through towns on a cold night or from local human clans, whom he thought was crazy as well, that were spread out throughout the world, but his friend told him this legend this time, and Darius was not old, not crazy, not drunk, and certainly no human. So, Darius's telling had a black grip on his heart and would not let go. Daemon took a breath of the air, but only seconds after that breath, he gagged on the air and pulled his facemask up, coughing and wheezing the mine air out. Darius jerked his head back, stopping in his tracks, and asked Daemon, "Are you alright there?"

Daemon shook his head, "No, this air tastes like copper!"

Darius blinked at him, "Copper?"

Daemon nodded and hacked out the last bit of air from his body before he started breathing normally.

Darius took a breath of the mine air himself, twirling it around in his mouth, but he didn't gag on it, but it made him shiver. "It tastes... like old world gold to me."

Daemon was surprised, "Gold?"

"It's no wonder Rod was brought into here then, the smell of gold can be intoxicating to greedy treasure hunters like him."

Darius kept trekking down lower into the mine until eventually hit where the heart the operation was in the large room. Mine carts were everywhere in there but all of them were empty, only one or two had a little golden nugget inside of them. Darius picked them out and gave them to Darius for him to stuff in his pockets, but even touching the gold made Darius shiver. Darius noticed something unusual in one of the mine carts though. He held out the maroon fedora that Rod always wore. He sifted through it, looking for anything inside, but there was nothing. He plunked it on Daemon's head for him to keep while they explored. He tried to follow any of Rod's tracks that he might have imprinted into the ground, but they were standing on solid rock, and there was no trace of Rod heading off into one of the caves in front of them. It was a guessing game now; they had to choose carefully as to where they went in this mine. Meanwhile, deeper within the mine, Rod had pasted out on the side of the wall to take a quick snooze and recover his energy and was dreaming great dreams of his riches, but the true him was inside fighting his greedy nature still, but it had a great grasp on him that he couldn't let go. The gold was so intoxicating to him; any smell of it brought out that greed and took tremendous strength to just let go. His dreams of treasures soon turned into horrible nightmares of twisted images that even Rod could be scared of. In his dream, he was the man of the world, but his friends had left him behind, as he was drunk with power. He wasn't in his body; he was just a floating soul watching the scene as it unfolded. His two friends, Daemon and Darius, left from his palace, cold and alone. The desert was beating them into submission and as they dragged themselves across the wastes, dying. The next image was Daemon

and Darius digging their own graves from the great beyond in Electra, but Rod? He wasn't even there. He was too busy counting his riches over and over again to be bothered to watch these two souls bury themselves. Rod woke up from his dreams and looked about, he had loosened his grip from the gold... but it wasn't enough. He tried to shrug off the dream and headed back to slumber. He wanted free of this curse, but he couldn't get it off him. So there he laid in the mine, asleep in the body that was controlled by greed, not of his own mind. He had control of his mind, no doubt, but the greed was controlling the rest of his body.

Darius had started exploring one of the caves that Rod would possibly be in. He couldn't help but noticed that he felt like he backtracking through the cave on an endless loop. It was just an endless tunnel to him that never, but it did finally end, in a dead end. "Crap... these are long tunnels." Darius said.

"No kidding... Rod could be in anyone of these,"

"Should we split up?"

"No way... too risky if we get lost, and I'm not in a gambling mood today."

Darius chuckled, "Good to see that you haven't lost your common sense."

Daemon hopped off, feeling a little more courageous than he was entering the mine. He followed Darius back down to the end of the tunnel and looked about at the rest that they had to explore. They chose the close one to the left, and planned to go in a clockwise manner of exploring these caves. That cave lead them to the entrance to another cavern, a deep ravine that was black as night, but there was no lanterns going that way, so Rod must have not gone that way. They went into another one, and big surprise, another dead end. The walls in that one were picked clean of dirt, rocks, and other minerals that were stuck in the wall. The last tunnel finally sent them on the correct way down. They should have considered bringing some food into this mine... they were starting get hungry and were worrying how long they would be in this mine before they found. They noticed a little indentation in the wall, which lead to a small room that had been turned upside down and wrecked. It was a small break room of some kind, with a fridge that had had some food in it. They didn't really trust the food seeing how this mine was closed off for so long, but their growling stomachs said otherwise. In the light, it looked fine. No mold, no weirdness, just food. Daemon took a bite of the food as a test. He didn't regurgitate it at all, that was a good sign. "Well... it doesn't taste funny," Daemon chuckled as he took another bite, "tastes pretty good actually."

"Really?" Darius questioned as he looked at his food item, "but this mine must be beyond 40 years old, so how could this food *NOT* be moldy and disgusting?"

Daemon shrugged, "Beats me, but I'm hungry."

Darius sighed to himself and then chuckled, "That's the Daemon I know."

He grabbed the other piece of food from the fridge and closed the door. It was just morsels of food, half of a sandwich, but it was good enough for them. However, Daemon noticed something attached to the fridge, a weird looking device that was wired directly into it. He traced the wires into the back of the fridge and looked over it some. He waved Darius over to the odd device to look at as he couldn't figure it out, but Darius scanned it over at least 5 times or something... and yet he couldn't make anything out of it either. "For all I know," Darius stated, "It could be a bomb."

Daemon wasn't thoroughly convinced though, as he analyzed the device again, retracing the wires in his mind, but he scoffed at the idea of a bomb, "That's ridiculous. It's wired up to the door light, meaning, if this was a bomb, which it isn't, it should have detonated as soon as we opened that door."

Darius looked it over once more and then scratched his head, "That's probably true."

Daemon sighed and tapped his fingers on the fridge door, thinking for a little bit. He then just decided to open the door back up and search for something to drink, but something odd happened inside of that fridge. When he opened that door, the whole thing was filled with foods, even though moments ago it looked like it only had two items inside. What was even stranger was that the foods inside were all of Daemon's favorites that only Nina knew how to make or things he tried from the human clans: Flapjacks and Syrup, a large dinner plate full of fries, a Cheeseburger, a little thing of applesauce, 3 large bottles of soda, and 2 gallon tubs of vanilla and chocolate ice cream. Daemon's eyes glittered at all the food inside and pulled everything out and set it on the only upright table in the room. Darius blinked and looked in the fridge, "Where did that come from?"

"I don't know! But it looks so good." Daemon sat up a chair, taking a seat in it and he stared at the food in front of him.

Darius looked at Daemon's smorgasbord of food that laid out in front of him, but his attention turned back to the fridge as he closed it and opened it again. More food appeared in the fridge although it was just a few things this time, some of Darius's delicacies: a rice ball, some sushi, and home-made curry.

"Huh... that's strange..." Darius exclaimed.

Daemon was engorging himself on his delicious meal of the century. "What is?" He asked, taking a short break from stuffing a burger in his mouth.

"The same thing just happened to me with this fridge... this thing obviously knows what we like and can conjure any of it up at any given time... all we have to do is open the door when it's closed and a meal appears just for the certain person who opened the door."

Daemon pondered for a bit as he continued eating up his meal. He then looked down at his pants which were oddly tight on his gut, so he unzipped his pants as his gut bounced out because of how tightly strapped down by the waste line of the pants. He sighed happily as he rested his arm on his newly formed gut, "Aw yeah... let's take that home with us when we get out of here. I haven't eaten that good in a long time."

Darius chuckled a little and closed the door, "Maybe just for your house."

"These miners had it good... well... besides the air tasting like Gold... or Copper."

Daemon belched and patted his gut, starting to shuffle back to the fridge, pulling out another plate of fries and relaxing back down at his small table. Darius peeked his head outside, seeing if anyone had come into the mine, seeking treasure. He didn't see anything... nor did he hear anything, but that was never a good sign. Daemon finished up his last plate of fries, his gut now twice the size of his old, tiny gut, and pulled up his facemask, leaving the break room. Darius led again, not because Daemon didn't want to, just because his gut was getting in the way a bit. The mine got deeper into the earth, the pressure was starting to lower inside and the air was becoming a bit harder to breath, but Daemon and Darius didn't seem to notice it at all. If they were use to desert air, they could get use to the lack of air. They came to another fork in the road, both leading off in opposite direction. They headed right. The mine dropped lower and deeper. It was getting to the point where Daemon and Darius had to take air support from one of the rooms. There were 5 in total... but 1 was missing when they entered. Rod had been there. Even one of his cigarettes butts was lying near the empty holder. He couldn't be much further, and this was becoming a massive mine. They travelled down to a small ledge which opened up into a vast crevice which they had seen up a few layers before. Daemon looked down into the pit, and gulped as he noticed something deep down at the bottom. It was clouds, blood red as Darius had described it. Darius looked down at the clouds as well... shivering at them, "That's them... are... we in

Sierra Madre?”

“But, Sierra Madre is a city! And it’s just a rumor, a myth!” Daemon shouted.

It made sense though, the smell of gold, the blood red cloud, it was no reason this mine was called Sierra Madre. It was a trap leading treasure hunters to their doom. Rod had fallen for the trap... looking for gold in this place was searching for Death himself and then meeting him face to face. Daemon and Darius had to hurry now. They rushed down the path way and were stopped at a fork once again. It was either... over rickety old bridge that looks like breathing on could make it collapse or down another tunnel... filled with the red cloud. It was a rock and hard place. Daemon put on his goggles and breathed in the air from the tank strapped to his back. He ran into the cloud as quick as he could Darius following him quickly. The cloud picked at their skin as they ran through, painful. They busted out of the cloud unhurt by the cloud though and ran down the tunnel. They saw Rod resting quietly on a wall, his air tank hooked up to his face. Daemon shook him awake, but Daemon didn’t see the Rod he knew in his eyes.

“Daemon, the gold... the gold is just ahead.” He sounded hypnotized.

“Rod, get up! We’re getting you out of here.”

He shook his head weakly and stood up... continuing his way down the hall towards and elevator. They tried to stop him, but it was like he was in a trance. Daemon and Darius chased him into the elevator as he pressed the button. Sparks flew from it and gate shut in front of them sending them down to the bottom of the ravine. Daemon pushed the up button but the elevator wouldn’t respond. The blood red cloud waited for them at the bottom. The cloud came in through the cracks of the elevator door and it opened and started to slowly pour in. Rod stepped out of the elevator and disappeared into the cloud as it slowly crept into the elevator. Daemon and Darius had no choice but to follow him through the cloud and even further into the depths of the mine. The cloud once again scratched at their skin, trying to get to them but they ignored the pain and ran through into a doorway which slammed closed behind them. The room they enter was clear of any cloud... and it was pressurized and full of air. They all took off their masks as they observed the room and placed them down next to the door. They assumed they were safe from the cloud. There was an elevator to their left and large door that was open... inviting them into another room. Gold bars sat on a table in behind the doorway, 40 gold bars in total. Daemon eyes lit up at the bars... he couldn’t help but feel himself slipping to the greed that was deep inside of him. He caught himself though as his foot was inside the door and getting closer to the gold, but Rod was already at the gold breathing in the golden dust that had laid on them for years. He giggled as he touched one of the bars, picking it up and rubbing it into his face. “Gold! I... I knew it was here!” Rod shouted happily. He rubbed the gold into his face like it was his child, kissing it happily. He laughed to himself manically as he inhaled the golden dust into him to rid himself of this golden curse. True bliss was found inside of him, he had fought with greed and with the power of the golden bars he rubbed with his face, and it was well worth the high-stake fight. He laid on bars, drooling all over them. Was it a trap or was this really the treasure that treasure hunters had been looking for? Daemon could believe it himself... but he grabbed a bar crazily and shoved it into his pants pocket. Darius blinked, “Um... this is way too easy... no traps or anything?”

Daemon looked around, “I guess...”

He stopped mid-sentence as he heard a loud screech echo through the cave. Both Daemon and Darius looked out through the vault door, the alarms began to blare loudly as the whole mine shook, rocks falling down from outside the vault. “I knew it was too easy!” Darius shouted.

Rod was still gobsmailed over the amount of treasure he had gotten that he hadn’t even noticed the

alarms blaring. Darius grabbed a few bars for Rod, shoving them into Rod's fedora and placing it back on Rod's head. Daemon ran to the elevator while Darius struggled to get Rod off the table. He was glued to that table, not one thing made him move. Darius yanked him off and knocked a few of golden bricks on the floor while Rod had an armload. The alarms blared yet again, but this time just in the vault as steam was released from the door and slowly started closing shut. Darius slipped through the crack of the door with Rod and ran into the elevator as something slammed at the door breaking it down. It was an Aerodactyl; his skin was as blood red as the cloud he emerged from and his eyes were as black as the night. His maw leaked the poisonous gas as he screeched loudly in the room. He saw Darius rush into the elevator and chased after him. He blocked his way into the elevator for Darius. He threw Rod in with Daemon. He danced about the room with the Aerodactyl as it whipped its tail at him trying to get a strike. Darius tried to draw its attention somewhere else so he could dive bomb into the elevator. He grabbed one of the air tanks and threw it at him smacking him in the face. It flinched at first, and then it dove at Darius. He strafed to right as it slammed into the wall. Darius used lashed him in the jaw with a Thunderpunch, stunning him for just a moment. He rushed into the elevator. Daemon hit the button as fast as he could and as the Aerodactyl jumped at the door, it slammed shut and dented its head into the door. It screeched loudly again and then the elevator moved upward, back to the level they were on before. Rod shook his head as he was regaining his composure, "Ugh... where am I?"

"Question later Rod," Daemon said, "We got to get out of this mine!"

"Wait, how did I get all of this gold?"

"Rod! Just take the gold and save the questions for later!"

The elevator stopped and the doors opened up for them. The Cloud Aerodactyl emerged out of the pit quickly and used a Wing Attack on Darius, smacking him back into the elevator. It left a red bruise across his chest where he hit. Daemon reacted fast and used a Flamethrower on him to make him cower back for a bit while the team rushed out the door and back into the mine. They ran into the break room Daemon and Darius were in before shutting off the light as they headed in. They ducked down behind some overturned furniture and watched outside. Daemon headed for the fridge and started cutting the wires to it, wanting it desperately and rushing back into the mine. Darius kept watch over Rod and watched as the Aerodactyl slowly lurked through the halls of the mine. He peered in the room for a brief second, grumbling something incoercible to itself and headed down the mine further. Darius sighed and gave the sign that the coast was clear as Daemon snapped the device off the fridge. They sneaked out of the room and head towards the heart of the mine as explosion shook the cave once more, but this time it sounded like it blew up something that was metal. They peeked out into the ravine and noticed that the cloud was rising up towards them. They only had so much time to get out before the whole place was covered in the cloud of death. The Aerodactyl, however, found them once again. They jumped back from the ravine as it tried to tackle them off the ravine. It wasn't a very bright Pokemon. They all rushed back into the mine. They had no idea if the Aerodactyl itself was poisonous, and right now, hiding was the best option. Daemon shrank them all down to a few inches high and crawled under an overturned mine cart. Daemon looked out and watched it look around and head down into a tunnel it had not explored previously. They all panted and gasped for air as the mine shook again from another explosion. The alarms were still blaring loudly throughout the cave calling for an evacuation from the mine. Daemon resized everyone and rushed for the exit while the Aerodactyl was distracted hunting for them. The tunnel they had come through and the cliffhanger to the ravine was now leaking the cloud as they rushed to the exit but... it wasn't there anymore! It was just another wall that didn't lead anywhere.

Daemon and Darius pounded at the wall as they yelled for help, but it was hopeless. The cloud was now beginning to fill up their tunnel and the Aerodactyl emerged from the cloud. He looked re-energized from the cloud. It walked closer to them, the cloud following right behind it. It was controlling it, and it now stood right in front of them peering into their very souls. The cloud consumed the last bit of the room and they held their breaths as long as they could, but the cloud clawed at their skins and lungs. They couldn't hold it forever, and they were forced to breathe the cloud in. They gagged and hacked at it as they dropped to their knees from it. The Aerodactyl laughed at their suffering as they slowly passed out in the cloud. They flopped on the ground and were consumed by the cloud, and its toxin. The end of a loving team consumed by greed. It couldn't be the end. It just couldn't. Daemon refused to believe it was their end and twitched and rived on the ground he laid on. His body twitched inside the mine hall, and he arose from the dead. He was near the entrance of the mine where they had entered. There was no more cloud around them. They had passed out on a wall near the end of the tunnel, where Rod's tracks had ended before. He looked back at the opening and noticed to gas sprayers that were emptied of their fluids. It was the cloud, a halogen. It was all an illusion produced by the gas in the sprayers that had knocked them out, it was a blood red fluid as well. It wasn't a toxin, but a laughing gas to knock them out as soon as someone entered the mine, and it caused a hallucination that the mine was more vast and expansive inside. There was no sign that said anything about "Sierra Madre" in the little shaft that they were in, but to the left of them was a little doorway that was wide open for them and dark inside. It seemed safe enough. Daemon examined himself, and noticed several scratch marks on his arms, and he checked Darius and Rod for the same marks. Though it wasn't clear on Rod, he didn't have any, Darius had scratch marks, but it was on his head and not on his arms. They must have been clawed at when they were asleep, but what would have been doing that? Daemon felt something rubbing its head into his side. He looked to his side, and noticed the little Charmeleon knocked out right beside him, Nina, who had fallen for the same gas that the 3 had fallen for. He picked her up, worried of what that gas had made her fantasize about. Her eyelids opened up slowly, blinking a little before looking about the mine shaft. He put her down, but as soon as he did, she hugged into him, shaking and tears rolling down her face. "Daemon, I was so worried about you," She whimpered, "You were gone for so long so I thought you were danger and I came to find you."

"Hours?" Daemon looked outside the mine, as it was now nightfall.

She whimpered into his side as he stroked her head cautiously, trying to calm her down. "What did you dream about?" He asked her.

"You, every single thing was about you." She said softly.

He blushed a lot as he hugged her close to him. He looked over to Darius and Rod, who were both starting to wake up from the gas. Rod was holding his head and Darius was scratching at his face. "Where are we now?" Rod mumbled.

"Out of that nightmare," Daemon sighed, "we're back in the real world."

Nina hugged his gut, "I guess you were eating in your sleep as well."

"Huh? What do you- what the heck?!" He exclaimed as he looked down and noticed his gut was still bulgingly huge, just like it was in the dream.

He then dug into his pocket and pulled out the golden brick that he stuffed in there, still shimmering greatly at him. Nina gasped at the golden brick, "Where the heck did you get that?!"

He held it in his hand, his lip quivering softly, "I-I-I have no idea."

He looked over at the only room that was open in the mine. He rushed into the room and what was

sitting on the table? 15 golden bars that the team took with them before the dream ended. Rod's fedora was also there with the bars sticking out of his hat. The fridge that Daemon and Darius had found was sitting in the corner as well with the device that he tried to take was reattached back on it. There was also a small golden statue of Daemon on the table, heroically posing with a tiny Charmeleon hugging at his side smiling down on her. They were... gifts from all of their nightmares from getting out of there alive. Rod, Darius, and Nina came in and were gob-smacked by the all the things inside of the room. Rod went over and touched the gold bars, they were as real as day. "Where did this come from?" Darius asked, looking around the room.

Daemon chuckled to himself as he pocketed his gold bar, "A gift... from the Sierra Madre to us."

Rod took the bars out of his hat and stared at them, sighing deeply. "It's not as good as I thought it would be." He said under his breath.

"Hmm?" Daemon hummed, "You say something Rod?"

He placed the bars back on the table and shook his head. Darius chuckled, "Uh-huh. Well, it looks like there is enough for all of us to take 3. We can give the last one to the guild... or something along those lines. Is that good?"

Everyone nodded and took their 3 as Daemon pocketed the last one for the Guild. They ventured out of the mine with their gold in hand and breathed the desert air once again. They all couldn't help but looked back at that troublesome mine... wondering who would be next to fall for that trap. Upon returning to the town, they all deposited their gold into the bank for safekeeping and later uses, but Rod high-tailed it to his house and stored his bars in burrow. No one knew where he lived besides Daemon, Darius, and now Nina, so if the gold was ever stolen from there, it'd have to be one of the three, at least that's what he thought. Daemon gave the one gold bar that he had pocketed for himself to Nina's Father as a sign of peace and forgiveness. Nina's father asked him where he got this gold from, having a twinkle in his eye as he held the bar in one hand... but Daemon lied to him and said it was the last of its kind. He sighed as he looked at his daughter with Daemon and remembered how happy he made her. He accepted the gold, and turn over a new leaf with Daemon. They became close friends and Nina's father apologized for the unnecessary roughness he had given Daemon. Daemon accepted his apology and was thankful for his new found kindness. Daemon later returned to the mine in the middle of the night for the last of the goods he had gotten from the Sierra Madre, and then sealed it off for the rest of time so no one would ever fall for the horrible trap that was the Sierra Madre Mine. Sure, they'd be able to change their lives and begin again... but the risk was greater than the reward, and that risk wasn't worth 18 karat gold. So, the mine sat there for the rest of eternity, waiting for its next treasure hunter to come, but never getting one again. And so, it was buried once again in the sands of time, never to be seen again. Though the rumors had continued through the centuries, the mine was conquered and died at the hands of its last victims.

To Be Continued...