



The Game of Time

Chapter Four: Trapped in the Past



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And I can't even be scared about it even if I tried, Mew thought, taking her first long breath of pre-time air. It filled her lungs and rushed through her body like a shiver from the inside out; and as she breathed out her lithe body fell from the air entirely.

She dropped, arms and legs and tail flailing. A squawk of alarm that definitely did not sound like 'mew' burst from her mouth. Somehow her body had curved around so far instinctively by the time she hit the ground it was on all four feet to absorb the shock; tail held straight out for balance.

The soft soil did a little bit to lessen the pain which lanced up her paws. She stayed motionless for a few breaths, eyes blinking to adjust quicker in the dim light and felt her ears flicking about as they focused upon each sound above her individually. The forest canopy was alive with sound; raucous birdcalls audible from every angle.

Instinct told Mew she was not safe where she was; crouched underneath a tree wrapped with strangling vines. Do I climb this tree, head upwards? No, I am

not safe there, either. There was only one task to remember; and that was to survive. How best to strive for survival? Eat, drink, mate, breed, raise young, teach them how to continue the cycle...

For her young - already quickening in her belly - to survive she would have to survive. Where best to strive for survival? She was not safe here, nor up the tree. Where was her nest? Where her mate? Where her food, her water?

Some deep instinct told her in no uncertain terms there was no safe place for her. *You do not belong in this world.* She bared her teeth and felt the hackles upon her neck and down her spine raise in fear at the feeling.

If there was no place for her now, she would have to fight and kill to make a place for her in the future. Stake a claim, make a territory and defend it against all comers. That was the Law of survival when as hard-pressed as she was.

You do not understand. You will never belong here, law or no. There will never be a place for you. You are a stranger here.

Mew hissed, her ears flat against her skull, and bounded away into the undergrowth; heading blindly towards nowhere in hopes the feeling would go away. For she had to belong here - where else could she go?

Where else had she been? There had only ever been the jungle and its dangerous creatures. The strange memories of flying had been a mere dream; for only the birds above her in the trees had wings to fly.

Help, she thought, but to whom she had no idea.

“Hurry *up* would you, guys,” John said, wiping his sweaty forehead with his t-shirt. “Forget the map, forget the camera; let’s just go.”

The four other humans were engrossed with their various items. One woman was poring over a highly detailed map which was hardly readable in the harsh red light of the setting sun. Another held a compass, another a flask of water and the last a digital camera dwarfed by the length of its own lens.

“We’re coming,” Trish said vaguely, navigating through images on the small screen. “I just have to delete a few to make some more space-”

“Don’t you get it?” he replied. “We’re lost, for God’s sake! We should’ve hit the river hours ago! I *told* you guys to not go off the trail...”

John shook his head, looking down at his feet; then swiped a hand roughly in dismissal at the others and took off through the dense jungle undergrowth again.

“Lost?” Derek said, a half-smile on his face as he pocketed the compass and held out a hand for the water bottle. “Nah, we’re just taking the scenic route. Here, give us a swig.”

Amanda handed over her flask with a grunt, stepping lightly after the first man as if her backpack weighed half as much as it actually did. “Don’t waste it,”

she called back over her shoulder. “Not until we can hear running water again, anyway.”

“I’m sure if we keep heading the way we’re going...” Natalie said, folding her map up with finality. “We’ll be there in no time.” She jogged past the other three to catch up to the first man.

The five trudged down the barely-there animal trail, weaving their way through as it zigzagged randomly, having to move the low hanging leaves and branches out of their way; yet before long Amanda cocked an ear, a searching look on her face.

“Ha-hah!” she crowed, her stride accelerating. “Told you so!”

By the time the others had joined them Amanda had already made her careful way down the small yet sheer embankment and was splashing her face with the cold river water.

Derek gave John a nudge. “And here I thought girls couldn’t read maps.”

“You’re holding the bottle, so you’re on refilling duty,” John retorted, looking down the river’s bank. When Derek made to jump down to the water’s edge, John grabbed his arm. “Hold up.”

“What now?” Derek asked.

Without taking his far-away gaze off whatever it was he was seeing, John flapped an arm at Trish. “Can I have the camera for a tick?”

“You break it, you bought it,” she said in a deadpan voice, placing it in his hand and making sure to loop the strap over his shoulder.

“Just don’t move, anybody,” he said, and raised the viewfinder to his eye.

The image remained blurred for a good while whilst he fiddled with the lens zoomed all the way in in hopes he’d get a better look at the small creature lapping water downstream, its head raising high and alert every few moments in case of predators. Finally he found the pale pink-white shape in the image and carefully focused the camera upon it.

“... hell is that...?” he breathed, one finger questing for the shutter button. At the last moment he saw its head flick up in surprise at a rather strident alarm call from a bird and in panic pressed down on the any button he could feel as it tensed and turned tail, bolting for the trees with an odd jumping-running motion; as if its hind legs were too big for the rest of its body.

He felt the camera whirr and he brought it down to stare bug-eyed at the image in hopes he’d captured *something*-

Trish was at his shoulder, looking at the blurred and shaky image too. “What’s that white pixilation to the right?” she asked suspiciously, then turned away from him with a wail to the skies. “How could you have possibly stuffed it already, man? Cost me a fortune!”

What *was* that pixilation? “Good question, Trish; because that’s not what I saw at all,” he said. “It was an animal. Some albino mammal or something.”

“Bullshit,” Derek laughed, already lying down on the embankment with his head in his hands; feet dangling off the drop.

“I’m serious.”

“Seriously hallucinating.”

John brandished the camera in Derek’s face. “What’s this, then?”

“Your mum,” Derek replied. “Now I *definitely* know it’s not my turn to put the tent up tonight when we make camp. I’m looking at you, ladies.”

“Screw you, asshole,” John said, suddenly feeling even more tired than he had before stopping at the river. He slumped down and folded his legs up, zipping open his bag to reach for his own prized possession: a brown leather journal wrapped in an old t-shirt to keep it safe. His trusty pen was still attached to its binding so he took it out and flipped to the next empty page.

Derek hmphed in response. “Y’know, normal people just blog...?”

“Computer keys don’t offer a tactile enough experience.”

“You’re weird.”

“That’s why you like me, right?”

“Totally.”

July 4th

Guyana, South America

We finally hit the river. Saw a strange animal on the riverbank. I have no idea what it was.

Trish flopped down besides John, peering down at what he was writing. He hurriedly flipped the journal closed. “Hey!”

“It’s not like there’s anything groundbreaking in there,” she said with a smile, proffering her smartphone. “Was it anything like this?”

John studied the webpage full of images of felines coated red, brown; some even a dusky dark grey colour.

“Sorta... Like this one a bit, only the head was a little bigger, and it was white furred.”

Trish nodded matter-of-factly. “Jaguarundi.”

“Jagua-what-now?”

She laughed. “Cute wildcat. *Albino* cute wildcat. We’d make a fortune if we caught it and sold it to a wildlife park.”

From John’s other side, Derek gave the both of them a lazy sardonic look. “Nah, I’d just take it home and train it into a vicious guard cat.”

“Skitch’im, Jaguar...”

“Rundi.”

“Rundi!”

But Derek shook his head. “Doesn’t have the same ring to it as Mutant Killercat. Hmm. Mew for short.”

“Awww, that’s a cute name!”

“You won’t be saying that when it goes for your jugular.”

“Mew wouldn’t do that to me,” Trish sniffed.

“That’s Mutant Killercat to you.”

Trish took her phone from John and stood up. “Looks like the tent’s ready.”

“Sweet.”

The two left John alone, his journal in his lap, silently staring out across the river in hopes he’d catch a glimpse of the wildcat again. *I don’t want to catch you or take you home or anything like that. I just want to know if I really did see you at all; or if I was just hallucinating after a long stressful day trekking.* He stayed there until nightfall; when the scents of dinner and his rumbling stomach lent enough persuasion for him to finally stir and wander into the light and warmth of the group’s campfire.

After hearing no more about it from anyone else during dinner he decided to forget it. Maybe it really had been a mirage. The white pixilation on the

camera could have just been some strange trick of the sunlight. It was time instead to focus on getting back to civilisation.

Mew huddled in the undergrowth close to the river, her delicate nose whiffing at the delicious scents wafting over in the breeze. She dared not venture out further though; there was no telling what kind of predators those strange animals could be they were so bold. From her own protection she could see they had none, and were huddling close together around a fire. Mew would not have dared to get so close to the flames; fire was something dangerous, something to flee from; and she was amazed that it was not at all spreading across the ground but dancing just in one place as the animals made loud vocalisations and ate their food.

Did these creatures ever sleep? Her body craved food. She had barely eaten a thing since falling from the sky, surviving on insects mostly since they proved the easiest to hunt. The food the animals were eating over the other side of the river smelled much tastier than insects. Surely they'd leave scraps; a bone, a piece of fat, anything after they had finished.

But as to when they would finish... It looked as though it was necessary to play the waiting game - but if there was anything Mew was good at, it was waiting. Something told her she would have to prepare to wait a very long while

before the land would see fit to accept her and her unborn kit. So wait she would, and wait she did; dark blue eyes unblinking as they looked out from underneath a large leafy frond and across the river. *Soon...*

<It's time for what?> Grace asked Aristeia as they flew through the time stream.

Aristeia did not slow her progress through the stream as she answered.

<You do not already know?>

The information was there, Grace could feel, lurking just beyond her consciousness. If she bade it, she would know it instantly. That was her right as a celebi. And yet...

<Talking telepathically feels more comfortable at the moment,> she started, and saw with relief that Aristeia nodded.

<Of course. As a fully budded celebi, it's time for everything. As a celeva you supervised and guarded the time streams and whatnot; now as a celebi you control them wholly. You have permission to create and travel through any. Of course, with all these rights come just as many responsibilities...>

The time stream led them out into a thinly forested wood absolutely dancing with celebi. Some sat on the horizontal branches and snacked on bunches

of round, red berries. Others flitted through the airy space looking far more focused and determined - as if on a mission - than the rest.

<What's...> Grace began, then shook her head. That at least was obvious. They had reached some sort of secret celebi sanctuary. More important questions were at hand. <What kind of responsibilities?>

Aristea took a seated position on the fringes of the collection of buzzing celebi. After carefully selecting a berry for herself and plucking it from a branch she cradled it for a moment at her lap to continue: <Well, we've already maxed out our body quota for the lake healing ceremony; which is a shame because it was simply *lovely*... Take the time to remember it, though; healing other celebi - and the world's flora as well - is a skill you'll want to foster as soon as possible.> She popped the berry in her mouth and smiled widely. <Delicious.>

Grace frowned. <What's something I can help with, then?>

<Oh, there's always various bits and pieces; mending paradoxes, visiting worthy humans, protecting the forests around the world->

Grace did not have to hive-mind-linked to Aristea to know she was dodging something much more serious and exciting. <Aristea...> she prompted. <I didn't face down the Lord of Time, Dialga, after waking up to merely patrol forests. *Tell me.*>

<Tell yourself,> Aristeia replied. <What happens after we bring primal Dialga back from the mystery space once he is healed, and he touches the before time?>

Grace thought hard - very hard - about this one yet there was no memory of anything afterwards, just a blank haze; as if she was a celeva again and not privy to the future any longer. Her eyelids slowly widened. <Does that mean no celevi survives to remember it?>

<Either that, or there are an infinite number of possible outcomes depending on us - so every time any celevi comes to this moment the result changes. Until that moment when our memories stop we will never know what will happen during, and every celevi afterwards cannot properly remember either because it will go differently the next time. Well, we *think*. That's the best explanation we've been able to come up with.>

<So every celevi in time - past and future - sees that blankness in that moment in time?>

<Yes.>

<How are we meant to know which celevi have travelled there before and witnessed it?>

<We don't.>

The idea both horrified and fascinated Grace. She realised her arms were wrapped protectively around her small body in response to feeling that strange blip in time that no celebi could remember properly. She sought information about afterwards - years, even - and found the entire way clouded and blank. She realised how quickly she had grown used to absorbing information from other celebi that the lack of such was what felt strange now.

<You want me to go to the moment the memories stop.> she whispered; the shock giving way to a burning curiosity at not knowing.

Aristea's eyes were glittering in some strong emotion, whether fear or excitement Grace couldn't tell. <Think of it as a *game*, Grace. And now you've finally joined us, it's your turn to move.>

A... game? She suddenly remembered Mew, back in Relic Forest: *Now truly begins the Game of Time!* Why had Mew called it that? Why had joining the Council that very moment been so imperative to Mew, anyway?

As she had answered Mew so she answered Aristeia the same way. <Time is not a game.>

<Would you have me describe it as a competition? None of us who have gone before - for we most probably have countless times - have seen it ended it in such a way that it can be remembered. The future possibility which we created - the one we saw come to pass - was only one of a million. Yet every moment in

every day, we come to this impasse in our minds! That means we still haven't learned what creates this anomaly nor have solved the puzzle of getting the events during it to finally stick. Of course it's a game of time, Grace; every day for celebi everywhen is a game.>

<And now you have a new player.> Grace said determinedly, taking heart at Aristeia's tone. <I'm ready.>

<You're not.>

Grace blinked. <I *swear* I have heard that more than once before, and from my personal memories, too.>

<It's time for you to take time.> Aristeia said, smiling gently. <It's so easy to get used to swimming the rapids of our time streams that we forget how to feel how time moves normally as a wide and long river does. Attune yourself to the forest here. The trees never forget; they always live at exactly the same pace.>

<I-I understand.> Grace replied, but now she had felt it first hand the fog of the future in her mind's eye wouldn't leave her thoughts. <Though, why does Dialga touch the before time and trigger the start of the game? What's the point?>

<The answer lies in *your* true memory, seedling. You've had to take a lot in since awakening, understandably, but this is one memory that I am seeing from you; not the other way around.>

Grace thought back. She'd awoken to the summonings of a time flute played by a ranger, travelled to Orre and purified Pikachutwo - Sparkling. As she had been travelling back, Dialga had accosted her and demanded she put things to rights; namely bring Sparkling back to her normal time. Then all chaos had broken loose, Mewtwo, Mew, another Sparkling and Chur from another time, *and* a human had arrived, and then Dialga had repeatedly attacked the entire congregation with its roar of time. Only Grace had escaped being flung elsewhere in time.

<The human girl I have seen before from another's memories. She lives the rest of her life in a past time. But Sparkling and Chur... they may have a much larger part in this game of time, I feel.>

Aristea blinked at her. <How can you tell that when...?>

<I don't know. It's... well, they both feel special. I was so driven to heal and defend Sparkling. I think her story is not yet over.>

<And Mewtwo and Mew?> the other celebi prompted.

Grace nodded. <They were blasted through time as well. They're... gone from us. Not dead, but... they're not here any longer. I can't sense their presences at all right now, merely remember them from a before time.~ She put her hands on her head almost unconsciously in concentration. ~I don't think I can even remember them from the future!>

<Nor can I.>

<Is that where they are, now? The before time? How are they even still
alive?>

<Nothing from our time can go there and live; but now two have, and they
survive yet. A paradox we do not understand for it is not of our making.>

Sending a Pokémon back and leaving it there permanently is prohibited,
Grace remembered. Dialga's very words; and yet he had been the one to send
Mew and Mewtwo back so far in time that they'd gone beyond anyone's reach.

<What would happen if I tried to bring them back on my own?>

<Opening a time stream to before Dialga's birth itself? Grace; there's a
good reason all celebi are terrified of not remembering moments in time. It goes
against our very being. That's why we feel so motivated to enter the game of
time. Could you honestly open that time stream? Could you reach that far back,
knowing it's far beyond the birth of space and time?>

<Then how can they still exist, if they were both pushed to a time before
time?>

Aristea shook her head. <We may never know, unless your turn finally
causes the events during the game to stick so we can ask and then remember.>

<I'll do my best.>

<I know.>

Mew waited a long, long time; long enough for the moon to rise and the clouds to cover the majority of its glow. She gazed up high where she had once flown free - *no, that had been a dream, even though it must have been a dream so real that she still vividly remembered the feeling of the cloud's embrace bathing her short fur with ice-cold dewdrops* - and waited for the birds and other wildlife above her to all fall quiet and still. Was there any other creature around who was still awake and alert? Waiting as she had waited; to creep silently and make the killing strike of the hunt as noiselessly as the night around it? Was she, the hunter, being hunted even as she waited?

There was no way of knowing. The only truth was the darkness and silence of the creature's camp across the river - and its still mouthwatering scents of uneaten food. The fire had banked and only golden-red embers remained. Safe enough, for now.

Mew slowly padded out of the undergrowth and made for the water, her tail lashing. She held her body so taut and low upon the ground that every step forward became a task in itself - but to lose her concentration now would be only inviting the potential for a noisy misstep upon the pebbles.

As she stepped into the water her hackles raised at its icy touch. It seeped into her coarse fur and met skin almost straightaway. Stubbornly, Mew continued at her excruciatingly slow pace at a futile attempt to mask the sound of the river

bubbling around her legs. When the bank dramatically fell away from her she barely stifled a startled growl and began doggedly paddling instead; fighting against the still-strong current bearing her downstream.

The light of the embers began to draw away from her rapidly. Now, Mew did growl; both in consternation and determination. There was no way of knowing how far she'd made across the black river with the moon's light masked as it was. Still she paddled, until finally her front paws began scrabbling upon the loose rocks and pebbles of the other side and she was able to make some purchase upon some once extending her sharp claws and digging in.

Her shoulder and neck muscles ached as she pulled herself from the water upon what felt like much larger boulders. The light at the camp was barely aglow upon the much higher ground so far away.

Now on solid ground, Mew made sure of her steady footing and then shook her entire body starting from her head and neck in a wave right down to the very tip of her long tail. Water sprayed everywhere, dotting the bank with loud splots of noise. Mew was too tired and beyond caring about noise at this stage, and even yapped softly in triumph for braving and defeating the river.

Yet Mew did not realise the most danger had not come from the forest's creatures around her but from the river's; for had she remained much longer in its depths the enormous arapaima fish now nosing sluggishly around the shallows

where she had clambered out would have been curious enough at the disturbance to take a bite...

Now safely on the shore, she made her way to the campfire and stared, mesmerised, at the glow for several moments until catching another whiff of the food emanating from just next to the intimidating-looking structure which smelled occupied. Mew cautiously made her way to the food scent and found it covered and enclosed. Her claws made short work of the covering in her hunger, and whilst the creatures snored in their sleep Mew choked down the hard and salty meat bits until she was completely sated.

The whole experience had made her mouth very dry and so she made her way back to the water to gently lap at its banks - gently enough, luckily, to not attract any more unwelcome attention from the river's carnivorous inhabitants - before letting her exhausted satisfaction take over completely and curling up to sleep as a real hunter would after eating its fill: proudly and unashamedly out in the open, in the lee of the overhanging ledge to escape the occasional breeze.

"You're fucking kidding me!"

Derek's anguished howl brought John quickly to his senses as he awoke in the tent come early morning. Everyone except Natalie was already up it seemed, for they were the last two left in the tent's comforting darkness.

Natalie's eyes were wide. "What is it?" she yelled.

"Some animal got into my jerky last night and ate the lot!"

John groaned. "Is that all?" he muttered, laying back down and shutting his eyes. "Here I was thinking we had a real emergency on our hands."

"I heard that," Derek said, unzipping the tent and thrusting the torn result at his friend. "Get up, lovebirds. It is a real emergency. Look!"

John caught it automatically. It was not only the bag of jerky that had been ripped to shreds. Derek's small bag was in tatters, loose threads waving everywhere. He couldn't contain the surprised smirk as it spread across one cheek. Natalie did even worse at the 'serious-face' attempt though - she began to giggle, one hand to her mouth.

"Jagua-fucking-rundi," Derek said, sounding disgusted.

"Aw, I guess Mutant Killercat doesn't like you after all," Natalie said, still giggling.

John guessed Derek was not amused at this. "C'mon, let's pack up and start heading."

"*Sans* bag."

John just shrugged in response. "It's not like your nocturnal friend made off with your compass or anything else irreplaceable."

“Guess you’re right. Anyway, Trish found a little wharf further down the river when she was snapping away. It’s on the way anyhow, let’s go check it out.”

Five full days later, Grace was right in the middle of snacking on her new favourite food: red berries. The taste was tart yet sweet, and *just right*; it made her want to practically squeal in sheer delight. The secret celebi clearing was completely encircled by the same species of berry tree and even the dozens of celebi zipping here and there, winking in and out as they moved about time before rejoining their friends, did not seem to be diminishing the spring crop at all.

She watched as a time stream opened right in front of her and Dianthus flew out and began hovering. <Long time.>

<Not really,> Grace said, puzzled. She hadn’t travelled through time at all during those five days; taking Aristeia’s advice to heart, yet whilst the days had flowed normally still she had not felt they had dragged at all. There was really too much going on around her in real time to ever feel stagnant or bored.

Dianthus quirked an antennae, not looking puzzled back but very humoured.

<Never mind,> Grace continued, feeling sheepish. <How’s it been in the mystery space?>

<Trying. Intense. Full-on. Heartwarming and heartbreaking. But... my friends living there saw it done nonetheless. They calmed Dialga from his primal state, and he is now prepared to return to this space to resume his duties here.>

<Oh!> Grace leapt from the branch in surprise and excitement at the news, her wings buzzing double-time. <Great!>

Dianthus smiled a bittersweet smile at Grace's enthusiasm. <Yes, it is. Come, meet me *here*.>

Dianthus bethought a space in her memories to Grace; a space high up in the air above the calm seas, one where blue met blue on the faded horizon at every direction gazed. Both celebi nodded to one another and without another word whirled through a time stream to a place far away.

Grace turned slowly around as she hovered. There truly was no land to be seen from their position. It made her feel slightly uneasy, especially with the lack of warm air updrafts assisting her in staying aloft.

<Palkia,> Dianthus said.

A great shining claw poked through from nowhere and slowly drew down; ripping a neat gash in the fabric of their dimension. Soon Grace could spot Palkia's entire arm slipping through, then curling round and drawing something else out as it flew slowly backwards.

Dialga had his eyes shut as Palkia grasped him by the forelegs, bringing him back with excruciating care; till at last the two massive legendaries drew apart in the air. Dialga opened its eyes and faced the two celebi, staring unblinkingly at them.

<Wait for it,> Dianthus said, a finger held up in the air. Time flowed past and with a start Grace realised the other celebi was waiting for the fog to kick in. Her heartbeat began thudding almost painfully in response at the mere apprehension of the idea.

Grace took a breath to mark the mental feeling of the moment as the very second ticked over, then turned her head and stared at Dianthus as she slowly breathed out, so enormously on edge every muscle in her body felt taut. Even her antennae felt tightly curled.

YOUR MOVE, LITTLE ONE, Dialga said. **YOUR MOVE IN THE GAME OF TIME. WHAT WILL YOU DO, AND HOW WILL YOU DO IT?**

<In a moment,> Grace replied, for something had just occurred to her. <Dianthus, if Dialga is the guardian of time then how does it still flow properly without his constant presence in the mystery space? > Something told her that her space, here in her world, would not have adapted well to Dialga's absence for very much longer. No matter how long it had taken to heal Dialga in the mystery

space, it seemed well to her that the pink celebi had reappeared very soon after the whole original crisis in Relic Forest in order to bring him back cured.

Dianthus laughed nervously. <We have an alternative means of keeping time stable there.>

Which is...? Grace looked deeper but for whatever reason Dianthus's memories remained hidden to her, and she was evidently not willing to explain further telepathically. *Hmph.* <Look, the only reason I ask is that if the mystery space can, then perhaps so can the time before time. Maybe it doesn't need a guardian - any more than the mystery space does - all the time.>

BLASPHEMY! Dialga hissed. **THERE WAS NO TIME BEFORE MY EXISTENCE! I AM TIME ITSELF!**

<But Dialga, if that time exists differently - with completely different rules - what if we simply look at it as we do the mystery space with its different rules; as another time *and another space!*>

<Go on,> Dianthus urged, after Dialga's angry - and mentally painful - growling subsided.

Grace shook her head to clear her whirling thoughts, her breath coming shorter as she grew more excited. <Listen - *listen* - we might need both Dialga's *and* Palkia's power to reach them. The combined powers of time and space; to

locate Mew and Mewtwo, grasp them and carry them back here to their proper time!>

Dianthus laughed shortly. <A Time Rending... Spacial Roar?>

<Exactly!>

Grace realised she was baring her teeth in an emotion which felt not quite like pleasant happiness but a savage joy. <So Dialga and Palkia need to combine their powers to find Mew and Mewtwo, then bring them back!>

Palkia blinked at her, opening its clawed hand and reaching for her. **THIS IS YOUR MOVE, LITTLE SPROUT, AND THUS IT IS YOU WHO SHALL FIND THEM. WE WILL ASSIST YOU, OF COURSE, FOR WE ARE FIRMLY ALLIED IN THE GAME.**

<Wha- what?!>

Palkia's great claws enclosed her.

<Remember to breathe.> Dianthus said, her telepathic voice drawing faint as Palkia placed its other hand on Dialga's shoulder and visible power began to gather at their forms. From its shoulder gem, Grace could sense Palkia's entire arm growing incandescent pink and chanced a look to Dialga's chest gem to see it was sparking also with blue light.

<Keep your eyes open and your mind sharp!> Dianthus hollered at her, her hands cupped around her mouth as she yelled physically too. <Good luck!>

Palkia's arm gathered Dialga's growing power and soon Grace was entirely enclosed in a growing light sphere of pink and blue energy. The energy was raw and nearly unfettered; she could feel Palkia's grasp shuddering ever-so-slightly as it grew denser and denser around her.

Till at last Palkia opened its mouth and cried out in a warbling pure tone; Dialga adding its own growling cry in the duet of power, and Palkia raised its arm with Grace inside then thrust it with a long swinging arc - celebi, power and all - into a different time and space -



- the breach was like an electric shock passing through her whole body. Antennae tingling, Grace barely had any time to register just what had happened - or if anything had happened at all, for somehow she still felt safely enclosed in Palkia's grasp - before she cast her mind into the waters of time for her strongest memories of Mew and Mewtwo.

She hurtled across time and space. Stars whipped by, planets flew by, and her only anchor in this mind-bending flight became a visual memory of the two of purple and pink and how they'd slowly grown to know each other-

Come back to us, Mew, Mewtwo. Where are you?

She flew towards a planet of endless green and blue. Her mind buzzed and the memories grew sharp, all clarity - *there! There they are!*

She was no longer Grace the celebi. She was an immense glowing beacon of blue and pink, violently slamming her way through time and space towards one particular point on the surface of this world. It would not do to miss, so she - flaming and wonderful and terrible - took the power from its previous bearers she'd once known and yelled one final battle cry before letting her useless wings fold flat and the energy cast her screaming at terminal velocity into the earth.

My first move in the Game of Time... will it destroy me?

I must bring them back, for they belong in another time and space.

Please let me not be forgotten...

... hell is that?

John Smith allowed himself that one final thought before the asteroid hit, blinding light engulfing the entire area. He felt the catastrophic impact through his feet before the roaring thunder followed through and momentarily deafened him. His hands sought Natalie's but found only emptiness and the void...

To any onlookers that day outside the the enormous hemispherical blast zone the explosion would have appeared as a flash of pink and blue in the air then peace and silence once more a millisecond later. The only difference was the sudden lack of a circular patch of forested land; now rapidly filling with water and creating a naturally circular lake instead. Everything inside the flash of light had simply vanished into thin air.

The journey back took a moment yet an age. Grace barely held the island in her grasp as she travelled once again through space and time simultaneously. A blink later and she was breathing once again with lungs and looking through her own eyes normally as she materialised back in alongside Dialga, Palkia, and a completely new landmark on the faraway seas - a little patch of what had once been part of Guyana, South America; now a faraway island in the pokémon world.