

The Phantom Child An Explanation

I conceived the beginning parts of this Mewtwo-based fanfiction some time during my years of later highschool and university, one day travelling home on public transport armed with sketchbook and pencil.

The sketchbook remains lost to this day, unfortunately and surprisingly (given that I try to keep everything); but what I do remember from it is a few pages of loose concept drawings of various Mewthrees (some more Mew-based in body shape, others resembling 'souped up' versions of Mewtwo) one of which was quoting something at his canon counterpart that he was the guardian of dimension-crossing as opposed to the original Mewtwo being guardian of clones and other lost souls.

Blast from the past: I have had a fanonical concept since my early teens lurking at the back of my mind regarding the legendaries that they have all have a guardianship position of something which relates to them in-universe. I even had a Word file (unsurprisingly titled 'Legendaries' saved on the old family computer listing each (until about the third generation) and their role. For example, Lugia was listed as *the God of the Deep Ocean and Song, and Guardian of the Beast of the Sea and the Shamouti Islands*. This concept, I remember, stemmed from the more elemental-based, forces of nature *kamigami* of the Shinto religion - as well as my past temptation to Capitalise Everything.

I had been attempting to put this concept into fiction for years, as evidenced by the beginnings (a mere 400 words) of a hilariously pretentious story about Mew being in danger somehow and all the legendaries of Johto and Kanto going to help. That fic also started the 'give the legendaries names' thing:

→ It had started as a very small calling. At first, Swift-rain had shrugged it off like an unnecessary thing. But then, racing across the uninhabited plains, Volcan-bark heard it too. Being solitary, it had kept it to itself, then as a greeting to Light-strike, the news had spread. ¶
→ Deep in the dark, Whirl-fin was aware. Something was wrong. Terribly wrong. It must have been closer, for it heard the cry like a wail of terror. Gathering up his strength, he tried to send a message. So all the others would know. So they could help. Help whatever needed theirs. ¶
→ Wing-rainbow, nestled up in a sleep, was awoken by whatever was calling. It was a passing thing, but it remembered it clearly, and stretched its wings, ready to depart. It knew where to go, and fully intended to too. Because of this, they needed to act swiftly. Already he was flying away, through the clouds. ¶
→ Warp-eyes, in the midst of nowhere, heard a tiny cry. But it knew how to help immediately. And then, it sensed a Calling. From Another. Communicating to all Others, instructing to them. Warp-eyes listened. And Warp-eyes started off. ¶
→ Blaze listened to the instruction. Freezer and Thunder did too. All then ready to do whatever was set out before them, they lit a line of POWER in the sky. ¶
→ Psyviolence heard it last, but KNEW what this was about. He too, sent a message to all POWERS, hoping to reach all, so they could meet. And save the one perishing. ¶
¶
They met on strange circumstances. Separated by the elements, yet brought together by Legends. Warp-eyes, Whirlfin and Psyviolence the Psychics were in the middle hovering over the others, Swift-rain and Freeze together as Water and Ice and Volcan-bark was flaming with Blaze and Wing-rainbow. Then Psyviolence realised which POWER hadn't answered the Calling. ¶
→ Bubblejoy... ¶

This meeting of two Mewtwo began to take shape as a story in my head about - we'll call him Mewthree to escape confusion - 'three crossing over to 'two's universe and explaining that in his world, Ambertwo still lived; and he could take Mewtwo back into his world to meet her. In my head, this Mewtwo-wish-fulfilment-styled plot soon turned to a sour note when he would get over there joyously and discover Ambertwo had grown into a distant, almost uncaring teen; looking upon her creation (and Mewthree's creation by proxy) as a sore spot upon a distant past she no longer wished to celebrate. Thus at the end of the story Mewtwo would be taken back to his own world with closure, but of a bittersweet nature.

Thankfully, I didn't even start writing this idea down besides mulling over it in my mind and drawing perhaps one scene in my sketchbook, but the seed of the idea of Mewtwo revisiting his past (as a sequel to the official movie and special) and finally remembering Amber had been planted in my mind anyway. Which is why I started writing the first chapter (now the prologue) of *Maboroshi no Ningen: Ai (The Mythical Human: Amber)* soon afterwards.

Like most of my other fics, the beginning of this story was done pantsing. It has always started with a nightmare scene; even at its most basic and short. There used to be a copy of this version on The Pokémon Tower at <http://www.thepokemontower.com/authors/pixen.shtml>. It took direct inspiration from the beginning of the movie when Mewtwo meets Amber in a dark void, only with a decidedly nightmarish twist. Speaking of inspiration, this is where my love of Stephen King novels and online creepypasta stories and pictures decided to rear their ugly heads.

Inside Jokes (Gotta catch 'em all): In the most recent incarnation/rewrite, the nightmarish Amber says: "I am hate." This is harking back to Amber's Japanese name of Ai; which means 'love'.

The amount of references to the original movie are so intertwined within this first chapter it seems ridiculous to explain them all, but this one I can't resist. Back when I was a child, at some stage after seeing the theatrical release of this movie I also rented it out on VHS and watched it at home. At the very last bit of the credits after all the pop songs and everything, right after the last logos, there's a barely-three-seconds shot of Mew flying over the mountain again with a trill of a flute before the last fade to black - and I remember distinctly getting a pang of excitement thinking, *oh is there more?* and feeling disappointed they'd teased us with that Mew thing and nothing more came of it.

In a way, by making Mewtwo obsessed with the mountain thing (which crops up later on in the story as a big point as well just in case people weren't already sick of it) I was sort of bringing that curious, needing-to-know feeling from myself. I'm a big fan of the imagery of this entire movie; especially during the flashbacks when Mewtwo is dreaming (?) all of Mew's genetic memories (?) (that's what I've decided to take

from those hazy almost-dream-sequence shots) before he properly wakes in the laboratory. This story is a big homage and exploration of those as much as it is a big exploration of ‘what if Mewtwo got his missing memories back’.

The next part I wanted to be a cruel, malicious version of the official charming scene where Amber teaches Mewtwo how wonderful and fulfilling life is. In every incarnation, the sun/Amber blinds and burns him alive. Sounds rather sick as I describe it now, unfortunately. Once again my love for horror stories pervading; which motivated me about the teeth. There’s just something about beings with too many long, thin teeth, yanno?

So the start of Chapter One has also existed in one incarnation or another for even longer than the prologue has, amazingly.

Blast from the past: The startings of that old-school fic referenced a page up got a rewrite, amazingly. It was just as bad, but at least had dialogue and more characterisation... and the very same scene of Mewtwo (here, Psyviolence) waking up in the Unknown Dungeon and realising Mew needs help:

Psyviolence; deep in contemplation, suddenly straightened and eased his aching grey back into a standing position. Spasmodically, his muscles quivered with the effort of lifting their burden with no food energy received for days now.

That call for help; it had been no coincidence that it had broken past his mind barriers and touched his very awareness. Slowly, his mind worked; tearing through his recent, thick wall of thoughts that would not help him now. Eyes closed, he desperately tried to put them behind him; in order to understand the future.

Reaching full consciousness, his eyes opened; and were greeted with the startling sense of sight that he had not needed for so long. Lifting a sinewy arm, he surveyed it, noting the thin bone that was plainly visible against the smooth pale grey skin.

<And so> his voice echoed; around the dusty cavernous space. <I am a Pokémon once more.>

It seemed it was true; his body, so unused for a time, was now besieging his mind with lunges of want. *Food! Water!*

He stepped off the dirt covered pillar and before his knees could collapse with the effort; his psychic energy filled the air and supported his weight. <I heard you.> he said. <And so I come.>

And here’s what survives to this day:

Mewtwo [...] straightened, and eased his aching back into a sitting position, muscles quivering with the effort after so many long days of inactivity. [...] Surprised at how shaken up he felt, he struggled to get his mind working at speed as it ran through his most recent memories. [...] Lifting a sinewy arm, he surveyed it, noting the similar symptoms. <And so,> he murmured,

turning his attention to the rest of his foodstarved body. <Am I a pokémon after all? [...]> His body, so unused for a long time, was now besieging his mind with cramps of want. [...] He stepped off the dirt-coloured ledge, and before his knees could collapse with the effort, his psychic energy filled the air and supported his weight easily. <I remember you, now,> he said, determinedly. <And so I come.>

I'm honestly surprised (and even a little embarrassed, maybe) myself that so much remains of this age-old non-fic about a premise I hadn't even explored further than 'Mew is in danger and needs help from the other legendaries'. It's so old it came from the file backup of the dinosaur LC575 Macintosh the family had back when I was barely in my double-digits.

This remains the only reason Mewtwo is lurking in the Unknown Dungeon as an original reference to the GB games; since I realised belatedly that at least anime-wise, after the events of Mewtwo Returns (which was released after I wrote this original scene) he's later seen stalking the cities at night in a brown cloak and I would have preferred that incarnation. (I ended up getting my preference after all, but that'll be explained later)

Mewtwo then heads to New Island, which is an abandoned version of his palace from the first movie.

Spot the plot-hole: At the end of the first movie, when Mewtwo flies away with his clones, the ground below Ash n Co's feet glow white and they are teleported away back to the Old Shore Wharf *en masse*. Cue TR's jubilant exit from the movie a few minutes after - but they're still at New Island which has been transformed into a grassy plain in the middle of the ocean. Well - I plumb forgot that little thirty second detail (and obligatory fan-theory that Mewtwo must have somehow removed all traces of his presence there as well as in everyone's minds). Ah - but if Mewtwo had erased everyone's memories included TR's, why were they not teleported away too? Was he aware of their presences or not? Finger-pointing at the actual canon to draw attention away from my own goof will get me nowhere. I could come up with a ridiculous retcon as to how the palace still exists but let's just go with 'it's more fun and interesting this way, and there wouldn't be a manageable story otherwise'.

The next section is me paying more homage to the events and concepts of the first movie, especially when the phantom memory of Joy rocks up to hopefully add to the spooky vibes. Nothing much else to mention here rather than I hope everyone else enjoys reading the mega nostalgia-fest as much as I did writing it.

The nostalgia continues in Chapter Two, with a flashback or twenty. I'm not sure I'm entirely satisfied with the first one as it stands now as I remember just trying to write

on through a big word block... but it'll suffice. This lapse in satisfaction is also related to the fact that this is about where I first blocked on how to continue the story at all. Which probably has something to do with the fact both Mewtwo and Joy start dithering and flashbacking and brainstorming after the flashbacks; in my unconscious hope that the pair of them talking endlessly will spark some inspiration. Luckily, it did in the end when I realised how I wanted things to go.

Inside Jokes (Gotta catch 'em all): A quote from the much treasured Japanese radio drama crops up in this chapter with Ai teaching Mewtwo how to count.

Then, the plot shifts when Lovrina rocks up out of nowhere. I've always loved the character even though she's evil as sin. Part of her charm, I guess...? Her dialogue got a rewrite recently when I decided it wasn't in character enough (hence all the 'so's' and creepily innocent adverbs). I also yanked a quote verbatim out of the game which is in hindsight not the greatest idea. Erm, bonus homage to Colosseum and XD?

Mewtwo remembers his Pokéballs designed especially for his plan. Weren't they just the most-awesome-yet-horrifying thing about the first movie besides the clones themselves? Pokéballs that could swallow *other* Pokéballs?! I remember feeling that exhilarating wrongness as a kid so deeply; Mewtwo as the Frankenstein's monster created to be the strongest then breaking the rules further by making tech that was far superior than anything we'd seen before.

And then the big reveal that had only been realised in my mind pretty much simultaneously. Pikachutwo turns up as one of Lovrina's Shadow Pokémon in a big dun-dun-DUUN! reveal in the biggest *please just bear with me* suspension of disbelief coincidence (Mewtwo even wonders about this in the story, even) to start off Chapter Three.

Blast from the past: I'd always had the question in mind as to what happened to all the clones once everyone had departed Mount Quena at the end of *Mewtwo Returns*. I have another really old document - equally pretentious -

¶ The cityscape loomed clearer and closer as Meowth-two clambered up the large village steps. The city had lured him ever since he had flown away from his maker and finally found what it was like in a world colonised by humans. Already he had neatly escaped a few spherical red and white things thrown by the more stupid humans. ¶

→ But he could not escape the call of the city. The noise, the lights at dusk and the towering skyscrapers all had awed and fascinated him. He needed to find more of his kind; this he knew. *If I feel the call of this place, will there be others who have also?* He asked himself, and devoutly hoped so. ¶

→ By noon the city was only a park away. He pranced through the flowers in loamy soil and dashed quickly past screaming human children playing on swings. There; he had spotted the first sidewalk; his Meowth blood shrilled in him, and he ran towards the concrete excitedly. ¶

→ The next thing he knew; he was cowering in the gutter as a car screeched and swerved to evade him. Evidently the lower road was not for Pokémon. ¶

→ His adrenaline pumping now at the near miss; he hurriedly skipped away from another fast-moving vehicle and moved onto the sidewalk. ¶

→ Dodging people's feet was even harder. Meowth-two even considered getting out of this manic place but then smelled a wafting odour of meat pie and chips. ¶

→ *Arrggh!* He screeched in his mind; hungry to the point of insanity. ¶

opening with Mewtwo being sombre and then leading into Meowtwo heading into a city and becoming totally overwhelmed by it and trying to deal with the streetwise Pokémon who are giving him a hard time. I'd planned to move onto Pikachu's POV soon after but never got there.

I finally got my chance with *Phantom Child*, though. The chilling concept of Shadow Pokémon is just such an interesting idea to delve into further than the games go (given that even though it's the one game mechanic the story hinges on in order to justify the whole *stealing other people's Pokémon thing* it doesn't really go into much detail in-universe besides a few sentences here and there) so I really enjoyed describing poor Pikachu's plight all through this story and the sequel *Game of Time*, even though that probably makes me sound like a right sadist.

Spot the plot-hole: Lovrina calls Pikachu 'she'. This was before the stage I was informed on fanfiction.net that Ash's Pikachu had been - finally! - canonically gendered as male in one of the later episodes I haven't yet gotten around to watching - and if Pikachu was male then his clone would have to be male too. So it comes down to half me not knowing half me having to put it down to being in an Alternate Universe where both Pikas are female in order for the punchline to work down the track.

There was a very brief time in which Pikachu had been referred to here as 'he' - truth be told I hadn't even thought about gender per se - but then owing to a budding idea about what was going to happen *after after* (namely that she and her special friend have an Egg; but more on this later) I had to go through and change all the pronouns. From then on in it stuck as Pikachu had her own POV chapters and character building later on.

This explanation sure is getting scrambled now. Anyway, so souped-up Shadow Pikachu takes down a weakened Mewtwo and I get to juxtapose more nostalgic first movie scenes with new content! Hurrah!

Inside Jokes (Gotta catch 'em all): Lovrina quotes Pinkie Pie with her 'okey dokey lokey'. I'm a tad embarrassed about this by now. Had been binging on MLP episodes at the time.

And then more dream sequences to enjoy whilst Cipher attempt to turn Mewtwo Shadow.

Inside Jokes (Gotta catch 'em all): Homage paid to Lewis Carroll and the Cat from Alice in Wonderland with Ash's "We're all dead here." This one I'm less embarrassed about.

The peon who takes pity on Mewtwo came out of nowhere really. I don't know what happens to him after he gets hit with the whatever-energy-process-that-turns-

Pokémon-Shadow for that brief moment. I have wondered, however. Think I'll have to keep wondering for the time being as there's more creepy Amber to muse upon now!

The nightmare from before continues with extra dialogue now. *She teethed at him.* I break English a bit with turning a noun into a verb. Like a smile, but not at all; like baring teeth but not. Hope it gets its point across. Mewtwo's still subconsciously trying to take control of the dream like he did before to break out of it. I wrote this the first time then had an urge to edit some more stuff in right when I was driving somewhere and couldn't jot anything down - so recorded my thoughts instead in the car.

"I need to add something about Mewtwo closing his heart, I need to change the strangulation scene so it keeps changing forms, and I need to make sure there's more emphasis on Mewtwo not caring and closing his heart and finishing with young Mewtwo dying and then old Mewtwo chucking him on the floor and then something happens like his chest hurts or something and then he... his heart closes 'cause of the Distortia."

Nod to an interesting concept I was inwardly referencing (just not by name because there was no real place to put it) from Pokémon Rebirth there.

Chapter Four starts off with a Mew POV; the same Mew that was in the first movie. Things get pretty psychic in this chapter. Lots of fun mental hijinks that were really fun to write because it meant I could go and write the biggest love letter to the opening sequences of *Mewtwo Strikes Back* (and then *Birth of Mewtwo* in Chapter Five) that I could manage. It's here that I also introduce a concept of Mew not being able to feel negative emotions like fear or anger as strongly as other Pokémon could.

Celebi gets involved owing to her part in Colosseum and XD in purifying Shadow Pokémon. As for Mew's justification it's because she's wondering what happened in Mewtwo's past and knows Celebi can time travel to find out. I also wanted to put in a little nod to the fact this is Beta Mew (also a Rebirth concept) when she heads to Ilex Forest and the shrine from Gold and Silver days.

Celebi recognises the symptoms that Mew describes. This is of course both referencing the Shadow game duology again *and* also the events of Movie 4 with the Dark Ball. It's soon after that Mewtwo's subconscious takes matters into its own hands and morphs Celebi into Amber in order to replay the forgotten memory in full whilst Mew is left to deal with Lovrina's peons starting the Shadow process on her. Dun-dun-DUUUN!

Chapter Five.

Inside Jokes (Gotta catch 'em all): “Well sure!” the girl said. “We’re really not all that different. Papa told me a story once about it. ‘There once was a time when there existed no differences to distinguish the two.’” That’s from the Japanese version of the Sinnoh Folk Story 3 - the only thing I can think of in the slightly more recent Pokémon canon which blurs the lines and asks a similar question like Mewtwo did in both Japanese and English versions of the movie. I know people rag on this movie and I know it has its definite faults. But before we had Diancie needing to make a big diamond before the 60 mins of runtime were up or Keldeo needing to battle Kyurem for some who-knows reason a little cloned human girl and her little cloned Pokémon whom she takes under her wing have a conversation about the differences between Pokémon and person are and I just think that is one of the most thought provoking questions in the entire Pokémon universe and it came out of the very first moment of the very first movie. And I think it’s wonderful.

Another thing which has always struck me as interesting is the fact both the original cloned starters with Mewtwo and Ambertwo had the same markings as Mewtwo’s cloned Venusaur, Charizard and Blastoise.

The radio drama version of Mewtwo’s Birth gets another nod with ‘cake and milk’.

Inside Jokes (Gotta catch 'em all): Amber says “I am... I...” which is a hidden reference to her Japanese name Ai. Soon after Mewtwo declares that he’s never cried and the pair of them quote bits from the radio drama again.

The majority of this part is referencing all over the place. The Winds of Water, though originally a rushed and sloppily executed way to explain the deus ex machina ending of the first movie from the Western dub (given that they’d cut Amber’s *only humans cry tears of sadness* altogether), definitely reminded me of the great flood of the Old Testament - only with a slightly more happy ending. Thanks to this mythos, then added with the original translation and miracle of pokémon crying tears of life this has now fanonically cemented in my mind the idea that pokémon cry Aura. More on this later.

Inside Jokes (Gotta catch 'em all): “My name is love,” Amber explains; a direct link to the prologue’s opposite and the meaning of Ai (her Japanese name). Now that Mewtwo can remember love as a concept - as well as remembering Amber as a person - he can open his heart again.

It’s then time for Mewtwo to be awesome again after being knocked about. He destroys their shadow machine and leaves them be; and Mew changes their course to the Tree of Beginning.

This part gets a tad confusing because it becomes 'which Mew is which'. The Mew from the first movie doesn't act like or sound like the one from the eighth at all. In my mind they've never been the same. Hence introducing (albeit vaguely) the Rebirth 'Beta Mew' and treating the Mew who lives at the Tree as Alpha Mew. Because the fanonical idea that the Mew that took on Mewtwo in the movie is a clone as well is too good not to use.

During the Rebirth referencing binge I also had Akiva rock up to pave the way for an alternative way he could meet Mewtwo and the psychic kitty could get his brown robe from the Agrarian Seers. Some sort of fanon alternate universe, hah!

Celebi and Mew discuss this after the pair of them leave. I couldn't resist chucking an extra bit in regarding Alpha Mew's absence, and finally a letter that Mewtwo writes to his late friend hinting at remnants of ideas from the age-old fics (such as the guardians being linked and being able to help each other) plus my ideas from other stories which were a fair bit more recent and had to do with characters and fakemon from my made up region that I was thinking of redoing.

Inside Jokes (Gotta catch 'em all): Mewtwo references a 'monster' which is the same one which featured in the (once again cut from the Western release) prologue to the fifth movie where Latios and Latias defend Alto Mare from it. It's not explained in-universe what that monster is, but gets a fanon explanation in the sequel *The Game of Time*.

This ends my indulgent rambling... for now. Hope it was interesting at least!