

A HailFire Change 3

The Show Must Go On

Foxgamer01

Content warning: Transformation, Pokémon, Multitaur, Kitsune,
Puns

No AI was involved in writing this story

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It was late in the morning when Thermis Coldflare returned to the camp's parking lot with Lloyd and their Glaceon and Flareon.

They looked around in the parking lot, checking if anyone else in their class remained. Perhaps someone chose to stay behind, hoping to spot any other Pokémon. Or perhaps their professor might have waited to ask Thermis if he could examine their body. Or maybe someone saw Lloyd transformed into a Mothreon and waited to see what happened.

Instead, nobody waited with only Thermis's car remaining.

"Man, has it really been half an hour since I saw that feather?" Lloyd glanced at the sunlight peeking through the branches. Despite his own transformation, he was reverted back into a human. "It felt like no time had passed by."

"*Snow* kidding," Freezy, the Alolan Ninetales side of Thermis, remarked.

"Time *blazes* by fast when having fun or doing busy work," Flamey, the Kantonian Ninetales of Thermis, added.

Lloyd rolled his eyes, but said nothing. The Glaceon and Flareon riding on Thermis winced at the puns, though. They lifted their heads up and glared at the opposite type's

head. Both of Thermis's heads laughed in response, as though they enjoyed making people suffer for their puns.

Thermis stretched all four of their arms, two on each side. Their shirt, the only clothing they could wear, was on the verge of falling apart thanks to the battle from before. It showed more of their skinny Ninetalestaur body, with it split down the middle between Kantonian and Alolan. Their front paws, which held stubby digits that could grab as well as their hand-paws, dug into the dirt.

Flamey grinned and patted the convertible car.
"Alright. It's time to *light the fuse*—"

"—And get this *snow on the road*," Freezy completed.

Lloyd slapped his hand against his face. "I can't tell if you're trying anymore."

"Thank you~!" Freezy and Flamey cheered, giving Lloyd four thumbs up.

Both Glaceon and Flareon huffed before attacking their owner with an ice attack and a fire attack. It hit Thermis on the opposing head, but they laughed and shrugged it off. Even when they were once a one-headed, normal human named Thomas, their attacks never did much damage. Thermis figured that they enjoyed the puns more than they

showed. Glaceon and Flareon huffed some more before hopping inside the car.

Thermis opened the driver side's door, with it so long that it reached the back passenger's side. The seat on it had a gap where they could lay on without impeding their ability to drive. The gas and brakes were also changed to accommodate their front legs. It was not like this before the camping trip, but a kitsune mage named Glorfindel modified it with his magic sometime after he transformed Thomas into Thermis.

Thermis wiggled themselves into the seat when the glove apartment popped open.

A piece of paper fell out, landing on the front passenger's seat.

Thermis picked it up and read the single message on it:
Check the car trunk. ~Glorfindel

Freezy and Flamey nodded to each other and stepped out from the car.

"Is there a problem?" Lloyd tugged on his long black hair.

"Not really." Flamey answered. His side of Thermis reached into one of the on the back seats and pulled out the car keys. "We found a message from Glorfindel—"

“—Asking us to check back here,” Freezy completed.

Thermis walked to the back of the car and inserted the key. With a twist, the trunk clicked and popped open. Inside lay a few bags, each see-through and filled with clothing. Each had a label on it, such as ‘Undergarments’ or ‘Kimono.’ Lloyd walked to the back and blinked, seeing a fusion of red and blue within.

“It figures that Glorfindel wanted to give us some type of clothing for us,” Freezy commented.

“While we weren’t sure about him before,” Flamey admitted, “we know better after fighting you.”

Lloyd looked away with a crestfallen expression. He knew he had been under that mastermind's control, but Lloyd still felt guilty for fighting his friend in that Mothreon form. If only he was stronger. “Sorry.”

“Don’t be a *glacier*—”

“—And *warm* up!”

Lloyd rolled his eyes. “I don’t think those puns are working!”

Thermis ignored Lloyd’s comment and went through the bags Glorfindel gave them. Once done, they took off what remained of their shirt and placed it in the trunk as a

memory of the trip. Thermis breathed in with both heads and opened the 'Undergarments' bag, finding a shirt and underwear. They were white with red stripes on the left side and white with blue stripes on the right. They felt amused that it fit the color typing on each side. They soon slipped them on, with them both snug while allowing their tails to exit through a large enough hole.

Once completed, they went to the pants' bags and picked them out. It was two halves, one for the front half and one for the back half. They slipped on the front half first, putting it on with the clasps on the back. It was somewhat tricky to put on the back half, but they managed it and made it firm thanks to a series of buttons on the back. A pair of flaming-yellow and ice-blue sashes lay at the middle, allowing them to tie both halves together. At the tail base lay a golden clasp, which they snapped together to keep dirt and such from getting in.

Thermis could not help but note how good it was to wear pants again. Just like the undergarments, they were split between red and blue down the middle. They sat down on their haunches and noted that the back half of the pants' leggings did not touch the ground. The pants' front half had the sleeves curled up, exposing the flaming-yellow

and icy-blue cuffs. At least Glorfindel had good enough fashion sense.

Following that, Thermis picked out the shirt next, with it having two pairs of sleeves and two neck holes. It parted at the bottom, with the red and blue twisting into a spiral at the frontmost one. They hung it over their heads and wiggled it until they filled all four sleeves which reached their wrists. It felt nice and snug on them.

Both of Thermis's heads thought about it before the Flamey side fired out some flames on his side's sleeves. "Let's *fire* it up!"

Despite the hot flames, his new clothes on his side remained unharmed without the slightest singe on it. Freezy curled his upper arm and generated snow and ice until it covered all of it. He broke it off, with the ice crashing onto the ground, but the shirt remained pristine.

"Woah." Lloyd took a step back. "That Glorfindel thought of that part too."

"He does have a *cool*/head about it." Freezy snickered.

Thermis went to one of the remaining bags and opened it. A kimono-style coat lay inside, with the red and blue on it much brighter than the shirt and pants. The cuffs

and eri were flaming yellow and icy blue, which fit the Kantonian Ninetales's side and Alolan Ninetales's side, respectively. They put it on, buttoning them together on the front while sticking the icy-blue eri under the flaming-yellow eri. The garment went far on their lower back, with it just as tough as a saddle.

Thermis glanced at the last bag before opening it up. Within lay two pairs of shoes, each one styled for their front and back paws. They also kept the same coloring pattern as the rest of their clothes: red and flaming-yellow on left and blue and icy-blue on right. The back paw's shoes slipped on with ease, even reaching the ankles since the legs there were digitigrades. As for the front paws' shoes, they slipped on like gloves. Thermis flexed each digit in the front right paw, noting how easy it was to move them.

Thermis turned to Lloyd and spread out all four arms. Both heads asked, "What do you think?"

Lloyd looked at his friend and walked around them to note all the angles. It was not something that someone saw every day, but then how many were a two-headed, four-armed Ninetalestaur? Lloyd thought it over and smiled.

"It does look neat," Lloyd admitted. "I wonder how the rest of the class will think?"

"I'm sure they'll think it's *cool*," Freezy insisted.

Flamey added, "Better yet, they'll think it's *lit*."

Lloyd rolled his eyes and shook his head. "Sure."

#

It took about three hours to reach their apartment complex, which was uneventful. This took Lloyd by surprise since he expected to get pulled over by an officer at some point. For starters, Thermis's driver license was taken before their transformation. It would be seen as outdated for that alone. Plus, with the top of the car lowered down, Thermis would attract any attention from his looks alone.

There was a point along the drive where Lloyd thought they would get stopped. An officer on a motorcycle waited at a T-section with a scanner, checking if anyone was speeding. The officer spotted their car and looked gobsmacked for a second. Thermis winced with both heads at the sight, though it looked more like they had a headache. The officer had a peaceful expression before ignoring Thermis's car, checking another one.

"That was close," Lloyd whispered.

Once they reached their apartment complex, they exited the car and grabbed all of their bags and backpacks. Thermis set their stuff on their lower back like

some Mudbray while Lloyd slung his backpack over one shoulder. They walked up the stairs, went to their door, and walked inside after unlocking it.

Lloyd glanced around before kicking off his shoes near the door. Thermis did the same, leaving their hind paws' shoes leaning on the wall along with the front paws'. The Glaceon and Flareon rushed into Thermis's bedroom without stopping for anything. Lloyd looked at them, amused, before flopping on the couch.

Despite how the cushioning was flattened to the springs, Lloyd felt safe and relaxed. The nightmare of this morning felt like ages ago, along with living it rough for the weekend. No longer would they need to eat food that tasted like wood ash or need to boil water before drinking it from the lake. Instead, they could order hamburgers and soft drinks without issue.

"Feeling *burnt out*?" Flamey asked.

"I don't know. He looked pretty *frozen* during the drive." Freezy laughed.

Lloyd took off the backpack to lay on his back. "Yeah. It's not as though I expected to get pulled over at any moment."

Freezy and Flamey nodded to each other. They grinned, but it was a strained one.

"Maybe he needed a Snom," Freezy suggested.

"Or maybe a Larvesta," Flamey commented.

Lloyd laughed despite himself. "I'm just happy that nothing bad happened during the drive." After a minute of laying there, he pushed himself into a sitting position and rubbed his chin. "Oh, boy. There's a whole lot of paperwork we need to do for you both. New driver license, birth certificate, and that's just the tip of things. And after all that, we'll need to redo all of the academy paperwork and ID so you don't get kicked out."

"Hey, one thing at a time." Flamey winked at Freezy. "We don't want to *burn* the midnight oil—"

"—Or get *frozen* over by working too much at such a short time." Freezy winked back.

Lloyd sighed and nodded. "Yeah. Sorry. This is just new to us. I mean, how many folks in this world have transformed into a Pokémon, let alone something like you?" He turned upward. "It's a shame that Glorfindel left so fast. I would've asked him to turn me back into that Mothreon again."

Freezy and Flamey glanced at each other for a moment.

“Do you ever think he’ll ever *cool/ off* his love for Bug-types?” Freezy asked.

Flamey answered, “I doubt it. His love is *burning hot* for them.”

“Thank you for your commentary.” Lloyd leaned toward the coffee table and reached for the radio. “It’s very helpful.”

Lloyd turned the radio on, with it playing a song.

Kinou no teki wa kyou no tomo tte

Furui kotoba ga aru kedo (Furui to wa nan ja~!)

Kyou no tomo wa ashita mo tomodachi

Sou sa Eien ni

He grumbled, loving the song but needing to change to another broadcaster. He wanted to hear the news, to hear if they were talking about Thermis. Even if the drive back to this apartment did not attract any attention, they still went to camp with a bunch of fellow students and their professor. It would be impossible for it to remain a secret after all that.

The radio crackled until he found another radio station in the city.

“Citizens of Cirrames! Do you wish to relax after a hard day’s work?! Then come on by to the Cirrames Theatre! There, you’ll see amazing acts, striking singing, and marvelous magic! That’s right! For one night only—”

“Nah.” Lloyd grabbed the radio’s knob—

“Wait!” Freezy grabbed onto Lloyd’s wrist, keeping him from changing station.

Lloyd blinked and turned to Thermis in surprise. Both of Thermis’s heads looked intrigued in this news, with their eyes wide. Lloyd flinched, more surprised by their expressions. Thermis never took the news seriously, with them always taking it in a laid-back and joking way. For them to be curious about it would be shocking.

The radio continued. “—We’ll also show you the magical magician taking the world by storm! That’s right, folks, it’s The Eevee Emcee! We’ll see you there tonight at six!”

The radio played guitar music afterward.

Freezy released Lloyd’s wrist, who then rubbed it a few times. It felt cold to the touch, though not freezing cold. He figured that it must be the same but in reverse with Flamey’s

side of Thermis's body. Lloyd flexed his fingers, feeling them waking up.

"What was that all about?" Lloyd demanded. He brushed his black hair back. "It was just another event in the theatre."

"I-I felt it." Freezy rubbed his forehead.

"Same here." Flamey rubbed his forehead as well.

"Felt? Felt what?" Lloyd tilted his head to the side.

"Like there was something important there," Flamey answered.

Freezy grunted. "And it's giving us a headache."

Both Freezy and Flamey rolled their heads, each grunting in pain.

"Uh, alright there?" Lloyd blinked in confusion. "Need some painkillers?"

Freezy and Flamey flinched and turned to the front door. They both declared in unison, "Someone's coming."

Lloyd raised his eyebrow and opened his mouth to speak. The doorbell rang before he said any words. Thermis's heads glanced at each other before rushing to their room. Their Glaceon and Flareon looked out in confusion as well, but they remained in the room. The door

shut behind them with a click. The doorbell rang again, causing the stunned Lloyd to flinch.

“Alright, alright. I’m coming.” Lloyd stood and rushed over to the door. He swung it open. “Hey—”

Lloyd stopped upon spotting a lady before him. She stood a head shorter than him, like an adult who just escaped her teenage years. She wore a tight-fitting suit, with a black coat over a white button-up shirt. Her black frilly skirt managed to reach her thighs, with black shorts underneath it. A black bowtie lay snug around her shirt’s collar, with it spinning when she raised her finger. The lady’s gibus hat held a pair of long ears, with it silverish white on the outside and grayish black on the inside. Her skin struck Lloyd the most, with it silverish white; it took him a second to realize that it was painted on.

“Hey there~!” The lady gave Lloyd a low bow. She took off her hat along the way, with a Pidove flying out from it. Lloyd jumped back in surprise, with his eyes wide. The lady laughed and set the hat back on. “Ehehehe~! Have you heard the wonderful news?”

“Um, this isn’t a Jirachi’s—?”

“Not that, silly~” The lady reached into her hat and pulled out a poster longer than the hat itself. “That tonight,

the marvelous magician, The Eevee Emcee, will be in Cirrames Theatre~”

“Yes, I just heard on the radio,” Lloyd responded. Inside, he felt disturbed. Twice in a span of five minutes, he heard something about this ‘Eevee Emcee.’ What was more, his friend reacted to it before it even came up. What was going on? “Um—”

“Oh, it must be fate, isn’t it?” The lady unrolled the poster, with it touching the ground. “Now you must see him on stage!”

Lloyd was about to protest when he saw the mysterious magician, with his eyes widening. The ‘Eevee’ part of his name was not a misnomer by any means, except he never saw an anthro Eevee before. This Eevee Emcee dressed himself similarly to the lady before him, down to the bowtie and hat (though that did not have ears attached to it). He wore pants instead of a skirt and boots instead of slippers, though. His silverish-white fur shone even in the poster, though Lloyd doubted that his fur sparkled in real life. He held a smug grin, holding a Jack of Clubs against his cheek.

“Uh, is he wearing a suit?” Lloyd asked.

"Oh, yes he is!" The lady answered. Lloyd relaxed for a moment, but the lady continued speaking. "His black-and-white suit goes well with his fur, doesn't it? And to be part of the magician world while being so young is so remarkable. Have you heard of his tour in Galar? It went great!" The Pidove came flying back, which she caught with her hat and showed the inside to Lloyd. He saw no sign of the Pokémon, so he reached inside. It did not take long for him to feel the silky inside, stunning him. The lady laughed and remarked while handing him the poster, "You people always do that. To be fair, it *is* The Eevee Emcee's hat."

"Woah." Lloyd felt a great deal of respect and concern about this. There was another anthro Pokémon wandering around? What was more, this one was possibly able to use magic? Was Glorfindel involved in this somehow? It should not be too much of a surprise, but what were the chances of it happening? "I-I see."

The lady giggled and bowed, pressing her breasts deeper than they should be pressed. "Come to Cirrames Theatre at six and see The Eevee Emcee do his magic~"

Without another word, the lady walked away to another apartment door to spread the word.

Lloyd stood there, trying to process this information. It took all his willpower to close the door. He glanced at the poster given to him, trying to figure out more about him. Perhaps that lady was joking about the fur, right?

Lloyd shook his head and turned, only to spot Thermis in the living room staring at him. "Ack!"

"Fefehehe. Sorry about that." Freezy rubbed the back of his head. "You look a little *chilly*."

"Fafahaha. At the same time, you look *hot* under the collar." Flamey's grin faltered. "Seriously, what is it about The Eevee Emcee?"

"What? Yes, but how did you know that?" Lloyd handed the poster to Thermis. "You went inside your room. Unless you snuck out and overheard us."

"I—" Freezy hesitated for a few seconds. "To be real, while driving on the way home, we've been getting these head pains."

Lloyd nodded while raising one of his eyebrows. "You've been having that headache for that long? Jeez, if you—"

Flamey cut in. "You said that you were worried about an officer spotting us and pulling us over. Truth be told, so were we."

"We tried to look *cool*—"

"—But we were *boiling hot* inside."

"And when we saw that officer with a scanner and motorcycle," Freezy rubbed his chin, "We thought we were done for. We saw him take note of us—"

"—Which was when the headaches started." Flamey placed his lower hand-paw on his chin and his upper hand-paw on the back of his head. "And then the officer just ignored us. As though we were perfectly normal."

"And our headaches' been getting worse since," Freezy admitted.

Lloyd stood there, unsure on how to take this news. He thought about getting some medicine to help his friend, but which one to get them? Would aspirin help? How about ibuprofen? Would Thermis need some Pokémon medicine instead of human ones? He was tempted to—

"—Get out the Super Potion to apply on us?" Freezy completed.

Lloyd flinched. "W-what?"

"And we doubt that aspirin or ibuprofen would help." Flamey shook his head by a bit.

Lloyd widened his eyes and took a step back. "H-how did you know I was thinking that?"

Both of Thermis's heads turned to the other, each having a concerned expression.

"We-we're not sure," Freezy admitted. "It felt like—"

"—Bits of your thoughts were leaking out to us," Flamey completed. "Much like how we feel what the other head thinks."

"And we think we somehow influenced that officer to ignore us when driving," Freezy suggested. "Like projecting an aura that we're normal."

Lloyd blinked twice, stunned at this revelation. Had Thermis somehow become a psychic? That seemed to be true, but how? Perhaps it was because of how they became a Ninetalestaur, except that neither Ninetales form were part Psychic-type. They knew some Psychic-type moves, but nothing like that. They did not know Confusion or Psychic itself.

"Trust us, we're confused too," Freezy stated.

"It's like we're in the *hot* seat here."

"We should get an *ice*-vestigator for this."

Lloyd grunted and rubbed his forehead. "Great. Now your puns are giving me a headache."

"It's what friends do," Freezy and Flamey declared with a grin.

Lloyd rolled his eyes at such a cheesy remark before turning to the poster Thermis held. "Um, that doesn't explain why you're detecting this Eevee Emcee, once through a radio and another through a door-to-door advert."

"We don't know either," Freezy admitted while shrugging.

Flamey nodded while rubbing his chin and left ear. "It felt as though he's someone important."

Lloyd stood there, wondering how to take this mysterious news. He wanted to reassure Thermis that it was nothing, that it was all in their heads. The event during this morning kept him from speaking out. They still did not know who transformed Lloyd into Mothreon. What's more, whoever did it in the first place knew what was going to happen to the point of writing it down. At least, this mastermind did up to before Thermis could land their attack.

If Thermis had realized it too late, Lloyd would not be standing here.

Lloyd looked at Thermis's eyes, seeing his reflection in their blue and red eyes, and nodded. "Then we should check out The Eevee Emcee's show tonight."

"For once, you read our minds!" Freezy grinned. "We should *break the ice* in that meeting."

"And see if we can *blow the smoke* in this plot," Flamey declared.

Lloyd nodded and went to his bag. He searched there until he found his smartphone, and pulled it out. It held a light-purple-colored case with yellow-and-black compound eyes on the top. Long antennae lay next to the eyes, and the back held green-with-ovals-of-red wings folded shut. Once Lloyd turned the screen on, it showed the time: 2:36 PM.

"It looks like we have plenty of time before the show," Lloyd noted. He nodded to himself before turning the screen off and pocketing it. "Shall we play a game?"

"Yeah!" Thermis declared before a growl came from both their stomachs. "After a late lunch meal!"

#

The next two-and-a-half-hours passed by fast, with them getting their hamburgers, fries, and soft drinks delivered. Thermis ate at least three times as much as before than when they were a human, which they guessed was due to needing a lot more energy than before. Once they finished eating, they decided to play Rhyhorn Racing. Lloyd played as a Wurmple while Thermis played as Cyndaquil, Cubchoo, and Togepi.

The hand-like front paws came in handy playing with the small Switch controllers.

Not that it helped Thermis's chances of winning.

Lloyd gave a smug grin as his Wurmple riding a Rhyhorn won the race again. "Ha!"

"I think my controller is *overheating*," Flamey remarked. He sucked on his lips, trying not to get too angry.

"Maybe your half, but my half is *freezing*," Freezy commented.

Thermis turned both heads to the bottom controller. "And these are *melting* out of pressure."

"Really?" Lloyd rolled his eyes.

Both of Thermis's heads were quiet for a few seconds. "Please let us have our puns. That's all we've got in this game."

Lloyd bent forward to laugh. "Guhahaha!! Sorry. That's hilarious."

Thermis laughed as well despite feeling sore about how these races went. Once they stopped laughing, Lloyd picked up his smartphone and turned it on. The time on it glowed 5:10 PM. He nodded to Thermis before turning the game off.

"That's all the time we got here," Lloyd said. He grabbed his backpack and slung it over one shoulder. "Shall we watch some magic?"

Thermis nodded, got up, and walked into their bedroom. It was a simple one, though it felt small thanks to their current form. The ugly beige walls made them grimace, making them wish that the academy that owned it would allow posters to cover them up. The bed lay at the corner, though it would need to be reworked since only half their body could lay on it.

Then again, laying on the ground while camping was not uncomfortable.

Both of their Glaceon and Flareon curled up on top of the bed. Thermis could not blame them for feeling exhausted. For trainers, they would be Pokémon to practice with for battle; for Thermis, they were friends, though still trained. As a result, they would be unused to getting hurt or overexerting themselves.

Thermis patted each one on the head, stirring them from their sleep.

"Hey there." Freezy rubbed Glaceon's neck and head at the same time. "Want to go on an *ice*-venture?"

"Lloyd and us are going to see some magic." Flamey booped Flareon's nose and stroked the yellow tuft on her head. "There'll be plenty of *fiery sparks* flying around."

"What do you think?" Both Freezy and Flamey grinned at their Pokémon.

Glaceon and Flareon glanced at each other, yawned, and went back to sleep in their ball-like shapes. Thermis's grins faded for a bit before nodding. They walked out of their bedroom glancing at the bookshelves filled with pun books. Perhaps they should invest in books focusing on Ice-type and Fire-type Pokémon.

They walked back to the living room where Lloyd waited with Thermis's bags.

"No luck on Flareon," Flamey explained. "She's *toast* for the day."

"Same with Glaceon." Freezy shrugged his shoulder. "He's *thawed* out."

Lloyd winced at the puns before nodding. "S-sure. Anyways, let's head out." He thought of something silly for a moment. "Do you mind if I ride on you?"

Thermis glanced at each other while getting their bags.

"We sure do. We're not a carrying service, after all," Freezy stated. "I bet you'll feel *frostbitten* riding on my half anyways."

"And you'll get *burned* on my half." Flamey went to the front door and opened it.

"Even so, we'll let you ride us. We bet you still feel tired from this morning," both declared.

"Right, right. Of course." Lloyd rolled his eyes. "Even when you're developing psychic powers, you still have time to let out some puns. That'll make you extra annoying."

"Why, thank you." Both Thermis's heads grinned as wide as possible.

"That wasn't a compliment!"

#

As soon as the front door closed, the Flareon lifted her head off from the bed. She counted to a hundred before she was certain that her owner and their friend left. Once done, she went to the Glaceon and poked his teal crest on his head. He opened his eyes and grinned at her.

The Flareon grinned back.

This was going to be a fun evening.

#

"We didn't think it would get this much of a crowd," Freezy remarked.

Thermis and Lloyd waited in line to the Cirrames Theatre, where it already went around the entire theatre. They got there early enough that only a few dozen people stood in front of them. People of all types waited in line for this, from fellow students of the Pokémon Strawberry Academy to out-of-town trainers. The speakers played music made by singers from the Kanto region.

Thermis did not understand what the singers sang, but it sounded good.

The building itself had an old Kalos-style design to it, despite it being built two decades ago. The windows that stretched from the bottom to the third story held pointed arches made of stone. All of the glass was tinted in such a

way to show various types of Pokémon while preventing people from looking inside. On the top of each arch held carvings of various Pokémon like Ludicolo, Meloetta, and Wigglytuff. Between the windows held posters of shows playing, with The Eevee Emcee as part of it.

“You know, now that I’m thinking about it,” Lloyd remarked while staring at The Eevee Emcee poster. “If that lady was trusted enough to borrow his hat, why isn’t she part of the poster?”

Thermis shrugged, with both heads having a confused expression. They guessed that it was because the magician took center stage even on the poster. The assistants, if more than one, were there to help on the fly or act as living props. It would make sense since magic acts were all about misdirection.

At the same time, Thermis could not help but feel that the lady felt off. They could not ‘hear’ that lady's thoughts, but they sensed enough to note she was more than any mere assistant. She held a much deeper connection to The Eevee Emcee, but what?

After several minutes of waiting, the group entered the theatre, where beautiful dusk light streamed down through the windows. The tall ceiling held ribbed vaults out of stone, which showed beauty and strength. From what they

recalled from class, this theatre was a passion project that was under construction for over five decades. The architect disliked the 'good enough' attitude of much of the region and sought to create something that would outlast him.

Given how much business it got since, it worked.

They approached the box office, where an elderly lady with pointy glasses sat within.

"Uh, I would like to get a ticket for—" Lloyd paused and turned to Thermis's entire body briefly. He turned back to the lady and continued, "For three. And I want them to be the back seats."

"Alright." The lady turned to Thermis for a moment. They felt a headache, which caused the lady's eyes to become unfocused. They felt her confusion when trying to understand them. She shook her head and turned back to Lloyd. "That'll come to 23,400 Pokédollars."

Lloyd winced at the price tag, but paid the lady regardless. Once done, she printed out three tickets for the show and handed them over to him. He took them, handing over two of them to Thermis.

"You know," Freezy remarked while holding onto one of the tickets. "We may have two heads, but that doesn't

mean you should pay for a head each. Don't put yourself on *thin ice*."

"It'll be a quick way to *overheat* yourself on finances," Flamey joked.

Lloyd rolled his eyes. "First, those puns were stretching it. Second, I didn't pay for three because of your double heads. It's because your body is so long, you'll dominate the seat behind you without trying."

"Oh."

"Ah."

The group went past the ticket booth and into a hallway, where rental lockers lined up against the wall. Lloyd approached one of them, inserting 1,000 Pokédollars into the bill acceptor. It popped open, allowing him to put in his bag covered in Bug Pokémon buttons inside. Once done, Lloyd input a one-time code into the keypad.

Thermis shrugged and did the same, opening a pair of lockers for each of their bags. The Freezy side unslung his red-orange bag and inserted it inside the right locker. Meanwhile, the Flamey side took off his violet bag and placed it in the left one. They closed them and input a one-time pin, with them the opposite of the other.

Perhaps they should swap bags with the other head.

Then again, only a *burning hot* fellow would care for a *freezing cold* detail.

Many rows of bolted chairs lay in a semi-circle in front of the stage, with each set up higher than the one in front of them. The bolted-down chairs dominated much of the audience, though the very back had simple fold-up ones. The theatre does not always set them up, but they do if they feel it was a big enough event.

Multiple audiences streamed in, taking much of the bolted ones. Thermis and Lloyd took advantage of that to get the further back ones. Lloyd spun one of the fold-up chairs around, allowing Thermis to stick their front legs through the opening as though they sat in it backwards. They sat on the one behind it as well.

It helped that they were on the sides, where people would not pass them to get through.

#

Lloyd watched how the theatre became full as the seconds ticked by, with more people streaming in. Even the valuable balcony seats were taken, which would cost an arm and a leg. He glanced at them, noting people setting up cameras at the farthest to his position. The one two balconies away had a similar setup, leading Lloyd to guess

that they were set up by the theatre's people to film the show live.

It would be a nice, cheap way to earn more money.

Lloyd pulled out his smartphone, with it at 5:58 PM. "At least we're not late."

Thermis nodded with both heads, only to wince and rubbed their foreheads.

"Um, feeling too many thoughts?" Lloyd asked while leaning away.

"It-it's not that." Freezy paused to rub the front and side of his head. "OK. There's a lot of thoughts streaming in."

"B-but this, it felt like a massive trick is happening." Flamey groaned and rubbed his crest-shaped hair-fur. "But if we can't take the *heat*—"

"—Might as well get out of the *ice* box!" Freezy gave out a strained grin.

Lloyd rolled his eyes. "At least you're not—"

The lights dimmed until all went off. This caused Lloyd to straighten to attention. The low talking silenced to the point that even a pin drop could be heard. For a few seconds, nothing happened.

The stage's lights turned on, showing a single figure on it who appeared out of nowhere.

The crowd applauded, only to stop in realization. Lloyd blinked, recognizing the figure. She still wore the tight-fitting suit from earlier, but now she wore a black cape over it. Instead of that frilly skirt, she wore long, black pants that went to her ankles. The gibus hat still kept the long ears, plus her skin was just as silverish-white as before. At the same time, she seemed to be sparkling.

"That's the lady who advertised about The Eevee Emcee," Lloyd whispered to Thermis. "I thought she might be an assistant to him, but where is this Eevee Emcee himself?"

Thermis remained silent for a few seconds before both heads moaned.

"Of course. It was obvious. He now really *sparks* my interest."

"And he played it really *cool*/then."

Lloyd raised an eyebrow. "What are you talking about?"

"Good evening, everyone of all ages," the lady spoke, cutting Thermis off. "I'm sure you're wondering where the magnificent magician, The Eevee Emcee, is." This caused a

murmur to break out through the crowd. The lady coughed and continued, "There's a simple answer to this."

The lady twirled around, taking off the gibus hat and knocking the ears off of it. While her back was to the audience, she tossed the hat to the air where it hovered. She reached behind and grabbed on her head, tugging hard enough to rip the skin underneath her hair into two.

The audience gasped out of shock, with a number standing up.

Instead of red flesh, silverish-white fur poked out from underneath.

A pair of long ears sprung out through the gaping hole.

Once the realistic mask was ripped off, The Eevee Emcee spun around and faced the audience.

"You see, but you did not observe," The Eevee Emcee declared.

The Eevee Emcee grinned wide at the stunned gasping from the audience throughout the theatre. He followed it up by ripping off his 'gloves,' exposing his hand-paws underneath. Once done, he glanced at his heels, which still had the human-like feet on them. He shook his head and took both feet off, with his feet-paws and boots slipping out

into place. His tail, silverish-white with a white tip, poked out from under his cape.

The hat stopped spinning and landed on his head.

A second later, the entire audience stood and applauded for The Eevee Emcee.

"OK. I have to admit," Lloyd remarked while clapping. "I never saw that coming." He wondered how the trick was done, so he turned to Thermis. "Did he do it with magic, or with doubles and mirrors?"

Thermis clapped along with the rest of the audience before turning both heads to Lloyd.

"No. That was all him," Freezy explained.

"He was wearing a human suit all along," Flamey added.

It took Lloyd a few seconds to respond. "What?" He turned to the stage, where The Eevee Emcee went to his chest. "What do you mean by human suit?"

The Eevee Emcee unbuttoned his shirt, exposing the white furry collar underneath. "If you observed hard enough, you would've realized that my 'breasts' were much softer than actual ones." He buttoned it up and took a bow. "Now, I want a volunteer to join me on stage."

He tossed his hat toward the audience, with it spinning in circles. It soon landed on a Strawberry Academy student, who got up and rushed to the stage. She approached The Eevee Emcee, handing the hat back while unable to stand still. The Eevee Emcee gave a sly smile and fanned out the cards to her.

"Pick a card," he told her. The student took a card and looked at it. The Eevee Emcee added, "Show it to the amazing audience, but not to me."

She showed the card out, with it being the 5 of Hearts.

The Eevee Emcee took the card back and inserted it back into his deck. He shuffled it a few times, even giving it a few cuts, before hovering the hand-paw over it. He wiggled his fingers and pulled the top card off.

"Is this your card?" The Eevee Emcee asked while showing the 8 of Spades.

The lady looked disappointed and shook her head.

The audience also shook their heads.

The Eevee Emcee sighed and paced away. "So, she picked poorly." He went back to her while folding the card twice. "Here's a good gift regardless."

He handed the card to her, only for it to burst into flames upon contact. She screamed and took a few steps back. Even the audience gasped at the shocking display. The flames disappeared just as fast, with the card unfolded and even un-creased.

It was also the 5 of Hearts.

"Is THIS your card?" The Eevee Emcee asked again.

The lady gasped and nodded several times in a second. The audience applauded, with even a few standing up and cheering. The Eevee Emcee gave a bow again, still holding the card up high.

"Jeez, this fellow is good," Lloyd noted. "Was that a sleight of hand while it was burning? How did it even start burning in the first place?" He turned to Thermis. "Or was that actual magic?"

"I can feel his thoughts." Freezy rubbed his forehead. "Those last two tricks, along with him being a door-to-door advertiser, was not him pulling a *cool*/trick."

"That was him actually using real magic, like Glorfindel." Flamey rubbed his forehead as well. "We can feel his *burning* passion as well."

"R-real magic?" Lloyd blinked twice. It seemed silly for him to doubt such a thing since he saw with his own eyes

and even fell for another's magic. At the same time, those were done by people not from this universe. It would be natural if their original universe had different rules of reality.

For The Eevee Emcee to also pull off such tricks?

It seemed almost too fantastical to think of.

Before long, The Eevee Emcee fell into a routine in performing his magic. At certain times, he would call upon an audience member to come on the stage to use magic. One lost his head, with The Eevee Emcee holding it for a few seconds before returning it. Another was cut in half while standing up, with The Eevee Emcee hovering his hand between the empty space. A lady had her hair changed from black to red when he poured water on top of her.

Lloyd could not help but note how dark The Eevee Emcee's tricks could get.

Perhaps he had a dark sense of humor, or they brought him the most attention.

Lloyd turned to Thermis, who pressed all four hand-paws against their heads.

"Um, alright there, buddy?" Lloyd asked. He patted Thermis on their upper back. "Do you need some water?"

"Gth. Sorry." Freezy sighed. "We felt something about this Eevee Emcee. A *freezing* secret."

"Yeah. One that *burns* into our heads." Flamey rolled his neck around. "Perhaps he's the key to what happened this morning."

"What?" Lloyd whispered in horror.

Thermis nodded and got off their seats.

"Let's head to the backstage," Freezy declared in a whisper, "and *ice*-vestigate further."

"Yeah. We'll *light* up the fuse and shine a light in the truth," Flamey whispered.

They walked down the side of the theatre before Lloyd could protest. He sat there, confused as to what to do. Even if this mysterious Eevee Emcee was behind the morning's events, it might be better to confront him after the show. Then again, they might find something now that he was on stage with no chance to sneak away.

Lloyd swallowed, got up, and followed Thermis to the theatre's edge.

Thermis walked down the side until they found one of the exits there, which was easier than expected. Perhaps they had better night vision than they had when they were

human. They turned the handle and grinned at Lloyd. They pushed it open, letting Lloyd sneak in from behind before anyone could check.

“Do you know what we’re looking for?” Lloyd asked while rushing behind Thermis. A few people wandered in the hallway, but they all ignored them. Lloyd felt thankful for Thermis’s ability to make others ignore them; perhaps it also worked with Lloyd because he walked close enough. “I mean, we don’t even know who the morning’s perpetrator looks like.”

Thermis shrugged and walked onward until they reached the side of the stage. Even through the wall, they could hear the audience gasping in shock. Perhaps The Eevee Emcee attached a tail onto someone’s rear. Or he maybe turned someone into a Tyranitar.

Then again, his sense of humor was not that dark, right?

Thermis and Lloyd reached the backstage before they paused.

A small part of it was dedicated as a break room, where a TV hung on the wall which showed the show live. Across from there held a few rooms, some the extras’ dressing rooms and others’ more private rooms. The private

rooms had signs, which told which performers were using it even temporarily. One of them had the text “**THE EEVEE EMCEE**” on it.

An Annihilape also sat beside that door on a stool.

Lloyd gulped, looking at this gray-furred Pokémon in fear. The dark-gray arms lay crossed under the bright pink snout, pressing the shackle on his left wrist between his right arm and body. The gray fur on the top half of his body waved upward in a shaggy way, becoming white at the tips. His ears fluttered down near his eyes.

That did not attract as much attention as the Annihilape’s wings.

They folded neat on the Annihilape’s back, arching up above the body. Gray feathers, which morphed into white near the tips, covered both wings. They twitched before relaxing against his back. Despite how relaxed he looked, Lloyd knew that a single punch from that Annihilape would launch him to another region.

Lloyd watched for a moment and blinked.

The Annihilape snored and lowered his body.

“I guess *ice*-olation can make anyone sleep,” Freezy commented.

"We shouldn't play with *fire* since it's a dangerous game, but we'll make an exception," Flamey stated.

Thermis approached The Eevee Emcee's backroom with slow, careful steps. Lloyd also followed, though not as quiet as he preferred. If he was still a Mothreon, he could at least hover and make less noise. That was something he should ask Glorfindel if he ever returned.

The Annihilape stirred and lifted his head.

Thermis stared at the Annihilape and furrowed their brows.

The Annihilape yawned and slept again.

"Having psychic powers does have its uses," Flamey commented.

"Agreed," Freezy nodded.

Thermis opened The Eevee Emcee's dressing room door and snuck inside, with Lloyd following.

It was a plain-white room, with one side of it dedicated to mirrors, brushes, and a touch of makeup. Several types of the same suit The Eevee Emcee wore hung at the other side, with some variation like skirts and vests. No other hat hung or lay anywhere in this room. A few human suits, just

like the one The Eevee Emcee tore off, also hung on hangers of either gender.

Lloyd was thankful that he did not flirt with him earlier.

What attracted their attention was the table at the center. There lay multiple types of cards, balls, and even some cookies. A manual next to the cookies instructed that razor blades should be inserted on the show for dramatic effect. Multiple fan letters lay on one side, ready to be opened.

A brown quill lay at the center next to a stack of writing paper.

Thermis picked up the stack and leafed through it. What was left of their amused expressions died while reading it. They took out one of the pages and handed it over to Lloyd.

It read:

Lloyd sighed and nodded. "Yeah. Sorry. This is just new to us. I mean, how many folks in this world have transformed into a Pokémon, let alone something like you?" He turned upward. "It's a shame that Glorfindel left so fast. I would've asked him to turn me back into that Mothreon again."

Freezy and Flamey glanced at each other for a moment.

"Do you ever think he'll ever cool off his love for Bug-types?" Freezy asked.

Flamey answered, "I doubt it. His love is burning hot for them."

"Thank you for your commentary." Lloyd leaned toward the coffee table and reached for the radio. "It's very helpful."

Lloyd turned the radio on, with it playing a song.

Kinou no teki wa kyou no tomo tte

Furui kotoba ga aru kedo (Furui to wa nan ja~!)

Kyou no tomo wa ashita mo tomodachi

Sou sa Eien ni

He grumbled, loving the song but needing to change to another broadcaster. He wanted to hear the news, to hear if they were talking about Thermis. Even if the drive back to this apartment did not attract any attention, they still went to camp with a bunch of fellow students and their

professor. It would be impossible for it to remain a secret after all that.

Lloyd paled and lowered the page. "Th-that was only a few hours ago!"

Freezy nodded while picking up the brown feather. "You said that you found something like this, which transformed you into that, um, Mothreon form."

"And there was also a discarded piece of paper which told of us fighting." Flamey nodded while flipping the pages. "Even though that battle took place moments before it came."

Freezy nodded before bending his head toward the last page. "It ended just before we entered this room."

"What?" Lloyd turned to the door and back again. He thought about what Glorfindel said before he left, and looked at the last page as well. He skimmed through the text, not reading them but paying attention to the handwriting. There were no signs of rushing at all, even at the end. "Wh-who could even predict all of this? There must be ways where it could be different!"

Thermis nodded and declared with both heads. "We can ask him ourselves."

Lloyd flinched, understanding what they meant while feeling unsure about it. No, there was something off about all of this. If The Eevee Emcee was the morning's mastermind, why did he attract their interest? He should have realized that it would uncover him by doing so. For that matter, why did The Eevee Emcee leave this evidence out in the open instead of hidden where no prying eyes could see them?

"Thermis," Lloyd begged while patting their upper back. "Let's not be hasty about this."

"Why not?" Freezy demanded. "He almost tricked us into attacking you! We could've killed you if we didn't figure it out!"

"That alone would be an unforgivable act!" Flamey huffed out some flames.

"Even so, we can ambush him here when he's finished with his act," Lloyd suggested. "If we interrupt him on stage, it'll not only be in front of an audience but it might even hurt his career if he was innocent."

Freezy shook his head. "If we did wait for him here—"

"—He'll still have that powerful ally nearby. For all we know, he might not even return here after the show ends." Flamey flexed both hand-paws. "We need answers. Now."

“And besides, we know he has a secret—”

“—And this must be it—”

“—That he’s the mastermind behind everything!”

Thermis splayed out all four arms in a star-like pattern.

Without another word, Thermis spun toward the door and swung it open with a crash. They sprinted out of there, leaving Lloyd behind. Another crashing sound, with this one more like boxes landing on the ground, echoed through. Lloyd gulped and rushed out, hoping that—

The Annihilape lifted his head in attention, snapping his red eyes open and twisting around until he saw Lloyd. “Hold it!”

Lloyd froze in fear. “P-please don’t— Wait.” He widened his eyes and turned to the Annihilape. “You can talk!?”

The Annihilape snorted. “Yeah. What about it?” He shook his body and splayed his wings out. “Never mind that. You’re an intruder, and I know what to do with intruders like you.”

#

Thermis rushed onward, heading toward the stage. They ran past a crane, knocked down a few boxes, and

brushed past several people. Some of them looked at Thermis with wide eyes, shocked from disbelief. Thermis did not care since it was going to happen sooner or later. What mattered more was dealing with The Eevee Emcee.

Both Freezy and Flamey felt enraged. Lloyd was a good friend who stuck with them for so long. Plus, their Glaceon and Flareon at home were loyal companions, even if they do get annoyed by their puns. To hurt any of them would be an unforgivable act.

To try to trick Thermis into killing any of them?

They never felt this much rage before.

Within seconds, Thermis reached the stage's edge, where they saw The Eevee Emcee performing. At this angle, he no longer looked larger than life. Instead, he almost reminded Thermis of someone who needed protecting. The Eevee Emcee sent out a few Pidove into the air, with them circling him. One landed on his head, where he caught it with his hat. When he removed it, a Snivy sat between his ears.

Such a sight almost made Thermis reconsider their thoughts on him.

Almost.

"Hey!!" Both Freezy and Flamey cried out.

The Eevee Emcee widened his silverish eyes before glancing at Thermis. He flinched for half a second before he grinned. He then turned toward the audience and bowed while winking.

"Ehehehe! It looks like I have a special guest here tonight!" The Eevee Emcee gestured his arm out to Thermis. "Please give my guest a warm welcome!"

Thermis blinked before they walked onto the stage. At first, there was a series of gasps from the audience. Someone in the back clapped, with it spreading like *wildfire* until the entire theatre applauded. Thermis felt stunned, *frozen* for the moment. They shook their heads before turning toward The Eevee Emcee.

"Alright, there," Freezy declared. "We know what you did this morning."

"Oh, no!" The Eevee Emcee took a couple of steps back while grasping on his chest. He still had a sly grin on his face. "You discovered my dastardly design to barter breakfast with my bodyguard!"

"Ye— Wait, no!" Flamey growled and shook both fists on his half of the body. "You wrote about this morning and tried to arrange things to hurt our friends!"

“Oh, dear!” The Eevee Emcee turned to the spectators with a faux surprise. “He found out I was writing an audacious autobiography about him! The first Ninetalestaur with four arms, two heads, and split between Kantonian and Alolan!”

The audience laughed, with a few cheering it on.

Freezy darkened his expression, clutching his fists as tight as possible. “You’ll get what you deserve!”

“Ehehehe! For writing a winning story?” The Eevee Emcee winked and snapped his fingers. “Very well!”

Thermis lost it and charged at The Eevee Emcee, with ice forming on Freezy’s hand-paws and fire on Flamey’s. Their opponent spotted the incoming attack and reached into his hat. A square frame with silverish-white sheets came out, which he hovered over his head. The sheet covered every inch of his body when Thermis’s attack struck.

The left half of Thermis set the sheet on fire while the right half froze it.

The sheet and frame clamored down, but The Eevee Emcee disappeared.

“What?!” Both Freezy and Flamey shouted.

They spun around, searching for their opponent but could not find him. They glanced at the high ceiling and the floor for any possible escape route, but spotted none. They stood up straight, only to feel a weight on their lower back.

The Eevee Emcee hopped off from Thermis and waved his arms at the applauding audience.

“Hey!!” Freezy yelled.

“How did you do that?!” Flamey demanded.

The Eevee Emcee winked at them. “Great job so far,” he whispered. “They’re loving it.”

Thermis growled with both heads before charging again.

#

“Thanks for the wonderful tea, Nate.” Lloyd smiled and bowed.

Nate the Annihilape smiled with his eyes and laughed. “Nananana. It’s no problem. We always have guests trying to sneak into Henry’s room, so you’re not special in that regard.”

Lloyd nodded and glanced around at the backroom with the TV on the wall. He sat before one of the two round tables, with cookies next to the tea cup and kettle. Multiple

people crowded at the TV, each one baffled at the stage's antics.

"That's his actual name, then?" Lloyd glanced at the screen, which showed The Eevee Emcee swapping Thermis's heads with each other. He picked up the tea cup and drank from it. "Are you sure it's safe to tell me?"

"I don't see why not. He may be The Eevee Emcee to you all, but to me he'll always be little Henry Dawson." Nate nodded while stretching his wings. "We've been together so long, ever since, eh." He shook his head. "Never mind. He's at least having fun with your friend there. Don't deny it." He winked at Lloyd. "I saw how you flinched when you saw that Ninetalestaur walk on stage."

Lloyd swallowed, but nodded. "You think your friend will be OK?"

"Oh, absolutely. Otherwise, I'll have to get on stage and drag both their heads off." Nate leaned back and laughed. "Nananana. Henry is also having a lot of fun there too."

Lloyd lowered the cup and sighed. "That's good."

Despite that, Lloyd felt nervous watching Thermis trying to tear The Eevee Emcee a new one. He might be using magic to avoid getting attacked, but that could only last for

so long. Sooner or later, one of Thermis's attacks would land and hurt him. After that, Lloyd did not want to see what would happen.

Best case, Lloyd got a bonk on the head along with Thermis.

Worst case, they better reschedule their vacation plans.

"Perhaps you should interfere just in case," Lloyd suggested. He took one of the cookies and ate it.

Nate shook his entire body. "Nah. Pretty sure Henry will get disappointed. I know him. Besides, the crowd is loving it."

Lloyd nodded and drank more of the tea. He felt his stomach tightening out of stress from this conflict. It felt more certain than ever that The Eevee Emcee was not behind what happened this morning. At the same time, what could he do? If he was still the anthro Mothreon, he could have the strength to intervene. Instead, Lloyd was nothing more than a plain human with no Pokémon to his name.

He thought more on how to stop it when light came from the floor and touched the ceiling. Nate jumped off his chair, knocking it aside while raising his fists. Lloyd blinked, finding this white light familiar somehow. The other people

flinched and turned around, only to cover their faces. Lloyd shut his eyes and covered them with his hands.

When the light faded, he lowered his arms, opened his eyes, and gasped.

At the spot the pure white shone stood an anthro being that reminded him of a Ninetales. Green fur covered much of his body, with it white on his torso. He wore a dark red t-shirt and black pants, with no shoes covering his black feet-paws. His wooden-brown staff was as tall as himself, ending with a yin-yang symbol of white and wooden brown. Five tails splayed out behind him, with the tips white and a black fuzzy ring separating the white and green. The golden hair-fur on his head swayed from non-existent wind.

Glorfindel the kitsune opened his eyes, showing those mysterious blue eyes.

"Glorfindel!" Lloyd gasped. "You came back!"

"Yes." Glorfindel lowered his head into a bow. "I never intended to leave for very long. Only long enough to get some answers." He glanced around the room, ignoring the gawking humans behind him. "Though I never expected to see you working in theatre."

"Um, that's a long story, but—"

"Wait, wait, wait. Hold up!" Nate went between Lloyd and Glorfindel while shaking his body. "What's going on here?" He turned to Lloyd. "You know this weirdo?"

"Yeah. Another long story." Lloyd stammered for a bit, noting Nate's red eyes glowing for a bit. "He's—"

"What's going on here?"

"Why does he look like a weird Vulpix?"

"Does he know The Eevee Emcee?"

Glorfindel spun around, at last acknowledging their existence. He waved his staff at them, causing their eyes to unfocus and turn back to the TV. He twisted halfway around until Thermis popped up on the screen and stopped himself. He raised his eyebrow at the battle between them and The Eevee Emcee.

"Huh. I never expected to see someone like him." Glorfindel pointed at The Eevee Emcee. "Nor do I expect to see him know a thing or two about magic."

"Wait, wait, wait." Lloyd went around Nate to Glorfindel's side. "You have nothing to do with him?"

Glorfindel shrugged. "Nope. I transformed humans into many things, but never a magic-using anthro Eevee before. Though that gives me some ideas—"

"Hold it!" A vein popped on Nate's forehead, with his eyes glowing brighter. "There are few things that make me angry, with one of them being locked out of a loop! Now, you tell me what's going on or else!"

Nate cracked his knuckles.

Glorfindel turned to Lloyd. "Well? I know less than he does about this."

Lloyd gulped and nodded. "Y-yeah. I would prefer it if we stop that fight first, then we'll get everyone straight."

Glorfindel glanced at the screen and nodded. "Fair point."

Nate growled, but nodded with his entire body.

"Thanks." Lloyd turned to Glorfindel. "It's a good thing you came, even as a *sinnoh ex machina*. How did you know where to find us?"

"The quick answer would be that I can trace you with the lingering remains of my magic." Glorfindel rubbed his acute muzzle. "The longer explanation will have to wait." He hummed for a few seconds before he grinned. "That gives me an idea, though. Does this theatre have a crane?"

#

"Gah! Quit! Playing! Around!"

Thermis panted with both mouths, their temper in a *burning* simmer. The sweat over their body felt *freezing* to the touch. They clutched all four of their fists to the point of cracking their knuckles. The Eevee Emcee, despite avoiding all attacks, also looked tired from this conflict.

"Magic is nothing to act around." The Eevee Emcee wagged his finger at Thermis. "It requires plenty of practice to perform as smoothly as I do. As your wicked writer, you should know how futile it would be."

Thermis grunted before they felt a shiver from the floor. The Eevee Emcee blinked, glanced at the floor, and flinched. He turned his thumb at Thermis.

"He doesn't know I just performed my terrifying trap card." The Eevee Emcee's grin strained with more sweat coming from his brow.

Thermis yelled—

—Only to fall onto the floor. They yelped, with their shoes stuck onto the floor. When Freezy and Flamey glanced at them, they widened their eyes. The floor and paws fused together, with them unable to spot where the floor ended and the paws began. The Eevee Emcee laughed and spun his gibus hat into the air.

"Halt!"

Thermis flinched, recognizing that voice. They turned their heads upward, where Glorfindel hovered while attached to the crane. The Eevee Emcee blinked in surprise and confusion, as though he did not know of his existence. He set his hat back on his brow before watching Glorfindel landing on the floor.

"I'm very sorry, everyone. We've gone way overtime in this act." Glorfindel unhooked himself from the crane. "We all thank you for watching this wonderful show."

The audience sat there, mystified.

Glorfindel snapped his fingers, causing sparks to fly off from the stage.

The audience broke out into applause.

Glorfindel pointed his staff at the curtains, causing them to lower onto the floor.

Lloyd and the winged Annihilape rushed onto the stage, reaching Thermis's and The Eevee Emcee's sides respectively.

"Alright there, Freezy and Flamey?" Lloyd asked. He helped Thermis stand on all fours, though still stuck on the floor.

"Y-yeah." Freezy rolled his arms around.

“Physically, anyways,” Flamey added.

“Henry!” The winged Annihilape set himself so The Eevee Emcee could lean against him. “You’re not hurt, are you? If you are, just say the word and I’ll send them—”

The Eevee Emcee laughed. “It’s alright, Nate. I’m not hurt. Had a brush of ice and fire, but nothing that could cause permanent damage.” He glanced at his boots. “Though I would like to move from this spot.”

Glorfindel slammed his staff onto the floor, sending another shivering wave to Thermis and The Eevee Emcee. Once done, Thermis gasped with them able to move their digits again. The Eevee Emcee laughed, hopping onto Nate’s back and setting himself there.

“Wait. You didn’t cast that spell in the first place?” Freezy blinked.

“It was all Glorfindel? We thought that was you!” Flamey added.

The Eevee Emcee shook his head. “Nope. I only acted like that because I detected what happened to me and deduced that it happened to you as well. Plus, while the theatre folks aren’t too keen on improv, I’m very good at it and adapting to the flow. Although, I never expected

anything like you or that green beast you called Glorfindel."

Thermis turned to Glorfindel with questioning eyes.

Glorfindel nodded. "Let's head backstage, then we'll talk and get on the same page there."

#

Within minutes, everyone was backstage, with them seated around a round table. The theatre manager went back there, demanding to know what happened since that was not part of The Eevee Emcee's act. Henry smiled and explained that he planned for this and kept it as a surprise to even the crew. That did little to satisfy the manager until he heard just how much the audience enjoyed it.

"That'll at least keep you two out of trouble," Henry told Thermis and Glorfindel.

Thermis, Lloyd, and Glorfindel explained their side of the story, beginning with how Thermis was once a human named Thomas. Glorfindel's magical Fire Stone and Ice Stone turned Thomas into the four-armed, two-headed, Ninetalestaur, with them renaming themselves. They also explained the morning's events, from how Lloyd got transformed into an anthro Mothreon and how he battled Thermis and Glorfindel until they reverted those changes.

"That's certainly a crazy story," Henry commented while nodding. "That explains your wild comments during the show."

"Yeah." Freezy nodded. "It's enough to *freeze* our hearts out."

"And *burn* our skin." Flamey nodded.

Thermis and Lloyd continued their story, from their trip home to Thermis's suspicions from his developing psychic powers. They went to the show when the radio and disguised Henry advertised about The Eevee Emcee. Said powers detected a secret that Henry had, which was why they went to his dressing room and found evidence that connected him to the morning's events.

Henry blinked twice. "I never had anything like brown feathers, quills, or any half-made book." Henry turned to Nate. "Go there and check, please."

Nate nodded with his whole body, got up, and rushed toward Henry's room.

"We swear we saw them!" Freezy declared to Glorfindel.

"Exactly like the ones we saw!" Flamey stated to Henry.

Henry flattened his right ear to the side. "Um, what did the writing look like?"

"Um." Lloyd thought about it for a couple of seconds. "It looked like one of the fanciest cursive I've ever seen, but still readable."

Henry nodded and reached into his coat's pockets. He pulled out a small notebook with a pen on top. He opened it and wrote down a sentence in cursive before showing it to the others. It was legible, but only just with it looking like Torchic scratches.

Sweat drops formed on Thermis's heads.

"Um," Freezy stammered.

Flamey blushed. "Er."

Nate rushed back while shaking his entire body. "I saw nothing like you guys described."

Lloyd felt himself shrinking in his chair.

"SYKE!" Nate laughed while leaning his entire body back. "Nananana! I couldn't resist. I didn't find the papers that you described, but I found this."

Nate placed a brown, feather quill onto the table. It had only touched the surface for a second when a cold air

knocked it into the air. Nate blinked and reached for it, but it disintegrated into nothing.

“Just like that sheet from this morning.” Glorfindel leaned forward with interest. He turned to Thermis and asked, “So, because you found that and some papers, you decided to confront our little magician?”

“Hey!” Henry huffed at being called little.

Thermis nodded with both heads while growing embarrassed.

“Um, he kept having that snide attitude when we faced him.” Freezy’s face turned bright red.

“Plus, we felt that he was keeping a secret through our psychic powers.” Flamey covered half his face with both of his hand-paws.

Henry snickered before he laughed. “Hehehehe. I was on stage, playing as an evil magician who does meanish pranks with audiences. How else am I supposed to act? An-evil-magician-but-not-really-so-never-mind? As for that secret, well,” he rubbed the back of his head. “I do have one, but nothing like that.”

Thermis blinked all four eyes in confusion.

Henry sighed and turned to Nate. "Demonstrate, please."

Nate nodded while reaching at the back of his wings. He grunted before pulling out a Water Stone. He applied it against Henry's arm, with it sputtering a feeble glow before stopping. Nate shrugged and put the Water Stone back, with it unable to evolve Henry.

"What?!" Lloyd straightened out in shock. "H-how did you—"

"Before I came here, I did a small tour in Galar," Henry explained. "The audience there were well-behaved for the most part. Some, though, thought it might be a good way to prank me by trying to get me to evolve." He rolled his eyes. "I don't think they realized that it meant I can't be called 'The Eevee Emcee' again. Heck, calling me 'The Espeon Emcee' doesn't have the same ring to it, which is why I didn't bother."

"However, while performing in the Isle of Armor's Master Dojo, I found out they can make Max Soup. It can grant certain Pokémon, like an Eevee, a Gigantamax form when Dynamaxing. For me, it comes with the cost of being unable to evolve again. So, I asked and ate the soup. I would've eaten the mushrooms raw if that also granted it."

Thermis blinked several times.

Freezy began with, "So, your secret is—"

"—That you no longer *have* the ability to evolve?"
Flamey finished.

"Pretty much." Henry snickered. "Hehehehe. I love the reaction some of those 'fans' had when they realized they can't use an Evolutionary Stone to make me evolve. Or use those Sun Shards or Moon Shards on me, which is always surprising when they pull those out."

Thermis glanced at each other's head for a moment before they stood. They approached Henry and bowed before him. Henry flinched at this display, confused by all this. When Themris lifted both their heads, their expressions were filled with remorse.

"We're sorry for that *frosty* treatment we gave you,"
Freezy declared.

"We were so convinced that you're that perpetrator so much that it *burns out* our reasoning," Flamey admitted.

"As a result, we ruined that show of yours," both
Freezy and Flamey noted.

Henry shrugged and gave them a kind smile. "Hey, it's all water under the bridge now. Besides—" he winked at

them, “–it gave the crowd a far better show than even I had planned.”

Thermis nodded and got up.

“Still, this troubles me.” Nate glanced where the brown quill faded away. “Someone tried to frame my little bro so he would get injured or worse.” He patted Henry’s shoulder and continued. “That’s an unforgivable act, if I may so myself.” He slapped his close fists against his open palm. “They’ll regret it.”

“That does remind me.” Lloyd turned to Glorfindel. “Did you discover who or what might be behind all of this?”

Glorfindel averted his gaze from the others, instead glancing at the TV. There, it displayed the musical act playing on stage. He brushed his golden-blond hair-fur back before turning to the others. He set his elbows on the table, his eyes distant.

“Not as much as I hoped, but I might’ve found a thread or two on what we’re dealing with.” Glorfindel breathed in and out. “I know someone who’s as old as my original universe, who goes by multiple names throughout the ages. An *acquaintance*–” his voice hardened for a

moment, “–Named him Mahal, which he likes enough to go by for this era. Don’t ask. It’s from a book we both like.

“Anyways, I figured that, if anyone knows what’s going on, it’s him. It’s a faint hope, since he rarely travels outside to other universes, but it’s the only one I have. He doesn’t know himself, but he figures that the answer might be in the temple’s archives. It’s been so long since he last checked, but he did find that thin thread that I mentioned.”

Nate rolled his eyes. “Stop being so dramatic and get on with it.”

“I’m getting there.” Glorfindel gave an impatient shake. “He, Mahal, figures that what we might be dealing with is an Author.”

The rest of the group fell for an awkward silence.

“Um, what? Who?” Nate blinked a few times. “You mean like a writer?”

“Exactly.” Glorfindel nodded. “That does sound plain, but it’s worse than that.” He struggled to find words. “Think of it like someone literally writing what we’re doing right now, down to the tiniest detail, before we do or say anything.”

“Th-that’s ridiculous!” Nate shook his entire body. “How could someone be able to write what we’re doing

before it happens? That's something that-that—" his voice became low. "Something like Arceus could do."

"Exactly. There's the trouble. It's said that an Author has omniscience along with the ability to influence events." Glorfindel lowered his head. "Although, it doesn't make any sense."

"What do you mean?" Henry tilted his head to the side.

"It's rare for an Author to get directly involved in an event, or at least be physically there." Glorfindel rubbed his chin, stroking it back to front. "At most, they'll send 'agents,' so to say, to cause a pivot if things stray out of course. Unless things are dire or important, an Author is usually content with writing. They wouldn't try to transform others—" he turned to Lloyd, "—Or try to plant fake evidence to create conflict. Even when they *do* get involved, it's usually because of events that have been building up for a climax, something that would change the course of history, not for something this petty."

The group grew quiet, letting Glorfindel's words sink in. Lloyd felt small, not just for being the lone human in the group but also for the danger facing everyone. The idea of fighting someone who could not only predict future events

but also influence them felt like challenging one of the Legendary Pokémon.

Thermis gripped all four hand-paws and slammed them onto the table. They declared with both heads, "We're not giving up here."

"Huh?" Lloyd jumped from the sudden noise.

"Sure, the threat might *freeze* our hearts—"

"—Or *burns* us inside out—"

"—But we're not giving up without a fight!"

"B-but," Nate held both palms out. "I mean, I would love to put a sock in that Author, but how can you punch something like Arceus?"

Thermis turned both heads to Lloyd, who blinked in confusion.

"Because that Author tried to get us to hurt or even kill our friend here," Freezy began.

Flamey continued, "But we didn't. Instead, we saved him."

"*That means even this Author has limits!*" Freezy and Flamey announced. "And we even showed up that Author again since Henry and us were stopped from hurting each other!"

It was a simple statement, all things considered. A spark in a freezing forest, a small hope in the night. It grew in strength, filling the entire group with renewed hope. Each one turned to the other and nodded. Without a word, Thermis, Lloyd, Glorfindel, Henry, and Nate pressed their open palms over each other.

"Very good." Glorfindel smiled. "In fact, I might be able to get some help. I have been hopping from universe to universe for a while, so I know some folks."

"Folks that you also transformed?" Freezy teased.

Glorfindel rolled his eyes. "They were already transformed when I observed them."

"Sure, they were," Flamey stuck his tongue out at Glorfindel.

"That's all good and all," Lloyd interrupted, with Thermis and Glorfindel turned to his direction. "However, I'm sure you noticed that I'm the lone human here. I doubt I'll do much to help other than grant you moral support."

"Glehehehe." Glorfindel bonked Lloyd's head with his staff. "I almost forgot."

"Ow! What the—"

Lloyd blinked when he felt his black hair shedding off from his head. It left behind a thin, almost buzz cut amount of hair that changed into an emerald-green shade. He grasped on it in shock, noting how the remaining hair's texture felt flaky.

The 'hair' spread down the rest of Lloyd's face before he could ask what Glorfindel was doing. He felt a tug on his ears, with them moving up on his head and stretching longer. They thinned out as well, turning white and ending with antennae. His mouth shifted forward into a short snout, feeling a few new teeth filling empty spots. His nose darkened while shrinking, becoming emerald green.

Freezy blinked. "You have—"

"—Got to be—" Flamey continued.

"—Kidding us!"

Lloyd flinched when he felt some aches from his back and sides. One set of lumps grew on his shoulder blades, pressing underneath his clothes for room. Another set of lumps expanded just underneath his arms. He stumbled off his chair, kicking it back as he gasped. New sensations came from both sets of bumps, finding that he could move them.

The emerald-green fur spread under his shirt and toward his arms and legs. They felt itchy, though Lloyd resisted the urge to scratch. His arms thinned to the point of looking thread-like compared to his torso. When the fur reached his hands, emerald-green padding grew on his palms. His middle fingers thickened before they separated into two, giving him six fingers per hand-paw. His nails shrank into small white hooks that protruded when he splayed his fingers.

The lumps expanded on his sides, with new nerves, blood, and muscles growing with it. When they ripped through, they looked clumpy with no set form. They stretched out, with the flaky emerald-green fur covering them, and thinned as much as his arms. New joints popped at the middle and near the ends, with Lloyd able to flex them. At the very end of his new arms fingers formed, just like the ones on his upper arms.

His back arched, with the lumps on his back growing faster. They ripped through his shirt, causing enough damage for it to fall off. It thinned much sooner than his new arms, almost crystal in look but flakier than his fur. They stretched out much wider than his arms and almost reached his feet. They turned into a beautiful emerald-green

color, though with white fringes as well. Lloyd's new wings flapped, lifting him off from the floor.

The fur spread down his legs, causing them to thin out as well. Lloyd felt his pants slipping off, so he grabbed them before they fell. His shoes and socks tumbled down, with his new feet-paws a few sizes too small for them. Lloyd's feet also stretched out into digitigrades, with similar paddings on his hand forming on the bottom. His toes fused into three digits, with small white hooks for claws. By that point, the emerald-green fur covered them.

Lloyd felt pain on his rear, as though his spine was stretching out longer there. Blood, muscles, and nerves extended out, poking from the top of his loose pants. It only reached a foot long, with emerald-green fur covering much of it. On the tip of his new tail grew pure white flaky fur. It wiggled on command, shedding some of the fur along the way.

Lloyd gasped in shock, having become the Mothreon form from this morning.

"W-woah." Lloyd flapped his wings again, with them moving faster than any eye can process. "I-I'm that AWESOME Mothreon! And I have full control! YES!!" He swung his fist up, only to stop to catch his pants from falling off. "Though it would be better if any of my clothes fit!"

Glorfindel snickered for a few seconds and waved his staff. Lloyd's gray pants shrunk so they could fit without causing any movement constraint. At the back, his pants separated and reformed into a snap above his new tail. His white shirt, on the other hand-paw, unthreaded themselves to strings before restringing themselves. They formed into a series of sashes that wrapped around Lloyd's torso without obstructing his wings. Lloyd lowered himself to the ground to look at his new body in wonder.

"Oh, boy! This is so cool!" Lloyd rushed over to Glorfindel and shook his hand-paws with all four of his arms. "Thank you, thank you, thank you! I would have asked you sooner, but so much has happened since! Ah, man! I love being a Bug-type Pokémon!"

"Glehehehe. I'm glad that you like it." Glorfindel smiled and bowed.

Henry and Nate blinked twice each at this jubilant display.

"Um," Henry whispered to Thermis. "Is he always this nutty about Bug-types?"

"Yes. His passion for them is *blazing*," Flamey whispered back in answer.

"Nothing can *cool* it down." Freezy snickered. "Not even this Author can."

"Alright." Glorfindel raised his hand-paws up. "It's been a long day, especially for me since I used up a lot more magic than I expected." He rolled his shoulders. "I suggest that we head home to rest and then plan out what to do to fight against this Author."

The others nodded to Glorfindel before they walked out into two separate groups. Henry and Nate went back to The Eevee Emcee's dressing room to prepare to head out. Meanwhile, Thermis and Lloyd walked side by side, grinning at each other. Before Lloyd left the backroom, he turned back to Glorfindel and tilted his head in confusion.

Despite his joy from before, Glorfindel looked doubtful.

"Go on ahead," Lloyd told Thermis. "I'll catch up."

Thermis nodded and left while Lloyd fluttered over to Glorfindel.

"Anything wrong?" Lloyd asked.

"Do you remember what sounded like a glass-crashing sound?" Glorfindel asked in turn. "The one from this morning?"

“Wha— OH!” Lloyd widened his eyes. “That was when Thermis stopped themselves from killing me during that fight.” He averted his eyes. “I was panicking inside so much. I did think I was going to die, so it was almost unnoticeable.”

“And was there a sound just like it anytime in the past half hour?”

“N-no.”

Glorfindel closed his eyes, deep in thought. “I wonder.” He shook his head twice. “Sorry. It’s something to think about tomorrow, when I can think clearer. Using too much magic can make me ill, and I already had little reserves to begin with. Already, I feel a headache forming.”

“Ah.” Lloyd could guess what he was thinking about. It troubled him as well, but he shook it off. “Come on. We have a space for you to sleep in, even if it’s just a couch.”

Glorfindel smiled and allowed Lloyd to lead him out.

#

On one of the balconies, between the theatre’s filming ones, two figures stood on it. The rightmost one wore a black-and-white yukata kimono, which wrapped itself snug against his red scaly body. His sea-blue eyes gazed at the

stage without emotion, despite the orchestra playing beautiful, soulful music. He held a bundle of papers against his right side while spinning a brown quill on his left hand-paw.

"Revelation precedes to hope," the writing dragon remarked. "A climax in expounding fiction. Yet, hope could be dangerous to characters. Hope could maneuver developing characters to a doomed conflict. Hope could also deceive characters into an inescapable cycle." He paused for a few seconds. "You understood it well yourself, Master."

The other figure did not stir. "Quill Dragan."

Quill nodded, with the brown hair-plumage on his head swaying in response.

"You let yourself be involved in this mere trifle," the other said. "I see no reason why you bothered yourself with this when we have far bigger issues to handle."

"The plot's current progress moves forward, Master, without fail." Quill closed his eyes. "A cycle of Hope and Fear. It is inevitable. One must organize for the genuine climax, but I'm not prepared yet. I am extensively too untrained in my capabilities, boundless though as they seem."

The other remained quiet for a few seconds. "Tell me, did you plan for this 'Thermis' and 'Eevee Emcee' to meet? Or did you want them to fight to the death?"

Quill opened his eyes and pulled out a sheet from his bundle. He handed it over to the other, who read the red ink in a sea of black text: '*Kinou no teki wa kyou no tomo #e.*' It took him a few seconds to understand what they meant since that was mere vocalization of a non-English language with different characters.

"*'An enemy yesterday is a friend today,'*" the other quoted. Quill took the paper back and placed it back in his bundle. The other asked, "Why?"

"This Henry fascinates me," Quill answered.

The two remained quiet for some time, even as the rest of the audience broke into an applause.

"I have plotted the culmination to this anecdote, Master," Quill continued. He held his sheets up, where the title A HailFire Change lay on the top. "This Glorfindel might guide as much assistance as conceivable, even through time and space, but it would not be of importance."

"Don't get too confident," the other cautioned. Quill dared to give the other a slight glance. The other

continued, "Even the best plans rarely hold up in battle. I know that from personal experience. And though you may carry the Author leader's blood in you, you're not him."

Quill remarked in a dry tone, "The concern of confidence, or pride, is something you're accountable for, Master. It is one of your fatal flaws." The other bristled at the comment, but Quill continued. "As for the theme of this tale, I have previously created an epigraph of it. Even if they interrupted my providence, this is always inevitable."

Quill changed the page on the sheet, where only a single sentence lay.

Demons run when a good man goes to war

"Fascinating."

#

Thermis and Lloyd stepped into their apartment, with Glorfindel following. They carried their bags, with Thermis swapping them with the other to see how it fits. Glorfindel could not help but smirk at it. The three chatted with each other, despite the darkness ahead of them. They went to the small living room before they paused and gasped in shock.

Glaceon and Flareon lay on the couch, surrounding a brown-and-cream-colored Pokémon egg.

The End

Thermis Coldflare will return

About Author

Standing over six feet tall, Foxgamer01 is a writer born in Arizona and currently living in Arkansas. Though he initially wanted to be in the gaming industry, he did not realize until later, after years of playing with random toys and imagining adventures with them, of his gift of being a writer. Even then, it took some computer classes with a dry professor in college that solidified his change in becoming a writer.

Foxgamer01 has been writing, at first through notebooks and later through laptops, since 2009. There was a dry spot between 2013 and 2018, thanks to distractions and work, but he has been writing consistently since. He had written over a hundred short stories and six 'books,' including one collab story.

Foxgamer01 would like to thank fellow friends and writers Greyhound1211, SnekKnack AKA Nick, Tails230, and Kinshou-fox AKA The-Writing-Dragon AKA Huggles. They have been the biggest inspiration for getting him to write. Though Foxgamer01 carried a lot of regret over the years, he would never regret the days he founded their writings, which triggered his desire to write his stories.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read my story! I really appreciate it. If you enjoyed it, then you'll definitely want to check out my gallery accounts at:

<https://www.furaffinity.net/user/foxgamer01/>

<https://www.deviantart.com/foxgamer01>

<https://www.weasyl.com/~foxgamer01>

<https://furrynetwork.com/foxgamer01/>

I have a lot of great content there that I think you'll love.

Also, if you're interested in supporting me and my writing, please consider visiting my Ko-Fi and Patreon accounts at:

<https://ko-fi.com/foxgamer01>

<https://www.patreon.com/foxgamer01>

Every little bit helps me to keep creating and sharing my stories with the world.

Lastly, if you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me at:

foxgamer01@hotmail.com

I'd love to hear from you and answer any questions you may have.

Thanks again for your support, and I can't wait to share more of my work with you soon!