Prologue

The Pokemon Unity lab building was ablaze, and Tim was *terrified.*

Tim's father, Harry Goodman, had been placed in the body of his Pikachu partner to preserve all that he was following a fatal car crash just two years prior. His body was still down there at the bottom of the lab, encapsulated in a pod that kept his body alive despite his mind's absence. Yet, it was only a matter of time before Harry Goodman's body was lost to the flames below.

Tim had to make the call. He needed to save his father and Pikachu, but he had a responsibility to the lives in the elevator with him; his classmate Rachel, her father and the Pokemon who had assisted him and Harry to this point.

As Harry cried out to Tim for him to go on without him, Tim's mind was at work, analyzing every possible outcome he could manage in such a short period of time. A few moments later, Tim steeled himself for what he was about to do.

"Tim?" Rachel shakily spoke, looking up at Tim as she comforted the Pokemon slumped against the back of the elevator. Tim said nothing in turn, not at first. His breath shook as he hyped himself up.

"Rachel, get your father and these Pokemon out of here, okay?" he turned to look at his pink-haired classmate, eyes focused.

"Tim… Don't do anything stupid!" Rachel half-chided, more fear than firmness in her shaking voice.

"Just do it, please," Tim then pressed the elevator's topmost button, and… jumped over the gate. Rachel gasped and reached out for him, but narrowly missed the hood of his signature red jacket.

"Tim! What the hell are you doing?!" Mayor Myers cried out, shock overcoming his overwhelming guilt, "you're going to get yourself hurt, or worse!"

Tim said nothing else as he adeptly climbed down the framework of the ascending elevator. He didn't listen as Rachel and her father pleaded; he had to save his father and Pikachu before the whole place blew sky high. He knew it was a slim chance, but what else could he do? Let them die? No, he wouldn't abandon them. Tim wouldn't lose his father again… Not after having come so far.

The building shook violently, nearly tearing Tim from the elevator shaft, but he held on. Once the tremor passed, he resumed his climb until he reached the scaffolding Pikachu laid upon, the electric mouse still struggling to stand.

“Dad!” Tim shouted. He cried out as another wave of tremors ripped through the lab. Tim steadied himself, but Pikachu wasn’t as lucky. Tim’s father shouted and slipped off of the top of the machine, falling like a bag of rocks to the next level beneath.

“Dad, hold on!” Tim shielded his face from some falling debris, slowly making his way along the scaffolding. Pikachu coughed,

“Ah, Tim… You gotta get out of here…” his father grunted, a bit of blood trickling from his furry forehead. Tim gritted his teeth and shook his head.

“No! I’m not going to lose you again!” Pikachu hardly had the strength to respond, and simply laid upon the unstable machine’s upper structure. A part of Tim had hardly believed he was doing this, but he knew that his adventures in Ryme City had built him up stronger than he could have ever been… His adventures with Pikachu- no, his father- had made him stronger, even if he had no idea Pikachu really was Harry Goodman with jumbled memories this whole time.

Tim swung himself and landed unsteadily upon the upper part of the machine just feet away from Pikachu. However, his landing had done a number on the structure, and the violent fire overcoming the lab was no help to keeping it stable. Tim could just barely grab Pikachu before the machine’s upper architecture failed, and they were sent plunging to the main platform below. It was all Tim could do to shield Pikachu from the landing with his body.

With a deep crack, a hot numbness filled Tim’s chest and left arm instantly. Tim couldn’t scream; his chest felt like it was on fire and filled with lava and dry ice at the same time. He only opened his mouth in a silent cry, no air escaping.

“Shit-- Tim! Tim, kiddo-” Pikachu rolled out of Tim’s grip, examining Tim’s condition despite his own injuries, “Tim, we need… I don’t--”

“*S’okay,*” Tim wheezed, clutching his arm close to his abdomen. Pikachu’s clever mind wasn’t fooled, and the Harry in him knew this was bad. He could only imagine what internal injuries Tim sustained from that fall. Tim’s left arm was badly broken- His ribcage probably-- Oh Arceus, he couldn’t do this! He couldn’t just sit here and watch his only son **die**…

Tim was well aware he wouldn’t be able to get himself out. Neither him, nor his father or Pikachu would escape, because of his stupid miscalculation. He screwed his eyes shut, a few tears escaping as he tried to bite back the scream of agony welling in his throat. Everything was starting to feel fuzzy, the adrenaline slowly starting to give way to pain.

Pikachu slapped Tim’s face gently as he started to appear distant,

“Tim, you have to stay awake,” Pikachu didn’t beg, he just spoke matter-of-factly, as though Tim was going to be perfectly okay and they’d be able to escape. He of course knew that wasn’t true, but he’d be damned if he wasn’t about to do everything in his power to comfort his boy before the inevitable,

“Tim?” Pikachu’s voice cracked thickly with emotion as Tim’s bright, inquisitive amber eyes began to dim. He could see a glob of blood trailing down the corner of Tim’s mouth, and bright crimson almost as vibrant as his hoodie blossoming through his white t-shirt.

Pikachu and Harry, melded together, felt twice the amount of pain as Tim’s ragged breathing slowly began to ebb. They were powerless, watching Harry’s son struggle against his injuries.

“Oh Arceus, please… Please… Please…” Pikachu choked, curling up against Tim as the explosions began to bring the building down on top of them both. The last thing Pikachu saw was a hungry blaze rushing towards them--

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Nothingness was something Tim could never really stand. His mind was always busy, whether it was a mystery to solve or his classwork. There was always a problem for him to chew on, some great thought process he had to work through. Nothingness was boring, and Tim needed mental stimulation.

So it was Harry Goodman, his father, who always aimed to nurture and hone his sharp mind. Tim could fondly recall his father making all sorts of puzzles and scavenger hunts for him to solve… Some part of Tim always wanted his father’s disappearance to be another scavenger hunt. A test… But the stakes were always much higher, weren’t they?

…

Harry wasn’t a perfect man. That much was true. He had always done his best to protect his family and raise his son and daughter right, but sometimes he’d mess up. Tim, bless his kind heart, had never stopped believing in him. He never stopped looking for Harry, no matter how hopeless it seemed, no matter what adversity awaited him.

Harry always knew his son would be a better man than him, maybe even a greater detective. He challenged him, he cultivated his innate skills, and Tim had excelled at every step of the way. Tim had made Harry immeasurably proud… He always had.

…

Tim’s awareness returned like a light being flicked on in a pitch black basement. He tried to gasp for breath, but found he could not breathe at all, nor did he need to.

Tim Goodman.

“Who… What…?” Tim ‘spoke’ in whatever space he was in, but couldn’t hear anything. Nothingness surrounded him, and only a single point of infinitely far light could be seen at all.

Thine people call me Arceus. I created all things. I hath created thee.

The light suddenly pulsed, and a vaguely familiar form made itself known to Tim. A strange, elegant Pokemon beyond much further description. It stood upon four legs, a crest of what seemed to be pure gold encapsulating its midriff. Tim was speechless.

I would speak with thee, Tim Goodman. Thy acts of courage and heroism precede thee.

“Um. Thanks,” Tim hardly knew what to say before his, well, ultimate creator. The God of all things. He found himself at a bit of a loss for words.

Thou sacrificed thine life to save another. Many Pokemon and Humans could say the same, but thine adventures have engrossed me so… I would see thee excel further, if thou art willing.

“What do you mean, ‘excel further’?” Tim couldn’t help but ask. After all, Arceus sought his agreement. Wouldn’t it be best to inquire?

A sort of ‘smile’ appeared on Arceus’s face, and it spoke.

Inquisitive, thou art indeed. I intend to restore thine vigor, Tim Goodman. Thou shall be restored to life, renewed.

Tim was struck with awe, but a tugging at his chest urged him onward.

“What about my Dad…?”

Harry Goodman lived fully. I would return him to that which he originated--

“No!” Tim shouted with all his being, which gave pause to Arceus. The Pokemon appeared stunned.

Harry Goodman hath lived honorably. Why would thou not give him peace?

“Because he- he isn’t done yet! He still has so much to do!” Tim argued, “And Sophia! My sister, he has to be there for her, and Mom too!” *And me!*

I see. Thy devotion is touching, Tim Goodman. Then I shall restore both of thee… I warn thee, the trials ahead will require strength of both body and mind.

“What does-- Ah!” Tim yelped as Arceus’s light suddenly began to swirl around his presence in the void-like space. Golden light filled his vision, and before long… Everything was gone, and Tim returned to his state of unconsciousness.

Revision #1
Created 2024-09-21 22:45:36 UTC by oblivvys
Updated 2024-09-21 22:50:17 UTC by oblivvys