

12.

"Were you still growing, after you left with the antidote?"

"Yeah..."

"Then, the moment you leave here...you may keep getting bigger, on your own. For all I saw, that potion is unbelievably powerful. You could outgrow us all in short order, unless you get a dose of antidote, yourself."

"Oh, no, not dat. I was kinda hopin' we were done talking..."

Figment's warning to Bartok swam, shark-like, through Toothless' thoughts, and the nearer it came to attacking his reality, the choppiest the waters got. At an impressive fifty feet in height, the black dragon had been ready to punt any opponent across the silly pokemon arena, the moment it emerged. Yet, here was Bartok, just as dragon as he, only *considerably* bigger—and that unwanted gap was widening, fast.

"H...haaaah, geez," Bartok sneered, as if ready to sneeze, before his body exploded out again, bursting from one hundred feet to 130, in one hot, billowing push of growth. Fur and scale alike stretched out in an expanding wave of pressure that funneled down into his feet and hands, making them balloon wider across a cracking floor. If he had been asleep, this was the wake-up call—for everyone present.

"B-bartok!" Toothless growled, waving dumbly with his massive arms. "Bartok, stop! It's me, Toothless, down here!"

Over one hundred and fifty feet of bulging, broadening dragon-bat tensed in with a wobble as Bartok's muscles flared, bristling his pelt out in waves. Two pink eyes tried to focus in below, squinting out over a growing muzzle, and as he attempted an answer, the shuddering doubled, blowing back into his body as it exploded to 200 feet, then 240, with just two hard throbs of growth. A snaking tail pushed out over the floor, creaking and squiggling awkwardly around over the polish, swelling so high up and thick around that fleeing referees stopped trying to scale it, to reach the exits. A few were scooped into the warm membrane of his wings, before sliding back down into the bulk of his furred sides. His muzzle rammed out into Toothless, bowling him back, as Bartok huffed hot into his belly and chest, still shaking with power, still surging even *bigger*.

"Tuh-Toothless," he rumbled, gulping, as Toothless clung to more and more and more muzzle and warm chin against him. "Huh-hu-I can't...can't stop it, there, then! *I can—*"

Suddenly, there was over three hundred feet of him, blowing back through the far bleachers, smashing them into pulp as spectators all cried and shoved their way into the only two exit aisles on that side. His muzzle crammed into, then up, up along the opposing bleacher, Toothless' body smashing through row after row.

"Calm down!" Toothless gasped, as Bartok's growing chin pressed in, crushing the air out of him quickly. He beat his wings uselessly, then scrabbled to the left and tumbled loose, letting the huge

dragon grow and grow into the wall, smashing flat to it as the arena shook. "T-try and relax! Where's Baba-Yaga? I t-thought she had the antidote!"

"Get out!" a voice called, down below.

**"Huh-huh-H-I dunno!"** Bartok wailed, as he closed his eyes and bit his lip, exploding even bigger, even heavier, gushing to fill the arena entirely. **"I j-just woke up, fer cryin'...out...looooud!"**

Again, frighteningly, Bartok trembled and groaned, then detonated in size, blowing up tight against the crushed bleachers, the walls, the scaffolding, the lighting rigs, the monitors, *everything*. Paws as big as houses stubbornly ballooned even bigger, swelling tight against his bulging chest and shoulders, his long neck forced in against his booming back muscles as he whined and shook all over, the power increasing, his growth escalating frantically.

*"Get out, y'idiot!"*

Toothless finally saw him, emerging from the sheer wall of Bartok's tufts—the old man! He was but a dot, a flea jostling about on some titan...but there he was, just the same, fighting his way over.

"W-what are you still doing here!?" Toothless balked, even as he struggled to move between the dying wall behind him, and the living wall, in front. From out the wall popped Drake, the hardened gym leader scrabbling out into Toothless' gigantic chest, fingers tickling as they found gaps in the scales. "I'm a tank, I'll be alright! Oof—you're not, you won't b-be!"

"Not leaving ya!" Drake barked, just as Bartok's 500-foot body trembled even tighter, untold muscles tensing in with all their might, then billowed uncontrollably against them, against everything. Walls snapped and cracked, webbing and warping, as too much dragon inflated everywhere, until the fleeing masses out in the adjoining hallway were interrupted by a surge of white scales blasting through, as Bartok grew, and grew, and grew, and *grew*.

Perhaps the gesture was noble; Toothless might have been struck by this old bird, sticking it out with him, in a calmer setting. As it was, there was a bit too much going on—a bit too much *Bartok*.

"S-stay put, in there!"

"Where?" Drake yelled, confused, only for Toothless' thick finger to push the man deep within the crease of his pectorals, for safekeeping.

As he did, Bartok's heartbeat boom-boom-boomed heavily in a growing, pressing chest, the gigantic dragon growing even greater and stronger as his pink eyes rolled back, then closed, and he doubled in size. Walls blew apart, throwing drywall and beams and splinters and glass and molding, tiles shattering away in a surge of white bulk. The ceiling tented up, up, then cracked, until a vast wave of fur and scales billowed up through it like a sundered egg.

In less than a minute's time (44 seconds, specifically), Bartok had ballooned larger than the entire stadium; his bulky arms blew out of both sides, a contrail of destruction angling along behind them, before his tail whipped free over the cliff on which it had proudly sat.

The last vestiges of its shell blew away as Bartok roared, his head thrown back, his neck

swelling longer and thicker, his body bursting more and more hungrily massive. Over 1,000 feet tall, and half a mile long, he overtook the back ridge of the cliff itself, bellowing fearfully against a setting sun. His throbbing bulk trembled harder, then ballooned even larger, again, and again, his building-sized claws crushing down over more and more rock and tree, spreading like wildfire in size.

Toothless, himself a giant, still found it harder and harder to keep his head above the canopy of Bartok's fur, as he kept tightly hugged to the dragon, less than toy-sized to him now. There had to be a way to shrink him.

*There wasn't.*

Baba-Yaga would know how!

*She wasn't here.*

Then, what was Toothless supposed to do about this?

"There!"

Toothless perked his many fins, blinking, then looked down into his own pectorals. Drake was waving wild for his attention, then pointing out over the great plains of Bartok's fur.

"THERE!"

Toothless squinted, then saw: a single glint of light, over and over, signaling, out in the jungle of fluff. Clinging to a single, ever-growing tuft of ivory, was a minute speck, and it was reflecting light off the sunset, again and again.

"What--"

"That's a gym leader badge," Drake shouted, it being the only way to compete with the constant groaning and swelling of Bartok's huge body. "That's him! That's Steven, out there!"

Without another word, Toothless was on the move. The dragon's wings, finally free, whipped open, and let the passing winds dote on them. They closed again, given they weren't strong enough, since Bartok was blocking most of it with his girth, and instead changed tacks. Drake watched the creature think, then shift, and start scaling the mounds of fur, hand-over-fist.

"You aren't--"

"Winds are too weak!" Toothless growled, as he grabbed his way along, climbing Bartok's growing form. "We'll get to him faster, this way!"

Of course, the doing was less easy than he might have hoped: Bartok's body, seemingly hearing the plan, decided to playfully expand even bigger, right after. More and more dragon spread out, the landscape on which he moved swelling wider and higher, still, as Bartok moaned up above in the skies, blowing up to a staggering 2,000 feet in height. In response, Toothless let his wings back out, and used them as boosters, or sails, flapping in time with leaping, to make up the distance.

The city below was in more of a panic than Toothless, as the crushed remains of the mighty gymnasium vanished under a massive wave of surging dragon-bulk. The walkways down the cliff to Ever Grande were brimming with the populace, their exodus ongoing as they scattered away. Even from the city streets, a great pillar of fur and scale grew bigger and bigger, towering higher into the darkening skies.

Bartok, now a half a mile tall, and over a full mile long, only continued to grow. His vast claws dug into the cliff, unable to help it, as he shook harder and harder, his tensing muscle spasms creating a great quake down below. He grit his huge teeth and snorted, shaking his head, as if trying his best to deny the growth—only to huff, then cry out as he rumbled deep within, and billowed even *BIGGER*...

Still, remarkably, Toothless managed to compensate, as each follicle of fur swelled from a reed to a tree, thickening unstopably larger and higher all around him. Even he was now a flea, if even that. By the time they reached Steven, the tuft had bulged too big, leaving him dangling and bobbing as he clung to the tip of a single, monstrous strand.

"T-thank goodness!" Steven shouted, keeping as much composure as one of his breeding could. "I...I didn't k-know he could use Growth!"

"It's not an ability!" Toothless sighed, as even he had to look up, the strand of fur too big to him to reach. Instead, he grabbed its base, and began to pull, forcing it and Stone Jr. lower to him. "This isn't a pokemon, he's a dragon! From another world, like I am!"

"I...I see!" Steven replied, loudly, as Toothless brought the strand low enough that the human could slip off, and thump down onto Toothless' huge head.

"Glad you believe me," Toothless huffed, letting the long follicle bulge bigger in his grip, before letting it whip away. "Saves us time!"

"Well, he is massive...and you can talk..."

"Get him down here, already!" Drake yelled.

"Is that...Drake?" Steven asked, as Toothless let him climb carefully onto a free palm, wherein he offered the kid down to his pectorals. "You're okay!"

"I had a dragon of my own, heh," the old dog laughed, rapping his knuckles on Toothless' shiny black scale.

As they reunited, the landscape of Bartok's body trembled again, rumbling even worse than before, so much so that Toothless danced and pitched to keep his balance.

"Just how all-fired big is he supposed to get?" Drake yelled, as the trembling increased.

"I don't know," Toothless gulped, as Bartok's fur began to outgrow them fully, engulfing the trio entirely in fur. "If my friends are right...he might not stop!"

"Those friends you were so keen to get to, right," Drake replied, thinking. "Would they know what to do, about all this nonsense!?"

"They would know better than me, I can tell you that much!"

"Wait," Steven said, patting himself over. "Wait, I know!"

Toothless had trouble seeing, granted, but Drake watched cautiously as the young man pulled the same pokeball out from his jacket, grinning.

"You think he'll fit?" Drake asked.

"What's the have?" Toothless asked, before his fins shot upright. "That ball! Of course!"

"It's worth a try, isn't it?" Steven asked.

"Don't ask me, just throw the thing, kid! Better to know now!"

Steven wound up, then hurled the ball down, so that it thumped one of Bartok's street-wide scales, between follicles. It snapped open. For a moment, there was only the whipping winds and the mean rumbling of Bartok's growing body under them, before a pink light finally overtook their view of him, consuming him all. It had taken several seconds' time to do what anyone in this world knew was immediate—Bartok had simply grown *that* big. Over 2 miles of towering bat-dragon finally vanished into the ball, which snapped shut...then promptly plummeted down to the crushed cliff.

With nothing between them and that same cliff, the trio found themselves in a sudden and violent free-fall. Toothless's hands thumped protectively over his chest muscles, his wings flared free, and he glided out beyond, the winds carrying him over the ocean's breadth.

"The ball!" Steven cried out, as they watched it thump down on the ruins of the gym, lost there. "We need to get back there! We can't let anyone get that pokeball!"

"Right!" Toothless bellowed, not really meaning to. His wings beat hard against the wind, and he forced his way back toward the cliff.

On landing, Toothless took an open palm and lowered both Steven and Drake down onto the ruins, careful and slow.

"You did okay, considering," Drake grumbled, though not sourly. Toothless blinked a few times, then slowly worked on a wide grin.

"You thought I was going to let you just get crushed? How low is your opinion of me?"

"Not so low, now."

There went the smile.

"Found it!"

Steven returned, waving the ball about. Drake wandered over, just as that same ball shook angrily, tossing and jerking about in the boy's hands.

"Whoa!"

"It's fightin' back pretty hard," Drake sighed, furrowing his aged brows even lower than usual. "Can it hold 'em?"

"I...I don't know..."

Toothless thudded over, and opened his hand back up.

"Gimme."

Steven looked it over, before the ball's shaking worsened, prompting him to do as told. Into Toothless' vast palm it went. One gigantic hand closed over the other, in an attempt to form a seal.

"Somehow, I don't think this will really hold," Toothless huffed, looking all about as he held it in both hands. "For all we know, Bartok's still growing bigger, inside, now that he's up..."

"Well, we can't just open it!" Steven groaned. "What do we do, what do we do? We could...contact my father! He might have something we can use, he did send me the new ball, in the first place..."

"Can you ring him up?" Drake asked.

"Well, I can, if my phone is still—"

At that, quite out of nowhere, the ball went still. That Toothless looked so confounded up overhead was enough to draw the two humans' attention, as well. The dragon cocked his head, then gingerly lifted one hand up, to reveal the pokeball, still and quiet. Dead, even.

"It stopped," he rumbled, sniffing it over curiously. "Maybe his growth spurt ended!"

Before the others could respond, the ball snapped open, making even Toothless lurch away fearfully. He winced, then waited, then looked to his open palm. The ball was open, and no sign of Bartok was there. He might have gone wide-eyed from the shock and bafflement of it all, but there was another, better reason for Toothless' expression, one that the humans couldn't understand, even if he lowered his hand to show them.

It was the momentary sight of a red portal, there, within it, blinking out of existence just as quickly as it had been spotted.

### ***EARLIER***

As soon as the ship departed, they moved.

Lucario crept out of the loading bay cargo holds so quietly that Figment would have lost her, had he blinked or looked away. In the rush to scamper through the vent system, just to reach the loading dock in time to sneak onboard, he had nearly blown back up in size three times. Turns out,

panicking and rushing was detrimental to maintaining his hold on imagining himself smaller. Once the Devon workers had finished mechanically loading Spyro, Cynder and the 'charizard' onto the ferry, however, they had had enough of a window to slip in after, before it all closed up, and took to water.

*Okay, we're clear,* Lucario thought, grinning slightly. *I think they trucked them into the back section of the ferry. It's a big boat, so we'd better move quickly. I don't think it's a very long trip, before they arrive at the rig.*

"The rig?" Figment whispered, thinking. "As in...oil deposits? But, we're over the sea...goodness! Manned offshore rigs! Brilliant!"

*It's more terrible than brilliant,* Lucario corrected, patiently. She turned to Figment, and placed gentle paws on his shoulders, making sure his eyes met hers. *Understand, Figment, this isn't for oil. Neo Mauville...er, Mauville, was a specialized rig, meant to cultivate something called Infinity Energy. It's a tremendous power source, and Devon was hellbent on creating a steady supply of it...*

"A...alright," Figment murmured, listening intently.

*But Figment, that power, it...we all thought it was revolutionary, at the time...a-and it was...but the price was terrible. Beyond terrible. It...required a source, and that source was...pokemon. Their energy, itself. Their life force.*

"It...exhausted them?"

The look Lucario gave him made Figment freeze. It wasn't an angry one, or a scolding or contemptuous look, as though he was some ignoramus or fool. It was complete, iron, cold *regret*.

*...No.*

Throughout, Figment had been blinking, whereas Lucario hadn't. Now, neither of them moved a single iota.

"Oh," Figment started, before pulling back. "Oh! No!"

*We need to stop this, sabotage it. Now. They suffered a blowout before, and the entire rig was damaged, beyond repair, so I thought at the time...*

"You did it, then," Figment said, slowly, letting pieces fall where they ought.

*I loved being at Devon,* she admitted, hanging her head. *I loved the progress, the camaraderie, the family. Figment, I was so happy there. I was contributing, I belonged.*

The urge to save Spyro and Cynder, to have them back beside him, was suddenly so overwhelming that Figment wasn't breathing. It wouldn't come to him. A creature out of time, out of worlds, the idea of his own comrades, his *family* returning, was suddenly maddening.

*I was part of security here. Under a supervisor, Jason Anders. Leon and I were a team, his team. Top-notch in every aspect, heh. Our clearance was so high up, we were moved over for a stint on the construction of Mauville, off the coast of Hoenn. I was so excited. I...I'm sorry, we don't have time*

*for this, do we. We need to get moving, forgive me.*

"Leon...the charizard in the holding tank?"

*Yes. And we can save him, and your friends, if we move!*

"So, you know this ferry, then? You know where to go?"

*Well...this is a new model, actually. I have some ideas, but—*

The hard screech of an alarm sounded, nearby, interrupting. A red light soaked the bay, casting them into darkness, otherwise.

"Wh-what's that for?" Figment asked, blowing up a foot in size, from surprise alone.

*I don't know!*

*"Alert, alert—containment breach in Sector H, aft...containment breach in Sector H, aft...all personnel to security, repeat..."*

Figment put it together first.

"Goodness...the candies!"

Following the swarm of guards proved easy enough, considering they weren't bothering to look for stowaways; what awaited them all inside of the back holding bay was enough to make Figment sympathize right away.

"What do you mean, they're growing!?" one officer shouted, shoving a scientist aside to get to and rifle through paperwork. "That's not possible!"

"See for yourself!" another shot back, usefully motioning toward the three gigantic holding tanks. Each one was filled to the brim with Spyro, Cynder and Leon, all of whom were slumbering as they ballooned bigger, so much so that the canisters themselves were starting to crack slightly, from within. "The pressure is designed to resist externally, at this rate, they'll break!"

"And their bodies—"

Spyro was bigger, certainly, but his canister was the least affected; Cynder, however, was becoming a complete behemoth, in hers. All two hundred feet of her pulsed out, her already-stupendous muscles erupting even larger, in upset fits of growth. Her breasts pressed tight to the casing, forcing the upper curves to pinch up against her trapped chin. Her shoulders striated deeper, tighter, evermore lines of definition bunching and swelling into each other. Her wings flattened between the tank lining and her own erupting back bulk, her thighs exploding together, bigger and stronger, leaving no room for anything else as she became impossibly over-built. The case snapped a bit further, making everyone scatter back nervously below, as the sirens continued on.

Leon wasn't as big, but his muscles were mimicking hers, volcanic bursts of power blowing his

frame wider and thicker. Shelf-like pectorals boomed forth, stretching his scales, his lats ballooning bigger under swelling triceps and blimp-sized shoulders. His entire body shifted, the feral features of a round belly and haunches pulling down, narrowing into humanoid legs, as knees clicked into place, and calves separated and bulged to proper form. The hulking charizard twitched, still asleep in the mixture, but a smile formed and wouldn't leave, as his bulk continued to inflate larger and larger, filling the tank at a slower pace.

"Leon...he looks as humanoid as the other two, now!"

"Are they influencing his genetic makeup?"

"How?"

"Look, I don't know! We have to move them!"

"Where!?! These are the biggest tanks!"

*They're working!* Lucario thought, her paws over her small muzzle and mouth. *I can't believe it! Oh, Leon, he looks...aheh, er...j-just what candy types did you put in there?*

"Well, it was dark, I wasn't really sure," Figment whispered, as they watched from behind a large crate. "I just went with what was in my hands, at the time, heh!"

"What are you doing here?"

The guard's voice came so sharp, so sudden, that Figment blew up another two feet in size, leaving him only a foot smaller than he. The armed human raised an electrically-charged baton to strike, when Lucario headbutted up under his chin, staggering him.

*Run!*

Figment stumbled back as the ship pitched; by the time he looked up, Lucario was fighting off five armed guards, all at once. Truth be told, she was doing a bang-up job. Literally.

"Hang on!" Figment roared, as best as he could, as he let himself grow up to an impressive 12 feet. He stormed heavily over, lifting the entire crate, and swinging it wild into the guards, knocking several of them back. Lucario only started a tiny bit as the sight of Figment, bigger again, before she chuckled internally, and nodded.

*Right, you're gigantic, I forgot!*

"Don't get me thinking that too much!" he laughed, before a smoke grenade popped off, hissing to a skid between them. Figment shoved Lucario back from the clouds as it engulfed him.

Figment!

"Get to the vents, go! I'll be alright! Here!"

At that, a single candy flew out from the cloud, which Lucario caught in a single well-trained

paw. She looked at it, balking, then back up to Figment. Before she could protest, another wave of armed guards came tearing through the bay door, and she yelped and bolted off down an adjacent hall.

As the tanks cracked nearby, and as the scientists, officers and guards all swarmed in towards him, Figment let his self-control slip, quite intentionally, and felt himself swell up, up, and up. His belly expanded back out into a great stretchy sphere of scales, his feet swelling over the floor.

"Let's see how you all like...t-this..."

As he ballooned up to a whopping 33 feet, Figment suddenly teetered in place. His eyes rolled back, and he fell over with a crash, out cold from the knockout gas.

Lucario was in the vent so fast, that the grating was shut in less than a second, leaving the guards to chase on down the hallway. She caught her breath as she waited, perking her large ears high. Silence, at last (minus the softened growls of the alarm, further off).

*Do I take this now?* she wondered, looking the strange candy over curiously. She sniffed at it, and grinned. It did smell divine! It nearly found its way into her mouth, just from want of its sweetness, before she pulled back, chiding herself. *No, no. These are serious business, I saw that for myself. I hope Figment's okay. I hope they can break out of those tanks, they looked ready to burst...*

Comporting herself, Lucario held on to the candy, looked both ways down the darkened vent shaft, then picked a direction.

Figment awoke to find his bulky arms behind him, having blown back up to full, monstrous size. His body was mostly belly again, leaving him back to his 90-foot size. He rested rather awkwardly in one of the holds, his massive wrists lashed to the wall mounts, much the same as would have been done to a secured cargo load. That he pulled with that much strength, and still remained fastened, was a credit to the engineers of this world.

Still, he was smarter.

"Whew, that was unpleasant," Figment sighed, shaking his head to clear the webs. "Lucky for me, I'm so very small...so very, very regular..."

"Rurr?"

The voice cut through his concentration, just as Figment had shrunken down a few feet, leaving him to billow right back up to full size again. He looked around, confused, having some trouble seeing over his own massive belly and chest...

"H...hello?"

"Rurru!"

Straining, Figment leaned over toward the sound enough to see past himself, and spot a smaller dragon, with long sloping antennae, a satchel, and a set of aviator-styled goggles on, resting atop two

big, gentle eyes. Female, from the look, as well as the sound.

"H...hello!"

The dragon beamed wide, nodding 'hello' back up to him. Her thick orange tail swished.

"Rrrr!"

"I beg your pardon?" Figment asked, suddenly embarrassed. He squinted, and noticed that her thick arms had been lashed to another section of the same wall. "Ah...a fellow guest, I take it? Are you a pokemon, too?"

"Rurrurrur!"

A nod followed.

"Ah, good to meet you! I'm Figment. Pleasure!"

The dragon smiled, then sagged a bit, her bindings groaning as she slouched.

"Oh...yes, I suppose we are a bit inconvenienced, aren't we," Figment chuckled, trying to cheer her up some. "If it helps, I came with a friend of yours! A, uh...Lucario?"

The dragon bolted upright, her mouth open. But, when it closed, her eyes furrowed into a glare.

"She...*is* your friend?"

The dragon blushed, and turned away some, her lip pursing unhappily. Perhaps he had committed something of a faux pas.

"Well, either way...I can still get us free. How does that sound?"

"R."

"I ah, I'm afraid I don't really speak the language..."

A thought occurred. Figment stopped, mused, and then smiled.

"Though, I imagine I could understand you just fine, now...yes, I can understand!"

"You can?" the dragon asked, looking up in renewed wonder at him.

"Indeed! That is certainly much easier, this way. Watch this!"

Concentrating, Figment began to dwindle smaller, and smaller, his lashings loosening rapidly in his wrists. She did indeed watch, her antennae bobbing up high in shock.

"H-how are you doing that?" she asked, tilting her head. "What kind of dragon type can control their size like that!? Amazing!"

"Heh, well," Figment huffed, straining to compact himself down to 70 feet, then 60. "I-it does take a bit of effort, I won't lie...but I can have us free shortly! Just wait!"

"But...we can't leave yet," she sighed. "I can't leave yet. Leon is on board!"

"That charizard? Lucario wanted to save him, too, as well as my friends...they're all trapped here on this ferry! Well, no...I have several other dragon friends, too, and I don't know where they...a-anyway, I'll help you, alright?"

"Lucario came back," the dragon murmured, struck. "She came here, she's on board, now?"

"She showed me how to get here, yes, we arrived together..."

By now, Figment was down to 40 feet.

"Well...even if she is...Leon's the priority! She probably just as her own selfish reasons for being here, anyhow."

"I thought you two were a sort of team," Figment offered, reaching 30 feet. "She made it sound like such, at least. I would have figured you two were working together, perhaps, throwing wrenches and the like into Devon, in secret."

"Out of obligation to the past, only," she huffed, glowering. "Only because she was so precious to Leon, and Leon is...precious, to me..."

Thirty feet deflated down to twenty.

"So, you were *never* friends?" Figment pressed. She fidgeted in her restraints, looking off.

"We were, before she left. Abandoned us. Those two were the golden ones, in security. Unbeatable as a team. I ran the delivery routes for Devon, so I saw them almost every day. Of course, we became friends. It was great, up until *she* started barking about what Devon was doing, about Infinity Energy. It was horrifying to hear, but Leon wouldn't accept it. No, maybe that's not right...he understood...but when she wanted to leave, to break away from Anders, he wouldn't go..."

Figment listened on, reaching 10 feet in height, small enough to slip free, and move over slowly towards her.

"I don't know if that broke her heart or not, but when she left, I *know* it broke his. I stayed on, at first to stay close to Leon, console him...but I couldn't reach him. He was all work, after that point. Before I could resign my post, though, she came back with an offer: if I helped her bring Devon down, if I could help her destroy what had such a hold on Leon, maybe he would snap out of it..."

"So, you helped," Figment finished, putting a soft hand on her shoulder. She sighed, then nodded, grudgingly. "Meaning, you stole those new pokeballs. My friends were likely warped into some of them, is why I mention them..."

"Warped?"

"I can explain better, later, heh," Figment offered, undoing her bindings quickly. "I'll make up a portal, and we can move around a little more freely, get all our friends out of here, before we get to this Neo Mauville place—"

"Neo Mauville?" the dragon gasped, terrified. "They...were continuing that awful project?"

"I'm afraid so. Now, I'll just recall the area where they were being held, and open a smaller portal to there—oh, wait, I can't go without the candy!"

He checked, then found, to his relief, that the strap and bag were still on him, albeit very, very tightly stretched over his huge shoulders.

"The humans tried to remove it from you, a moment before you woke up," she explained. "But you were too big, and too high up. They went to go get a ladder, I think, so whatever you do—"

"Not much time, understood! Thank you, miss, ah..."

"Dragonite," she replied, shaking Figment's larger hand gratefully.

"Okay, then, hang on...I'm about to show you how my friends and I travel between worlds!"

Still processing everything, Dragonite just observed in stunned silence, as Figment concentrated once more, hard. He strained, then snapped back to attention, grinning proudly.

"There, I felt it! Okay, lets..."

He looked around, along with Dragonite. Nothing.

"Where is it?" she asked.

"That...is rather odd," Figment snorted, cocking a brow. "I know it formed...where is it?"

He followed its signature as best he could, moving past their holding bay, over nearer to a cluster of pokeballs, all strapped together in a bulk, in a series of pallets. One in particular glowed red, from within, causing Figment to carefully collect it between two giant fingertips.

"What in the world is this?" he wondered, before the ball snapped open, revealing a small red portal—the very same such that had brought them here. "It...formed in here? How?"

Figment's line of query was cut short, as a familiar white mass bulged through, filling the ball.

"B...bartok!" Figment gasped, only to see the small white bat-dragon start to violently rumble, in a way Figment knew all too well. "OH, GRACIOUS—"

Immediately, Figment snapped the ball shut again, just as an explosive burst of growth rattled inside of it, barely containing what Figment correctly surmised was a tremendous spurt.

"W-what was that?" Dragonite asked, as Figment forcibly held the rumbling ball between his

fingers. "That red thing... was that your portal?"

"Well, not quite the same portal I meant to make, no...but yes! But why is it inside this pokeball? Why did Bartok come through it? Was he...in...another one! Good gracious, he must have been! These pokeballs here, they look different from the ones Lucario and I rescued before...can you tell me, those balls you stole earlier today...did they look like these?"

"Y-yes, they're the same, they're new models, super-durable..."

"Okay! Then, let me try something else..."

Figment strained again, opening another portal. Instead of a fresh one appearing there, in the bay, the next pokeball on the pallet glowed bright red, between its crevices. The rumbling of Bartok's contained growth left the ball in Figment's grip, and the nearest pokeball began to rumble, instead, prompting Figment to rush over and grab it, to hold it shut.

"Hah...incredible!"

"What is it?"

"I think...yes, I think...the portal I took last...it's different, so I can't summon it, outside of these pokeballs! If it was the entry source for all of us travelers, at the moment it was created...it's energy...I suppose I would have to guess...is confined to these interiors! They're like their own worlds, so...it only operates therein! Which means...Bartok had been in one...alright, one more experiment, then we move!"

"Uh," Dragonite began, only to back away nervously, as Figment concentrated once again.

The red glow left the new pokeball, and returned back to the old one, seemingly on command. Figment grabbed that one back up, laughing in bewilderment and understanding, alike.

"All travel has to be done through pokeballs! Which, heh...means I would..."

Figment suddenly drooped, as the numbers presented themselves.

"I would...have to get all of us...into a pokeball, to leave here..."

The rumbling in the original ball grew worse and worse, drawing his focus back to it.

"I'm a bit lost," Dragonite rumbled, wringing her flat, clawed hands together.

"Oh, I know! I'm sorry, one last thing," Figment sighed, poking his tongue out in concentration. "My friend in here, Bartok, is likely about to explode to such a prodigious size that he'll burst out of the pokeball, and overwhelm the entire ferry...he's been holding off the effects of a potion so powerful, I fear it's making him grow, nonstop..."

"WHAT!?" Dragonite roared, backing away. "W-well, stop him! Please!"

"Not to worry," Figment soothed, smiling. "There's a major advantage, we've just been handed!"

"How!?! You can't warp anywhere, and the minute you let him out, he'll get super-colossal and sink us all into the sea!"

Figment chuckled, his tail wagging.

"Time for a science experiment! Oh, if Blair could see this part!"

"Who?"

Figment closed his eyes and focused; just as the pokeball shuddered and bulged out, creaking to the breaking point, that same red glow raced along the creases, then vanished. The ball sighed back to normal size, and Dragonite went slack-jawed at the sight of the red glow passing to one pokeball on the pallet...then to the next...and the next, and the next. In seconds, it had sped up into a rush, as the glow sequentially raced through ball after ball, forming a streak of energy that came and went, as it passed through every single ball there.

By the time it came to the very last ball, Figment went to it, and opened it up casually. Dragonite reared back in a panic, only to see it open, and allow a very, very small white creature to come stumbling out, spent and tired, onto Figment's massive hand.

"Hello, Bartok!" Figment boomed happily, looming up, up over the now very, very, very tiny bat-dragon. The white creature spun about, dizzied and wobbling, collapsing in a cute heap on Figment's palm. "Sorry for the dizzy spell, but it was the only thing I could think of, to stop your growth from going haywire..."

"Aw, hey, d-don't mention it, Fig," Bartok panted, blinking his eyes, closing them, fluttering them, anything anyone would do, while trying to shake off vertigo. "N...never felt better, yanno...am I ever glad to see someone with a brain around!"

Dragonite crept in, fascinated for the dozenth time in minutes. Figment saw the two of them up close, then quickly did his best to imagine Bartok could understand...because she clearly had something to say.

"That's your friend?" she asked, snuffling down over Bartok, who remained merely toy-sized to them. "H...hello there..."

"Yeah, hiya," Bartok drawled, rubbing his temples at the ears, just shy of the horns. "Good to meetcha, there. Boy, how many portals did ya cram me through?"

"Several hundred. That's what I figured it would take, to finally spend all the power built up into your next growth spurt."

"How could you know what it would have come out to?" Dragonite interjected, her antennae perking way, way up.

"Math," Figment chirped, wagging fully. I had seen how humongous he grew in our last world, together, and I applied that to the elapsed rough time spent fighting Ludmilla, and after..."

"Who?" she asked, suddenly overwhelmed.

"*Bad news*, is who," Bartok said, finally collecting himself enough to sit calmly in Figment's palm. "Seriously though, thanks there, Figment, y'saved my bacon bad. Whew. I must a' been big as a town, there, before Toothless got me back in that ball. Go team, eh?"

"Toothless?" Figment repeated. "Is he alright?"

"Sure, far as I know. I was asleep after we left ol' Baba's place, an' I woke up in the middle of some goofy arena, fer somethin', I dunno..."

"A pokemon arena," Dragonite pondered.

"Yeah, that, an' there was Toothless, with this crusty old guy in a pirate suit or somethin', and next thing I knew, BWOOMP! I was blowin' up like crazy, got so big I filled the cliff it was all sittin' on ...smashed the whole place up pretty good, I guess—"

"An old sailor type!?" Dragonite boomed, suddenly intense. "You saw an old human there?"

"Yeah, so?"

"Is he okay!?"

"Sure, I felt him snugglin' up safe on Toothless, before the whole place went blammo."

Dragonite sighed so hard it nearly blew Bartok off of Figment's hand.

"Oh, thank goodness. Thank you! That human is...very dear..."

"Really?" Figment asked, looking to her, then to a tiny, confused Bartok. Before any elaborations could commence, Bartok shuddered, then rolled his eyes, tingling visibly. "Wuh-oh, one moment, sorry! Back in you go, for now, okay?"

"Ugh, *fine*—"

The words only got so far away from Bartok, when Figment bumped him with a pokeball, and it took him back inside it. He turned to see Dragonite there, rubbing her head over tenderly.

"I know, it's a lot to take in," Figment offered, shrugging. "But, for what it's worth, we've been through much crazier, up to this point."

"I believe you," she moaned. "My head feels ready to explode. This is way too much. Do you really always stand around talking and theorizing, this much? That's insane!"

Figment beamed, proudly.

"Thank you!"

Even Dragonite laughed, briefly.

"O-okay, so...you're from other worlds...you have other-world dragons here, captured, on this ferry, along with my Leon...something important is in that pouch of yours, and you can make portals, but in this world, they only form inside pokeballs."

"Yes."

"Okay. What now?"

Figment thought, yet again, making Dragonite nearly roar with impatience.

"Can...multiple pokemon get inside of a single ball?" he asked, abruptly.

"N...no, it's one per ball, maximum."

Figment thought even harder.

"That does complicate things. I was going to try capturing everyone in one single ball, and open a portal out of this world, through it. But...that's not an option. What could work, then? What? We would...need to...ah, put one dragon in each ball...that totals five...no, six balls, for Leon...you know what? Let's just grab a mess of these—"

Now, after so much back-and-forth, Figment was suddenly all action, throwing poor Dragonite even further as he passed a handful of pokeballs to her, then kept a handful, himself.

"Do you know where they're being held, by chance?" he asked.

"N-not exactly, no, I don't use the ferry..."

As if hearing its name, the ferry responded, as the entire thing pitched hard left, tilting deeper and deeper off balance. Both Figment and Dragonite shuffled for bearing, then skidded along with the floor as it continued to twist lower. A shockwave peeled past, from the bow to the stern—and, once again, the alarms were singing all about it.

"Now what!?" Dragonite moaned, vying to keep upright as the boat steadied back.

"I think I know why no one's come back with that ladder, yet," Figment muttered, turning back toward the sound of numerous, highly-motivated boots thudding down a hallway. "Best to follow! I think their efforts to stop it didn't quite pan out!"

"T-to stop what?" Dragonite asked, following along behind, as Figment squeezed himself into the relevant spaces, forcing his semi-grown bulk through.

*"My friends!"*

Lucario could only watch on from the overhead vent, as the insanity unfolded, and unfolded further out over itself. The female dragon, Cynder, had finally began to swell too big, her tidal bulk snapping and shattering the front load of the welded tanks, sending a torrent of fluids out into an arc,

where they splattered over the cargo deck. A dozen suit-clad scientists scattered, scrambling away, as her groaning muscles burst bigger, and bigger, forcing the webbed cracks of the break-point to crack and snap further out, as more and more of her sleeping body ballooned free.

"Sedatives!" one worker hollered, over the din of the klaxon, motioning for someone, anyone to go stab her with an oversized syringe.

"The fluid was a sedative—"

The tank blew open down the center, as Cynder's groaning bust swelled out, out, creeping over the floor. Her humongous arm muscles boomed larger, still, as her house-sized muzzle thumped out, her head and huge horns resting on the ground. The cacophony of cracks and snaps married strangely with the rubber-like swell of her mass as she remained knocked out, dumbly growing and bulging in every direction.

*Serves them right*, Lucario thought, smiling just the slightest little bit. *Let them take on more than they can handle, for once!*

"Get him out of there!"

One voice cut over the others, making Lucario seize up the moment she heard it. She knew who it was; it was as burned-into her mind as breathing, or moving.

"Get him out, I said!"

Anders stormed through the confusion and hysteria, motioning big and angry, stepping over officers and scientists alike as they slipped around in the spill. He walked right up to Leon's tank, watching in morbid fascination as his partner kept on ballooning bigger and stronger, there in the tank. More and more of the charizard's bulk mashed into the interior, more and more cracks forming, the bigger and mightier his muscles erupted.

"We don't want any of them bursting out! Look at this other dragon, you fool!"

Anders stomped over to the chief officer and took him up by his collar.

"I don't care about those others, you dolt, you get my boy Leon free! I'm not asking! I didn't give any permission for this garbage, you understand? He's a loyal employee, and my friend! My *only* friend, you get me? Now, I'm not going to ask again—"

Cynder's body blew up even larger, so powerfully, so loudly, that everyone turned to her as she rumbled and burst up again, swelling from her initial 200 feet to 330, her overgrown biceps stretching as they ballooned into the slipping researchers, parting them like dominoes. Her abs swelled out, her enormous thigh muscles exploding free, as her wings and broadening back surged into the shattered remains of the tanks.

"Get her secured, use everything and anything we have on hand!" the lead officer bellowed, ordering the panic down into some sort of structure again, before turning to Anders. "I don't care if you ask or shout or do a back-flip! I don't take orders from grunts! Get out of here, before I throw you overboard, and your pet!"

All the sound and fury culminated in a sudden explosion, as Cynder's trembling body began to burst even larger, stretching and billowing out over everything and everyone around her. 350 feet erupted with a hard shudder to 400...440...490...her bulk relentlessly expanded as she snored on, her side-position forcing her titanic shoulders to bump, then push, then tear up through screeching metal. Her entire body filled the bulk of the hold now, shoving struggling little humans back into snapping, shattering cargo crates, as Spyro's tank thudded hard and rolled away, cracked, but unbroken.

"The bindings, sir!" one tech shouted, as she and a team fought to successfully lash just one growing scaly wrist. "We can hold—"

A soft groan escaped Cynder, as she throbbed, then blew up to 600 feet, her feet tearing right through the hold walls, crushing through hallways and containers and strapped-down company vehicles like they were tin. Her huge head pushed through to the other hall, then through it, compacting tons of metal into thick sheets of wreckage, before her horns burst through the siding, and the entire ferry began to pitch right, along with her shifting weight.

"Everyone, out!" the lead finally hollered, waving wild. "Out, out, now! Get to the deck! Evacuation protocol, C! Get to the Neo Mauville docks! Go!"

"I'm not leaving Leon to sink with this stupid tin can!" Anders roared, even as the lead shoved him off, and climbed up the tilt of the floor.

"I don't care what you do!"

As the crew fled, Lucario watched. She watched Cynder's breasts swell closer and closer, her instincts unsure whether to stay put or flee along with the Devon personnel. Just as they loomed in her sight, on the other side of the vent grating, and just as she turned away in fear, a soft *thump* sounded, then the monster-sized behemoth of a dragoness was suddenly gone.

*Huh?*

She peered right up through the grate, then started wagging.

*Fignent!*

From her vantage, it was easier to understand: a single high-grade sort of pokeball rolled on the flooring as the boat pitched back from lack of so much weight and muscle, nearly riding the grade down into a crushed hall, before Fignent scooped it up into his paws, and hugged it close.

"Got it!" he laughed, wagging, as Anders staggered back, completely agog.

"What..." was all the startled human managed, before Dragonite slid into the hold with him, just as the tilt of the ferry started to correct back to nearly-normal. At the sight of her, Lucario gulped. She had been ready to burst out and join the dragon, but a new, worse fear clutched her insides.

"How big was she going to get, Fignent?" Dragonite barked, as the purple dragon moved over to Spyro and Leon's tanks.

"Well, the candies we put in were supposed to take effect much earlier, really," he chuckled, nervously. "I couldn't say why Spyro isn't reacting as much...unless, his body takes sedation much harder than hers...interesting!"

"No, it isn't!" Dragonite huffed, as Anders kept pressed to the still-breaking glass of Leon's tank, as he pulsed slowly bigger with in it. "It's scary! What if she did serious damage to the boat?"

At that, a single streak of water finally shot through, from where Cynder's head had impacted the siding of the interior. The leak went from a pressurized trickle, to a shotgun-blast, as water began to geyser inside.

To Anders, one dragon was speaking excellent human; the Dragonite, more amazingly, kept rurring and roaring back, and she didn't sound pleased at all. When the water blasted in, that tore it.

"Whatever's going on," Anders panted, getting both the bigger beasts' attention, "j-just help me! Help me get Leon out of here!"

Dragonite finally looked up at the tank, and roared.

"L-leon!? He's...growing? Wait, he looks... like a human's body looks..."

"That would be the candy!" Figment explained, hurriedly, thudding his inflated self over to Anders, who leaned back tighter at his approach. "I can certainly go through the moat with you, on all this, sir...but for now, the ship is sinking, and we need to move!"

"F...fine! Fine, do what you need to!"

Water pooled up to their feet, and it had only been a minute, tops. The geyser swelled even wider as the sounds of pinging bolts blowing loose echoed over, the siding bending away against more and more water pressure from outside. Figment took Cynder's pokeball and stuffed it into his candy satchel, thankfully just large enough to accept it easily.

"Help me smash the tanks, they should be damaged enough!" he ordered.

"Of course!" she huffed, taking up a striking stance. "Hang on!"

Anders bolted back, plashing through knee-high water, as Dragonite leapt into a full-on headbutt; she slammed Spyro's tank, and it shattered away with astonishing force, making even Figment stumble back in surprise. As soon as the 60-foot Spyro spilled free of it, Figment tossed another ball. Big as he had gotten, he went easily in, vanishing, and Figment waded through belly-high waters to retrieve it as it floated about.

Before Anders could plead for Leon's turn, Dragonite inhaled, then blasted out a blazing orb that smashed into the final tank, blasting it apart, just as the 100-foot musclebound charizard exploded free. Anders finally caught real sight of him, and cried out, even as the waters rose to his chest.

"What'd they d-do to him!?"

Not bothering to answer, Figment threw another pokeball, and in the humongous man-zard

went, in a burst of energy and light. Up the ball went, even as Anders swam over, waving, demanding a moment's notice.

"H-hey! Let me have him, whatever your name is!"

"Figment, sir!" the bigger dragon chirped, grinning quickly, before kindly lobbing Leon's ball over to him. Anders snatched it with one able hand, not daring to miss, and the look on his face was an entire conversation, in one flash of desperate relief.

"T-thank you—"

The wall screamed as it finally gave out, bending and curling, letting the sea in, and the waters rose toward the hold ceiling. Even Figment and Dragonite's feet left the ground as they floated up with Anders, all as Lucario watched in horror.

"We're not reaching the top, like this!" Anders hollered, over the roar of the flooding. "The door are down there, flooded! It'd take several minutes j-just to get topside, with them dry and breathable!"

Figment bit his lip, as the waters nearly reached the top. His hands held Spyro's pokeball tight, having had neither time nor chance to stow it in his bag, with Cynder's.

"D-dragonite! Quick, get a pink candy out of my satchel! Can you reach it?"

"I've got it, hold on!"

The ferry groaned deep and sad, a horrible bend and crack riding the center. Within the vent, Lucario looked to the candy in her paw, gulping anxiously.

*I'm too small to save them, she thought. Not like this!*

As she brought the candy to her muzzle, the ship pitched again, and she banged the back of her head hard against the vent shaft, going limp after, the candy still stuck in her mouth.

"I've got one out!" Dragonite cried, as Figment swam around to face her, Anders swimming toward the two bigger dragons, as the waters made it up to the rafters, starting to pour into the vents overhead. "I-it's pink and b-blue!"

"Put it in my mouth, please!" Figment ordered, opening his maw, only for a loosed beam to swing low and bash him down into the waters.

*"Figment!"*

Just as the waters overtook the entire boat, just as Dragonite and Anders' heads vanished under the full rise of the flood waters, she panicked, and crammed the tiny candy into her own mouth, swallowing it with the seawater, in one hard gulp.

To the remaining human onboard, everything was a swirl of motion and suspension, altogether; he saw Figment thump down into the floor in slow motion, only to look up, as the Dragonite's body started to rumble terribly, stirring the flood waters so deeply that even he felt it. He swam back in a

moment of reflexive shock as, seconds later, the orange dragon's whole body trembled, then boomed out. Her sides stretched tight as her feral belly and haunches and rear and tail all ballooned bigger, quite literally, expanding frantically out wider and wider, larger and larger. Her warm scales collided with him, shoving him back, as her head surged up into the ceiling, then rammed up through it, her swelling shoulders crushing into the walls, smashing the entire hold back, as she inflated endlessly in size; the soft, half-smothered rumbling gave way to a low groaning ripple as he felt her shudder, then swell even greater against him, against *everything*...

Up on the deck, ten small helicopters all whirred to life, the staff and scientists all clambering in as orderly as Devon could ever have taught them, all as the ship tilted and moaned in distress below. With a circling of a raised hand, they all took to flight, one after the other, a small swarm of Devon tech. The flock bore West, to a gargantuan rig that blotted the lowering Sun, and crowded the horizon itself with its bulk.

No longer looking back, not one employee took notice from the air, as the sinking ship slowly and surely bugled out, around the middle. The former definition of a boat was abandoned as its center distended into a larger and larger sphere, windows snapping, walls bowing, beams curling out of splitting openings. All the while, the sphere swelled, larger still, wider yet, as mounds of cream and orange boomed through every aperture, peeling the hull away steadily.

A vast lump cracked its way up through the topside, obliterating the deck, paneling, rails, and helipads, all of which blew away in a spray around a massive dragon head. Two monstrous antennae caught the edges of the hull as it blew out, then whipped up into the air, higher and higher, a vast, echoing gasp of air escaping as Dragonite took a long, wanting breath—which, in turn, only inflated her vast spherical belly even bigger, in the water.

"GUH!"

A cough like a monsoon followed, as she inhaled again, and ballooned even larger, quite literally blowing herself up into a great and greater scaly balloon. Buoyant as a blimp, she held there, floating on the waves, as the ferry tightened its shell about her, then slip down the middle, letting all of her tremendously huge belly boom into the open waters as debris rained down.

For a moment, she rocked there, softly, lost in the waves...until she understood things better, and patted her huge belly with building-sized paws. Each feeling thump made a deep drumbeat as she continued to grow and grow, frighteningly so, surging bigger than a ferry roughly 600 feet long, and 100 feet wide. She was bigger than the entire thing, and then some, despite the overwhelming scope of the sea around her. A Dragonite, over 600 feet tall, and over 1,400 feet wide—and only blowing up bigger, by the moment.

"Goodness!" she rurred, in her own language. "I...I'm huge! Oh, Figment! Where..."

She squinted, trying to scour her own vast belly for any signs of life. The only reason she caught sight of Figment was from how contrasting his purple was, to her light orange. A massive claw nudged carefully, cautiously at him, testing.

"Are...a-are you alright?" she murmured, still bobbing in the waves, her claw growing bigger and bigger beside his limp form, her belly rising and swelling under him.

Another poke. Nothing.

"Hah, uh," she sputtered, trying to look around for help. "Hey? Wake up!"

There, held in Figment's arms, was the comparatively-tiny Anders. The nudging woke him first, and he struggled blind in the dragon's bulky arms, coughing and groaning.

"W-what...ah, what happened," he slurred, the little human unable to free himself proper. "What...ah!"

Dragonite lurched back, bobbing in the sea, as surprised by Anders as he was of her, looming high up overhead, a sudden titan. She closed her huge eyes and shuddered, pursing her lip, as she blew up yet again, inflating with a loud, echoing stretch, inflating up to 700 feet tall, and 1,800 feet wide, before at last, it stopped, and she blew out a soft, relieved sigh.

"RUURUR!"

To Anders, it was a blast of sound, incomprehensible and booming.

"Are you okay?" she was asking. "Is Leon okay?"

With no means to fully communicate, she grumbled to herself and started to turn her massive bulk around, slowly, to fully face the looming specter of Neo Mauville. As she did so, something small caught her eye, far off.

"What is that?" she murmured, looking closer. "Is...oh...oh, no, no!"

What Dragonite saw, at length, was a modest-sized ship, speeding along through the waves, toward the rig. It had to have been coming from further off the Hoenn coastline, from Ever Grande City, which likely made it—the S.S. Tidal.

*Drake's ship!*

"Hey," she started, waving both enormous hands where she bobbed. "Hey! Don't! D-don't go there! Please! Ah, can't you see me!? I'm...I-I'm so big! Look this way! Drake!"

She might have been wrong. She wanted to be wrong. But, if she wasn't...

**"No!"**

With that, Dragonite put her massive, inflated tail to work, wagging up enough momentum to start drifting sluggishly in toward Neo Mauville—but at the rate she was going, there was no way to beat the ship there, or cut off its course. All she could do was move, as the evening clouds steadily overtook the skies, traces of a storm starting to rumble to life, overhead...