



# *The Phantom Child*

*Prologue: The Nightmare*



## Prologue: The Nightmare

*Where am I? Who am I? What am I?*

Deep within his mind, the young Mewtwo struggled with the rushing waves of thought that constantly besieged him.

*Am I a pokémon, or a person? What is the difference between a pokémon and a person?*

He didn't know the answer to that - didn't know any of the answers to the dozens of questions repeating through his head - yet the possibility that there was no true answer frightened him more than the not knowing.

He sensed his body responding to his fear; curling up tighter into a fetal position. The feel of his chest upon his fingers was distant, as were the muffled sounds from outside himself. With a sudden impulse, he willed his body to move, to straighten from the posture he had remained in ever since his first time of awareness, but his arms refused to even twitch.

*Can't move. Trapped. LET ME OUT.*

It made him want to scream. But he wasn't even able to breathe without a machine, let alone scream, so he willed himself away from the panic and frustration; drew deeper down where the feelings stopped and the light faded and a thick silence fell.

Her remember place...



The darkness soon dawned into a new place. Mewtwo floated in the sky; high above the ground although completely dwarfed by the enormous snowcapped mountain before him.

*This is different to last time. Where am I? Am I now ready to be?*

His eyes widened as he caught a glimpse of something moving above him. Pink and lithe, it wound through the scattered clouds and out again, sparkles from

the pale sunlight glinting off its body, disappearing from sight through a considerably greyer patch of cloud then appearing once again until finally it circled the very peak of the mountain and then vanished from sight.

Mewtwo's shoulders slumped, and he hugged himself tighter. Had the creature only given him some time, perhaps he could have followed. He would have liked to know where was going.

*Next time...* he thought.

“What's this?” came a voice.

Mewtwo uncurled his body in shock, reveling in the fluid motion, and twisted in the air. Before him was a very bright light, shining yellow. He blinked furiously and quickly shielded his already watering eyes with a long grey arm.

The light frowned at him. “I don't like it.” It cast a beam of light towards the mountain and Mewtwo's gaze followed. The light struck the mountain and through the glare Mewtwo saw it completely melting away. He wondered if the pink creature had been struck too.

He chanced a look downwards. The untrod wilderness of before was now a neat row of little cottages bordered by a neat row of trees. Silent, and empty, and devoid of colour.

The light faded slightly, then it smiled. “See? All fixed.”

“This is where you used to live,” Mewtwo said.

“Uh-huh!” the light said, nodding. “I lived here, so it’s my remember place. You don’t get a remember place ‘cos you haven’t lived anywhere besides a tube.”

Slightly hurt, Mewtwo drew away from the light, looking away from it and allowing his eyes to readjust. “I could have lived there,” he said softly, and looked back up to the sky where only a few moments ago it had loomed protectively over him; imagining it in his mind’s eye.

“You don’t even know what that big thing was called,” the light said, “or what it was covered with.”

Mewtwo kept silent; half burning with embarrassment at the fact she was right, half hoping she would tell him even without him asking.

“It’s a *mountain*, and it’s got *snow* on it. Snow is really really cold water, so cold it goes solid. Now, what is this?”

Reluctantly Mewtwo turned back to the light. “That’s the sun,” he said, his eyes watering anew.

He heard a high giggle. “Right!” As he watched the light grew, encompassing his form and drawing him in to a blissful warmth and brightness. Closer and closer towards the core, and then there she was, her form silhouetted, rays of light and shadow beaming past her body.

Mewtwo strained his eyes to see her better but it was just too bright. He stretched his arms towards her but she darted out of reach and giggled again. “Catch me!”

“I can’t see you to catch you,” he said.

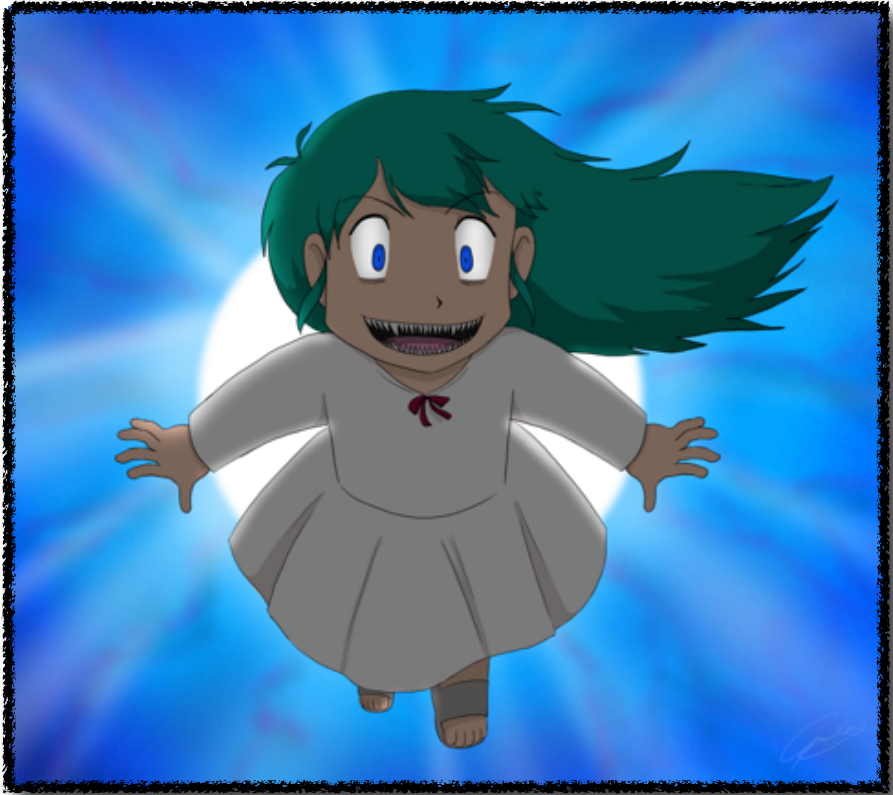
She slowed her sun dance, pausing with one hand pointing towards him. “Oh,” she said, then chuckled. “Oh, that’s right. My daddy told me not to look at the sun too long. Otherwise...”

The fear returned. Mewtwo closed his eyes but an obstinate purple haze and dull pain remained in his vision. “What? Otherwise what?”

“You go *blind*,” she hissed, and the sudden malice in her voice shocked him so much that he felt his eyelids fly open again.

She hovered before him, only now in plain sight. She was smiling toothily at him, but there was no pleasure in the smile. Her gaze upon him felt colder than the snow she had described.

“And if you get too close you *burn*,” she said, and the light flared into heat.



Agony enveloped his entire body; his skin blistering with the heat. He tilted his head back and screamed.

*Close your eyes!*

His eyes stayed open, keeping him dimly aware through the excruciating pain that she was hovering very close to him as he burned alive. He turned his head slowly towards her and her smile widened as their eyes met, widened into a deranged leer. He watched as her delicate baby teeth grew points and if possible

his shrieking grew even louder as she bent her face down towards his, her mouth opening further than it should go.

*There's one more question to ask.*

He took a breath, the hardest one to take, and stilled his screams. Somehow.

*Just one more.*

“Why?” he rasped, feeling the flames searing all the way down to his lungs and igniting his whole body from the inside, her teeth now only inches from his face. “*Why?*”

She hesitated at the question, her face morphing back to the memory of her when they had first met. Still she leaned forward over him, yet in that instant she was beautiful: just a young human child with flowing glossy sea-green hair and ageless eyes looking into his very soul.

The girl shrugged and giggled again, quirking her head slightly to the side.

“Because you lived.”

*No, there's one more question after all. One more! Please! I must know!*

“Who are you?”

“I am hate,” she said. Her face and teeth changed with one violent back-thrust of her neck, and then the tooth-filled mouth came down.