

lemonzsaauce

... Author's Notes ...

Dear reader,

I go by the pen name j.j. scriptease and I've been writing fan fiction on and off for almost a decade and a half now, predominantly of a lemon/erotica variety. None of the places I've posted my stories on however quite felt like home, whether it be due to the design or structure of the website, the restrictions imposed on saucy content, or anything in between. And thus, I thought it would be neat to have a personalised hub for my fan fiction works.

I teamed up with a developer buddy to create a site called lemonzsaauce.com where you can find ALL my literature along with extra goodies – like downloads in PDF format, seeing the artwork that inspired the fics, and subscribing for new story and chapter updates!

The site does cost money to keep up and running. If you enjoy my work and would like to help with maintenance (or would simply like to support me), please feel free to visit lemonzsaauce.com/donate to make an offering - no pressure, and it's not necessary at all :) - any amount from a dollar up will be very much appreciated.

Thank you for reading! I hope this piece of writing lives up to your expectations.

- j.j. scriptease

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WARNING

This work of fiction is Rated MA and only suitable for mature audiences. It may contain explicit and offensive language, adult themes and graphic descriptions of a violent and/or sexual nature.

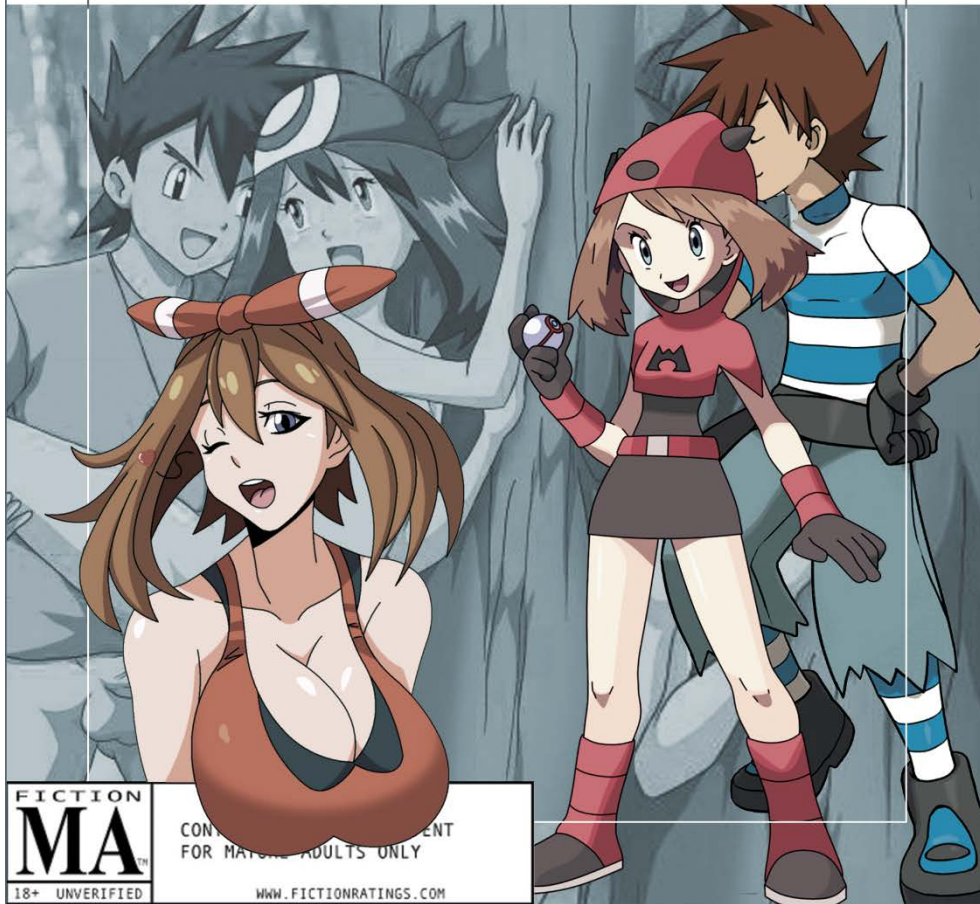
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J. J. SCRIPTEASE

DOING THE OAKY POKEY

(A Pokémon Fanfic)

CHAPTER 3



Synopsis

Gary Oak, pokémon researcher and heartthrob extraordinaire, never yearned for anything his arch rival Ash Ketchum had, not until a chance encounter introduces him to Ash's new girlfriend.

...

Doing The Oakey Pokey

A Pokémon fanfic by j.j. scriptease

Chapter 3 – May's Dismay

May braced herself as Gary opened his mouth.

“Hi, Ash,” he said. Inoffensive, so far. “I never thought I’d see you in Team Magma colours. If you weren’t such a goody two shoes I’d totally believe it. Just kidding,” he added quickly before Ash could fire off a rebuttal. “Seriously though, nice costume.” He nodded, impressed, then reached out for a handshake. “How’s it going?”

Her boyfriend hesitated, scrutinising Gary’s hand as though he might’ve hidden some sort of nasty slime in his palm. May didn’t blame him. After careful consideration, Ash raised his hand to meet his arch-rival’s and, to his surprise, nothing but a sincere handshake ensued. “Um, good. Thanks, I guess. May picked them out for us.”

“Is that right?” Gary’s sweeping glance found May. She broke eye contact immediately. “In that case...” He took a long pause in which May screwed her eyes shut fearing he’d blurt some snide remark about their shameful tryst. She felt her stomach turning as he opened his mouth and said, “You deserve all the credit. Nice picks.”

“Yeah, May,” Misty agreed. “Congrats on finding the second-best outfits out here.”

Gary and Misty laughed merrily like a cheesy couple.

May laughed, too, in her nervousness and bemusement. She’d never seen this side of Gary Oak before. Never knew there was a layer beneath the insufferable smugness. Granted, two years was a decent enough time to develop his interpersonal skills. Perhaps it wasn’t so strange to witness a little maturity on his part. Or, it could’ve all been a ruse...

He offered her a handshake, too. It might’ve been her imagination or he really might’ve lingered onto the hold a few seconds longer than necessary.

May uttered a soft 'thank you' while hiding her eyes from his. The heat of his hand had felt like... like something she had no right feeling in that moment.

"Er, so you guys are a thing now?" Brendan asked the burning question both she and Ash had been dying to since Gary walked in.

The Team Aqua cosplayers turned to each other, stars twinkling in their lovestruck eyes. A heartfelt smile lit Gary's face from ear to ear, inspiring the same of Misty's rose-tinted lips. "Yeah," he answered Brendan while lost in the oceans of Misty's eyes. "Yeah. You could say that." He wrapped an arm round her slim waist and pecked her on the lips with undeniable affection.

"Whoa sweet, dude," Brendan said with an approving nod.

It was, May could agree. Kind of. Seeing them all lovey-dovey raised a bittersweet sensation in the pit of her stomach. Here she'd been worried sick about Gary drudging up the past yet he'd shown no indication of even remembering what had happened. She should've been able to breathe a sigh of relief. So why wasn't she?

"That's great," Ash said through a forced smile. "You two look good together."

"Yeah," May admitted. "Congratulations on finding each other."

"Oh, come off it," Gary said, trying to wave them off despite a cheesy grin spreading across his chiselled face. "This party isn't about us."

"Yeah," Misty echoed. "We're just here to celebrate this fun, little reunion like everybody else."

Smiling, Ash held May's hand and gave her a reassuring squeeze she hadn't realised she needed. "Great."

Gary took in their surroundings for the first time, nodding with appreciation of the extravagance. "Not bad, Brendan. The perks of being in the Elite Four, am I right?"

"Damn straight!"

"You know I could be joining those ranks, too," Ash butted in. Far be it from him to miss an opportunity to rub his every success in Gary's face. "I'm going up against the Champion of Alola in three months!"

“Wow, really?” Misty sounded amazed.

“You bet! Hard work and perseverance always pays off,” he said, barely disguising his pride. “Hard to believe we both started with the same goal when we were ten years old, isn’t it, Gary?”

The pokémon researcher stifled a chuckle. “Well done, Ash. You truly deserve all the accolades you’ve raked in up to this point. And if you beat the champion, hey, more power to ya! You’re a better Trainer than most – better than me, too. Probably always were.”

What? May needed to get her ears checked. No snide backhandedness to his compliment? No hint of sarcasm? The strapping, young Team Aqua grunt looked like a taller, athletic version of one Gary Oak, but sounded nothing like the researcher she’d come to know and hate.

“Amazing how much you can achieve once you discover what’s most important to you,” Gary continued. “Once I did a little soul searching and realised what I longed for most, I’d set myself on the path to get what I really want. And, well, here we are.” He looked deep into Misty’s green eyes, melting her heart with his smouldering gaze in case his words hadn’t done the trick already. Misty stood on her tippy toes and awarded him another light kiss.

Ash looked away awkwardly as his attempt to put Gary down fell flat on its face.

The levels of cheese threatened to overwhelm even May, who loved her fair share of romanticism. So Misty was who Gary had always longed for? May didn’t get it. Misty kindled a heart of gold, boasted talent with water pokémon and cleaned up really well, but she seemed a little too plain for someone steeped in reputation like Gary Oak, grandson of the famed Professor Oak. What did he see that he hadn’t in the hundreds of girls before her?

May really needed to know.

“Well!” Brendan clapped his hands to chase off a looming awkwardness. “Now that we’re all caught up, how about a brief tour of the palace? What say you all?”

Misty beamed. “That would be lovely.”

“I’m game,” Gary said.

“Yeah, okay,” Ash muttered.

May agreed with a muted nod.

“Okay then!” Brendan whipped around, whacking Ash in the shins with his fluffy Sceptile tail.

“Hey, watch where you swing that giant thing!”

“That’s what she said,” Gary quipped.

Misty slapped his arm playfully. “Gary!” she scolded him, blushing.

Gary sealed his lips with an imaginary zip.

Ash didn’t so much as crack a smile. Unfortunately, May could attest to the reality behind Gary’s little quip. She tried to shake it out her mind.

“Sorry about that,” Brendan said before marching onwards. “Right this way, everyone!”

...

May was hardly paying attention as the man-sized Sceptile guided them through dozens of rooms in Stone Manor, sharing fun factoids about the grand piano sitting in one corner of a room or the hieroglyphic wallpaper decorating another. The beauty of renaissance décor and nature-inspired tapestry could not pull her eyes away from Gary’s arm round the back of Misty’s waist.

May and Ash made up the rear of the touring pack, allowing her to spy on their counterparts without drawing attention. Just when she thought she’d buried his existence, Gary Oak had to crawl out the crypts of her mind.

She fixed an absent gaze on the back of his broad shoulders which stood a few good inches above Ash and Brendan’s. Between writing long, laborious papers and dissecting bug pokémon cells under a microscope, or whatever else pokémon researchers did, Gary found the time to keep his body in tiptop shape. He looked more lean than muscular, with decent tone to his arms and probably abdomen, too, judging by the way the Team Aqua top clung to his flat tummy. The extra boost in height didn’t hurt either.

Wait, why was she even taking note of all this anyway? For a minute she forgot Ash was still holding her hand.

Brendan led them into one of the living rooms. It was spacious and oval-shaped, furnished with a pool table on one side and sunken couches in the middle, seating youths crowded around a hookah set. A boy May didn't recognise in his Charmander costume puffed scented smoke into the air to cheers from a Squirtle-boy, a skeleton-boy, two ogres of each sex, a male clown and a witch. The skeleton-boy grabbed the pipe next before the witch spotted Brendan ushering in the latest arrivals.

"Heya!" she shouted. "Ya'll come to join in?"

While Gary and Misty looked to each other uncertainly, Ash shot down the invitation straight away. "Er, we're not really into all that," he said. "We're just here for the party."

"What are you talking about, bro?" the skeleton-boy said. He held up the end of the hookah pipe and added, "This *is* the party!"

"Yeah!" His clique cheered in agreement.

"Now, now guys," Brendan said. "I'm still giving our guests here a little tour. Maybe they'll reconsider after they've had some time to settle in?" He turned to them speculatively.

May already knew Ash wouldn't. Which meant she couldn't without sowing some seeds of dissent. Not that she particularly wanted to. But still, he could've given it some consideration like Gary and Misty appeared to. Everyone would think she and Ash were the most boring, unimaginative couple ever. "It might be fun," she whispered temptation in his ear.

Ash looked stunned, as though she'd just suggested they sell their souls to the devil. "Are you serious?"

Admittedly, it wasn't something either of them had ever done, or even entertained the thought of. "Isn't the whole point of a costume party to be someone else? We're not May and Ash. We're Team Magma."

"I dunno..." He remained unconvinced. "We shouldn't get too carried away."

“Carried away?” The skeleton-boy sounded puzzled. “It’s not like we’re asking you to join an orgy.”

Gary chuckled. Something smug in his laugh annoyed Ash, but her boyfriend stuck to his guns and – to his mind – stuck to his morals. “We’re good, thanks.”

The skeleton-boy shrugged. “Suit yourselves.” He inhaled from the pipe only to sputter smoke in a coughing fit, much to his own amusement and his peers’.

Unimpressed, Ash peered through the haze of smoke to spot something he did find exciting hung above the mantel. It was a full-length portrait of Steven Stone flaunting a dazzling necklace embedded with the rarest gemstones from across all discovered Regions.

“Pretty neat, right?” Brendan said, noting his interest. “You know... rumour has it he keeps that necklace, and all sorts of other treasures he’s dug up, hidden in a secret room somewhere in this mansion.”

Ash’s eyes grew wide. “Hidden treasure?”

“All sorts of pokémon related artefacts and fossils, too. Legend has it he’s even got an Articuno egg in there.”

“An Articuno egg?!” Ash and Gary exclaimed at the same time.

“Articuno doesn’t even breed,” Ash pointed out.

“Yeah,” Gary added, putting on his pokémon researcher hat. “At least, we’ve yet to find any evidence that it does.”

Brendan shrugged his Sceptile shoulders. “Hey, man, just sharing what I heard.”

“Where is this room?” Ash pressed.

“Out of my jurisdiction,” Brendan said. “And definitely out of the bounds of this tour. You really wanna find it, you’re gonna have to do it on your own time. I’m just here for the party.” He winked. “Moving on!”

“Can you believe this guy?” Ash muttered to May as Brendan hurried them on to the next room. “An Articuno egg and he just glosses over it like Pidgey lay them every day.”

“It’s probably not even real,” May said. “Just some stupid rumour.”

“I need to know for sure though. And if I know Gary,” Ash said, lowering his voice, “He’ll be thinking the same thing. We need to find it before he does!”

May rolled her eyes. “Seriously? You’re going to turn this into a ‘You-vs-Gary’ thing again? What about the plan we already had before? Rhymes with expedition? Ring a bell?”

“Oh, that.”

“Yes, that,” May chirped, annoyed. Sometimes she wondered if he loved her as much as he hated Gary.

“We can still do it,” Ash whispered. “After we –”

“Forget it, Ash.”

“What I do now?”

“Nothing.”

...

While Gary was squeezing Misty’s waist, May and Ash were no longer holding hands when Brendan led them into a ballroom that he’d made ‘a few adjustments’ to. May didn’t know what the room had looked like before but she felt as though she’d just walked into a cocktail lounge crossed with a night club.

Unlike the other rooms lit by crystal chandeliers, this fun little corner was mostly cloaked in darkness, with purple and sapphire LED lights glowing from the ceiling and digital walls. Kids dressed up as everything, from vampires to bunnies, danced on the main floor to booming music as bass shook the large windows and red cups strewn about the tables. Everyone had migrated here and May could see why.

She recognised a few faces squished in the mouths of pokémon costumes, Harley in a Cacturne getup amongst them, stealing the limelight on the dance floor while Drew and a group of his Coordinator friends chilled in one of many round sofa sets circling the room. She considered popping over to say hi when another familiar-but-unexpected face tapped the back of her shoulder.

“May? That really you?”

She whipped around to find a lanky, green-haired boy wearing an oversized Zigzagoon costume. “Um, hi?”

“It’s me! Nicholai! Remember?”

“Erm –”

“Of course you do! Nicholai, the greatest knickerbocker! You showed great promise with your knickers when I first met you in the woods! Fancy running into a fellow knickerbocker here!”

“Oh, it’s you...” May thought she’d seen the last of this weirdo years ago. Perhaps no one at this party was more at home in a pokémon costume than this furry. Weirder still, he’d somehow remembered her name when she barely remembered his face. “Er, yeah, funny seeing you here too. I’m not a knickerbocker though. Never was. I had on plain old bike shorts that day.”

“Ha! ‘Plain old.’ Modest as always!” he said. “Those shorts fitted you exceptionally well! In fact, I’m disappointed you’re not wearing shorts today!” He took a wobbly step forward, got uncomfortably close to her and whispered, “Psst, I still got mine on under this Zigzagoon fur.”

Ugh. Like she cared what this goofball was or wasn’t wearing. He’d been way too enthusiastic about his so-called ‘naturalist’ lifestyle, and way too interested in her clothing decisions. As far as May could tell, the red cup in his unsteady hand was half-filled with the kind of poison that only exasperated his fanaticism. His drunken sights descended upon her little grey skirt.

“Actually,” he hiccupped. “You still look pretty acceptable in that, Little Ms Team Magma! I won’t revoke your membership from Hoenn’s Knickerbocker association! How’s that, huh?”

“I wish you would’ve,” May said flatly.

Ignoring her retort, he drank in the sight of her busty top. “Mm, yes, and those can definitely stay, too! You don’t mind if I just...” He raised a hand and May didn’t approve of where it looked like it was going.

“Hey!” She grabbed his wrist before he could touch her inappropriately. “What do you think you’re doing?”

The alarm in her voice caught her boyfriend’s attention. “Huh?” Ash turned around. “What’s going on May?”

“This creep just tried to touch me!”

“Him?” Ash pointed at Nicholai as she held him hostage by the wrist. “He looks kind of familiar...”

“It’s me, Ash! Nicholai, the knickerbocker!”

“Oh, I remember you!”

“Oh yeah?! Of course you do!” He slipped his wrist out of May’s grasp. “I didn’t know you two are a thing! I wasn’t going to do anything, Ash! You gotta believe me! We were just catching up and she got the wrong idea!”

May scoffed. “Bullshit.”

“Uh, I don’t know what happened,” Ash said. “Seems like some sort of misunderstanding. But May and I gotta be on our way.” He steered her away from the frisky Zigzagooon-boy. “Later, Nicholai.”

“Yeah, yeah, sure! Bye!” He disappeared into the crowd of revellers in a hurry.

“What a weirdo,” Ash said. “He’s the kind of guy that would’ve turned up wearing that even if it wasn’t a costume party.”

Whilst she agreed, May wasn’t chuffed with how Ash had handled the situation, partly because she wasn’t chuffed with him in general at the moment. Brendan asked if everything was all right to which she nodded for the sake of moving on.

“I don’t suppose any of you came with your bathing suits?” their Sceptile-guide asked. He then drew their attention to a huge sliding door at the end of the room. Beyond its crystal-clear glass, revellers splashed in a giant pool glowing sapphire with LED lighting.

“Whoa!” Misty gaped. “If I knew, I definitely would’ve come prepared. You ought to make it a pool party next time.”

“Hm.” Brendan rubbed his chin in thought. “Not a bad idea. Not a bad idea at all.”

May expected nothing less from a water pokémon Trainer. Before they could move on, a blue-haired girl donning a princess’s gown and tiara threw the sliding door open and stormed into the manor. She rushed right past them bawling her eyes out.

“Wasn’t that Dawn?” Ash said.

“Yeah...” May had recognised her too.

“Poor girl.” Misty frowned. “I wonder what happened.”

“I’ll go check up on her,” May decided.

“Want me to come with you?”

“No, that’s okay.” The truth was May would’ve welcomed any excuse to walk away from the awkward group dynamic involving her current boyfriend, the first girl he’d ever crushed on, and the first guy May had ever shagged, who also happened to be her boyfriend’s worst enemy. It was a miracle she’d lasted as long as she had. “I’ll catch up to you guys later!” she shouted back while racing after Dawn.

...

Gary dropped out of the tour shortly after May did. As much as he appreciated Brendan showing them around, he doubted he’d find another room as lively as the cocktail lounge. Gary suspected Ash continued to follow Brendan around because he hoped to uncover details about the supposed Articuno egg. A pokémon geek to the end, that Ash Ketchum.

Gary no doubt would want to get his hands on it, too, from a researcher’s perspective, but until he had solid evidence it existed, he wasn’t about to throw himself into a wild goose chase. As for Misty going along for the ride, well, she had her reasons.

While the cats were away, Gary plopped himself on a barstool. Lavender light glowed under the surface of the long counter nearly extending the full width of the room. An impressive assortment of brews lined the three shelves behind an impressive fluffle of servers dressed in sexy bunny costumes. Brendan was about one stripper pole away from turning

Stone Manor into a playboy mansion. Gary didn't want to be there should Steven Stone walk in on any of this. But as it were, Steven *wasn't* present, and Gary was; so, he cast his concerns aside and sought to order a drink.

The bunny waitresses were shepherded by a bartender wearing a vampire-esque costume. His dark cloak was the shade of Zubat, almost camouflaging him in the black room, and as he stood with his back to the counter wiping down a champagne glass, big bat-like ears stuck out of his tall, spiky hair.

"Hey, Count Zubatula." Gary whistled. "Think I could get something to drink?"

"Ah, certainly!" The bartender took the new nickname in his stride, maintaining a polite tone whilst he turned around. "But I'm going to need to see some ID if you want to order... Gary? *The Gary Oak?*"

Surprised, Gary squinted at the would-be vampire and envisioned him without the faux Zubat fangs in his teeth. "Brock? Who put you up to this?" Gary stifled a laugh. "Don't tell me Brendan has you on his payroll now. It was bad enough when Ketchum had you wiping his ass and doing all his cooking for free."

"Ha." Brock continued shining his glass, unperturbed. "Brock wipes the ass of no man! This is volunteer work, dude. It might be pro bono but that doesn't mean it's not without its rewards." He shifted his eyes stealthily to the left, directing Gary's attention to two busty, blonde bunnies at the far end of the counter.

Gary smirked. "More like pro boner work, am I right?"

Brock chuckled to himself. "Couldn't have said it better myself."

The two fresh-faced blondes dropped what they were doing when they noticed Gary looking. They muttered amongst each other while taking turns glancing back his way. Yup, they'd recognised him all right. He knew those looks all too well. Once upon a time he might've winked or gave them half a smirk of acknowledgement but, today, Gary turned back to Brock in bored fashion.

"Er, hate to break it to you," he said. "But I think the little hussies you're pro boning over just spotted something they like more."

“What?” Brock swung a haphazard glance at the young ladies, who indeed had their sights set on a certain pokémon researcher. He groaned, annoyed, then threw his arms up and yelled, “Hey, back to work you two! I don’t pay you to stand around gawking at our customers!”

“Sorreeee,” they crooned, not sounding sorry in the slightest.

Brock rolled his eyes as they turned back to their duties giggling. “Really, man?” he admonished his criminally handsome but innocent patron. “You really have to show me up in here, too?”

Gary’s shrug said, ‘Sorry, not sorry.’ He couldn’t help being a magnet for certain types. “Those poor girls think you’re really going to pay them, don’t they?”

“Who says I won’t? It might not be with Pokédollars but...”

“Ah. Never miss a trick do you, Brock?”

“Don’t patronise me,” he said. “Bet they’re both on your list already anyway. Any other beauties you’d like to point out while we’re at it?”

Well... he’d already walked past four former conquests during the mini palace tour. In fact, there was one gorgeous girl in particular Gary could point out that would rock the former Gym Leader to his core. But... “Meh, I’m not into that game anymore.”

“Oh?” Brock paused with disbelief. “You’re saying you’re a one-woman man these days?”

‘Ah, that’s right. He didn’t see me walk in here with Misty.’

“Maybe I always was,” he suggested cryptically, “and just didn’t know it.”

Brock laughed his head off. “And maybe I’ve always been a Casanova – the ladies just didn’t know it,” he whispered.

“Whatever you say, Count Zubatula. Are we going to spend all night gossiping about loose women or do you plan on serving me a drink at some point?”

“It’s kind of what we do, Gary. But I hear ya.” Brock slid a whiskey glass across the counter. “What will it be tonight? FireSpin Whiskey? Roselia Rye Original Blend? Maybe –”

“The Seven Island.”

Brock raised an eyebrow. “Really? That’s kind of light. For you.”

He shrugged. “I listen to what the night says. And the night is screaming out for The Seven Island.”

“Screaming? More like purring. Your call though. One Seven Island coming up.”

Brock swapped the whiskey glass for a cocktail one. He mixed a concoction from bottles of Vermouth, Belue curacao, brandy, ginger ale and soda, then topped it off with slices of Citrus Berry and ice. It was as good a Seven Island as Gary had seen anyone prepare, the cocktail emitting a bluish-purple glow from the counter’s LED lighting. Brock added a dash of mint and stuck a straw in his creation before sliding it over.

“Not bad,” Gary said, taking in the fruity whiff of Belue rising from his cocktail glass.

Brock swung the towel over his shoulder, satisfied with his satisfied customer. “That’s the first Seven Island I’ve made all night.”

“Can’t expect everyone to have the same exquisite taste as me.” Gary sipped the cocktail through his straw, raising a thumbs-up as the icy beverage soaked his taste buds.

“Yeah, I still don’t buy it.” Brock crossed his arms, analysing the parched researcher relish in his Seven Island. “You ordered something light only because want to keep your wits about you. Which tells me one of two things; one – you’re the designated driver, or two – you’re up to something.”

Gary looked like he would’ve scoffed if his mouth wasn’t swirling liquid. “Can’t a guy enjoy a decent cocktail without being psychoanalysed? I’d rather deal with those two bimbos if you’re going to keep this up.”

“Hmm.” Brock remained unmoved, in his posture and his assessment.

“Fine. I’m the designated the driver. Let’s go with that, okay?”

Brock smirked.

“And what’s with the music in this place anyway?” Gary scampered onto a different topic, looking up in search of the DJ booth. He could see the balustrades of the second floor

and shadows walking to-and-fro, but no obvious person or station controlling the music. It wasn't terrible, only a little shallow and unsophisticated for his personal tastes, not that that stopped people from making fools of themselves on the dance floor. "Who do I talk to if I want to jazz things up in here?"

"Don't tell me you're thinking of gracing us with your *lovely* singing voice?"

Gary chuckled. "My budding singing career has long been over."

"Thank goodness! Maybe you'd have better success as a dancer."

"Maybe. I have been told I'm great at the horizontal tango," he said, ever so modestly.

"I bet you have," Brock said, ever so jealously. "So, who are you doing the ole Oakey Pokey with these days anyway? Tell me about this woman that tamed the show-stealing, convertible-wheeling, steady-scheming, woman-dealing, Gary Freaking Oak!"

He laughed at the absurd reputation of his former self. "You're too much."

"You say too little. Where is she? By the pool? In here?" He craned his neck surveying the lounge area. "At least let me see what she looks like."

"Don't worry, Brocky-boy." Gary patted the nosy bartender on his shoulder before stealing a glance at his fancy wristwatch. "I have a feeling you're going to see plenty of her tonight." He gulped down a huge swig of Seven Island and said nothing more.

...

May and Dawn convened in the shadows of a second-floor pillar overlooking the palace's cocktail lounge. It was quiet enough to hear their own thoughts and voices, and yet close enough to the music for an upbeat backdrop. Well, upbeat as far as the mix was concerned, but not so much regarding the hot topic of their discussion.

May had spent over half an hour soothing Dawn's back while she spilt her guts about her sudden break-up with Kenny. Apparently, he'd been stuck in Unova all week and asked Dawn not to attend this party without him. After much back and forth, Dawn decided to turn up despite his jealousy and paranoia forbidding it. The minute he'd found out Dawn

exercised her right to do as she pleased, he called her while she was at the pool and dumped her over the phone.

Jeez, and here May thought her disputes with Ash had been over the top. Listening to Dawn bemoan her relationship woes helped May appreciate her own. Ash might've been infuriatingly slow at the worst of times but he was nowhere near the control freak Kenny was painted out to be.

Nonetheless, Dawn relapsed on fond memories of her now ex-boyfriend. The heartbroken girl teared up, sobbed, reflected, laughed then relived the cycle of emotions over and over again. May was tempted to suggest they might patch things up the next time they met in person but she didn't want to spread false hope either. In the end, she'd done little more than absorb Dawn's outpouring of emotion, often with one eye downstairs where she could make out everyone chatting and living it up in the streaking LED lights of the cocktail lounge. At least some people were making the most of this party.

Dawn downed the rest of her martini in one big, worrying gulp.

"Another one." She burped.

"Er, think you might want to slow down on those?" May suggested, wary.

"No need to wor-" Dawn hiccupped, then finished the word, "-rry. It was only my third one."

"Yeah, I know... hey, maybe you should come crash at my place tonight."

"No way! You're overreacting. Look – if it was so bad, could I still do this?" Dawn raised one foot and spun in a perfect pirouette. May was impressed; she wouldn't have been able to pull that off even with sober feet. "Just one more?" Dawn begged.

"Oh, all right." What could she say? The pirouette had won her over. "Last one." She clapped her hands twice in quick succession and Freddie came scuttling from the shadows, his tray of snacks and goodies in hand.

Dawn swapped her empty martini glass with a full one before the portly butler went on his way. "How does he get here so quickly? Think he's hiding behind the corner stalking you or something?"

“That’s... a good question.” May looked over her shoulder but saw nothing. “Maybe he’s part of a huge family like the Joys and the Jennies.”

“Maybe. Thanks for this.” Dawn raised her glass then took a sip. “And for offering me your spare bed. But I wouldn’t want to get between you and Ash’s sexy time anyway.”

May let slip an uneasy laugh. “Your safety is more important than –”

“That’s one thing Kenny was great at,” Dawn blabbered on. “Like, seriously, great. That boy could bang his way out of a hostage situation.”

“O... kay.” May looked around, pleased to note the hallway was vacant.

“Like, seriously, May. The sex was mind-blowing. We did it everywhere – at Poni Beach, in a PokéMart, on the roof of his apartment building. He was like a Tauros between the sheets. All night long. And again in the morning. I swear when I came, the high could carry me throughout the day.” Dawn drifted into a blank stare as the memories overran her operating system, culminating in a sizzling shiver. “Woo! I’m going to miss that so much. Probably more than anything else. You’re lucky you still got Ash for nights like this.”

“Yeah, hehe...”

Lucky, huh? Lucky would’ve been any instance she managed to get more than two minutes out of Ash. Despite everything she’d tried, May couldn’t inspire the inner Tauros of her two-year boyfriend.

Perhaps it was high time she considered looking at herself as the problem. Maybe if she was sexier he wouldn’t have such a hard time; or rather, have *more* of a ‘hard time’ when he was with her. Hearing how Dawn and Kenny went at it like Nidorina inflicted her with a bad case of FOMO.

Orgasm? What was that again? A pipe dream without the pipe, that’s what. Did Ash even notice she wasn’t sexually fulfilled? Did he even care? Apparently not if he could ditch another instalment of May’s Sexpeditions to go on some crazy egg hunt.

“May? Are you alright?”

“What?” May blinked as though she just remembered where she was.

“You zoned out for a second there,” Dawn said.

“Oh, it’s nothing... I was just... thinking... about stuff.” She was supposed to be consoling Dawn about her failed relationship, not the other way round! Not that her relationship was failing... was it? “I need to go find Ash.”

“Oh yeah?”

“I’m sorry. I don’t mean to ditch you at a time like this –”

“No need to worry, honey! You’ve helped me plenty already.”

“You sure?”

“Go, girl!” Dawn pushed and shooed her away. “Go find your man!” She gave May an encouraging smack on the bum as she hurried off.

And then there was one.

On her lonesome. Only an empty champagne glass to keep her company. A sneaky thought curled across her lips. She clapped her hands twice. Freddie appeared as expected.

“I’ll take another –”

“I’m terribly sorry,” the butler said, moving the tray out of her reach. “Mistress May made it very clear you’d had your last.”

Dawn crinkled her nose at him. “Well, ‘Mistress May’ isn’t here. I can keep a secret, can you?” She winked.

Freddie stuck his nose up at her and walked away. “I’m afraid I must be on way. Terribly busy night tonight.”

“Come back here, Freddie!” Dawn chased after the portly man in a crazed powerwalk, threatening to follow him to the ends of the palace if he didn’t give hand over a martini!

...

May slumped onto a barstool at the counter, swamped from wandering the labyrinth that was Stone Manor. After stumbling into her fourth kitchen, she had called off her manhunt seeking one Ash Ketchum. She’d sooner get herself lost than find her Team

Magma partner. Since the cocktail lounge was the heart of the party, she had no doubt Brendan would double back and end the tour here. All she had to do was wait.

But oh! She'd bet Freddie knew where Ash had run off to! He had practically been keeping tabs on them all night. She clapped her hands twice. But this time, there was no scuttle of hurried feet, no portly man bustling through the throngs of costumed teens. Hm. Very curious indeed, May thought, scanning the dark room behind her. Perhaps the loud music trampled over the sound of her double clap. She tried again.

"Yes, ma'am?"

May jumped in her seat at the sudden response. It hadn't come from Freddie, but from a long-fanged bartender springing up from under the counter. Bad enough he was dressed like a vampire; he didn't have to act like one, too! "Hey, what's the big idea?" she blasted him, hand clutching her racing heart.

"May?"

"Huh..." She did a double take. "Brock?!" May went from wanting to throttle to him to wanting to give him a big hug. A friendly face was exactly what the doctor ordered after the night she'd been having. "Good to see you again. Hey, you haven't seen Ash around by any chance, have you?"

"Afraid not. But he's bound to turn up here sooner rather than later," Brock said. "Can I get you anything while you wait?"

Now that her personal butler had gone AWOL, she'd have to order her beverages like the other commonfolk in attendance. A champagne glass brandishing sparkly, blue liquid winked in the corner of her eye. Whoever had been drinking the cocktail abandoned it half-full on the counter. May was seduced by its azure glow and the sweet scent of Belue Berry wafting from its icy mouth. "I'll have whatever that is."

Brock nodded, pulling up an empty glass. "All right then. One Seven Island coming up."

"Good choice," came a deep, suave voice to her left. A gloved hand lifted the stem of the cocktail glass she'd thought abandoned and raised it to the lips of a Team Aqua grunt. The last Team Aqua grunt she'd ever want to bump into. Gary Oak.

Her stomach leapt into her throat.

May looked away in a hurry, staring at nothing straight ahead, hoping he'd disappear if she pretended she hadn't seen him. No way she could face him now. She wasn't ready. So much to say, and yet her head felt blank all the same; she felt as though she'd been caught talking about someone without realising they were standing right behind her the whole time.

But that was preposterous. She hadn't spoken about Gary to anyone. Literally, not a soul. Probably why her stomach did somersaults as she sensed him sitting down in her peripheral vision. She hid her shaky hands under the counter.

May appeared fixated on the way Brock was preparing her cocktail. Behind her feigned concentration however, panic ensued. She came to realise there *was* one person she'd been talking about Gary to: herself.

Every time she'd wondered where he was, what he'd been doing, if he remembered her, May had inundated herself with questions she wasn't sure she wanted the answers to. Brock garnished her cocktail with a slice of Citrus Berry before presenting it on a napkin. With that, he slipped away to attend to other requests, leaving her alone with Gary, and with nothing else to pretend to be focused on.

After several long beats, the familiar stranger beside her broke the silence. "So, we're just not going to talk?"

May sipped her beverage, barely glancing at him in the corners of her eyes. His question lingered in the awkward air whilst she contemplated the perfect response. None came to mind. "Is there something you wanted to say, Gary?"

"Hm." She heard him readjusting on his barstool. "Depends," he said. "What would you like to hear?"

From him? Nothing! That would've been her unfiltered, unadulterated response. An outburst of emotion that said little about how she truly felt. She didn't want to give him the satisfaction of knowing she felt anything at all. In a response as calm and measured as another cocktail sip, she said, "What does it matter? The past belongs in the past." Where it couldn't hurt anyone in the present.

“So you haven’t forgotten about the past,” he said, completely missing her point.
“That’s okay. I haven’t either.”

Oh? Now that piqued an eyebrow. She watched him raise and set down his glass from the corner of her eyes. It sure hadn’t seemed like he remembered with the way he’d been all over Misty since they got here. Where was the Jesse to his James anyway? “Where’s your girlfriend?” she asked, a little more pointedly than intended.

“Misty’s a big girl. She can take care of herself.”

“Is that why you chose her?”

Gary sat with the query and stirred, not unlike the way his straw circled the contents of his glass. It wasn’t exactly a trick question and yet he seemed awfully careful about how he wanted to answer it. “People change, you know? And sometimes it takes getting to know someone to make that happen. Misty definitely changed me.” That much a Zubat could see from a mile away. “But…”

“But?” Her ears tuned out everything except his voice.

“But probably not in the way you’re thinking.”

And how would he know what she was thinking? Pretty presumptuous of him. Typical Gary Oak. He made her mad and she didn’t even know why. The only way to get anywhere with him was by being stubbornly direct. “Do you love her?”

He fell silent again, predictably. What May hadn’t anticipated though was her nerves gnawing at her insides. Every second felt as tense as waiting to hear the verdict of a trial – her own, with Gary playing judge, jury and executioner. She didn’t know when it started mattering so much what he did with his heart but she was certainly guilty of caring more than she should’ve. And the bastard kept her hanging on the edge of her barstool.

May picked up her cocktail again, if only to cool her nerves a little, but she discovered nothing more than brittle ice cubes clinking at the bottom of her glass. She shouldn’t have been drinking this stuff this quickly. Her fidgety fingers tapped on the empty glass until she finally gave in and ordered another.

After she acquired her new drink, they both stared forward caressing their glasses, with only a barstool and silence between them, their backs to the party raging on in their absence.

“Does it matter what I say?” Gary wondered, his voice two decibels shy of a whisper. “You never believed I was capable of caring about anyone more than myself. Or that anyone could ever really care about me.”

So, no answer to her question then? May was kind of relieved, regretted asking it in the first place. Although, hearing him throw her words back at her made for tough listening. Damn, had she really been that harsh? He’d been a pushy jerk but the years had apparently softened her stance on his attitude. They had both been younger and dumber, and plus, “You really pissed me off.”

“I know.” He offered a guilty chuckle. “And you were totally right to be. I might’ve been a little bit of a jerk the last time we spoke.”

“A little bit?”

He laughed. “Look, I’m not used to losing. And I mean at anything. Back then, I didn’t know how to handle it when things didn’t go my way.”

“And, let me guess, now you do?”

“Well, no. Now I make sure everything *does* go my way.”

Such a Gary Oak thing to say, even if she could hear the tongue-in-cheek in his tone of voice. “Some apology this is turning out to be.”

“Who said anything about apologising?” He took a flippant sip of his cocktail. “And why am I the only one doing anything remotely close to it?”

May scoffed. “Are you for real? I’m supposed to say sorry for hitting you in the nuts?”

“I mean... it did kind of hurt.”

“I mean... that was kind of the point.” Although, in retrospect, she could admit, “neither of us were on our best behaviour that day, I guess. We could’ve done better.”

“Yeah.” He nodded. “And thanks for apologising for both of us.”

Really now? May shook her head and caught herself smiling. She killed it immediately. “Anyway...”

A welcoming lightness cooled the air, a teetering hope they could be civil to each other moving onwards. It was especially important given their significant others happened to be good friends, which meant she and Gary were more likely to cross paths again than not. Without muddying their hands in the past, she felt they’d come to a silent agreement never to dig up what had happened in those woods, for the benefit of all parties involved.

“May.” His voice dropped in the way it did when you wanted to bring up something serious. More than that, hearing him say her name commanded her attention for the mere rarity of ever hearing him say it.

She turned to face him for the first time since they’d started talking. A fat strip of neon blue cut across his darkened features, from one piercing, brown eye to the opposite edge of his strong jawline. His face had ‘bad boy’ chiselled into it and the Team Aqua bandana boosted his credibility. Her heart fluttered and that was when she knew she had to look away.

“Gary,” she said back to him, taking a sip to divert from her coyness.

“I really am sorry about how things ended.”

“I know. I can see it in your face,” she said, without looking at said face. It must’ve been the cocktail, she decided, tilting her glass curiously. Or the lighting. Anything, other than her own sensibilities, made him look more devastatingly handsome than he had the right to be. She didn’t dare steal another peek.

He added, “But I’m not sorry about *what* happened.”

An explosion of warmth rushed to her cheeks and extremities. She tugged on her hood to keep him from noticing. Because, while every fibre of her being yearned to scream out ‘me neither’, such notions were objectionable for a taken lady like herself. “It was a mistake,” she said. “That’s all. I made a mistake.”

“Yeah, well, mistakes are where the greatest stories come from.”

“No, you don’t get it. It ruined me. I haven’t been able to look myself in the mirror for the last two years. Lying, keeping secrets from people – argh, haven’t been able to...” She

took a deep breath. Yikes. Had she already said too much? Time for another swig. Or rather, another glass. She called out for one of the bunny servers to make her a third.

Meanwhile, Gary hadn't missed a single word she'd blabbed. "Haven't been able to what, May? Get over your guilt? Or... over the fact you loved it as much you did?"

"I..." Beet-red, May stammered on her retort. That drink couldn't come soon enough.

"Admit it," Gary said. "You've been thinking about it."

"Have not!"

"What's the matter? Ash not been able to keep up with you?"

"What...?"

"Heh. He doesn't know what he's doing, does he?"

"Ash is... Ash is fine."

"Then why is this the first time, all night, you've gotten all flustered and wet –"

"Stop!" May slammed her fist on the counter. Both Gary and the bunny waitress holding her drink jumped back. Embarrassed, May buried her face in her hands, then ruffled her hair under the red hood. Dang it. How did he always find a way to worm his way into her mind?

Gary held his hands up in innocence. "Hey, I was only ribbing you. Didn't mean to –"

"Well, you did!"

"All right, I get it. I don't have to be here, you know? You want me to leave this party, just say the word."

"Okay then," May said, muffled by the hands covering her face. "Leave."

Her bluntness stunned him silent, like someone who hadn't expected their bluff to be called. She wouldn't lift her head, even as she heard his stool screech backwards. Wow, he was really leaving. She hadn't actually meant it. Jeez, what did she do? U-turning on her word

now would only make her look even more pitiful. She sat there in her stubborn stupor for a while before throwing her head up so abruptly her hood fell back.

“Gary, wait...”

He was already half way across the room when he stopped at the sound of her voice. “If you see my date,” he said, without turning around, “Tell her I’ll be waiting for her out front. See ya later.” He waved a backhanded salute before disappearing through the darkness of the cocktail lounge.

May groaned, annoyed at the whole world, but at least she had a third cocktail to comfort her. She drank it on her lonesome, reflecting on her stormy conversation with Gary and everything that had led up to it. Who was she kidding? There was no way she and Gary could ever get over their baggage long enough to be anything remotely close to friends. She was three-quarters to the bottom of her glass when a friendly face re-emerged across the counter.

“Things going upside-down?” Vampire-Brock asked, concerned.

He had no idea. May gave him a vacant look, her face drained and dispirited. What was she even still doing here? “Where’s Ash?” She just remembered she’d been looking for him before the tempest known as Gary Oak threw her off course. “I want to go home.”

Brock glanced between her weathered expression and her near-empty cocktail glass. “That doesn’t sound like a bad idea,” he said. “I haven’t seen Ash all night. Hope he’s okay and hasn’t lost his way in the mansion somewhere. Wait here. I’ll go try to find him.”

Pfft. What was she, a baby now? She could find her own boyfriend herself! As soon as Brock exited stage right, May downed the last of her Seven Island and stood up – perhaps, too quickly; she wobbled on her first step and clung onto the counter for balance.

The alcohol content in one Seven Island was quite low, but apparently it added up when you gulped down three in quick succession. May was still of clear mind and she could walk just fine on her own with a little added concentration. Ironically, she felt quite light and carefree despite it all.

Now, where had that lousy boyfriend of hers run off to?

...

May tried to retrace the steps they'd taken during the tour, but it was no use. She couldn't remember one corridor from the next. Besides, if Ash had really gone looking for that Articuno egg, he wouldn't have taken the same path Brendan had led everyone down. When May circled back to the lobby, she took one look up the imperial staircase and said 'screw it'.

The second floor was as much of a maze as the first, if not more laborious. All the walls were cream white and decked with portraits of Gym Leaders. The music grew fainter behind her as she delved deeper down the halls. She hadn't seen anyone since veering left on the last corner. Soon, there were only the sounds of her black-and-red boots thudding along deserted paths. Then, another noise began creeping into her vicinity... a soft knocking sound...

It appeared to be coming from a cupboard up ahead, she realised, as it grew louder the closer she tiptoed towards the door. Knock, knock, knock, rattle, rattle, rattle. It sounded like someone trying to bang their way out. At least it did until she started hearing the cacophony of laboured grunts. It didn't take a genius to put two and two together. Whoever was in there, they were having an awfully good time...

Ash...? She feared the worst. He hadn't disappeared alone after all.

With her heart pounding, May took a closer step, close enough to see the door rattling in archway from someone evidently getting pounded against it. Louder still, the grunts were clearly born of pleasure. May's hands were trembling, not only from anxiety, but from a mounting rage simmering under her skin.

How dare he?!

She'd always known there was something fishy about that redheaded skank, what with her love for water pokémon and all. Did she think May hadn't noticed her eyeing up Ash the moment she entered the house?

May grabbed the doorknob and wrenched it open violently.

A loud *GASP!*

Nearly stumbling out the broom cupboard, Dawn's pale, sweaty face met hers with wide-eyed alarm.

"D-Dawn?"

"May?! Oh my gosh!" She scrambled to lift her dress back over her exposed chest.

May was at a loss for words. "What are you – who are you...?" She peered inside the small, cramped room. Amongst brooms and shelves of cleaning materials, a topless, portly man shrugged with his arms. "Freddie?!"

"Mistress May, what can I do for you?" he asked in his usual professional tone. Except, it seemed a little less professional when one didn't have any pants on.

"Oh God." May turned away cringing. She shot Dawn a 'just how much did you drink?' look. The bluenette shrugged with her arms, too. May laughed a big laugh. At the odd pair and at her own paranoia thinking they were other people. "Whatever," she said, amused. "Do you, girl. Do you. Think I'm losing my mind. I need to splash water on my face or something. Where's the nearest bathroom?"

"Ah, yes," the butler said. "Down two doors, take a right and it will be the third door on your left."

"Thanks, Freddie." May chuckled by herself all the way up to the bathroom. But then she opened the door. Her face fell flat.

Leaned up against the sink, Ash had his long shorts down at his ankles, and a redheaded Team Aqua grunt sat on her knees before him, bobbing her head back and forth with a mouthful of cock. Her *boyfriend's* hard cock.

The split second she'd walked in, Ash looked as though he was on cloud nine, his head lolled back and his eyes half-lidded – but they grew twofold when he'd recognised her gasping in the doorway. "Shit!"

He pushed Misty off his cock and grasped at his pants in a hurry. The redhead was on the brink of cussing him out when she, too, made out May. She gasped, her face pale to the bone. "Oh my – May! It's not what you think!" she said as she wiped spit off her jaw.

May's shock turned to disgust. Then anger. She seethed, shaking with emotion.

“W-wait!” Ash begged, fumbling with his belt as he tried to reach her. “I can exp-”

“No, you can’t!”

“Please!” He grabbed her shoulders. Big mistake.

May shook off his seedy mitts and rewarded his efforts with a stinging slap that echoed through the bathroom walls. Her cheating boyfriend stumbled to the side, nearly losing his footing.

“Ash!” Misty cried out. She pulled him back from attempting to reach his shattered girlfriend again. “Let her go! Let her go!” she cried as May stormed out of the bathroom.

At least his little harlot had the sense not to try her at that moment. May didn’t know what she would’ve done if she’d gotten within hair-pulling range of the skank.

She marched right past Dawn and Freddie as the half-dressed pair shared stunned expressions, asking her what had happened. May couldn’t have responded if she wanted to, not with the way emotion clenched her throat. Tears flooded her eyes. She moved faster despite having no clue where she wanted to go.

Somehow, through blurred and watered vision, she reached the imperial staircase and bumped shoulders with Brendan who happened to be going up. “Hey, hey, hey!” He seized her wrist forcing her to stop. “What the...?! What the hell happened?” Panic was strewn across his face. “May?!”

A barrage of tears burst from her eyes. “Fucking Ash cheated on me, that’s what!”

Brendan’s jaw hit the ground, jarred by utter disbelief.

“Yeah!” She ripped her arm out of his grasp. “Screw him. Screw them both,” she spat before fleeing down the staircase a sobbing mess.

...

Gary sat on the trunk of his red convertible, gazing at the stars. The trickle of the Wartortle fountain behind him added a serene backdrop to a rather chaotic night. His bust-up with May had soured his appetite for the party. Even if she hadn’t asked him to leave, the

growing tension between them would have. Perhaps he'd tried to launch the rocket too early. What a major miscalculation. He'd missed the moon and still didn't land on the stars, but at least he could admire them from afar.

Misty was the only reason he hadn't left already. Despite his miserable failure, he hoped she was getting what she wanted out of the party. The manor's front doors swung open with a dramatic bang.

Gary looked over his shoulder and caught a female Team Magma grunt storming out of the mansion. Arms crossed beneath her ample bust, she paced around the fountain with her head hung, tears and sobs spilling from her red hood. Damn. He could tell she'd been let down and wasn't taking it well.

"Hey," he called out. It took a sharp whistle to break her insistent pacing. May looked in his direction, albeit the hood obscured the top half of her face. "Over here!" He waved her down. She stayed rooted in place, hesitant. "I'm only offering you a place to sit down – would hate to see you run those boots to their soles." Still, she didn't move. "Suit yourself." He returned to his skygazing.

What she couldn't see from his back were how his eyes snuck to their corners speculating on whether she'd approach or not. A tinge of something lit his nerves when he heard the tentative thuds of her boots growing louder. She was coming! Gary made sure to be looking up at the black sky indifferently when she climbed onto the trunk beside him.

And here they were again.

He didn't think he'd see her again so soon. Last time they had had an explosive confrontation, they'd become strangers for years.

Though she'd joined him on the convertible, May hadn't said a word, sombre hands cradled in her lap. The sobbing had stopped with the exception of dying sniffs here and there. Gary hadn't mastered his own emotions; imagine him attempting to console another's? And a girl's at that? Granted, this was partly his doing. The least he could do was try.

Whilst his sights clung to the stars, he asked, "Where did you find them?"

She slowly swivelled her head in his direction, contemplated something, then looked up and responded. "In the bathroom."

“Heh. Can’t give them any points for originality.”

“You don’t seem... surprised. Or hurt. Did you... plan this whole thing?”

He sneered. “I know you don’t think much of me but come on.”

“I don’t know what to think of you. Not anymore.”

An improvement? He shook his head, unsure. “It was obvious,” he said. “Those two. When I first got with Misty it was great. Then I started to notice she had this weird habit of injecting Ash’s name in every conversation she possibly could. I didn’t tell her – naturally – just continued to observe. Till eventually I had to ask myself if she really saw me for me, or if I was just some vestige from the past, a means to remember a young boy in a Trainer’s cap carrying a Pikachu on his shoulder.”

May mused on it quietly.

“Anyway,” he continued. “If there was anything unresolved between her and Ash, I figured the best way to find out would be to reunite them and leave them to their own devices. I wanted to be wrong but... no, I can’t say I’m surprised.”

It was round about then May realised there was more to the story than her. “I’m sorry, Gary. Truly.”

“I’m not. And you shouldn’t be either.” He turned to face her – or rather, the side of the hood she presented him. “Besides, not exactly like we’re completely innocent in all this.”

May dropped a heavy sigh. “That’s different...”

“Of course.” He laughed. “It’s always different when it’s you, isn’t it?” But he didn’t want to dwell on the past. “In any case, what I’m saying is we should be grateful.”

“Grateful?” She scoffed at the idea.

“Yeah. They’ve shown us what I think we’ve both known all along.”

“...and what’s that?”

He knew what he wanted to say, what he wanted to do, but his hands lay hesitant on the trunk, his left a short crawl away from her right. The nervy itch lining his stomach was so

rare it felt new, the fear of losing at anything, of losing with her. He had to remind himself who he was. Gary Fucking Oak! “Screw it.”

He braved a gentle hold on her chin and, when she hadn't tried to bite off his fingers, turned her hooded face towards his. His thumb brushed over her full lips, then continued up her cheek, wiping clear the dried trail of a forgotten tear. He threw her hood back. Puffy, blue eyes trembled at his caress, raw with emotion as they searched his own pair. Actions spoke louder than words and he couldn't think of a more resounding response to her question. He cupped the side of her face and leaned in.

“Gary...” she croaked the last of her waning resistance.

“Anyone ever tell you,” he whispered hotly, “you should shut up when someone's trying to kiss you?”

She let her eyes fall shut and his lips close the distance. He was immediately embraced by the warmth of her pink cushions, so soft and tender and laced with hints of berry. May tasted like home after a gruelling journey abroad, and Gary wouldn't settle for a single serving. His tongue met no resistance wedging her hot lips apart and reuniting with her own lathered muscle. They exchanged deep longings and remnants of cocktail under the starry night, the world around them fading into the dark.

As soon as their tongues untied and their mouths unglued, a single word crossed both their lips...

“Wow.”

He sighed a dreamy sigh. “You have no idea how long I've been waiting to do that.”

May's cheeks grew as red as her hooded top. She couldn't bring herself to say she'd missed him too, but that was fine. The passion she'd put into the kiss spoke volumes.

Gary felt a huge weight on his shoulders dissolve, one he'd known was weighing him down before her lips untethered him. A cheesy smile fought its way onto his visage. “Say...” He clasped her hand. “How would you feel about making another mistake?”

Their great minds thought as one as they glanced back at the manor behind them.

... TO BE CONTINUED ...

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Sincerely yours, j.j. scriptease.