

## Easter Egg - Snow on Mt. Silver

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Post with 280 notes

So, my brother and I, we kinda grew up on pokemon. Around here a lot of kids did. It worked out perfectly for us, too- every time a new gen came out one of us would get one version, one of us would get the other, and since our mum liked to spoil us a bit we both got the 3rd one. This is going to sound, at first, like a bittersweet story about two siblings who grow up with a couple of games that eventually take them down two different roads... Well, it's a little more than that.

The years rolled by, we kept collecting. Gameboys got old; we replaced them. Cartridges finally gave out, we picked up new copies. But we started down two completely different roads before R/S/E came out. See, around then my brother got a Gameshark. We had heard all the hacks and cheats you could do with them, even if we were kind of late to the party, and they sounded awfully cool. Our first guinea pig cartridge was my brother's old Blue version. We just dicked around with it a little bit, nothing major. But whatever we did fucked the cartridge up. After just a couple of code entries, it glitched out completely and became unplayable. Naturally we were upset at first; my brother mourned the loss of his hours of work, and I was sympathetic. I told him, "It's okay, we can replace it I guess. Stupid shark was a waste of money."

But here our paths finally differed. After seeing the mess it had turned Blue version into, I had become opposed to the idea of hacking or cheating any of my games. (What can I say? I'm a chick. I feel feelings for the little pixel-critters.) At least with that gameshark. But my brother had taken his game's destruction as a personal challenge or something- don't think he ever played a game after that which wasn't hacked somehow. Yeah, we played a shit ton of pokemon, man. But for us there really wasn't much else to do; we live way out in the country without many other kids, and the farmers didn't want us on their property... so... we played pokemon out on the lawn just about all day, every day. It was pretty awesome to us, at least.

We lost the gameshark when our rooms got moved around. A new addition was built onto our house and it disappeared in the mess of shit that got stuffed into

the new closet.

R/S/E arrived, and after playing through them once we were both in agreement that they were definitely lacking in comparison to the last gen. We both tried another honest play-through, and though we managed to finish, it left us both yearning for some good old-fashioned nostalgia. Where were our old G/S/C cartridges, though? It took us probably a month to dig through the boxes we'd been too lazy to open up before, but we finally found one full of a shitload of all our old electronics: My old purple Gameboy Color still worked, his red one could no longer hold batteries in place. Both of our GBAs were fine, though, along with our snakelights and link cables, that one with the nifty little connector in the middle that I had always wrapped up oh-so-carefully to avoid fraying the wires and condemning it to the trash like our last cable.

We both grabbed up everything we could. It was so nice to have Yellow (which had been my first and most cherished game of any series, not just pokemon) and Red and Gold back.

We went through the motions of checking our old files, taking in all the old memories, and eventually we figured the gen 1 stuff was just too nostalgic to get rid of. I restarted Gold, he restarted Silver. Immediately he snatched the Gameshark out of the box and slipped it into the back of his GBA. I just shook my head at him. I remember what I said to him.

“That thing will kill your game, you know.”

He never had liked me preaching to him about ‘abusing pixels.’ I shut my mouth after that, but it had put him off playing with me. I guess it was just one time too many or something; I oughta know to keep my thoughts to myself, really...

It was a couple of days later that it happened. I was out on the porch, gameboy in-hand, just about to go into the E4 when I realized I needed a little help. My team was ill-balanced thanks to my playing through for leisure, and at the time I was no great trainer that could pull off gimmick runs. I knew that my brother had been two badges ahead of me when we'd last checked with one another, so I was hoping maybe he'd let me borrow a poke or two just for this run-through.

Now, the thing is that I'd spent the last 24 hours at a friend's place. I had literally come home, dumped my bag in my room, and crept out into the sun with my GBA to play. I had no idea what he'd been up to. For all I knew he was done with the game and onto a new one... which, I figured, was all the better for me since

he wouldn't need those pokemon and I'd stand a better chance of nicking a few. So I got up and went into the house, and when I was crossing the living room I noticed all of his pokemon games lying on the floor. Some of the cartridges had been mangled, like they'd been hacked at with something sharp. Even his old Blue version, long ago dead and too sentimental to throw away, was lying with the plastic cut ragged, split almost halfway up one side, completely unusable anymore even if it would have worked.

I was a little scared. This had to have happened this morning, otherwise our mum would have seen and they wouldn't be lying on the carpet. Tucking my GBA into my pocket, I crept over to his room and found the door unlocked. Somehow that was even more concerning.

I walked in and found my brother sitting on the edge of his bed. His GBA was in pieces on the floor at his feet, smashed to bits. Next to him on the bed were a hammer and our mother's gardening scissors. His face was paler than I'd ever seen it, whiter than the time we'd gone corning and the old guy up the street, legally blind and a raving nutcase, had come and chased us into the trees with a shotgun. It was now I also noticed the gameshark on the ground, and a silver cartridge corner poking from under his bed. Somehow they had been spared the wrath of the hammer.

"Are you okay?" I asked. I remember the chills that ran through me. He was my little brother. Seeing him like this was horrifying.

"It was awful," I remember him rasping, and the way his voice rattled made my knees weak. "Oh god. White everywhere, and then BLACK..."

I remember running over and hugging him. And I remember, his limp arm fell and brushed the gameboy in my pocket, and his sudden scream, right in my ear, making me jump and bite my tongue by accident. He ripped the handheld from my pocket and hurled it at the far wall. I cried out at the dent the plastic system made there, running over to collect it. The screen had gone dark, and though I feared the worst when I flicked the switch it powered up normally. I waited there in the corner, trying to pretend the GBA mattered enough not to go and run for our mum.

The volume was on.

The pokemon theme started up, and he screamed again, picking up the hammer. This time // screamed, too, and ran from the room with my GBA

clutched to my chest like a shield.

He ended up in the psyche ward of the hospital for two days. When we went to visit him, I left my GBA at home. No one could figure out what had set off his strange, manic behavior. There was some talk that I didn't understand at the time about some kind of disorder he may or may not have had, but even though mum and I had collected and brought in all the cut-up cartridges to be looked at (mum's idea, not mine), no one had even thought to tie it back to the game... maybe that was my fault. I hadn't said a word about what had happened when he had accidentally touched my Gameboy, or the blind, white terror he had been thrown into when the music had started.

On my last visit to the hospital before school on the second day, I was left alone in the room with him while mum had some private talk with the doctor about precautions to take should this happen again. I sat in a chair next to the bed where he was staring at the ceiling. But then suddenly he sat up, making me flinch.

"Hey," he told me, "Angie. Go in my room when you get home."

I didn't understand what he meant, and then I remembered the things we hadn't packed up and brought in... the game and the hacking tool under his bed.

"Get rid of them. I don't ever want to play with them ever again."

His voice was so weary and desperate... he sounded like an old man on his deathbed. My poor, damaged little brother... how could I refuse?

"Promise you'll get rid of them."

"Okay. I promise."

I was carted off to school late, and through the whole day I only had my promise to him in my head. I didn't know it at the time, but this would be the last time that I could ever play the big-sister role and help him out. I just had to get home and get rid of that game... but as the day went on a sick curiosity started to go through my own head. What could possibly have happened to that game that scared him so badly? I was scared, myself, but I just had to know. I had to.

I got home and went right into his room, bent on uncovering whatever horror was waiting for me. Mum had since vacuumed the room, and the cartridge and gameshark were no longer visible. I got down and crawled half under the bed,

feeling timid but holding onto the promise I made as my badge of courage. Under the bed there was enough dust to make me cough, enough old legos and various other toys that I couldn't set my elbow down without it landing on something. But I finally saw both objects. They'd been shoved to the corner, on top of a notebook that looked too new to have been down here long. Unthinking, I grabbed the corner of the paper and dragged everything out with me, still wheezing from the dust. (Allergies and all.)

They looked so innocent, simple toys and a simple, spiral-bound bunch of papers. When I set Silver version and the gameshark on the floor, I took a closer look at the notebook. On it were scrawled at least twenty different cheat codes, but one had been scratched out with sharpie over where it had initially been drawn in with pen. This was confusing. He had REALLY tried to erase it out- the marker had been pressed to the paper so hard that ink soaked through most of the pages behind it, almost 2/3rds of the way to the card-stock back cover. But pen has a way of sticking around. I picked up the notebook and tilted it backward in the light, and the reflective surface of the sharpie revealed the indents that had been left where he'd written. The code was an unintelligible mess of letters and numbers, but the words next to it confused me.

“Easter Egg - Snow on Mt. Silver”

I remembered what he had said when I'd found him... he had been raving about white, white and then black... could he mean snow? Even though it was only August and the temperature was still climbing to 90 degrees every day, a chill ran down my spine. Did I dare...?

I picked everything up and brought it to my room, and laid it out on the carpet in front of me with my own GBA next to it. For a long time I just stared down at it, and the longer I looked, the more maniacal Lugia's face became on the sticker... like some kind of twisted grin, like it was daring me to find out what had happened to my brother. I was a 14 year old kid. Did I really want to tempt fate and risk ending up like him? I glared down at Lugia for awhile longer.

I had to see.

I slid Gold out of my GBA and stuck Silver in in its place. It took me almost 15 minutes to compose myself and turn it on.

It started up normally. I left the sound on low, too afraid of what I might hear to

keep it up the full way, and too curious to turn it the whole way off. The title screen was normal, too. Lugia again, but somehow menacing despite my common sense telling me it was exactly the same picture as every other time I had started up the game. How bad could this be? I asked myself. His notes said Easter egg. Didn't that mean that that was coding already in the game?

The menu came up... still absolutely normal. His character was Blake, with a mostly filled pokedex... but the time was odd. 999:99. I KNEW he couldn't have been playing that long... I had barely logged 50 hours on my own game and I was at the E4... and I was playing slowly. Probably the result of his hacking fucking up his file, I thought. Well, whatever then...

The game started up, and the first thing I noticed was the prolonged black screen. It took almost a minute for anything to change... and there was no sound at all. The hairs on the back of my neck were standing up already, but it was too late to turn back.

Finally, a very dim sort of map came onto the screen... but it looked like static. What was going on? I squinted down and realized with a fearsome pang that it was actually the Mt. Silver map... but what I thought was static was heavy-falling snow. So this was where he had last saved his game. I checked his party... a very normal team for someone who'd been using a Gameshark: Typhlosion, Feraligatr, Meganium, Pidgeot, Tyranitar, Lugia, all level 100 with modded moves... typical for him. Something about the sprites was... strange, though. They seemed sullen, in a way. Their colors seemed washed-out, and their expressions lacked the usual vigor they normally had. I chalked this up to missing pixels or something, also due to the hacking...

The map had brightened up just a smidgeon when I closed out of the start menu. Indeed, snow was somehow falling very heavily; pixels danced across the screen so fast it was hard to see the little sprite that was my brother's character. Something was off about him, too. When I checked the information, it was the same as the pokemon sprites; the colors were dull. In fact, now that I thought about it, he almost looked frostbitten.

My stomach tightened, and I turned and tried to move back down the mountain. As I hit the bottom of the screen, words popped up, and there was finally a sound – my sprite hitting an invisible wall.

“I can't turn back now.”

That was... unsettling. I went into my pokemon and tried to use Pidgeot's 'Fly'

ability.

“I can’t fly in this!” obviously referring to the snow.

‘Fuck this,’ I thought, going into his bag. There was an escape rope. I tried using it.

“I can’t go back anymore.”

What was going on? Once again, I tried to walk back down the mountain, and to my horror the words changed with every attempt.

“I can’t run away.”

“I can’t go back down.”

“I can never go back.”

This last one sent a frigid feeling through my heart. There was no way down the mountain. I had to climb. Turning the little sprite around, I moved him forward.

No resistance at all, though my walking speed was oddly slow. What was truly weird was the lack of grass, of trainers, of anything at all but that white snow, which still blew across the screen and made it almost impossible to see.

As I moved further “up” the mountain, his walking speed became slower, and slower. The static curtain of pixels grew thicker, so that I could barely make out the features of the map... but it seemed like the only way to move was straight ahead anyway. I reached what looked like a set of stairs at the very top edge of the screen. I didn’t remember this being there before. As I tried to move up, the little sprite paused.

“I’m cold.”

By now even I was getting goosebumps. His walking speed had become painfully slow, as if somehow he was being impeded. Up the little staircase...

More text on the screen.

“Meganium has died.”

What the fuck, I thought. Pokemon don’t die in these games. I checked in my party, and was frightened and confused by what I saw.

Meganium’s sprite had been replaced by a red X. All of my other pokemon

sported varying degrees of damage, though I hadn't battled once. I went into my bag and found a single revive, and tried to use it.

"It's too late," it said. What kind of easter egg was this?

There wasn't much else I could do... trying to turn around yielded the same messages as before. So I kept moving.

"Pidgeot has died."

I checked again... sure enough, there was the little red X. This time I selected it and looked at the pokemon itself, trying to figure out what was wrong... I wished I hadn't.

The sprite was mangled; pieces of it were missing. What was left was splotted with a sickish blue-grey color, and its eye was a solid black pit. I flipped down to Meganium- same deal, a leg missing, a chunk of its neck, most of its head, save that pitch-black, dead eye.

Morbid curiosity urged me onward, and the path never deviated from the straight upward road I'd traveled the entire time. Along the way, every now and then, another party pokemon would 'die' and examination of its sprite would show it was in the same condition as the others. Until all that was left was Typhlosion. One more stair case was up ahead. I climbed it, braced for whatever horror awaited me.

I hit the summit.

It was deserted – Red was nowhere to be found.

The snow had stopped falling.

In the very center of the map was something sticking out of the snow. It looked like a pokeball. Okay, maybe all this creepy shit lead up to some climactic, final battle using whatever was in THERE. If I picked it up, maybe Red would come out of hiding. I walked over and examined it, and there was a burst of static noise from my game that made me jump.

What appeared on the screen was a battle animation, my trainer sprite appearing, his skin tinged blue... against another mangled pokemon sprite.

It was Celebi.

In the center of that black hole that was its eye, a single red dot burned out like an ember. The thing looked rotted. I didn't even throw out my mostly-dead typhlosion before it had moved.

“Celebi used Perish Song.”

A screech came out of my GBA, and I almost dropped it as the screen went white. A part of me was relieved, thinking that my final pokemon had been KO'd and I would be transported to a pokemon center... but I was wrong. My sprite reappeared in what looked like a cave; was in now inside the mountain? I checked my trainer card and felt sick. The sprite was just as mauled as the pokemon had been; a leg gone. A single eye remaining, pitch-black and so, so sad looking, tears welled up at the corner... And every color on him was replaced by those sick shades of frosty blue-and-grey. Every stat on the card was reduced to 0, except the time, which still read 999:99.

I quickly moved back to the map. His sprite there mimicked the horror it had become on the trainer card; pieces were missing, everything was discolored. I started trying to walk, and at first I received a message.

“It's so cold.”

There was only one direction to go- upward. I moved on, and every now and then would be stopped by a message that made my heart sink lower and lower.

“Mother...”

“It feels so cold...”

“I can't go on...”

The walls, as I walked, became darker and darker, until they were pitch-black at the end.

There was an exit there, marked only by a white outline. I had no other choice but to go through it.

It opened into a chamber that was also solid white... the only way to distinguish the walls was a thin grey line that marked them as separate from the floor.

Against the far wall there was another sprite. Red's sprite. Intact. I had come this far... I had to finish this. I walked right up to him and hit A.

“ ... ”

A battle started.

Red's sprite had none of the deformities that marred my own. The colors were the same blues and greys, but he was intact. He just looked... extremely sad. His first pokemon came out; Venusaur. It was just like my own had been... but level 0, with a speck of health. I sent out typhlosion, who had just 6 hitpoints left. No pokemon made a sound when they were brought into battle.

“Venusaur used struggle!”

There was no animation, just a single point of damage done to typhlosion, and then the opposing sprite dropped off the screen.

“Venusaur has died!”

There was no text asking me to switch out. Instead, there was just what I took to be dialogue from Red.

“ ... ”

His next pokemon was Blastoise, even more mangled than Venusaur had been. It too struggled and died. After each round there was that ominous “ ... ” from their trainer. Every sprite was more damaged than the last; his Espeon was barely distinguishable as a pokemon. I realized somewhere he was sending them out all out of order, which saved one pokemon for last...

Pikachu came out, and it was grotesque. It, too, was discolored like it was frostbitten. It was missing an ear, half its body and tail, its head was mostly intact but its eyes were much larger than they should have been, and glared out at me like pitch-black windows into hell... but the thing that got me the most was the giant smile that extended almost all the way to the edges of its head. Its health was somehow at 0, or at least looked that way.

My hands were shaking. I didn't get a chance to attack.

“Pikachu used Pain Split.”

“Pikachu has died! Typhlosion has died!”

It cut back to the image of Red's sprite... and now it looked like mine, with his body so butchered it looked like a carcass stripped of most of its meat... except

it had those same, soulless, deranged eyes as pikachu.

I finally understood what happened. They were dead. They were dead, and this sublevel of the mountain was the hell they now existed in.

Red finally spoke.

“It’s over.”

The screen flashed black and white for a moment.

“ used Destiny Bond!”

A horrible, hideous screeching started to issue from my GBA. The screen went white and it shrieked at me, and I threw it to the floor and pressed my back against the bed. The horrible noise continued for several long moments while the screen stayed white.

Then went black.

Then there was silence.

It took me a long few moments, but I eventually stood up. I took the gameshark. I took the notebook. I took that fucking possessed game. I picked them all up and carried them to the garbage can we had already set out for morning pickup, at the end of our long, winding driveway... and I threw them in. When I got back to the house, I don’t know what made me do it, but I picked up yellow version and inserted it into my Gameboy... I think it was part of me determined to make sure I hadn’t somehow been tainted as well.

The music started up. The game played. I turned to my pikachu and hit A.

Its smiling face greeted me with an ear twitch and a big, pixelated smile. A pleasant, normal smile. I turned my game off, and spent the next hour crying on the floor.

My brother and I never did play pokemon together again – he gave it up for good. I stuck to replaying my comforting, unhacked games.

That winter, the snow fell thick.

