**Raindrops on a Sunny Day**

*A TAoL excerpt*

You are Lulu, a wild female pikachu on a quest to find a Thunder Stone. After just leaving the tribe where you were raised, you decide to swim across the river. A strange decision since you know there are fish predators out there. Sure enough you got swallowed whole by a hungry seaking but you kept your calm and used Thundershock and the seaking promptly spit you out. It spit you so far that you landed in some rapids and were whisked downstream until you were knocked unconscious by a fallen branch. You awoke to a vulpix raping your unconscious body but you stoped him before he could finish. He seemed genuinely sorry and you found out it was him who swam out and saved you from drowning. You told him, let's just call it even and then he apologized and ran off crying. Shortly after the vulpix leaves, a pidgeotto appears in the sky, heading your way. The events of the seaking took any energy you had for a Thundershock, leaving you defenseless to the bird of prey. You quickly hide in some brush nearby and thankfully, the pidgeotto didn't see you. It lands on a dead crooked tree to your north, blocking the path. It looks like it is about to hunt for goldeen in the river. You could have gone south but elected to hide until the pidgeotto leaves, then go north. Let's just hope, for your sake, the pidgeotto's Keen Eye ability fails.

~~~~~~~~~~~~

You want to head back north but you'll have to wait. You cozy in tighter, grabbing some branches to cover yourself. Nothing but your eyes poke out, you hope.

The pidgeotto finishes cleaning itself and flies back into the air. You watch it fly up and down the river for over thirty minutes. Occasionally, the pidgeotto dives down and glides over the surface. With great intensity, the pidgeotto stares under the water and plunges its talons below the surface. When it pulls them out, they are nothing but wet. The final time the pidgeotto sinks its talons in the river, it pulls out with it a goldeen's tail. The goldeen is dragged ten feet into the air, looking terrified. It flails hard side to side. The grip on the tail is not strong enough and the lucky fish breaks free. The goldeen splashes back down in the water and disappears.

The pidgeotto looks frustrated by its failure in the hunt. It turns around and lands on the gravel bar less than ten feet in front of you, looking towards the river. Suddenly, a twig snaps next to you. The pidgeotto whips its head around. You see a careless rattata waltz out from the brush beside you and walk onto the gravel bar. The pidgeotto turns around and spreads its wings wide as though it is about to give chase to the purple rodent. The rattata sees its mistake and peeps in fear. The rattata turns tail and runs, disappearing back into the brush. The pidgeotto doesn't give chase though and instead lets out a sad feminine sigh. It must not be worth her time. She tucks her wings and scans the forest. Your little heart beats fast. Her eyes pass over you but don't stop. You feel relieved but her head does stop suddenly about forty-five degrees later. She pauses like she just realized something and you think you see her give you some side-eye. Oh no, this can't be good.

She coos, "I spy, with my keen eye, something yellow." You freeze in fear. "You need another hint? Okay, something that could be stuffed down my gullet." She snaps her head to the left and looks right at you.

You turn around and dash into the brush. Unlike the rattata, you must be worth it because, in just a few steps, talons clasp around your midsection. They don't tear into your gut but instead, they grab you gently around the midsection and lift you high into the air. The sudden change in altitude disorients you and you do nothing but gawk in disbelief. The pidgeotto circles around a tree and is taking you back to the gravel bar, ascending higher into the air. You regain your composure and realize she is trying to drop kill you. You have no electricity so you are at her mercy but the pidgeotto doesn't know that.

You are only about eight feet in the air and you bluff a Thundershock, "Pika-" Sure enough, the pidgeotto releases you from its clutches and you come crashing down. You slam into the gravel bar and skid across the pebbles. You come to a stop at the river’s edge. You are mostly unhurt and quickly get back up and hunch down in a defensive position. The pidgeotto lands about five feet in front of you.

You growl, “stay away from me pidgeotto, I’ll shock you!”

The pidgeotto says, nonchalantly, “oh little pikachu, don’t worry, I’ll leave you be. I don’t eat pikachu, that is, IF they have electricity. It’s not worth the meat. I’m just here to check on your well-being. You do have electricity… right?”

“I do! Now back the fuck off, or you’ll get it.”

She coos, “strange, most pikachu flash sparks there. You do look pretty beat up. Why don’t you show me those pretty little sparks and I’ll be on my way. Otherwise,” she licks her beak.

Shit, she is testing you. There doesn’t look to be a way out of this but you can’t give up yet, “I don’t have to show you shit, pidgeotto. Now leave!”

She just stands there for a few seconds, blinking her translucent eyelids. She says, “you know what? I think you’re full of shit and I’m about to be full of pikachu.” She suddenly flies forward. You try to run but she lands on top of you, pinning you down under her talons.

You instinctually try and shock, “Pika-CHu…”

The pidgeotto winces, but when she sees you were lying she chirps, “oh, my! A pika-meal. I’ve had a difficult past few months. You’ll cheer me right up!”

“Let go of me you fucking freak!” You squirm under the weight of the hungry bird but go nowhere. You're well on your way to becoming bird shit.

“Oh, I remember you,” she says.

“Wh-what?” You look up at her. She has a happy look on her face.

“Yeah, don’t you remember me? I almost snatched you up at the crooked tree a year or so back. How could I forget? I’ve never seen a prey, much less a pichu, stare my talons down as you did. You were giving me the same brave look you are now. It’s a lot like the last time we met, only this time no one will save you.” Pidgeotto all look the same to you but it must be her. “Too bad I didn’t eat you then, pichu are tastier than pikachu, but at least you brought more meat with you this time. It worked out okay. I did eat pichu that night. My mate did the honor of killing your friend. Once she was grounded up nicely, he shared some of his pichu soup with me.”

“N-no,” you feel so disheartened that you begin to sob.

“Hey now, don’t give up yet. I still want you to struggle. It’s no fun when they slide down easy. Come on, let's go find a good place to eat my dinner.” She flies gracefully into the air with you in tow. The ground gets smaller and smaller as she ascends with her meal. You try to fight out of the talons but they grasp you tight. You look down on the world. You’ve always wondered what it would be like to be a bird. You guess you now know but for all the wrong reasons. The trees look so small from up here. You must be over three hundred feet in the air. The pidgeotto flies north over the tribe. You can see the main clearing where the center trunk is. Over a hundred little yellow dots are scattered across the field. Those are all your friends and family, going about their daily lives. They warned you not to leave, that this very thing would happen. They were right and you were wrong. Now you just hope none of them are looking up at this moment. They would see a tiny pidgeotto flying away with an even tinier pikachu. The tribe would probably, and rightfully, assume it was you. You lower your head and cry. Your tears fall from the heavens like raindrops.

The pidgeotto flies north with you for another ten minutes. She begins to descend and you look around. Far to the north-west, you see a mountain with a raging thunderstorm enveloping its peak. That must be it, Thunder Mountain. It’s so far away, at least fifty miles, and over treacherous terrain. There’s no way you would have made it. No telling what kind of horrible predators lurk out there. You couldn’t even fight off one that you have a type advantage over. You didn’t even make it a mile outside your tribe’s territory and you were going the wrong way as well. It was just a matter of time before something got to you. Guess it’s better for it to be on day one.

The pidgeotto lands with you near an edge of a rocky cliff overlooking the river. The pidgeotto coos, “this is one of my favorite places to digest prey. It’s so beautiful here. Don't you think? Well, no time to waste, I’m famished.” She opens her beak and you can see deep into the strangely welcoming maw. The beak drips with strands of saliva. Inside, it is pink but with each concentric throat ring, fades to a deeper red until it is nearly black.

The sight causes a primal dread in you and scream, “pika-pika!” You start to flail but are kept pinned. You think this must be where she eats you but instead, she reaches back and bites your tail. She releases her talons and hoists you up into the air. You dangle in the air, kicking and struggling. You hope, maybe like that goldeen, you could break free but her beak has you right where she wants you. She flaps up to a nearby branch and rests on it. You fight hard, this is your last chance before meeting a pidgeotto gut. But this must be her plan. You kick at the beak, punch at her feathers and scream into the forest for help but it's no use. Every time you feel your tail start to slip free, she quickly tosses her head up and gets a better grip. She shakes her head back and forth, flinging you around, disorienting you. You feel so small and helpless. Finally, after a couple of minutes, you wear out. You dangle there limp, exhausted and panting.

Now rendered nearly immobile, you look around. You see you are sitting in a tree near a thirty-foot cliff. Across the river you see a vaporeon laying near the river on a rock. It is sunbathing in the late afternoon sun, its skin glistening. It looks up at you with excited curiosity, a witness to your fate. It doesn't look like the vaporeon is going to try to save you and instead, looks extremely enthralled by your predicament. Farther up the river is a human house with billowing smoke coming from a chimney. Behind the house are a shed and a dog house. Inside the dog house, you see something yellow, although the shape of it you can not distinguish. Otherwise, the view is of a peaceful winding river and rolling green hills. As the pidgeotto said, this place is beautiful. You try to make peace with the fact that this is the last of the outside world you will see.

Satisfied her prey is ready to eat, the pidgeotto tosses you high in the air. You scream and cartwheel over once. As you fall back down, the pidgeotto opens her maw wide once more, this time with the intent of eating you. You slam headfirst into the gaping gullet with a squishy splat. It smells of fish, rodent, and vomit, a pungent odor you will soon help develop. The beak snaps down on your back, securing you in place. Why does it have to end like this? The pidgeotto lowers her head parallel to the ground and begins rubbing her rough tongue all over you, slathering you in thick saliva. You must taste good because she ruffles her feathers and lets out a, ”mmmmmm,” forcing a fishy gut smell in your face. You gag, nearly sending some of you down early.

You break down and plead with the hungry bird, “no please don’t. Please...” You try and think of a way out of this but have nothing to bargain with. The only thing you can offer to the pidgeotto is your meat. You can’t even appeal to her morality. She’s a bird of prey and you are something tasty to eat. She is just doing what she has to. Knowing you're dead, you start crying again.

The pidgeotto tilts her head high to the sky and you slide into the red void. “No!” You scream, but pleading with gravity is even more foolish than with the pidgeotto. The gullet, like a fleshy warm bag, opens wide. The pidgeotto makes four quick head thrusts and you sink deeper into your tomb. You fight the whole time, kicking, clawing, biting, screaming, but nothing helps, in fact, it only hastens your descent. The pidgeotto closes her beak and everything goes dark. You are now fully ensnared in your killer. Everything but your tail is now on the inside. The flesh bag tightens around you and becomes slippery with recently swallowed saliva. The bird of prey tilts its head to the sky and...

\*GLK\*

 “Pi-Pika-Pi!” You cry out in desperation as the powerful gullet transports its prey downward, helped by the gentle oscillating movements of the pidgeotto’s head. It only takes a few seconds before you empty into a strange hole. You plop down to the bottom and turn yourself around. This isn’t the stomach, at least you think. There isn’t any acid and it doesn’t gurgle or churn but something deeper inside is. A deep thudding of a calm happy heart sings to you. You look at the tube you just came down and see a tiny light, helping aluminate the red flesh around you. Some fresh air wafts down, a reprieve from the stuffy fishy gut air. You try and force your way back up screaming, “please, let me out!” You get your head back inside the throat and wiggle your way up to your hips when she gulps again, forcing you down back into the hole.

A booming giggle rings out from the throat, “stop that. That tickles! A fighter, I like your spunk little pika. I knew you would be fun to eat ever since we first met. I would love to keep you as my crop toy for longer but it’s been awhile since I last ate so nothing is waiting in the queue. Let’s get down to business.” You feel the hole tighten around you and it pulls you even deeper, this time tail first.

The light fades and everything goes dark. This is it, your final journey. It won’t end at the top of Thunder Mountain but in a hot burning bird gut. It can’t end like this, can it? You yell, “not like this!” You lock your arm in a T and legs in a V, pushing against the walls trying to wedge yourself. It works! The tube is tightened to a point where you can brace, stopping your descent. The walls of the gut shudder around you.

“Oof,” the pidgeotto lets out in pain, “hey now, that actually hurt. Play nice pikachu and get…” she groans and squeezes the gut around you hard.

You push back with all your might, “chuuuuuuuuu.” You hold on as the walls press harder. Suddenly, your arms buckle and legs collapse. You slide quickly the rest of the way.

“...down! Ahhhhhhh,” the pidgeotto lets out, declaring victory. You fall into a pool of burning acids that comes up to your chin. The pidgeotto coos and clicks her beak in pleasure, telling the world of her recently satiated hunger, made so by a plump hapless adventurer.

Now securely in the stomach, you give up all hope, giving in to the dread that has been building in you ever since the pidgeotto first caught you. No denying it or fighting it, you're nothing but food now. You no longer struggle and do nothing but bawl as the gut gurgles and groans around its latest victim. The sounds of your wailing are only interrupted by occasional cries for your mama. Coming face to face with your mortality has reverted you to a child-like state.

“Aw… it's okay, little pikachu. It will all be over…” the pidgeotto stops mid-sentience and mumbles, “fucking weirdo.” Was she talking to you? Her weight shifts and you hear the heavy thumping of wings. She's flying with you again, but this time she has traded full talons for a full stomach. At least it’s less embarrassing this time. Before your failure was on display for the whole forest but now an observer would see nothing but a majestic pidgeotto soaring through the air, unaware of the pikachu that lines its stomach. It is both a relief and degrading. To the outside world you are no longer a pikachu, your identity stripped the second your tail joined the rest of you. Now to them, you're just a small lump under cream-colored feathers and soon, you’ll just be bird shit on some unfortunate surface.

While she flies, the gut works its magic, churning, contracting, secreting acids, and singing a merry tune. Your crying fades from squalling, to quiet sobs as you run out of air, being sapped of energy. The smell of your hot fleshy prison goes from fishy to that of the smell of your tribe’s members after a hard rain, if the rain were vomit that is. The acid has now worked its way deep into your fur and burns. With each churn of the stomach, it eats away just a little more skin, softening its meal.

The pidgeotto flutters and lands. The stomach acids slosh around from the sudden change in momentum, splashing some in your eyes. The pain causes you to meekly peep, “piiiii…” The pidgeotto doesn’t say anything and just sits there quietly. The lack of air has made you docile and you no longer cry. You probably have just a minute or so until you pass out. The snug walls nestle around you like a warm blanket. If it weren’t for the smell or the burning acid, it wouldn’t be so bad. You think, at least this isn’t the worst way to go. You could have been torn apart alive, ripped to shreds, melted in strong plant acid, or crushed to death. This is a relatively peaceful way to die. You find a little solace in that.

The pidgeotto suddenly speaks up, “sorry, I got interrupted. I was going to give you a whole lecture on how it’s okay for worthless little mice to get eaten. It is what you were made to do after all, but it looks like we are running out of time together and I wouldn’t want you to miss the best part. Time to meet my gizzard.”

Gizzard? The walls of the stomach loosen. The acid drains into a cavity below and you slide downward. The walls of this cavity feel different. They are rough, like the tongue of the pidgeotto, and rubbery. What kind of hellish contraption is this? Your ass falls in first and the powerful thick walls squeeze hard. Your back and leg bones creak and groan under the strong force. The pain shocks you to full consciousness and your senses are revitalized. All at once, the rubbery walls squeeze harder than you thought possible and you hear a loud \*CRACK\* as everything from your waist down is pulverized by the fleshy vice. The intense pain causes you to scream “CHAAAaaaAAAaaa…”

The pidgeotto’s only response is a soft giggle. The walls relax and you sink deeper into the monstrous stomach, this time up to your shoulders. It squeezes again \*CRUNCH\* your rib cage puts up little resistance. It hurts even worse but you no longer have lungs from which to scream. Everything goes numb and cold. You are now just a head, unable to do anything but listen to the horrific sound of your bones below, being crunched into smaller and smaller pieces. It's now your skull's turn to yield to the gizzard's will and give to it the juicy contents within. The rubber walls grip down around your head and begin to squeeze. Terror starts to be replaced by a feeling of peace. It’s a peace that makes you feel sanguine about your fate. Like the pidgeotto said, it’s okay for worthless little mice to get eaten. It is what you were made to do after all. But before the peace can fully take hold…

\*CRRRRACK\*

~~~~~~~~~~~~~

\*crrrrack\*

The muffled sound comes from deep within her gut. "Hoooo…" she lets out in satisfaction. Nothing is better than cracking a good pika-skull. The gooey contents squish out and warms her gizzard.

\*crk-crk-crk-crk-crk\*

The gizzard continues to mash the bones up into smaller pieces, sounding like someone walking in freshly fallen snow. No need for gizzard stones when the prey comes with the bones, claws and teeth to chew up themselves. The ball of meat is a little stiff and she passes some of the pikachu back up to the stomach to further stew in acid. She has a fast metabolism so before long, the pikachu will be completely digested. The well-fed pidgeotto lays down and roosts in her empty nest.

The pidgeotto lets out a sad sigh. This should be a happy moment. She rarely ever manages to eat pikachu but the victory reminds her of her mate. Her mate loved eating pikachu and she would want nothing more than to throw up some of the yellow rodent into his beak. But he disappeared a few months ago. That's not supposed to happen to pidgeotto, they’re the apex predators of the forest. They had been mates since pidgey. When pidgey, you expect your mate to get taken by a vulpix, an ekans, or really anything with a hunger for flesh. Pidgey are the rattata of the sky and every night they came back to the nest, and one of them wasn't missing, was a little miracle. So when they made it to pidgeotto, they thought the rest of their lives were set. They would grow old together, share tasty prey they only dreamed about, and get back at those pesky low-level predators for all the friends and chicks they took from them. But she returned one night with a big fat goldeen to find an empty nest. She was devastated. They didn't even get to mate for the spring, so she was left un-bred.

It's been tearing her apart ever since. The worst part is not knowing what happened. Did he hurt his wing and died alone under a bush? That thought makes her unbelievably distraught. Did he leave her for some hot young tail across the forest? Unlikely, every pidgeotto knows one another, and rumors spread fast, but just the possibility makes her enraged. Or was it some other predator, more powerful than a pidgeotto, lurking in the central forest? That thought terrifies her. If her mate succumbed to it then maybe she would be next. There have been rumors, amongst pidgey, that a persian hunts just north of the pikachu's territory. She's done a few flyovers but saw nothing. She would like to get revenge if it was a predator that took him but if it really was a persian, she wouldn't stand a chance. So she avoids landing in the area now.

The gizzard churns but no longer crushes bone. The bones are ground up so finely, they do not make noise. The pidgeotto yawns. A full warm gut makes her sleepy and she nods off quickly.

The pidgeotto wakes up the next morning, just before sunrise. She fans her wings and stretches. She begins cleaning them by pecking out frayed feathers. Once she is done, she hops to the edge of her nest. Something is coming back up her throat. She hacks out a pellet made of bits of bones and yellow fur, reminding her of yesterday's tasty meal. The vibrantly colored pellet falls from the cliffside nest and splashes into the river below. With her gut now empty, she spreads her wings and glides from the high nest, in search of the next unfortunate prey to fill it. She's heading south, to the crooked tree, to try and pluck a goldeen from the river. But she is really heading there in hope that a mischievous pichu will sneak out. She probably wouldn't get that lucky two days in a row but she can hope.

She's only in the air a few minutes when she sees a group of four pidgey flying far below her. The pidgey in the lead is a cute little tiercel. The pidgeotto has seen him around. He seems capable and strong for a pidgey. Before she would have seen him as a threat and would probably had to eat him but now he looks like a potential mate. It's time to put her loss behind her and move on. She wants to approach the pidgey but she wouldn't be caught dead talking to a pidgey without cause. She wouldn't want rumors that she's a pidgey fucker floating around the forest. She'll have to find a good reason to approach him, maybe over a scavenged kill. Then there's his mate she'll have to get rid of, but she knows just the trick. She won't have to hunt that day.

The group of pidgey flies off northeast and she heads south. After a few minutes, she flies over to the human house near where she ate yesterday's lunch. A car is parked out in their driveway. She can't help herself and seeks to get revenge on the trainers who raised the degenerate vaporeon that ruined her pika-picnic. She lines up her shot and unloads. Many years of practice have made her aim true. The former pikachu, turned white and black goo, lands on the windshield with a splat, covering over half the passenger side's view.

The pidgeotto smugly mumbles, "have fun cleaning that up."