

Aza's Magic Trinket Shop
By Angelus

Rhododendron was a small and sleepy town in an out-of-the-way corner of the Pokemon world. It had all the usual amenities, namely a PokeMart and Pokemon Center, but there was no Gym or Contest Hall, or even any landmarks worth visiting. It was a great town to live in if you weren't fond of the city, and it was an ideal location for a certain devilish Pokemon to set up her cursed shop.

Aza was a Ninetales that had been around for a long, long time. She had traveled the world twice over, and in doing so, had amassed a considerable store of power, enough to put even a legendary Pokemon to the test. With all this power she was able to retain a matronly, if witchy appearance; a fitting look for a Ninetales that dealt in dicey charms and cursed objects. Of course, it was those same trinkets that helped her amass her power, and it was also her greatest form of entertainment.

Even now, she was watching her latest scheme play out, grinning wide and showing off her snagged teeth as her tails whipped to and fro. Her crystal ball hung from a chain on the ceiling, and through it she could view anyone who had accepted one of her curses.

Presently, she was observing a Grovyle who had failed to upkeep his end of the bargain, and was now facing the consequences. His power was being rapidly converted into gaseous magical energy inside his body, causing him to stretch into a great green balloon. In fact, he had lost so much energy that at this point he was actually looking a Treeco now. His body was inflated to the point that his limbs had sunken into his hide, and his thin skin glowed with the pressurized energy within. His face was bloated and creaking, encircled by a huge, puffy inner tube of inflated neck. He was uselessly pleading, which only brought Aza more delight.

"N-no! Please! Erf! I can meet the deadline, if you just *-hurrff-* give me an extension!" he pleaded over the creaking of his body. He had moments left at best.

While Aza could hear him through the crystal ball, the communication was one way. And she certainly COULD stop her curse effect if she wanted to... But she wasn't going to. She watched as a final surge of magical gas pumped into the Treeco's body as his level hit zero, and his body exploded into a bright blue cloud that quickly evaporated. With the curse over, Aza lost her visual, but that was fine, she had seen what she wanted.

She chuckled to herself, but only for a moment. She knew what came next. That cloud of vaporized energy transported itself from wherever it was, directly to her. Her stomach swelled beneath her legs, ballooning her cream-colored belly until it lifted her paws off the floor, leaving her to balance on the broad blimp that was blown up beneath her. She didn't even reach half the size of her victim, after all, it was easy for a master mage like herself to condense that energy within her body.

Once she had received the whole supply, a small crystal attached to her roughly hewn shirt began to glow, and her stomach shrank. The energy in her body flowed into the crystal, filling the gem, which made for excellent long-term and high capacity storage. This amount of energy didn't even fill the crystal to capacity, but that was fine; Aza had any number of curses out at any time, many of them with similar themes of inflation and energy leeching. She had been building power this way for years, and had no plans of stopping.

Sure she made enemies this way, lots of them, so she was always on the move, but what did it matter when all her unsatisfied clients were reverted to first form evolutions at the lowest possible level? And besides, it was easy enough to teleport her whole workshop, even if she did have to empty an entire crystal to do so. She swayed her tails again, pleased with the energy collected from the most recent sucker, and was about to step away from her crystal ball when she felt an electric tingle down her spine. Her gaze flicked back to the crystal ball, which was now showing a view on the outskirts of town. Someone *new* had just crossed the tripwire barrier she had set up around the town, and new arrivals meant new potential sources of energy.

The Pokemon entering town were a Seviper with a distinct scarf around the end of his tail, and a Mightyena who looked to be QUITE fat. Normally the snake would have drawn her interest; they had stretchy skin and scaly hides that looked excellent stretched out... But that dog! She'd never seen one so fat in her life. His stomach dragged the ground, leaving an obvious trail on the dirt road behind him, and it bulged out between his legs on all sides. It didn't seem to slow him down at all. If he was that big of an eater, well, she wanted to have him. She *had* to have him.

Aza lost sight of them as they passed out of the range of the tripwire barrier, but Rhododendron wasn't a passthrough town; there was nowhere to go once you were here, meaning they were here to visit. That gave her plenty of time to set a plan into action.

She turned away from her crystal ball and faced the rest of her home, that also doubled as her shop. It had a natural, wooden interior, made to look like the inside of a tree. She had dozens of gems hanging from the ceiling, all glowing to illuminate the abode. The cobblestone floor was warm under her paws, kept pleasantly heated by a magical current.

There was a short counter set up to separate herself from potential "customers", and behind it there were shelves filled with potions and trinkets she had enchanted herself. Many plants sat in pots and on baskets on the walls to bring a bit more nature into the already natural-leaning aesthetic.

Aza shuffled through her shelves until she found a small brooch that she figured would be perfect for the dog, and she worked to start enchanting it. At the same time, she pressed a paw to a stone behind her counter, which sent a jolt through the local leyline and manifested some flyers for her shop at the local inn, where she knew the snake and dog would be headed for their stay.

That was all she needed for now. If she needed to do more to attract them after a day or two, she could ramp up her efforts, but keeping a low profile was her preference. She knew she would have some time before they reached her shop on the edge of town even if they came today, and she decided to tidy up to make things more presentable.

A knock on her door came sooner than she anticipated, but her shop was more than ready. She put on her best smile, showing off her crooked teeth, and got behind the counter. "Come in! We're open!"

The door was nudged open, and the Mightyena from earlier squeezed in, barely. His stomach dragged the floor, sloshing with every step, and he had a dumb smile on his face as he looked around the small shop. "Hello there!" he barked, tail wagging.

"Welcome! Looking for something specific, or just here to browse?" Aza asked, putting on her best customer service voice.

"Oh! I heard this place has magical trinkets! I was looking to get something that would get me more food..." He seemed to get distracted, and began to drool.

"Ah! I can get you something like that, certainly! I think I have something right here..." Aza grabbed the brooch she had prepared earlier and placed it on the counter. "I'll just need your name, to make sure no one else can use it." She paused. "Ah, and of course, I'm Aza. Just to make it fair."

"Good deal! I'm Milkbone! Nice to meet you!" He eyed the brooch that was on the counter with wide, excited eyes.

"Very nice to meet you too~" Her eyes were fixed on that big gut. She couldn't wait to see it ready to blow. Aza touched a paw to the brooch, and the gem on the front of it glowed dimly. Milkbone's eyes sparkled as he watched the magic happen; it wasn't something he got to see too often. The enchantment was quick and done in a moment, and she slid the trinket towards the big dog. "There you go! All done."

"That was fast! You're good... How much do I owe you for it?" Milkbone asked as he grabbed the brooch and stuck it to his chest.

"Oh, no charge! That's not how my shop works, I just like helping people and seeing new faces!" Aza lied.

"You sure? I can afford any price, I'm certain!" Milkbone was confident in that.

Aza on the other hand, was confident he couldn't handle her price, not her *real* price. "Please, it's fine, don't worry at all. I just hope it suits your needs!"

"If it does what I asked I'm sure I'll be pleased!" Milkbone took a last look around the shop, enjoying the look of the place before waddling for the door. "I'll let you know how it goes!"

"Oh, please do!" She didn't expect to see him in person again. She'd just enjoy watching his magical detonation through her crystal ball. She waved him goodbye with all nine of her tails, and he squeezed out the door and headed back into town. Now that he was wearing one of her items, she could easily observe him no matter where he was. She watched the fat dog waddle his way back to town with surprising speed. Seemed he was used to all this weight.

The curse she had given him was a simple one. The next time he ate, all the food around him would begin to multiply and feed itself to him until he blew up. The bigger he got before bursting, the more energy she would be able to harvest. It was a flawless plan, aside from the few boring hours between now and whenever she guessed his lunch would be. She left the crystal ball tuned into him, and decided to work on other stuff in the meantime. She'd get an alert when he was close to being full; all of her curses were set up with an alarm like that, so she seldom missed a good show.

Only a couple hours had passed, when she heard another knock on her door, this one quite loud, almost demanding. She looked up from her work, and glanced at her crystal ball to see if her special client was at the door. To her confusion, the crystal ball was showing what

looked like grey static. She look at it in confusion and gave it a tap, but the grey remained. Annoyed, she tried switching the view to her front door, and to her relief it worked.

At her front door was the Seviper who had come into town with Milkbone, she recognized him from the scarf around his tail. He was looking very annoyed, and he knocked on the door again with the flat of his tail blade.

"Who is iiiitt?" Aza called through the door in a singsong voice.

"Slough. Open up!" the Seviper shouted from the other side.

Aza was cautious, but curious, and so she opened the door. "Hello there, how may-"

"Undo the curse. Right now." Slough's blade was at her throat before she could finish her sentence.

Aza was caught off guard, and there was a brief flicker of fear in her eyes as that poisoned blade was raised to her throat, but she recovered her composure quickly. "Curse? I have no idea what you're talking about," she tried, though with how mad he looked she figured that bluff wouldn't work.

"The infinite food curse you put on Milkbone. Undo it now." Slough pushed his body through her doorway, and his coils spilled into the shop, easily surrounding Aza.

She stiffened but held her ground. Seviper was big, and dangerous, she was well aware, but she had more than enough power in reserve to teach him a lesson, if it came down to it. She just preferred not to use her energy store if she could avoid it. "Hmph. Fine, you caught me, but I won't undo it. It's exactly what he asked for. And when he finally blows from getting all he could indulge for and more, I'll be taking all of that energy for myself!"

Slough's face softened, going from angry to disappointed. "Wait, when he what? Oh, no, you don't know who he is do you?"

"Who he is? Why would I?"

"He's famous!"

"Why? He's just a fat dog isn't he?"

Slough looked exasperated. "He's the international eating contest champion."

Aza's face had a moment of confusion, and then a big grin spread over her face. "Oh good! That just means he'll be able to eat a LOT before he finally gives in!"

In a flash, the Seviper wrapped Aza in his coils and deposited her outside, leaving her disoriented as she came to terms with the fact that she was outdoors. The Seviper spun her around, towards town, and pointed with his tail. "Look."

Aza blinked. Instead of overlooking the town, the vista outside her shop was overlooking a huge mass of fuzzy grey that looked very similar to the grey static that her crystal ball had shown her earlier. She furrowed her brow, and then it hit her. "That... no, that's impossible?!" She realized that that town covering mass of grey was Milkbone's stomach, still filling with infinitely replicating food. The mass was inching closer as Milkbone continued to eat somewhere in the distance, absolutely gleeful about all the free food he was getting to stuff his face with.

"That... That is... AMAZING!" Aza's pupils practically went heart-shaped and her tails all wagged furiously. "In all my years I don't think I've ever seen *anyone* get this big! Certainly not with such ease!"

Slough gave Aza a worried look, then he sighed and rolled his eyes. "You're a fan of this and you don't watch eating contests?"

"Hmph." Aza snorted. "My shop doesn't exactly have cable television, but goodness, if it means I can see more of this..." she melted again, grinning wide at the sight of the overblown blubber dog.

"Invest in it then. Anyways, can you stop this?"

"Just stop it? Not fix it?"

"Eh, he's enjoying it, but if word gets out that we're here, our vacation away from paparazzi will be ruined." Slough did a motion akin to shrugging, despite lacking shoulders. "We can handle the size, this is... common, for him."

"Common... G-goodness, I really really lucked out! I'll play along with you this time, but, mmpph! I won't be able to keep away for long, so please do know that I hope he'll be a repeat customer!" Aza chimed with delight.

"Eh-hem..." Slough mock cleared his throat and pointed at the still-swelling food balloon of dog.

"Ah. Right. I'll stop it." She closed her eyes, and one of the gems on her top glowed. There was low rumble in the distance, and the wall of dog gut stopped approaching, though she was certain she heard a distant whimper of disappointment. "There, it's done."

"Good. Now, this is gonna be big news, and we don't want that. Can you make sure word doesn't get out about this?"

"Don't worry. This town is basically mine. No one will know, even if he stays like that the whole time you're here. Not a view I'd complain about having from my porch~" she said, licking over her muzzle.

"Good, that will be enough." Slough moved to leave, but turned his head back to give a last statement before heading back to his dog. "Oh, and like I said, he DID enjoy it, so you can probably expect he'll return like you hope~" he hissed, and then slithered off.

Aza sighed and looked out over the horizon of dog before her. At this point, she had no choice but to cancel the curse anyways. If Milkbone HAD burst at this size, the amount of energy that would have flowed out of him would have caused her to suffer the same explosive fate several times over. His size was improbable, impossible, and just this once she had to admit defeat. That said, she had no plans to stop her business. She just had to be more mindful of her customers, and make sure she didn't give out curses to any other eating contest champions.