

A HailFire Change 2

Meeting the Mentor

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Content warning: Transformation, multitaaur, and battle

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A large Ursaring prowled between trees, hunting for prey. She produced no sound despite her hefty weight and walking on all fours. She sniffed the air and twisted around at the forest surrounding her. The morning sunlight leaked through the thick tree trunks and branches, landing on her fur. Sensing no prey, she lowered her head and—

A twig snapped nearby.

The Ursaring lowered her body closer to the ground, enough that the tan ring on her chest rubbed against the dirt and grass. She inched closer to the sound's source, pushing aside any grass and bushes with her long, white claws. Once she approached near enough, she pushed herself a few inches up. Her head; brown with a light tan muzzle and with small, round ears; pressed against a bush to hunt.

At the other side, an anthro figure stood with his back to her. His black and white yukata kimono wrapped snugly and comfortably on his red scaly body. The scales reminded the Ursaring of a Salamence. The anthro figure held a sizable brown quill with his left hand-paw and a stack of papers with his right.

This anthro stood within her territory, something only the strongest trainers dared to do. She inched closer, suppressing a growl and baring her fangs. Regardless of

this figure's supposed reasons for being here, only one outcome comes with—

The Ursaring froze midway.

The anthro somehow emitted an aura of power far stronger than any Pokémon or trainer she had ever encountered. This power seemed to dare her to attack him; in a transparent, mocking way. She realized that fainting after losing against this mysterious figure would be generous if she attempted to drive him out.

She sensed nothing generous about him.

The Ursaring's fur stood up while she closed her mouth from fear. She pulled away and ran off as fast and far as possible. Twigs snapped beneath and around her, the ground rumbled, and any potential prey fled, but she did not care. She feared this red scaly anthro would attack her for a battle.

A battle she knew she would not survive.

The figure turned around to this retreating Ursaring, showing no emotions. Even when he spoke, no emotions of any kind leaked through. "The beast played an out-of-character move on me. Wise decision."

He lifted his papers, stacked like a bindless book. He wrote nothing in the papers, though not because of writer's

block. Thoughts came to him of this world's past, present, and possible futures; all unfocused and all at once. Such thoughts would kill or drive insane any ordinary folks unable to contain these god-like visions.

For a Writer like him, it held no impact on his sanity. In fact, he thirsted for more.

"An anthropomorphism tale has been told here," he remarked. He brushed his dark brown hair-plumage back. "Such stories have become cliché."

His sea-blue eyes glowed into pure white. Visions of the past, present, and possible futures focused on a specific person in this world. They showed days ago that a human plucked a Fire Stone and an Ice Stone off the ground, left behind by a pranksterish five-tailed green kitsune. This kitsune meant for this human and his friend to take one each. Since he took both, however, the two Evolution Stones each attempted to change him into a Ninetalestaur at the same time. It resulted in him gaining two extra arms and an extra head, half-Kantonian and half-Alolan. Though the brain separated into two, they remained connected in a way that they now thought in similar lines.

"Thermis Coldflare, a living antithesis," he remarked. More visions of this Thermis came regarding their future. A few showed them living in peace with their friends and

Pokémon. Others showed them working with professors worldwide, thanks to their changes allowing them to understand Pokémon languages. Most visions showed them working as a hero, using fire and ice in conjunction. All of those futures bored him for holding little originality. "Such narrative does not appeal to my ethos."

He shifted his visions to the other human, who went by the name Lloyd. On the surface, this Bug-type Pokémon lover held less interest than Thermis since his future remained plain. At the same time, his blank slate could be a potential in this tale. He shifted his visions under the guidance of interfering with their course of life.

"What this plot needs is a plot twist that changes its very course," he stated. A specific vision involving them and Glorfindel that went with ethos popped up. "Yes. That would be a fascinating situational irony."

He went to his papers and wrote a few paragraphs on it. Once done, he plucked the page from his stack and blew on it. The page slipped from his fingers, flapping around him in circles and spinning. The page softened at the edges, while hardening in the center into a line. The white changed into brown as it folded in itself. Subtle slits formed all around the perimeter that reached the hollow

center. When he grabbed the object, it had finished transforming into a feather, much like his quill.

He tossed the feather into the air, where it would remain until the right time.

"Perhaps I should write an epigraph before when this tale began."

He then scribbled down on the top page and stared at it briefly.

Written on it:

Your worst enemy could be your best friend

And your best friend your worst enemy

"Fascinating."

He wrote below it, beginning the story.

#

When Lloyd woke up that morning, black fur covered the back of his left hand. He yelped and slid off his inflatable bed. He reached with his other hand and rubbed the fur back and forth. It felt silky smooth to the touch. That only made Lloyd more worried.

"N-not again!" Lloyd crawled over to his best friend. "Do you see this!?"

Thermis groaned with both of their heads.

Flamey, the left Kantonian head, leaned up. "Did you say something?"

"It's happening again!" Lloyd pointed to his left hand. "Lo—"

The black fur had already disappeared from it as though it never existed. Not even a bit of fur remained on the tent floor. Lloyd gasped and flopped back to his rear. He felt multiple questions flowing within his head but no answers to them.

Thermis rolled the other way and stretched out, with joints cracking throughout their body. They slept on the ground instead of on their inflatable bed. They attempted on their first night, but their body grew too large to feel comfortable; either they slept with their top half leaning off or their lower half lying on the ground. Even trying to sleep upright felt more like a balancing-act struggle, so they gave up on that. Instead, their Flareon and Glaceon lay on the bed in place of Thermis. Besides, Thermis found that lying on the floor felt more comfortable for some reason.

Thermis turned to the side so both of their heads faced Lloyd.

"It's gone." Lloyd hesitated. He shook his head. "It was black fur on my left hand this time." He tugged on his black hair. "I swear, I'm not going insane. Weird stuff keeps happening to me since the first morning."

"Sorry," Flamey replied. "Looks like I'm left out in the *coal*."

Thermis's Glaceon winced and woke up.

"What an *ice* thing to say," Freezy, the right Alolan Ninetales side, joined in.

This time, Thermis's Flareon winced and rolled off the bed.

Lloyd sighed and rubbed his face. "First off, those were pretty bad. Second, I'm not joking, either. You must've seen that I somehow gained two extra fingers on both hands."

"Uh-huh." Flamey shrugged with both of his side's arms. "Perhaps you got too close to a Bug Pokémon and got toxic pollen on you. We're just happy that you didn't catch a *coal*."

The Glaceon lowered his eyelids in annoyance.

"I always keep my distance with them!" Lloyd glanced at his right hand. "I know how aggressive they can be if disturbed. Besides, even if I did, it should've worn off long

ago, but it keeps happening. Like how my fingernails somehow tripled in length before entering that cave."

"They look normal to me." Freezy's blue eyes twinkled. "And I'm seeing them with my own two *ice*."

Flareon groaned and got up, annoyed.

"This is serious!" Lloyd rubbed his back. "Heck, you must've seen those two lumps on my back, like tiny wings."

Thermis turned their heads to each other before shrugging with all four arms.

"Nope. I *fry* as hard as I can, but I didn't see them," Flamey responded.

"Naughty but *ice*," Freezy quipped to Flamey.

"As good luck *wood* have it."

"Let's *cool*/it a day."

Thermis's Glaceon and Flareon grew sick of their trainer's puns. They would attack them with breath attacks, but they feared damaging the tent. Instead, they went for a different strategy. They hopped into the air and slammed their foreheads against their trainer's opposite type heads.

Thermis laughed, used to getting attacked like this. They pulled Glaceon and Flareon off from their heads and snuggled them close.

"We love you too, buddies," Freezy proclaimed.

"Such sweethearts you are," Flamey added.

Glacion and Flareon gave each other the side-eye in annoyance.

Lloyd blinked and sighed, sliding back. "You're not taking a single word I said seriously, are you? I feel like I'm going insane, and all you can do is make bad puns."

Thermis's heads glanced toward each other before setting their Pokémon down. They scootched up to Lloyd and patted him on the shoulder. Lloyd flinched and glanced at his friend in confusion.

"Don't say that. We're taking it as seriously as possible," Freezy reassured him.

"Sure, we launch puns like no tomorrow," Flamey added.

"But we do it so you can relax."

"Besides, there are times when making jokes during serious times does help."

"And jokes can be the best weapon one can have!" both Freezy and Flamey exclaimed at the same time.

Lloyd blinked and glanced away. "Uh, I haven't thought of it that way." He smiled and hugged Thermis close. "Thanks."

Thermis smiled with both heads and hugged back with all four arms.

"It's no problem. We're here to break the *ice*," Freezy soothed.

"And we're *kindling* spirits," Flamey added.

Glacion and Flareon glanced at each other with exasperated expressions.

Despite the dumb puns, Lloyd chuckled. "Yeah." He glanced at his watch at the side and widened his green eyes. "Is it that time already?" He got up and unscrewed the cap on his inflatable bed. "We should be packing up."

Thermis nodded and got off the ground. They went to their inflatable bed and unscrewed its cap, letting the air flow out. Lloyd brought out the battery-powered inflator and pulled its hose, inserting it into the air intake side. He stuffed the other end of the hose into the bed's opening and then turned on the inflator. It sucked out the air from the bed far more and faster than just squeezing it out.

Once done, Lloyd screwed the cap on while ensuring no air flowed back in and did the same with Thermis's bed.

Within a few minutes, their beds lay as flat as possible. They folded the beds and stuffed them into their bags. They followed it up with blankets, pillows, and the inflator. Once done, they unzipped their tent and poked their heads outside.

Nearby, another classmate group folded up their tent with their stuff around. They waved to Thermis and Lloyd, who waved back. Lloyd slipped on his shoes and watch, then exited the tent, followed by Thermis and their Pokémon. They emptied the tent of their stuff, with them scattered outside in bags. With a quick tug, they pulled off the tent cover and the stakes keeping the tent down.

“So far, so good,” Lloyd declared.

“Yup! Let’s go for it and *freeze* the day!” Freezy joked.

Flamey followed up with, “*Fire* away!”

“Less puns, more work,” Lloyd advised.

Lloyd headed over to one corner of the tent and grabbed its pole. Thermis did the same with the other corner. They pulled the rods up and out from the tent’s slits. The tent fluttered into the ground until it lay flat and wrinkled. They folded the tent poles, strapped them together, and placed them into the tent bag afterward. Within a minute, the tent itself lay folded as a small square

by them. After doing the same with the cover and stakes, Lloyd stuffed them next to the poles and zipped up the tent bag.

"I guess we can call this a successful camping trip," Lloyd declared. Despite the sweat on his face, he grinned wide. "I doubt I'll ever forget this anytime soon."

"This trip was pretty *lit*," Flamey jested.

"Indeed, it was pretty *ice*," Freezy laughed.

Thermis's Glaceon and Flareon glanced at each other and nodded. They fired fiery or icy breath attacks at the opposite Thermis's head type. Rather than harming them, they laughed and shrugged off the attack; even if they had remained as a one-headed human, the results would have stayed the same. Lloyd sighed and shook his head, hiding his wincing.

"They've been attacking you a lot more now," Lloyd noted.

"Yeah, but we're not worried," Flamey assured.

"They always know how much to apply before it starts hurting," Freezy clarified.

Flamey extended his arms out. "They're best buddies like that!"

Freezy extended his arms out. "Sweethearts, even!"

Thermis grinned with both heads, arms spread out in an X shape.

"But now we're Ninetales, we can expand the fun!" both Flamey and Freezy gushed.

Outside of a few Kricketune chirping in the background, the area grew silent. Even the rest of the class group stopped and watched Thermis in their act. Lloyd glanced at his friend with half-closed eyes. Glaceon and Flareon, meanwhile, sighed and shook their heads. They still hopped onto Thermis's lower back and lay there.

Thermis smiled and rubbed their heads all over.

The other classmates shrugged and either kept packing or headed to their vehicles.

"Right," Lloyd snarked. "Let's head out to your car and load our bags in. OK?"

"Sure." Freezy rubbed his pale blue muzzle. "Though that does bring up a tricky question. How will we fit in?"

"It's not like we can drive our car like this," Flamey noted. He glanced at their four legs and nine tails. "We'll need to pull out the seat at least to drive."

"I doubt it'll be smooth *hailing*."

"We must *fry* as hard as possible to find a solution."

"*Icy* what you did there."

"I *lava* a good fire pun."

"Here's a suggestion," Lloyd interjected. Dark rings formed underneath his green eyes. "Why don't you lie on the back seats while I drive? Does that sound like a good idea?"

Thermis turned their heads to each other.

"What do you think?" Freezy asked.

"I can't come up with a better solution," Flamey answered.

They turned toward Lloyd and approved simultaneously, "Then we'll permit you to drive our car. Just don't scratch it."

"Wouldn't dream of it," Lloyd responded.

Thermis picked up one of their bags and slung it over their upper back. Lloyd picked up the other bag, along with the tent bag, and laid them on Thermis's lower back. Despite the extra weight, it felt like nothing to them. Lloyd flung his own backpack; filled with clothes, what remained of their snacks, and his Nintendo Switch; over his shoulders. They then strolled up the path, passing trees

along the way. Branches crunched beneath their shoes and paws. All around, their classmates and professor also packed up and headed out.

Lloyd thought about the closing event from the previous night after they had cooked corn on the cob and hamburgers over a fire. Other than having sensed something growing on his rear, like a tiny tail, it went well. Professor Osage had talked about respecting nature; from the trees, lakes, and rivers; to the Pokémon living within. He warned his students about thoughtless destruction, noting how lands became deserts because of chemical wastes and overcutting down trees. He had followed that up by noting that, despite humanity's flaws, many still lived in the exact same locations for countless generations.

Lloyd had tuned out from the speech, only noting the Ledian flying above.

He had only resumed paying attention when Theremis had taken centerstage, playing tricks with fire and ice.

"I still think it's amazing how you managed to fuse Flamethrower and Powder Snow into a beautiful sight," Lloyd gushed.

"It's pretty *cool*, isn't it?" Freezy asked.

"Cool? Don't you mean *hot*?" Flamey asked back.

Thermis's convertible car peeked through the trees.

"/cy what you did there."

"Really? I'm de-*lighted* to know."

Lloyd flinched and rolled his eyes. He went to the driver's side, pulling his bag an inch above his shoulders. He stopped and blinked at the driver's side door, wondering if it stretched an extra foot back. Glancing through the window, he widened his eyes in shock.

"Uh, guys?"

"Naughty, but *ice*."

And you're a bright *spark*."

"Guys?"

"What an *ice* thing to say."

"And I'm being—"

"WOULD YOU BOTH STOP WITH THE PUNS AND LOOK!!"

Both of Thermis's heads stopped, blinking in confusion. They tilted their heads in confusion once they saw the driver's side door. They knew their car enough to realize it had changed on them.

"Uh, why is the door a foot longer?" Freezy asked.

Flamey replied, "I have no idea."

Thermis pulled their keys from the upper bag, unlocked the door, and swung it open. Within, the driver seat's top half hung on the swivel at the right side, leaving a space for the bottom. Thermis tilted their heads and flicked a switch, letting the convertible's roof fold to the back. More of the car's changes became visible to them, with all of them confused and amazed.

"Woah. Look at the bottom part of the seat. It stretched as far back as the door while the top half remained where it once stood. Pretty *cool*, huh?" Freezy rubbed that seat extension, finding a switch that allowed it to pop out.

"And there's an extra seatbelt on it, too, like it was made for us. Looks pretty *lit*." Flamey helped his Freezy side snap it back in.

Thermis pulled their bags off and placed them on the back seats. They swiveled the top part of the seat back and stepped in. They swung the top part around, leaving enough space so their lower half could lay comfortably. It held enough space for even their nine tails to curl around on the back seats. Even pressing on the gas and brakes with their front legs felt as easy as it was as when they were still human.

Lloyd rubbed the side of his head in confusion. "What is going on here?"

Both of Thermis's heads turned serious. They stepped out of the car, closing it behind them.

"You know, Lloyd?" Freezy asked. "Those little incidents that you kept seeing or feeling?"

"We no longer think you imagined them," Flamey conceded.

"Perhaps whoever did them—"

"—Also modified our car—"

"—And is maybe the one behind those Evolutionary Stones!" both Freezy and Flamey exclaimed.

Lloyd paled. He envisioned this mysterious fellow looming all over them in a shadowy form. "If so, who? And why?"

Thermis's Glaceon and Flareon sniffed around the car in the meantime. Flareon sniffed the passenger side, flinched, and cried out. Glaceon sniffed it as well and nodded to Flareon. They rushed out, following the scent into the forest opposite the campsite.

Thermis rushed around the car and followed their Pokémon.

"They got the scent of the mastermind behind this," Freezy explained.

"But we can't let them go alone like this," Flamey added.

"Looks like we'll have to follow and fight tooth and *hail* if needed."

"Time to bring in the *heat*."

Lloyd nodded. "I'll come—"

"No," Freezy insisted. "Wait here."

"Yeah. It might get dangerous, and you don't have any Pokémon," Flamey added.

"Leave it to us!" both Freezy and Flamey declared.

Thermis hurried into the forest, following Glaceon and Flareon, before Lloyd could object. After placing his bag in the back seat, he sighed and leaned against the car. Part of him wanted to sit inside and play Picross, but he doubted he could focus. Instead, he crossed his arms and sighed, feeling powerless.

"Be safe, Thermis," Lloyd whispered.

A loud thud came in front of him, making him jump.

“Huh?!” Lloyd turned to the object in front of him. Dust and dirt hung midair in a cloud, obstructing his view, until it settled. He only grew more confused when he saw the thing. “Uh, how could a feather crash that loud and hard?”

With its end jabbed into the ground, the brown feather glowed an alien shade of purple.

#

Thermis followed their Glaceon and Flareon deeper into the forest. The branches and trees above them grew thicker enough that only trickles of sunlight streaked through. Various rocks littered the ground, though powerless to pierce through Thermis’s paws. Instead, they clinked against each other. Various Beautifly flew in the air, and Joltik crawled up and down trees, each making chattering noises.

Despite the urgency in discovering the truth behind these last few days, Thermis grinned with both faces. The forest’s smells felt so strong to their noses, from the leaves dripping with dew and the flowers sprouting out. Their golden-white and pale blue fur held a silky texture no amount of dirt could remove. From how the Pokémon talked, they thought they heard words they instinctively understood, like with their two best buddies. In a way, they felt freer in the forest than at any point in their life.

Thermis's Glaceon and Flareon paused their run. Flareon turned back and cried out to them. Thermis caught up and kneeled toward Glaceon and Flareon.

"What is it?" Freezy asked. "Did you *freeze* them?"

"Or is it too hot to *candle*?" Flamey asked in turn.

Glaceon and Flareon glanced at each other with an annoyed expression. Rather than attacking their owner again, they walked past a few trees and bushes. Thermis nodded and followed, entering a clearing. Both of Thermis's heads gasped and bent their knees, ready for anything.

Some sort of creature unknown to Thermis stood within the clearing. Though the green fur reminded them of a Meowscarada somewhat, this one held five long, extra bushy tails like a Ninetales, tipped with white. This being stood on two legs like a human, though with digitigrade feet-paws instead.

Thermis watched with caution until this being spoke in a soft tone.

"I've been waiting for you, Thermis Coldflare."

Thermis flinched as though they spoke a pun even they felt.

Freezy asked, "How did you—"

"—know our name?" Flamey completed.

"I've been keeping track of you since you found my Evolutionary Stones."

This being spun around, showing his face to Thermis. His muzzle stretched long and at an acute angle like a Ninetales. His mysterious blue eyes radiated a power of some kind unknown to them. He wore his red shirt tight against his chest, bearing a logo that Thermis did not recognize. He wore jeans just as black as his arms and legs past the elbows and knees, along with the tips of his ears. He wielded a wooden brown staff just as tall as himself, ending with a yin-yang symbol with the white part wood brown instead.

"Call me Glorfindel." He waved a free hand with a wide grin.

It took Thermis a bit to register what this Glorfindel said.

"Uh, who or what are you?" Freezy asked.

"And what do you mean by 'your Evolutionary Stones?'" Flamey continued, adding onto the previous question.

"Did you cause this?" Both Freezy and Flamey gestured to themselves.

Glorfindel smiled. "Yes. It didn't go as planned, but I'm not unhappy with the results." He brushed back his golden-yellow hair-fur. "As for what I am, I am a kitsune mage."

"A kitsune mage?" Freezy asked.

Flamey asked in turn, "What's that?"

"Quite simple, really."

Glorfindel turned to the side and bent down to a dying flower. He hovered his staff over it and hummed. At once, a green misty energy flowed out from the staff head. It fused with the flower, causing it to glow. A second later, not only did it rejuvenate with brighter green leaves, but it also somehow produced Citrus Berries. Glorfindel plucked one off and tossed it to the stunned Thermis.

Flamey caught it, cut it in half with a claw, and ate his part while handing the other half to Freezy. "Mmmmmm. This tastes like the real thing."

Freezy nibbled on his half before chomping the rest down. "Feels like the real thing."

"So, it must be the real thing!" Both Flamey and Freezy spoke in sync.

"That's pretty *cool*."

"And *lit*."

Both Glaceon and Flareon glanced at their trainer with exasperation.

"It is, though the flower originally isn't." Glorfindel stood up. He leaned against his staff while having a sly grin. "I carry a, well, *decent* amount of magic within me. As for what that is, think of it as having the ability to edit the world around you. I can do plenty of stuff, though I prefer the transformation arts, like the ones you and your friend, Lloyd, experienced."

"I got several *burning* questions about this 'magic' that you're talking about," Flamey stated.

Freezy continued, "I would have more, but they *slipped* my mind."

Glorfindel rolled his eyes. "Very impressive."

"In all seriousness, we got to ask: why?" Flamey rubbed his chin with two of his hand-paws.

"Why plant those Evolutionary Stones that transformed us? Why do it at all?" Freezy tilted his head at Glorfindel.

"If you did prank Lloyd, like you hinted, why?"

"And why did you change our car without asking or telling us?"

Glorfindel remained silent for a few seconds. "Ah. That's the thing with kitsune like me. We're tricksters and pranksters, though I like to remain in the shadows. I'm not that open for the limelight"—he added in a harsher tone—"*like someone I know.*" Glorfindel shifted his eyes and continued in his usual tone, "And seeing two humans with a Glaceon and Flareon gave me an idea for a prank that I couldn't resist."

"Which is why you led us to those Stones?" Freezy asked.

"Yup. It was a good chance to test them out, too. Although you did, well, interrupt my plot. I'd meant for your friend, Lloyd, to take one too."

"Wait." Flamey flinched.

"What?" Freezy widened his eyes.

Glorfindel chuckled. "Yup. As a result, it produced such curious effects." He pointed his staff at Thermis's extra arms. "But it gave me data for next time. Although, I felt bad that Lloyd was left out. So, I have him participate by doing minor changes and undoing them just as fast."

"That's not *cool*," Freezy crossed his upper arm with Flamey's.

"It's very blas-*flame*-ous." Flamey pressed his lower hand against his hip, like Freezy.

"But not bad enough to stop the puns, is it?" Glorfindel winked. "Still—"

Crunching sounds came from behind Thermis. They turned around in confusion, folding their ears back. Glorfindel stopped speaking and walked over to Thermis's side, concerned. Both Glaceon and Flareon leaned low, ready for a battle.

A green-and-black beam fired out, splitting trees along the way to its targets.

Glorfindel, Thermis, and their Glaceon and Flareon ducked down to the ground. The Signal Beam grazed a couple of Thermis's tails, but all of them remained unharmed. They pushed themselves up and looked at the attacker.

This new figure became visible to them, hovering in the air. He flapped his emerald-green wings, fringed with white. Silvery powder shed off from the wings before a sudden gust of wind blasted at Thermis and Glorfindel. They grunted, knocked back by the Silver Wind attack.

Their feet-paws clawed the ground, stopping themselves from crashing against the trees behind them. Glorfindel breathed out, observing this attacker.

This mysterious attacker hovered a foot above the ground between a stunned Glaceon and Flareon. His wings fluttered fast, though not enough to become invisible to the naked eye. His short tail, emerald green and tipped with white, wiggled behind him. His muscles tensed in all four arms, each skinny. His long white ears, ending with antennae, twitched back and forth.

“Wh-what is that?” Flamey asked.

“Is that some kind of Pokémon?” Freezy suggested.

“It looks like an artificial one, a pseudo-evolution of an Eevee,” Glorfindel answered. “A possible one if one could turn into a Bug-type.”

This Mothreon glanced at Glorfindel with his green eyes and wiggled his emerald-green nose. He zoomed toward Glorfindel, extending the white claws on his hand-paws. Glorfindel waved his staff before himself, producing a green energy shield. The Fury Cutter cracked the shield, knocking Glorfindel back a few feet.

“Tough one, aren’t you?” Glorfindel stumbled and fell onto one of his knees.

“Glacion!” Freezy shouted.

“Flareon!” Flamey hollered.

“Use Flamethrower and Ice Beam on that thing!” both Freezy and Flamey commanded simultaneously.

Glacion and Flareon nodded and inhaled. A glow emitted from their mouths while aiming at this Mothreon. The Mothreon twisted back and hissed in anger. The Glacion and Flareon sniffed the air—

They froze, stopping their attacks.

“Huh? Glacion?” Freezy asked, confused.

“Flareon? What’s wrong?” Flamey tilted his head.

Before Glacion and Flareon could respond, the Mothreon zoomed toward them. He used his Pounce attack, pouncing on them both. He knocked them against some trees hard enough that tree bark flew out from the force. A second later, Glacion and Flareon fell onto the ground, fainted.

Thermis widened their eyes in shock at this event. The Mothreon twisted back and hissed at them. Thermis gritted their teeth, clenched their fists, and tensed their muscles. Rage boiled throughout their body, going from their two heads to all nine tails.

“You’ll pay for that!” Freezy screamed out.

“We’ll teach you not to mess with our best buddies!” Flamey snarled through gritted teeth.

Thermis charged forward at this Mothreon. The Flamey side’s arms burst into flames, engulfing half of the body. The Freezy side generated snow that refused to melt even when rubbing against fire. The Flame Charge/Avalanche combo attack rushed toward the Mothreon, but he flew to the side. Thermis instead smashed through several trees before stopping, either burning or freezing them.

The Mothreon inhaled while staring at Thermis.

He fired out another Signal Beam.

Thermis jumped to the side, letting the green-and-black beam crash behind them.

Glorfindel lifted his staff toward the Mothreon, trying to scan him. “Huh? I sense a trace amount of magic, but nothing I ever felt before.”

The Mothreon hovered in the air, shedding off powdery scales and dust from his wings. He then blasted another burst of Silver Wind at Thermis. Thermis raised their four arms, blocking the attack from impacting their faces. All around them, leaves ripped off the tree branches from the attack.

Glorfindel winced at the attack. "That must be—" He paused, sensing something from the Mothreon, before some alien magic traces on the Bug type blocked him. "Huh? Did it disrupt my scan? How? Who or what created this being?"

Thermis grunted, lowering their arms while gritting their teeth. The Mothreon's mouth glowed, about to fire another Signal Beam. Thermis inhaled, and with both heads, prepared a Flamethrower and Freeze-Dry. A second later, all fired their attacks, which met in the middle and exploded.

The Mothreon grunted from the smoke engulfing him. He landed on the ground, twisting away.

Meanwhile, Thermis snuck up on him. Thermis sprinted to the side, preparing another attack.

Glorfindel kept pointing his staff at the Mothreon. "Come on!" A second later, his scan finished. "Yes! Now, to see what—" He glanced at the information and widened his eyes. "Oh, no."

Thermis charged through the smoke with Icicle Spear hovering on one side and Heat Wave on the other.

Glorfindel extended his staff toward them—

A brown, blurry object zoomed from the sky, slashing at Glorfindel's side.

"Gah! What the—?" The question died when Glorfindel saw how close Thermis approached. "STOP!!"

The word rang hollow in Thermis's heads, their rage blocking everything that prevented them from attacking. Time slowed for Thermis, with one step lasting as long as several seconds to them. This Mothreon remained standing there, his back to them. He twisted back, his green eyes gazing into Thermis's blues and reds. Within those green eyes, they thought they saw something familiar, but they shrugged it off.

They took another step forward, ready to slam both attacks simultaneously. The Mothreon raised his arms, but they would only slow the inevitable. Thermis sniffed the air, smelling the battle's smoke, dust, and ice.

With that, they smelled something familiar.

A scent from someone they knew.

It couldn't be, could it?

The air cracked above them.

Thermis widened their eyes and flung both attacks to the air to avoid hitting the Mothreon.

The Mothreon flinched and leaped back, growling with rage.

Thermis stood there, stunned and confused.

"Lloyd?" Both Freezy and Flamey asked.

"Oh, thank goodness!" Glorfindel relaxed and leaned against his staff.

Lloyd, the Mothreon, charged forward with claws extended. He swung his Fury Cutter at Thermis, knocking them back while slashing against their chest. Thermis winced, knocked back to Glorfindel's side. They panted, not from the attack or this battle, but from their wrath leaving their body.

"That-that's him, right?" Freezy asked Glorfindel.

"That's Lloyd, correct?" Flamey asked.

"Yes." Glorfindel rubbed his cut side, healing his wound. "That's him."

"Is this your doing, too?" both Freezy and Flamey asked. Both of Thermis's heads glared at Glorfindel.

"No! I may be a prankish kitsune with a love of transformation, but never would I brainwash someone to do battle!" Glorfindel held a defensive tone in his voice. "Even if I had turned you both into Vulpix, I would rather have

you keep your thoughts than to mold them to my desires. Heck, setting friends up for battle is just horrible to think of!”

Thermis doubted Glorfindel at first since, after all, this ‘kitsune’ admitted to pranking their friend. A second of thinking later, they thought of their transformation, which changed them from a human named Thomas. This Glorfindel could have affected their minds, but he did not. Plus, while he pranked Lloyd, it felt more restrained, like he did not want another camping incident.

In fact, they only found out the truth because Glorfindel changed their car to be taur-friendly.

This incident with Lloyd, however, felt malicious.

Thermis felt as though someone wanted them to kill each other.

Thermis nodded their heads to Glorfindel.

“OK. We believe you,” Freezy confirmed.

“But how are we going to save Lloyd?” Flamey asked.

Lloyd hissed and flew toward Thermis and Glorfindel, about to use Pounce.

Thermis and Glorfindel jumped to the side, avoiding the attack.

"Listen. I can use my magic to revert him." Glorfindel aimed his staff at the changed Lloyd. "It'll take longer than normal. Whatever changed him is also blocking my spells. You'll need to distract him."

"Distract him?" Freezy remarked.

"But how?" Flamey asked.

"Pin him down, attack him without doing serious damage, do something!" Glorfindel kept pointing his staff at Lloyd. Below the kitsune, a green magical ring formed beneath him in a series of stars, along with a yellow sun and moon on the ground inside the ring, the two celestial bodies orbiting his feet-paws. "Just make sure he doesn't get away!"

Thermis grunted, wondering how they would hold their dear friend down without hurting him. They considered using one of their weaker attacks, but they all felt too powerful. They would not cause Lloyd to faint; they would likely kill him.

Lloyd hissed and flapped his wings for another Silver Wind.

Thermis grunted until an idea popped into their heads.

The best weapon they had.

"Hey there, Lloyd!" Freezy greeted with a kind wave.
"/ce to see you!"

"Yes! We *flame* to please!" Flamey quipped.

Glorfindel blinked. "What?"

"It looks like all *hail* broke loose."

"And you look *fiery*-ous."

"I've been angry once or *ice*."

"Don't be *afame*'d. Come out with us."

"Why are you two just making puns?!" Glorfindel yelled at them. "What good would—"

The Lloyd Mothreon hesitated and landed on the ground, stopping his attack. He balled his two lower arms into fists. A pained hiss leaked from his mouth.

"Huh?" Glorfindel flicked his ears in confusion.

"Say. Do you know why there are so many cracks in the ice rink?" Freezy asked. "Because the maintenance crew is *slipping* up!"

"What do you call it when an arsonist turned himself in at the police station to get famous?" Flamey asked. "His claim to *flame*!"

Lloyd growled until he screamed out. He pressed against his head with his upper arms. The antenna-ears folded back, the wings closed behind him, and the knees buckled. He fell to the ground, still screaming.

"Come on," Glorfindel urged. A green mist crawled up his arm and into his staff. "Come on." The staff's head glowed bright white. "Now!"

A white beam flowed out, slamming against Lloyd.

The light engulfed his body.

Thermis covered their eyes from the light, grunting.

Thermis's Glaceon and Flareon groaned and rolled onto their bellies.

Sweat covered much of Glorfindel's body.

A minute later, the light faded away. Within lay Lloyd, human again and groaning from pain. Glorfindel waved his staff, summoning clothes onto Lloyd so that he was dressed. The ring underneath Glorfindel faded to nothing. He leaned against his staff as though carrying a ton of weight on his shoulders.

Lloyd, once dressed, rolled onto his back, breathing in and out.

"Lloyd!" Freezy cried out.

Thermis rushed over and kneeled to Lloyd's side. With two of their arms, Thermis lifted Lloyd off from the ground. Lloyd coughed and opened his eyes.

"Are you alright?" Flamey asked.

"It-it was horrible!" Lloyd stammered. He stared out into the distance. "I-I saw myself fighting you and the others, but I couldn't stop myself. It was like I was strapped onto a chair, staring into a TV." He turned downward. "I-I'm so sorry."

"It's OK. It's OK," Freezy comforted.

Thermis lifted Lloyd back onto his feet.

"We don't blame you at all," Flamey reassured his friend.

They hugged Lloyd close with all four arms.

Lloyd hesitated and hugged them back.

"Th-thank you." Lloyd turned to Thermis's Glaceon and Flareon. "I'm sorry for attacking you two, too."

Glaceon and Flareon only gave relieved smiles and rubbed their sides against his legs.

Lloyd sighed. "Good." He turned to Glorfindel, who stood up straight. "And who are you?"

“Ah. Call me Glorfindel. The one behind changing your friend and the, well, tiny incidents that you felt. NOT this one!” Glorfindel shook his head. “I have nothing to do with this!”

Lloyd paused and turned to Thermis. “Say. Did I turn into a kind of Bug-type Eeveelution?”

“Er. Yeah.” Freezy rubbed the side of his head. “Kind of ironic since—”

“That is so awesome!” Lloyd gushed. Thermis blinked and waited until Lloyd continued, “I always love Bug types! They always feel underappreciated! It would be the greatest thing ever if I had actual control over it!”

Thermis blinked and turned their heads to each other.

“Huh. This didn’t *cool*/down his love for Bug types one bit,” Freezy remarked.

“More like it *fired* it up more,” Flamey agreed.

“You bet it did!” Lloyd chuckled and turned to Glorfindel. “Say. Is it possible if—”

Despite the lack of wind, a series of flapping noises came from the side. All of them turned to the source, each confused. Several pieces of paper fluttered by. Glorfindel raised an eyebrow, and aiming his staff at them, pulled the

papers toward him. They all gathered in his hand-paw, which he glanced over.

"Huh. There's writing on them," Glorfindel observed. He read through a page and froze. "Wh-what the hell is this?"

"Say, how did you change into that Bug Eeveelution anyway?" Freezy asked.

"You just came out of nowhere, already changed," Flamey added.

"That's the strange part." Lloyd rubbed the side of his head, spinning a lock of his black hair. "When you left, something loud and hard landed next to me. It was some kind of brown feather that glowed purple. Despite how loud it crashed, I picked it up with it light on my hand. All of a sudden, it-it fused into my body, changing me. I lost control over my body, which decided to attack you and the others. I-I couldn't stop myself until you said your stupid puns."

"Fehehe. Laughter is a strong weapon," Freezy chuckled.

"Fahaha. One of the strongest, in fact!" Flamey agreed.

They turned to Glorfindel and flinched at how pale he looked. He struggled to keep the pages between his fingers

for some reason. He turned to the others with wide, fearful eyes.

"I-I have never seen anything like this." Glorfindel shuddered. "In all my years exploring the multiverse, I saw incredible things, but none so incredible or horrifying as this."

"What are you talking about?" Freezy asked. "What froze your heart?"

"Fire away," Flamey added.

Glorfindel inhaled and read aloud:

Thermis grunted, lowering their arms while gritting their teeth. The Mothreon's mouth glowed, about to fire another Signal Beam. Thermis inhaled, and with both heads, prepared a Flamethrower and Freeze-Dry. A second later, all fired their attacks, which met in the middle and exploded.

The Mothreon grunted from the smoke engulfing him. He landed on the ground, twisting away.

Meanwhile, Thermis snuck up on him. Thermis sprinted to the side, preparing another attack.

Glorfindel kept pointing his staff at the Mothreon. "Come on!" A second later, his scan finished. "Yes! Now, to see what—" He glanced at the information and widened his eyes. "Oh, no."

Thermis charged through the smoke with Icicle Spear hovering on one side and Heat Wave on the other.

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The combined attack slammed against the Mothreon.

The Mothreon flew back, crashing against the trees and ground.

"Ha! Would you believe that? Not too hot, are you?" Flamey taunted

"Suffer a cold day in hail!" Freezy jeered.

Thermis turned back to Glorfindel and blinked at his horrified expression.

"Wh-what have you done?" Glorfindel stammered. His voice held no tone. He fell onto his knees. "What have you done?"

Everyone stood there as silent as possible. A cold wind blew by, though they felt none of it. The papers slipped out of Glorfindel's fingers, with him hesitating to grab them again. Before he could, the sheets disintegrated into nothing.

Lloyd spoke up first. "I-I was meant to die?"

Freezy turned to Glorfindel. "Was there anything more in those papers?"

"That was the last bit," Glorfindel answered. "Though the last bit was written carelessly, as though whoever wrote them wanted that path to be solidified."

Flamey rubbed his chin and behind his ear at the same time. "And you don't know who did it or why?"

"No. I would suspect another from my world, but I've never seen him try anything like this," Glorfindel answered. "Plus, being in the shadows for so long wouldn't be his style. He would've revealed himself by the time I turned your friend back. Besides, I know his magic. This one felt much different."

Thermis and Lloyd turned to each other, concerned.

"Now what?" Lloyd asked.

"You guys need to head home," Glorfindel replied. "I would stay, perhaps teach your friend, Thermis, about their powers, but I need to research this new development. Whoever's behind this must be powerful, more powerful than I. And knowing nothing about this mysterious figure, that makes things even worse. I think I know who to ask, though."

Before Thermis and Lloyd could say anything, Glorfindel raised his staff and slammed it against the ground. At once, a pure white square formed underneath him at about 10 feet on each side. A smaller, four-pointed diamond, also pure white, formed afterward, not reaching the square's sides; the closest corners at opposite sides of the diamond only missed the sides by two feet. Four pure white arms of a star-shaped spiral spread out underneath Glorfindel's feet-paws, spinning around in a circle. They crossed the diamond's corners without touching any other parts of the diamond. They reached the end at the square's corners, causing every bit of the symbol to glow brighter. Once finished, light engulfed Glorfindel, to the point where not even his shadowy outline appeared. The others turned away from this bright light.

When the light disappeared, so did Glorfindel.

"Well, that was something," Lloyd grumbled. He sighed and leaned forward. "And I didn't get to turn into that Mothreon by him."

Thermis's heads glanced at each other for a moment, wondering if they should protest Lloyd using the term 'Mothreon.' After all, whoever masterminded this event also used the same term. A bit of thinking later, they shrugged it

off. Even if that term did come from this shadowy figure, the term surprisingly fit that Bug-Eeveelution form.

Freezy patted Lloyd's back. "Icy does it. You'll get another chance."

"Yeah. Then you'll get the *spark* of life," Flamey added.

Lloyd flinched from the puns. "Y-yeah. Sure." He smiled. "Thank you for saving me. Even if it did involve those dumb puns."

"It's no problem." Freezy smiled back.

"We're always here to help." Flamey smiled as well.

"With us around, nothing can stop us!" Both Freezy and Flamey exclaimed.

Lloyd laughed. "Yeah. Let's go home."

They all nodded and walked toward where they had left Thermis's car. Thermis's Glaceon and Flareon hopped onto the lower back and lay there, tired. Thermis and Lloyd strolled side by side past the fallen trees. Though they faced a threat that almost separated them, they overcame it. With that, Thermis felt they could handle anything in their way.

#

“So, they broke free from their roles,” the anthro red-scaled Writer mused. “How disappointing. The narrative I designed would’ve made the protagonist more mature.”

He shook his head and focused his visions on Thermis. The course of their future changed, though smaller than intended. Within, he spotted a possible confrontation, one that held a low chance of happening.

“Perhaps a red herring would repair this plot.”

About Author

Thank you so much for taking the time to read my story! I really appreciate it. If you enjoyed it, then you'll definitely want to check out my gallery accounts at:

<https://www.furaffinity.net/user/foxgamer01/>

<https://www.deviantart.com/foxgamer01>

<https://www.weasyl.com/~foxgamer01>

<https://furrynetwork.com/foxgamer01/>

I have a lot of great content there that I think you'll love.

Also, if you're interested in supporting me and my writing, please consider visiting my Ko-Fi and Patreon accounts at:

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Every little bit helps me to keep creating and sharing my stories with the world.

Lastly, if you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me at:

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I'd love to hear from you and answer any questions you may have.

Thanks again for your support, and I can't wait to share more of my work with you soon!