

Chapter 28: Triple Trouble in the Gloomy Woods Part 2!

Snarls vibrate from the Zoroark, Ramon gripping his fist, grinding his teeth. The Lucario glares into Ramon's eyes, blood sliding off his lips.

After what feels like centuries of glances, Ramon looks down and sighs. Travis raises his brow, his paw glowing yellow. "About time you've accepted your fate," he says, his paw facing towards the fox.

"Wait!" Ramon shouts.

Travis quirks his brow once more. "Don't bother with your tricks. It's over."

"But—" Ramon looks back, his ears lower, his eyes teary. "At least give me a reminder. If you truly believe I'm lying to you, then provide one more context to why you couldn't stop chasing me. Tell me exactly why you wanted to kill me...All of it." He unravels his fist, shaking. "...Please."

Travis keeps glaring for a moment until his eyes widen, his heart thumping. *What the? His appendages twitch. My aura is going against my thoughts on him...Could he be telling the truth after all?* The Lucario looks off, shaking his head. *No. He's lying about his amnesiac state. I know he is.*

The blue canine clears his throat. "I don't know why I should tell you since you're outright a devious liar. But sure, I'll humor you just this once." Travis' arm further presses against the fox's chest, Ramon groaning. "To avenge my beloved friend, Xander Yvonne."

"A-And why's that? Elaborate further than *just* revenge."

"...Xander's life was going so well. So...*peacefully*." Travis gazes at the dark trees, a few leaves hurling down. "He was always a man of determination. The willpower to experience all kinds of ideas." Smiles. "He wanted to improve both mankind and Pokémon alike, and I admire him for it. Because he cared about others, not just himself."

The Lucario then sighs, glancing back at Ramon. "It was until you came into the picture where everything had gone down to ruins. You see, Xander was working on this project called 'Project Transvian', hoping to find a way to turn a Pokémon into one."

So...he must be the one who wrote that wet note then. Ramon looks to the side, concerns sprawling. He then eyes back. "Why did Dr. Yvonne form the project? Besides wanting to turn a Pokémon into a Transvian."

"...He did it for my other friend, Noctis." Travis sighs. "Noctis once thought he wanted to evolve into his final form. But as soon as he did, he regretted ever being in that form..." The Lucario

lowers his ears. "He wished he could devolve back, but couldn't due to not being a Transvian. Xander felt sorry for him..." He grips his fist, tears streaming down. "I wished he wasn't so selfless as to make the project become a reality. Because after trying so hard to make the conversion work...he met you." Glares. "Something tells me *not* to trust you." The Lucario grits his teeth. "And after hearing about the incident along with rumors of a Pokémon surviving it, I *knew* you were the cause of it."

Mesmeren gazes at the two, her hand against her chest. *Oh dear...I-I can see why he cares so much about this Y-Yvonne scientist...*

"I...My sympathy towards your friend, Yvonne..." Ramon shakes his head before frowning. "But also, your conclusion makes no sense! Why would I stay at a facility *after* destroying it? Let alone not remembering a single thing from it!"

"Cut the crap, Ramon: You intentionally became one of Xander's subjects so that you can sabotage the facility!" Travis yells.

"Then why would I remain there? If my entire goal was to destroy it, don't you think it would be a good idea to escape afterwards?"

Travis' heart jumps, the Lucario's eyes widen. His appendages twitch once again. "Grr, you stayed there so that you can steal Xander's journal and use his hard work for nefarious deeds!"

Ramon snarls. "Oh my god, you're killing me with how many times you're evading my honest answer, *especially* with that response. Sure, it's possible that I could've remained at the institute after destroying it and grabbing the journal...But also *why* wouldn't I just do that before ruining the place? Let alone staying in it."

Travis' appendages shake more, his eyes trembling. *Ugh, my aura is acting up again! I know he's not telling the truth! Stop being sensitive!* "So you're admitting that you *DID* cause the incident, lying about your amnesia this entire time!"

Ramon squints his eyes, growling. "No: I'm going off from your assumptions of me, and none of it adds up." He groans. "Don't you get it!? I. AM. NOT. THE. CAUSE!"

Travis grits his teeth, his appendages twitching at a rapid pace. He trembles, growling. "SHUT UP! I KNOW YOU KILLED XANDER AND DESTROYED THE PROSPECTIVE INSTITUTE!" Travis shouts, tears sliding down like a waterfall. "He...He was a dear friend to Noctis and I. And then you ruined it all!" *STOP BEING SENSITIVE! HE'S LYING, DAMMIT! I KNOW HE IS!*

Ramon gnashes his teeth, tears streaming down his cheeks. "Why can't you just believe me!? Why do you insist on me being the cause!? *Why!?*" He grips his fist.

Travis looks at the Zoroark for a moment, eyes trembling with intensity. He then lifts his paw, readying a Force Palm. "Ju...Just shut up and die!" He gets pushed to the side by Confusion, rolling around as the light blue auras fade. Ramon drops down, stroking the grass in freedom while panting. He looks to his left, Mesmeren's eyes reverting back to normal. She gropes her chest, panting at a speedy pace.

"Mesmeren..." the Zoroark says in a soft tone before turning to his right, the Lucario grunting. Travis stands, staring directly at Mesmeren. Snarling, he casts his white bone.

"Oh no you don't!" Ramon dashes on all fours, growling. Travis is about to throw his Bone Rush before being tackled, the two rolling around and latching onto each other. They snarl, their teeth clenching with menace.

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The Greninjas hop from one branch to the next, Sylock and Justin keeping their eyes sharp. Justin groans, lowering his brows.

"Shit, how do we take these guys out? Cuz I only have two chances left for my shield, fam." The boy gazes at his shield, blue auras flourishing throughout. He then snaps his finger, eyeing Sylock. "Say, I heard Blaziken can be born with that Speed Boost ability. Do you have it?"

The Blaziken looks at him, shaking his head. The boy grunts. "Welp, that blows." He stares back at the Greninjas. "I guessed the only option we got is us fighting them, with me putting up the shield when it's right. Would that be alright with ya?" The boy blinks for a moment, twitching his ear to see if he can hear a single word from Sylock: He can't.

Justin turns his head. "Well?" Sylock simply nods at him, the boy squinting. "Dude, you could just talk to me straight up instead of nodding and remaining silent..." The Blaziken then gradually glares at the Greninjas, to which Justin lifts his brow, frowning. *Bro...*

Sylock grabs the edge of his sword and unsheathes, Justin lowering his arm. The blue shield fades, the three Nativus wasting no time to strike. Justin casts his blades and swings at one of the Greninjas. The Pokémon fades, a Substitute doll taking its place. *Oh no you don't!* The boy jerks his blades towards the side, hitting another Greninja's Water Shuriken before another one kicks him. He blocks with his blade, sliding across while grunting.

The Blaziken clashes his sword against the third Greninja's Water Shuriken, gritting his teeth before backing away. He shrouds his legs in dark red auras, jumping. He High Jump Kicks the Greninja, but it Substitutes. *Dammit...* Sylock thinks, kicking the doll away.

The Greninja returns and slaps him to the side, the Blaziken clawing the ground, stopping himself. He snarls, glaring at the Greninja dashing after him. Its Water Shuriken meets his sword, the two pushing each other.

Justin slashes and blocks the aquatic shurikens, jumping away from the two Nativus. The frog ninjas leap forward, readying to strike. Justin smirks, kicking the amphibians to the side. The Greninjas collide against a nearby tree before immediately getting up, rushing towards the boy.

After he lands, Justin prepares his winds and swings his sword forward, the winds dashing directly at the Nativus. The two jump to the side, the winds dissipating. "Uh." The teen looks to his side, the first Greninja jabbing forward with dark energy. Justin blocks the Feint Attack, moving back slightly.

"Knew you'd do that crap." He swings his blade, the Nativu fumbling around the grass before jumping back. Then the second Greninja shoots its Water Shuriken at the boy, leading him to scream and ram against Sylock. "Ugh..."

The biped chicken pants, grabbing the side of his arm, his sword remaining out. All of the Greninjas shoot their Water Shurikens, Justin dashing his arm up. The Mystical Shield engulfs the two, the aquatic projectiles bouncing off. They groan, exhaling strenuously. The boy looks at the Blaziken as he eyes back, both nodding.

"One last time..." the teen says, summoning his blades upon standing up.

Sylock gets up as well, groping his hilt before his other fist casts flames. As the shield fades, the two jolt towards the Greninjas.

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Courtney ducks from the many leaves the Alakazam tosses, white energy trailing behind her. The Exploud runs towards Ada, engulfing its fist in flames before using Fire Punch.

Ada winces while blocking the punch with her claws, being pushed back a bit. She clenches her teeth. *They're so...strong*, she thinks, her heels scratching the grass.

The Lopunny kicks the Alakazam back with her Quick Attack, the Nativu shielding itself with a clear sphere, crossing its arms. *Huh. So we're facing TWO abandoned Nativus, then*, Courtney thinks, jumping back and landing swiftly. *Yeah, no. That is FAR from good.*

The yellow humanoid turns towards Ada, its spoon glowing dark pink before expanding itself. Its arm swings, Psycho Cut waves ushering forward. "AH!" Ada screams, flying off from the landed attacks and thrashing into a tree.

Courtney grits her teeth, rushing towards the teen before being encased in light pink auras. "Ah cra—" the Alakazam throws her across the Exploud with Psychic, slamming her into a boulder beside Ada. Courtney widens her eyes, coughing out blood. Ada stares at the rabbit, eyes rumbling side to side.

“RAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!!!” the Lopunny cries, shrieking at the top of her lungs, gripping her fists.

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Sylock and Justin jump from the echoing scream, the Blaziken widening his eyes and lowering his sword. *Courtney!?*

The teen looks to the side. “Was that Courtney screa—” a large stream of water hits the boy as he yelps, colliding against Sylock. They crash into their main tree, both groaning heavily. Justin quickly raises his shield, letting it take the incoming Hydro Pumps.

Sylock snarls, pushing Justin off. He gets up only to wince afterwards. *Ugh... One eye closes. Must...save...her.*

Justin groans, his arm staying up. “A-At this rate fam, we might be screwed: This is my last usage of the shield. And those three are kicking *both* of our types asses...” The boy expands his eyes, gazing at the ninja frogs hopping around nonstop. “Shit, man...”

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SLAM!

“GAH!” Ramon yelps.

The Lucario’s arm presses him against the tree, zero spaces remaining. Mesmeren raises her hand, her eyes glowing light blue. Travis snaps towards her, his eyes turning pure blue before hammering Mesmeren against the boulder. She coughs up purple blood, stuck by Travis’ Psychic.

“Now then—” the blue canine glares at the fox, his paw shrouding in yellow auras. “Got any last words before I end you?”

“Yes...” Ramon sighs, gazing down. He then eyes back. “Why do you hit so hard after I use my Dark moves on you???”

Travis and Mesmeren blink at the Zoroark’s question, raising their brows.

“Wha,” the two say.

“Really? That’s what you wanted to say before you die? Not even going to ask me about my childhood memories with Xander nor anything? *THAT’S* what you’re curious about???”

Ramon nods, lowering his ears while smiling awkwardly. “Y-Yeah. I’ve been wondering about that for so long, and it’s been bothering me from time to time.” The Zoroark whimpers, staring at Travis with puppy eyes. “I know you think I’m lying to you, but the least you could do is tell me about it!”

That’s...a very unexpected question to ask in a life or death situation, Mesmeren thinks, wishing to tilt her head.

The Lucario has the look of perplexion, his maw slightly agape at the entire ordeal. “...Justified, that’s the name of my ability. It powers my physical moves every time I get hit by Dark moves.”

“Thank you—Wait, *ability*!? The heck is that?”

Travis squints. “You know what that is.”

“No, I seriously don—”

“Shut it.” Travis squeezes Ramon against the tree, the Zoroark groaning. His other paw glows yellow, raising it. “You’ve already mentioned your last words. So die.” The Lucario pins his Force Palm against Ramon’s head, the Zoroark yelping. He drags the fox’s head, his appendages going haywire, his eyes widening. *HE IS NOT INNOCENT, AURA! SHUT UP!*

Mesmeren stares ahead, mortified. “Pl-Please, don’t kill him!” she pleads, tears forming. Ramon grunts, gritting his teeth.

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Ada and Courtney stroke their arms: Legs shaking, breaths racing. The Exploud closes its mouth, wiggling it as Courtney grips her hilt. The Alakazam twirls its spoons, glaring at them. Ada eyes the blue biped, taking a step back.

“What...is it doing?” the teen asks.

Courtney squints, light blue auras sparkling around the wide mouth Nativu. She then gasps, widening her eyes. The Exploud crosses its arms and leans back. “Shit, he’s about to—”

“RAAAAAAAAAAAH!!!”

The Exploud unleashes a giant group of supersonic waves, roaring at the top of its lungs. The Boomburst pushes the two, the blue waves dragging the trees along. The two scream, fumbling in the air. Ada slams against one of the trees, coughing out purple blood upon cracks casting on it.

The noise echoes throughout the Gloomy Woods.

Justin and Sylock turn to their side, the waves vibrating towards them. "You heard that?" Justin says, raising his brow. The Blaziken nods, glaring.

Travis quirks his brow, his ears twitching. "Hmm?" Looks to his right. "What the?"

Mesmeren blinks. "Wh-Where's that coming from?"

I don't know where it's coming from either, but... Ramon eyes the Lucario's arm. *Now's my chance!* He grabs him, Travis yelping. The fox twists him around, throwing him against the same tree. Mesmeren falls down, the blue auras fading instantly.

"Grr...Why you little—"

The Zoroark scoops up a large chunk of dirt, throwing it towards Travis. "GAH!" The Lucario screams, gripping his face and covering his eyes. His paws tremble, caressing his eyes while growling in agony.

Ramon dashes towards Mesmeren, picking her up and setting her on his back. "Hang on!" he says before running on all fours, not giving the Drowzee enough time to think. Luckily, she grips onto the hair, yelping and ducking along the way.

The Lucario stops rubbing, opening his eyes to no longer see the two at his sight. He snarls, grinding his sharp teeth, gripping his fists.

"I'LL KILL YOU EVEN IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO, RAMON!" he shouts, his appendages jittering rapidly. His shaky paw touches his claw marks, wincing. Blood drips onto them, the jackal trembling. "...I need to go to Serenity. See if anyone's kind enough to treat this wound..." Travis grips his fist, squinting. "Despite wanting to go after him."

The Lucario turns around, staring ahead at the darkness. "Ugh..." He shakes his head. *I know what I'm doing is right...I just know it.* The jackal runs off.

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Sylock's fists clench, engulfing in red orange auras. Justin eyes him, keeping his Mystical Shield up. "Uh..."

Sylock grits his teeth, glaring at the hopping frogs. Bits of flames spark around him, blending with the auras.

Something...tells me to back away, Justin thinks, moving back.

The Mystical Shield then fades, the boy jumping. “Ah shit! I didn’t mean to—” three of the Greninjas jolt off, preparing their Water Shurikens. “CRAP!” Justin summons his blades, sweat dripping down. Within a flash, Sylock disappears, flames trailing. Justin looks to his side. “Huh!?”

Sylock punches each of the Greninjas’ face, shooting them towards the ground. As the Nativus stand up, the Blaziken leans his head back and chars the first one with his fury Flamethrower. The Greninja’s skin deteriorates, its tongue ripping off as the Pokémon flies back. After the flames fade, the Greninja is left crisped against a boulder.

The Blaziken lands on the ground before two aquatic shurikens charge towards him. He dodges forward, quickly jabbing the second Greninja with Fire Punch. As it yelps, he grabs its tongue and twirls it towards the third Greninja, slamming the two against the same boulder. Sylock catches the tongue on fire, spreading it throughout the frog. He then moves the Greninja back and forth, bashing it over and over against the third.

Blood spews out of the two like a water hose, the second screeching in agony. Sylock’s eyes expand, seeking his claws into the Greninja’s tongue. *You’re. In. My. Way.* He increases the bashing speed, snarling and growling. He doesn’t even care about the blood coating his claws: He’s too prioritized.

The boy stands there, hands trembling, eyebrows raising. *What the hell?* he thinks, sweat dripping onto his shirt, painting it dark blue. *Is this what Blaze or whatever it’s called can do to a Pokémon? Just...* Justin presses against the main tree, gnashing his teeth as his blades fade.

Soon the bashing halts, the second Greninja quivering and wailing as the third is left unmoving. It coughs out many red liquids before Sylock yanks it towards him. He punctures the tongue one claw after another, holes of blood gushing. The Blaziken have the Nativu close to him, staring into its red eyes with his browbeating blues. To the Greninja, it looks as though Sylock’s eyes are crossed, shaking to their very core.

Leave, the only thing Sylock can think of before slamming the Greninja’s tongue to the ground, stepping on it. The Nativu yelps and tries to form another Substitute, but Sylock kicks it to the air, ripping its tongue off. The Blaziken jumps, his knee coating in dark red auras. He flips around before landing his High Jump Kick, firing the Greninja further towards the sky. The Greninja screams, bypassing the leaves: Never to be seen again.

Sylock lands down, turning towards Justin. The boy continues his gaze, gripping the tree in pure dread.

“H-Hey man,” Justin says. “You...didn’t have to kill them, ya know?” The Blaziken glares at the teen before looking beside him, dashing past the boy. The teen yelps, jumping from the sudden speed. *Holy crap, he’s fast!* The dark skin boy blinks for a moment before gasping. “Yo, wait up!” He chases after him.

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The Zoroark runs and runs, squinting to dodge any incoming bushes or trees. Mesmeren clenches the tip of his hair, closing her eyes.

Ch-Change back...

Ramon raises his brow. *What?*

Change back to your Zorua form. Pl-Please, Nomar pleads.

Why? And how do I even do that, anyways?

Just stop and change back!

HOW, NOMAR!? YOU'RE NOT TELLING ME EXACTLY HOW I CAN DO THAT! Ramon snarls. *I don't even think I CAN do that!*

Mesmeren tilts her head. "Is something's wro—" her sentence stops when Ramon glows white, decreasing himself. "EEK!" The Drowzee falls off, rolling around.

Ramon stops running, turning around once his large hair is gone. The glow fades, showing off his Zorua's appearance: Red hair tuft and all.

"Hmm?" Ramon says in his softer tone, gazing down at his forepaws and then his bushy tail. Although, his left eye remains covered by his newly formed hair: It's similar looking to his black fur. "I...I have no idea how I changed back into a Zorua..." *Actually, what even was I after I evolved!?*

I think it's Zorua's evolution, Zoroark?

Ramon quirks his brow. *Wait, you 'think'?*

My knowledge has been leaving me since I died so bare with me...

"U-Ugh..." Mesmeren groans.

Ramon rushes to her. "Are you alright?" he asks, concerns sprawling throughout.

Mesmeren sits upright, stroking her arm. "A little, y-yeah..."

Ramon sighs. "Good to know."

"H-Hey, um..." The Drowzee shifts. "Why di-did you change ba—"

"I'm not sure," Ramon says, staring off. "It just...happens, I guess."

"Huh...That's bizarre." Mesmeren leans against the tree behind her, caressing her hands.

Ramon blinks for a moment before lowering his ears, whimpering. "Ah! Apologies for interrupting you like that!"

"Um...It's fi-fine," Mesmeren says shakily, smiling with trembling lips. The fox looks at the tapir, smiling and wagging his tail. Mesmeren eyes at his slightly new look, focusing on the bangs. Her face reddens. *Si-Since when did he become cuter!?* she thinks, mesmerized.

Ramon tilts his head, his left hair shifting. "Is something wrong?"

The Drowzee yelps, shaking her head before looking away. "N-Nothing! Just, um..." She looks around, her hands jittering as she covers her face. "Thought about something embarrassing that happened in my childhood, that's all."

"Like what?" Ramon leans closer, his ears perking. Mesmeren spreads her fingers, screams echoing inside her upon his face being close.

E-EEK! SO CLOSE! A-AND WHY ARE YOU SO CUTE!? Mesmeren turns to the side. *In fact, he even looked handsome in his Zoroark form, I-last I checked.* She gasps and smacks her hands against her cheeks, Ramon raising his brow. *Oh gosh, pull it together, me!*

"Um...Are you alright?" Ramon asks, laying his paw onto Mesmeren's leg.

The Drowzee shivers, laughing nervously. "Y-Yeah! I-I'm fine. Just, um, overwhelmed by all of what happened today. Yeah...that's it."

The Zorua gives Mesmeren a straight look. "I mean, I'm overwhelmed, too. But it doesn't mean I have to slap my cheeks and shake constantly..."

The Drowzee lowers her ears, looking away. *Good job, me. Now I creeped him out...* "S-Sorry..."

"No, I'm sorry. I...didn't mean to phrase it like that." Ramon whimpers. "I mean if I was overwhelmed, I personally wouldn't react in that way. But it's okay if you do." Ramon smiles at her. Mesmeren perks her ears up, gradually looking back. "I guess in a way, that's what makes you who you are."

The tapir gazes for a brief moment, feeling as though time has stopped. Afterwards, she nods. "Th-Thank you..."

Ramon nods back. "No pro—"

I would hate to interrupt this sweet moment, but there is something crucial I got to tell you, Ramon, Nomar says.

Ramon blinks, stepping away from Mesmeren. Mesmeren looks at him in confusion, holding her hands together. *What is it?*

Don't tell your friends about you achieving Transvolution. Tell Mesmeren not to let the others know, too.

Wait wait, what!? Transvolution!?

You're able to evolve and devolve by will. Hence why I told you to revert back to a Zorua.

But...I didn't revert back on my own: It just happens out of nowhere.

Huh...That's odd.

Ramon looks off to the side. *So...if I can do that, then doesn't that mean I'm a Transvian?*

...I'm not sure.

The Zorua quirks his brow. *What do you mean you're not sure!? We both learned about their existence from Forest, who gave us more details about them along with the history of this region!*

Those stories are just fabricated lies by humans and you know it! Nomar yells.

Ramon frowns. *Nonsense! Otherwise, Dr. Yvonne wouldn't write about his successful attempt at turning a Pokémon into a Transvian! He grits his teeth. And how do you even know about Transvolution, anyways!?*

Ramon: Why are you still defending humans? Haven't our separation and my death not taught you anything? Nor the events at Majestic City with that corrupted mayor? Nor what happened at Serenity when it was raided by Team Conjure?

The Zorua snarls, leading Mesmeren to tremble a bit. "Ra-Ramon...?"

You know deep down that humans are vile, ruthless beings waiting to shred your heart into pieces. Slowly and...painfully. Nomar emphasizes the latter with a gruesome tone, Ramon lowering his ears: His eyes widen. Remember the talk you had with others yesterday? About you calling humans 'evil beings'? You're completely right.

The Zorua gazes ahead, eyes trembling, tears forming. *It's okay, Ramon. It's okay to feel that way. Ramon snuffles after hearing those words, tears sliding down. As for how I know about Transvolution, I'll explain to you about it later. Now please...Tell Mesmeren not to let the others know about this.*

"Um...h-hey?" Mesmeren waves. "Are you o—" she gasps from the sudden hug, Ramon whimpering into her chest.

"Me-Mesmeren..." Ramon looks up, tears streaming. "Don't...tell the others about what I did." Yelps. "Pl-Please..."

The Drowzee stares for a brief moment, nothing but the tears of the fox can be heard. Eventually, she says, "I...I will."

Ramon snuffles once more, looking up at the Drowzee. "Thank you..." The fox then frees the tapir from the hug. "Can you still move?"

Mesmeren grunts as she stands, her legs trembling slightly. She then smiles, raising her thumb, or thereof. "Somewhat, y-yeah."

"Tell me when to slow down, alright?"

After Mesmeren nods, the two run off.

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Sylock blazes past the trees and bushes, zero care to the boy begging him to slow down. *Faster, dammit!* he thinks, spreading his hands out before catching them on fire.

Ada and Courtney pant heavily from the Boomburst attack, pinning down by the Alakazam's Psychic. They groan.

"C-Crap...This sucks," Courtney says. She gnashes her teeth, gripping her fists.

"Yeah...think we're done for," Ada replies before groaning, the Exploud marching its way towards them. "We're at a complete disadvantage against those two. They're just...so strong." The girl sighs, looking down.

"Dammit girl, have some faith in yerself!" Courtney sighs. "I'm sure that Sylock, Justin, Ramon, and Mesmeren heard the Exploud's Boomburst."

The Exploud cracks its fist as Ada raises her brow. "And what makes you so certain about that?"

Sylock zooms past the Exploud, the creature pausing and enlarging its eyes: Yelping. Rage fuels the Blaziken's eyes as he Fire Punches the Alakazam's stomach, flames bursting throughout the yellow humanoid. It coughs up blood, blasting through multiple boulders and disappears.

Courtney gasps. "SYLOCK, BESTIE!" the Lopunny yells, her and Ada being free from the Psychic's wrath.

As the Exploud turns towards Sylock, Justin stops by to kick it in the head, causing it to groan.

"And Justin, too!" Ada sighs in relief, the two jumping to their feet, their legs shaking. "I suppose you're right about that after all, Courtney."

"I told yo ass to slow down, man!" Justin yells at Sylock, jumping off from the Exploud. Sylock looks back at him with a red glare, Justin raising his hands within seconds. "Haha, I mean, at your own pace, man!" *My Arceus, this dude is SCARY.*

The blue bipedal stands up before Ada claws its eye, blood spewing to the side. Ramon and Mesmeren reunite with the others, the Exploud rolling around the ground and pinning against a tree.

"Ada! Justin!" Ramon shouts, wagging his tail with excitement.

The teens look behind them, glee spreading across. "Ayy, Ramon!" Justin shouts back, his tone filled with even more excitement.

Before any sort of celebration occurs, the Exploud groans loudly. It looks at the group: Ramon moving forward to snarl while Ada and Justin summon their Magic moves, glaring. Mesmeren hides behind the Zorua while Courtney strokes her hilt, squinting. The blue creature then eyes Sylock, who's real up close to it. Sylock cracks his fists, gazing down at the Nativu with menace and fiery. The Exploud's eyes widen as it trembles, jittering its mouth.

The moment Sylock ignites around him, the Exploud takes off running. Not leaving a single trace behind.

Good, Sylock thinks. Everyone sighs in relief, Sylock's flaming auras subsiding.

"Man...what a day so far," Ramon says, falling flat on his belly. "With us getting separated, and me encountering the cloak wearing guy again."

"Agreed..." Ada sits on the ground with Ramon, staring up at the shielded leaves before blinking. "Wait, you said you met the cloaked guy again!?" Ramon nods, Ada gripping her fist. "I swear he's getting on my nerves every time he tries to kill you..." She slams her fist to the ground. "Over something you don't even *remember* doing!"

Justin shakes his head, his hand against it. "Man."

Courtney and Sylock look at the three, perplexion popping throughout. "Uh, what are y'all tal—"

Sylock coughs out blood onto his hand. Courtney sticks close to him, resting his arm on her neck. "*Think I've...overdid it a little*," Sylock signs, blood dripping from his beak.

Courtney squints her eyes. "Ya don't say, goofball."

The four look at Courtney and Sylock, tilting their heads. "...Huh?" they say in unison.

Ramon then stands up, sighing. "As much as I'd like to explain about the cloaked guy, it's best if we move forward. I don't want to see him again."

"Same," both Ada and Justin say.

Courtney snaps her fingers. "Let's also try sticking together while at it."

"I-I second that!" Mesmeren says, raising her hand.

Before the group leaves, Courtney holds her hand out. "Wait...Got something to say real quick."

"...And that is???" Justin raises his brow.

Courtney turns towards the Zorua. "Nice hair."

Sylock shakes his head as Ada groans. "Ugh, really? You stopped us *just* to say that?"

Ramon blinks in confusion. "Um, thanks?"

The Lopunny smirks. "No problem. I don't remember your hair covering ya left eye, though."

Ada, Justin, and Sylock lay their hands against their chins. "Yeah...come to think of it: Why did your hair change? Or fur, I should say," Ada questions.

Oh dear... Nomar gulps echo throughout Ramon's head.

"I'm...not sure, honestly." The Zorua shrugs, blowing on his left tuft of hair. "But I guess it's a part of me now."

Everyone looks at each other for a moment before shrugging. "I see," Ada concludes.

Phew... Nomar says, sighing in relief. Afterwards, the group moves forward.