

Chapter 29: From Gloomy Woods to Windmill Forest!

“...Sooo...” Justin taps his chin, lifting his brow at Sylock. “How did you move so fast?” The Blaziken looks at him, expressionless. “You told me you don’t have Speed Boost, and yet you zip through those Greninjas like those cars at Majestic City.”

“Did he now?” Courtney says, eyeing the Blaziken while keeping his arm on her neck. “That explains why you overused yer Rune...”

The quartet gives Courtney the look of perplexion. “His *Rune*?” they say.

Sylock signs at the Lopunny, to which she looks at the group. “His Rune, Blaze Booster: It makes his Blaze ability stronger and has him move faster.”

“That...wasn’t quite the confusing part, but thanks for explaining it,” Ada says in a blunt manner.

Courtney quirks her brow. “Then what in tarnation are y’all confused about?”

“Rune, fam: What is that?”

Ramon nods. “I’m with Justin on this: What exactly is it?”

Courtney snaps her fingers. “Ah, that. Well, it’s a pretty darn complicated thing because of how it relates to Magic type, but I’ll do my best to explain it.” She looks ahead at the dark grassy road. “Rune is a special kind of power naturally gifted to Intellicates and Transvians. It’s a skill that allows us to either power up our abilities and moves, use powers that aren’t normally possible for a Pokémon, or a lot more I’m still trynna learn about.”

Everyone stares in awe. “Whoa...That sounds interesting.” Ramon walks close to Courtney and Sylock, his tail wagging.

“No cap,” Justin agrees.

“I-I...wasn’t even aware that Intellicates have those kinds of powers,” Mesmeren mentions, poking her fingers together.

“Figured: Many Intellicates, and even Transvians back then, weren’t aware of their Rune skill.” The pathway shifts left, the group turning. “Some of us can even die without ever discovering it. It’s that much of a mystery.”

Ada folds her arms, caressing her chin. “So Rune usually becomes the stuff of myths because of not knowing about it?”

Courtney points towards her. "That and because of its negative side effects once someone discovers it. I'll get to that in a second."

Justin rolls his eyes. "Figured there'll be a downside to something as good as Rune."

"Life™."

"DUDE!"

Both Courtney and Justin snicker at each other while Ada and Sylock deadpan. Soon the path shifts right, the group following along.

"But yeah, just cuz many of us don't know about our Rune, doesn't mean it's impossible to discover. Cuz there are ways to discover it. And once we do, we can name it however much we see fit." Courtney smiles, looking at the Blaziken. "Ain't that right, Sylock?" Sylock smiles back.

"Hmm...I-I wonder why—"

"I wonder why they're not used as often," Ramon finishes. He blinks for a moment before looking at the tapir, lowering his ears. "Ugh, sorry...That tends to be a habit of mine, apparently."

"I-It's okay. W-We were thinking about the same thing, anyways." Mesmeren smiles in a meek manner, holding her hands behind.

Ada shakes her head. "You really need to address your habit there, Ramon."

"I'll try..." The Zorua whimpers.

"And fam, didn't you hear what the rabbit girl said? Not many Intellicates know about their Rune, hence why it's not used as often."

"Right. But I was referring to an Intellicate discovering their Rune...Why don't they use it as often?" Ramon tilts his head.

Courtney snaps her fingers again. "Glad you asked: The negative effects." She then points at Sylock. "Remember when this guy vomited blood like crazy?" The four raise their brows.

Sylock widens his eyes and grits his teeth, his hand spasming. "*WHY DID YOU HAVE TO SAY IT LIKE THAT!?*"

The rabbit smirks. "Just messing with ya." Snorts. "But in all seriousness, Sylock was experiencing the downside of Rune: It can hurt him after being used." She displays a straight look, glancing. "The more someone uses it, the weaker they get. Until eventually...they die from it."

Mesmeren gasps, covering her mouth. *Oh gosh*, she thinks, both her and Ramon's eyes widen.

Courtney gazes at Sylock, caressing his back. "...That's why I was concerned about him overusing his Rune."

"...I see, then." Ramon looks ahead at the dark road, the grass rustling. "Rune must be more of a last resort, then."

"You're catching on, ain't ya?"

Ramon nods. "It makes the most sense."

Ada slips her hands into her jacket's pockets. "Have you discovered your Rune, Courtney?" she asks, everyone bringing their focus to the Lopunny.

Courtney gazes at her hand for a brief moment before shaking her head. "Still trynna discover that myself..."

"Discovering things about yourself...I know that too well," Ramon adds, sighing. "Although, finding out what my Rune is can be added to the list of mysteries about me, haha..."

Mesmeren looks to the side, shrugging. *Wondering what's mine, too...*

"Hmm..." Ada shifts her pockets. "You mentioned Rune relating to Magic type: Care to elaborate?"

"Not gonna lie—" Courtney laughs nervously. "I forgot about that very detail."

"Damn..." Justin shakes his head.

"All I know from Forest's history book is that Rune was used as evidence towards Intellicates connectin' with Magic type. The details were so long and drawn out, I slept through most of it though." Courtney scratches the back of her head. "My bad..."

"Really now?" Ada gazes to the side, lifting her brow. *Do Intellicates have magic blood in them, too?*

Courtney then stops, the others looking at her with perplexion.

"Whatchu stopped for?" Justin asks.

"There's just...one thing I want to address." The Lopunny gradually glances at Sylock's left hand, her eye twitching at the blood leaks. The burnt leaf barely clings to the hand, the char

slipping off. "This has been bothering me for some time now." Courtney points at Justin and Ada beside her, the rest of the leaf deteriorating. "Please let those two heal it."

Justin and Ada look at the Blaziken's hand, blood seeping. "Yeesh...That looks disturbing," Ada comments.

"I still have no clue why you stabbed your hand, fam," Justin says to Sylock, lifting his brow. "But yeah, I don't mind healing it."

"Same here," the girl agrees. Sylock glances at the teens, bringing his hand back. "Um...?"

Courtney smiles at the Blaziken. "Hey now. They're not gonna hurt ya, and haven't been for some time. It'll be fine." Sylock gazes at the Lopunny, the rabbit giving him a reassuring nod. He sighs, showing his left hand. "Thanks, Sy."

Justin and Ada lay their hands onto Sylock's, glowing blue. "We ain't gonna *Ruine* your hand, pal. Trust me," Justin says with a wide grin. Courtney, Ramon, and Mesmeren snicker while Ada and Sylock roll their eyes. "What? You gotta give it to me on that one."

"No, I will not credit you for that awful joke," Ada states, glancing.

"I second what she said."

Justin raises his hand up and down as the teens heal Sylock. "Typical jealousy of my humor, I see."

"More like overconfidence *defying* reality."

Justin's eyes widen, Sylock's hand stops glowing as the two bring their hands back. "Damn, Ada. Didn't have to burn me that badly, haha."

Ada folds her arms, smirking. "You'll still sleep with two eyes closed. You'll be fine."

Ramon eyes Sylock's left hand, blood no longer seeping out. Although, the punctured spots have turned into a scar, the Zorua tilting his head. "Hey, why didn't the magic healing remove the scar?"

Sylock rubs his hand, the group continuing onwards.

"Sorcerous can heal others, but at the cost of scar marks left on the wound, depending on the severity of it. Such as having a cut," Ada answers. "It's the only downside to magic healing."

"I see, hmm..." Ramon looks up. "There's also another thing I want to ask about Magic type."

“Go ahead since it’s going to take us awhile to leave.” Ada blinks up, the light slowly dimming through. “Well, maybe we’re almost out of it. Who knows.”

“So it has something to do with the Oran Berry earlier. You were able to lift it with your magic: Is that another gift from being born as a Sorcerous?”

“Yes: Sorcerous can lift any object with magic. As long as they’re small and don’t require too much energy, no one should have any issues carrying it.”

Ramon blinks in surprise. “Really now? Sounds convenient.”

Justin grins. “You have no idea how many times I do this to brush my teeth and take out the trash at Synchronic Village.” The boy snickers. “It’s hella convenient, fam.”

“Interesting.”

“Although, there’s something I want to correct myself on: Sorcerous can lift a large object like a car. But that requires too much energy to pull off, hence why Sorcerous rarely lifts up heavy objects.”

“S-So if your kind can carry large objects, d-does that include a building?” Mesmeren steps in.

Ada shakes her head. “I don’t believe a single Sorcerous can lift those kinds of tall objects. Probably with a Spell they can, but I have no clue. I just know that minor tall objects can be lifted with magic.”

“M-Makes sense, I guess?” Mesmeren stares down. “This Magic type has some odd complexities to it. M-More than any other typing.”

“Agreed...” Ada takes her hand out of her pocket, casting her purple claw. She gazes in mystique. “I wouldn’t be surprised if there’s still things I don’t know about Magic type. About us Sorcerous...”

After Ada’s claw fades, Courtney turns towards the Zorua. “By the way, who was that mystery fella you mentioned earlier?”

“Hmm?” Ramon blinks for a moment before gasping. “Oh right: He’s this...Lucario named Travis. He wanted me dead for ruining the Prospective Institute, according to him.”

“H-He’s very terrifying,” Mesmeren comments, shaking.

“Huh. I see, then.” Courtney looks ahead, keeping Sylock close. “I’ve heard of that institution and its downfall. I wonder why this Travis fella suspected you of bein’ the cause, though.” Sylock’s finger nudges his chin, staring down at the Zorua.

Ramon stares ahead as well, the woods becoming more enlightened. “He told me about hearing rumors of a Pokémon surviving the incident. And since I was the only one who escaped the institute...” He sighs, lowering his ears and closing his eyes. “You get the idea.”

“What the—” Courtney pauses, lifting her brow. “Isn’t that pretty damn extreme to conclude?”

“You’re not lying: I was thinking the same thing when I confronted him about the chase.” Ramon whimpers. “...I kind of feel bad for him despite the many times he wanted me dead.”

“In *what* universe, Ramon?” Ada glares at the fox. “Why pity someone who wants you dead?”

The fox yelps from the glare, shaking his head. “I mean, I’m not saying I want to befriend him or excuse his actions. Not in the slightest after the many times he tried to kill me.” He looks away. “I just...more so understand his anger and sorrow. He’s a close friend of Dr. Yvonne, and his death must be too much for him and his other friend, Noctis.”

“Noctis?” Ada, Justin, and Courtney ask.

“Yeah. I’m not sure what species he is, but it looks like Project Transvian was formed because of him.”

Courtney scratches her head. “‘Project Transvian’? Was this Yvonne fella trynna revive a dead species or somethin’?”

“Yes. Ada has his journal.” Ramon gestures to the teen as the group reaches the pathway’s corner. “Show her.”

The girl nods and digs in her jacket’s pocket, taking out the familiar brown journal. She hands it to Courtney, who then looks inside. “It should be at the very last page,” Ada says.

Courtney reaches the Project Transvian page, eyes widening. “Excuse me: THIS WAS A *SUCCESS!*?”

“The crazy part is: I have no clue where this Transvian *is*.” Everyone turns to the right. “I don’t know if this happened before or after the incident...But either way, it’s all so—” Ramon frowns. “*Confusing*.” Sighs. “I wish I could remember exactly what happened there.”

“Interesting.” Courtney closes the book and hands it back to Ada. The teen returns it into her inner pocket as Courtney thinks to herself. “Hmm...This could mean we have a modern day Transvian living out there.”

“Sounds dope, honestly,” Justin states, his hands behind his head.

“Agreed. Hehe.”

“Wait a second.” Everyone stops in their tracks along with Ada herself, the teen stroking her chin with intrigue. “If the project was a success, with there being rumors of a Pokémon surviving the incident *on top* of Ramon being the only one escaping the institute...” She turns towards the Zorua. “Could *you* be that Transvian?”

Ramon stares at Ada for a moment, uncertainty flowing. “I’m...not sure.” He looks back at the path ahead. “There could be another Pokémon out there that survived the incident and became a Transvian. Which would further my confusion on why I was there, if that’s the case.”

“I see.”

...*What kind of Pokémon am I?* Ramon thinks, sighing as the group moves forward, turning at another corner to their left. Courtney quickly gives others glances, jolting her eyes all over.

Mesmeren blinks in perplexion. “Hmm?”

“Alright good, we’re still together,” Courtney mentions, Justin raising his brow.

“Uh...aight then???”

“Although, it’s mighty weird to see these woods get brighter. This may mean we’re about to leave, finally.”

“Speaking of the Gloomy Woods—” Ada points at the Lopunny. “Tell me exactly what happened to it and how it became this way.”

“...”

Courtney remains silent briefly, gripping her fist. She gazes up. “I’ll...do my best to summarize it.” She takes a deep breath before exhaling. “Long ago, the Gloomy Woods used to be calm and peaceful. Nativus, Intellicates, Ordinas—literally *anyone* can join in and have a good time there. Formin’ fonder memories and stronger bonds along the way...”

Courtney grimaces. “The woods used to be called Gleeful Woods due to all that positivity.”

Ada puts her hand on her chin. “I see.”

“That name came from a man called Mr. Tranquility, or just Tranquility. He’s the founder of Serenity that no one knows much about.” Shrugs. “The only thang we know was his goal to bring peace and prosperity to the village, which led Gleeful Woods to become the way it was.”

Mesmeren pokes her fingers together. “S-So the Pokémon here used to be kind and peaceful?”

"Yeah. I even befriended some of the Nativus during my youth. The time I used to be a Bunear... Courtney grips her fist, shaking her head before sighing. "Things used to be fine and dandy until Tranquility left Serenity. Many crimes and awful acts from humans ran rampant throughout the village...It was insane."

The Zorua's eyes widen upon hearing the very word 'humans', keeping his gaze onto the Lopunny.

Courtney continues, "So many people died over those heinous behaviors. And this is what unfortunately led to the Gleeful Woods going through the chaotic roots: Nativus becoming more violent against each other, some were abandoned by their trainers, and...and just..." Tears form in the rabbit's eyes, her arms shaking. "I-I remember the last time I tried chattin' with my Nativu friends and—"

Courtney gasps from Sylock's sudden hug, his arms wrapping around her. Everyone stops, Courtney looking at the Blaziken as tears slide down. She hugs back. "Thanks..."

"Courtney, what happened to your friends?" Ada asks.

After Sylock releases the Lopunny, the group continues onward, Courtney keeping the Blaziken's arm on her. "...They were killed by a strong Nativu. Right in front of me," Courtney answers, touching her face.

Mesmeren strokes her chest, whimpering. "M-My condolences to them, Courtney." Her ears lower.

"Same here." Ada sighs.

The Lopunny wipes her tears, taking in deep breaths. "At least Serenity went back to its peaceful state after Forest and Mokuri arrived. Sylock and I even helped them, including fighting off those many criminals I told ya about."

"Yep, you did," Justin confirms.

"While we got Serenity back to normal, we...couldn't do the same for Gloomy Woods. There was so much wrong with it down to getting lost easily and almost dying to strong Nativus, as we all went through not too long ago." Courtney groans in melancholy, shaking her head. "Hence why the name changed from Gleeful to Gloomy."

Ada tilts her head. "Is there not a way to return Gloomy Woods back to Gleeful Woods?"

Courtney gives her a firm head shake. "In the worst case scenario: Gloomy Woods may just...remain this way forever."

Justin slips his hands in his pockets, shaking his head. "Damn..."

"I-I wish the woods didn't b-become that way." Mesmeren holds her hands together, staring down.

Ramon slowly stares off, lowering his ears. *Humans caused the Gloomy Woods to become this way.* Glares. *It's...hopeless trying to defend them, huh?*

At long last, the light shines more on the group, all leaving out of the Gloomy Woods. The sun provides them with its array of light, the trees displaying ahead along with a concrete path leading around the woods. To their right is a gray building afar, surrounded by iron gates. Some guards are by it, squinting their eyes and jotting around.

Justin points at them. "Yo, what's that building over there?"

"That there is the Serenity Vicious Center," Courtney answers.

"The what now?"

"Serenity Vicious Center: It was built in response to the many violence happening in Serenity back then." Courtney waves her hand around. "Now it serves as a way to both control the violent nature of Gloomy and 'correct any criminal's behavior', as they put it."

"Uh huh."

Sylock glares at the center. *More like a waste of everyone's time*, he thinks, looking away afterwards.

"Hold up—" Justin stops, everyone following suit. "This path goes around Gloomy Woods. Does it take us to Glory Pride?"

"Nope: It cycles back to Serenity."

"What the—" Justin slams his hand into his face, shaking. "Bruh, we could've just *went* through this path instead of going into the woods."

"...Yeeeeeaaah." Courtney laughs nervously, scratching the back of her head. "Somethin' told me to leave to the left instead of in the woods. I...guess I was too eager to go to Glory Pride that I didn't really think about that." Courtney lowers her arms. "My bad, y'all."

"Hey, at least we're out of that place. So we can continue moving forward in peace," Ada chimes in. "I hope."

"You better hope, fam!" Justin pouts. "I'm not sure if I can handle Walking Simulator 2...or 3. 4? Shit, I don't know how many times we've walked, but it's a lot!" His cheeks puff, folding his arms. Ada, Courtney, and Ramon look at each other before snickering.

"You have a point there."

Everyone then looks at another path next to the first, the path leading to some windmills afar.

"I feel like this should take us to Glory Pride, though. So let's go."

Justin snaps his fingers. "Right behind ya, Carrots."

Courtney turns towards the boy. "Please don't call me that."

The group walks ahead, leaving the center. The path twists and turns at every angle, the group passing by multiple trees as the sun guides them. Eventually they come across a sign nearby one of the trees, pointing forward: *'Windmill Forest'*

The name isn't wrong: Couple of windmills are placed randomly throughout the forest. Some normally lie within the grass while others are on the boulders. However, those very windmills have parts attached to places it doesn't belong: Blades striking the ground, rocks, and some of the trees while the poles stick on top of the trees, even to the point of pinning them down.

The gang eyes the entire forest in perplexion, Sylock freeing himself to touch his hilt. Courtney places her hand onto her hilt, glancing around.

"What in the world happened here?" Ada asks, cautious.

"Y-Yeah..." Mesmeren sticks close to Ramon, holding her hands together. "There's windmill parts everywhere..."

"Whatever happened here is something faaar from good news." The Lopunny rubs her hilt. "Be careful, y'all."

Ramon lowers his ears, looking down. *Wouldn't be surprised if humans were the cause of this forest's destruction...*

"H-Hey, Ramon..." The Zorua turns, the tapir tapping her fingers together. "Are you alright? You look down, s-so..."

"Hmm? Oh yeah. I'm alright."

"PLEASE GIVE IT BACK!" an unknown voice shouts from afar.

The group looks ahead, four figures being at view. They walk close to the figures, seeing them being four Pokémon: A brown biped with gray scythes, a huge biped with silver armor, an brown avian with red outer feathers, and a grayish-green biped dragon with protruding tusks on the side of his maw. The Kabutops, Aggron, and Pidgeot toss a green wristband over the Axew like a ball, snickering and cackling.

The Axew jumps over and over, panting after his last leap of faith. "Just...give the...wristband back." The laughter continues from the three, the Axew resting his hands on his knees. "Please!"

"Kabu," the Kabutops says, smirking as it twirls the wristband.

"Hey!" Courtney shouts, catching the four Pokémon's attention. "Give his wristband back."

"Or what? Small Pokémon don't deserve to own something like we tall ones do," the Aggron says with menace, slamming his fist against his hand. "Get lost or we'll pummel ya!" The Pidgeot and Kabutops glare at the group, grinning.

"I ain't gonna repeat myself: Give it back. Even by wild life standards, it ain't right to toy with another Pokémon like that." Courtney grips her hilt.

The Pidgeot snickers. "Heh, right or wrong has no place in the wild, Lopunny. We saw this wristband, we like how it looks, therefore it's ours," he says in a cocky tone before eyeing the Aggron. "Think we should beat em up, eh Aggy and Kabi?"

"Yeah," the Kabutops agrees, stretching his arms out before the three move forward.

Ada turns to Courtney. "I'm not sure what they're saying, but it looks like they want to fight."

"Yep. You're sure right about that." Courtney gets her sword out, Sylock following suit. "So much for peace talk." She sighs, shaking her head. Ada turns back to the three Nativus, slowly summoning her claws.

"I see, then."

Courtney takes a quick glance at Sylock. "Think you'll be alright?" Sylock looks back at her, simply nodding. "Gotcha."

Justin casts his blades while Ramon stands in front of Mesmeren: All glaring ahead. The Axew rushes to a nearby tree, hiding behind it in safety. He watches the conflict unfold, his hands resting on the tree.

The Kabutops surrounds himself in water while the Aggron's claws and the Pidgeot's wings glow white. The three charge forward, the bird being in front of the two. Ramon casts his Dark

Pulse, readying to fling until Justin and Ada run in front of him. The teens collide their Magic moves against the Pidgeot's Quick Attack, pushing him back. The bird flies towards the Nativus, the two dodging out of the way. Courtney and Sylock charge towards them.

"Huh!?" The Kabutops stares at the Lopunny, clashing his scythes against her sword. Courtney glares, pushing her sword forward until she flips over him. She twirls around and kicks the Pokémon's head, the creature groaning. "AH!" He slides across the ground as Courtney lands with grace.

Sylock slashes the Aggron, the Nativu countering Sylock's sword with his Metal Claw. The Blaziken's legs then get coated in dark red auras before he kicks forward. The Aggron blocks in time, groaning. Sylock then blows him back with Flamethrower. "Gah!"

Once the flames subside, the silver biped notices the lack of Sylock's presence. "Where did he —" a High Jump Kick plunges into the creature's face, blowing him away from the group. Sylock lands on the ground, stroking the grass.

Kabutops gasps in shock before yelping at Courtney's Quick Attack behind him. "Never get distracted during a fight," she says, smirking. Just when Kabutops is about to turn around, Courtney swings her red aura leg, crashing him into the Aggron.

The wristband drops along the way, being in the center. The Axew watches the fight, eyes sparkling at the grace movements from Courtney and Sylock.

"Whoa..." The dragon's tone is that of a loyal child, his hands gripping onto the barks with intrigue. He eyes the Pidgeot being pushed by the teens, the bird zipping around with Quick Attack only for Ada's Enchantment Claws to smack him. He flies up before soaring down Quick Attack. Justin twirls around and rams him away with his Sorcery Blades, the Pidgeot squawking.

"Man I've seen Pidgeys using Quick Attack better than you," Justin mocks, chuckling. The Axew stares at the boy. "Even a Magikarp can attack faster than that, fam!" The dragon giggles, covering his maw.

The Pidgeot rolls around, groaning before standing up. He growls, flapping his wings rapidly as winds build up. Justin and Ada look at each other before nodding, the two dashing forward. The Pidgeot flings his Gust, the wind charging at lightning speed. Ada extends her claws and shreds the wind, Justin jumping over her before firing his Mystical Projectile. The bird squawks and jolts off, flailing around before colliding against the two Nativus: All groaning in pain.

Justin lands down, jumping in ecstasy. "Holy shit, that was so badass, dude!" He brings his fist up, waiting for it to be bumped. Ada sighs in relief and gives what the boy wants, giggling.

"Honestly, it was."

The dragon looks at the four: Both he, Ramon, and Mesmeren are in awe of those teamworks. "...Amazing," the Axew says, walking from behind the tree.

Courtney and Sylock stroll over to the group, taking their gaze onto the three Nativus. The three eye the group, receiving gruesome glares and warning summons of moves.

"Th-These guys are tough! Let's get out of here!" the Kabutops suggests before the three scurry away.

"Told y'all I wasn't going to repeat myself!" Courtney shouts at the Nativus, sticking her tongue out while waving. The Lopunny then eyes around, her brow quirks. "Uh, where's the Axew's wristband?"

Justin sees the wristband nearby, picking it up. "Found it."

The Axew rushes over to the boy, smiling. "That was really amazing what you and the others did!" he says, holding his hand out.

Justin waves his hand up and down. "Ah, it was nothin'. Just us helping an fella out, that's all." He hands the wristband over, the Axew wrapping it around his right wrist afterwards.

"I see, I see!" Everyone gets close to the two, the Axew stares at the group around him. "Genuinely thank you all for helping me! This wristband means a lot, so I didn't want those three Nativus to steal it..." The Axew looks at his wristband, sighing.

"You're welcome!" Ramon says before lowering his ears, laughing in a nervous manner. "Even though Mesmeren and I haven't done anything to help there..."

"O-Our apologies." Mesmeren whimpers, stroking her arm.

The Axew nods. "No worries! It was only those three Nativus that the four took care of with ease."

Justin snaps his fingers, displaying his usual finger guns while winking. "Hell yeah, dude." Sylock cringes at the gun wink combo, his face scrunching up.

"I'm very grateful for you all's help, in all honesty." The Axew then presses his hands together and bows. "My name is Roan and it's a pleasure meeting you."

"Call me Courtney, not Carrots," Courtney says, the Axew lifting his brow.

Justin chuckles. "Fam, you're acting like I'mma keep referring to you as that."

"Just making sure, that's all." Courtney frowns.

“So yeah, that’s Carrots—”

“HEY!”

The Axew snickers as Justin continues, “And I’m Justin. Nice to meet you, too.” Everyone else introduces themselves to Roan, with Courtney elaborating on Sylock not chatting as much.

“I see, I see. Such an intriguing bunch you all are,” Roan says.

Yeah, I wouldn’t say that, Sylock thinks while glancing off, puffing his cheeks.

Yeah, I would say that, Nomar says inside of Ramon’s head, his snickers echoing. Ramon smiles, nodding.

“We’re quite diverse, I’d like to think,” the Zorua mentions. “So I can see that.”

Ada looks ahead of the path, the road leading up to a lake and cabin afar. There’s also dark clouds shrouding above, becoming a sore thumb in an otherwise sunny sky. “Anyways, as much as I like to continue chatting, we should be going.” She folds her arms, staring with mystification. “I...assume that’s Lake of Purity, right?”

Courtney looks at the path as well, raising her brow. “I think so?”

“I-I mean, there’s a lake and a cabin over there. So p-perhaps it is the Lake of Purity?” Mesmeren follows, remaining close to Ramon. “Although if it is, then...why does it look like a storm is about to happen?”

Ada caresses her chin, glaring. “I was thinking the same thing, too. Doesn’t sound quite like the name suggests.” She looks at the group. “Let’s be careful while on our way there.” She then nods at the Axew. “And you take care too, Roan.”

The group nods and walks along the path until Roan says, “Hey, wait a second!” He catches up with them as they turn around.

“Is something wrong?” Ramon asks, tilting his head.

“No. It’s just that: I want to travel with you.”

“Oh?”

Roan looks at the ground for a moment, inhaling the air before exhaling. He nods. “I believe after seeing the way you four fought, you’ll help me find my mentor.”

"Mentor?" Ada asks, lifting her brow while folding her arms.

The Axew shows them his wristband. "This is his wristband: I wish to return it back." His arm lowers. "We got separated after an ugly hurricane in Windmill Forest while we were training." He looks down. "Since then, I made it my task to find him..." He gazes up, lowering his brows and forming his fists. "With your strength and courage, we can find him together. Even train with each other so that I can become strong enough to defend the weak!"

Everyone blinks at the Axew for a moment, unsure of how to stomach such a situation. "...Well —"

"Also I have nowhere to go and I think traveling with you all would make me feel less lost," Roan says, interrupting Ramon.

"Okay, that's a more understandable reason," Justin states. "Cause we're lost too, fam." He jolts his thumb up. "Let's be lost together!"

Ada smacks the boy's head, the boy groaning while rubbing. "Justin! That wasn't called for, you know?"

Roan snickers. "No no, it's fine. I appreciate his sense of humor." He then scratches the back of his head. "Although, that was kind of rude. Didn't know searching for someone close isn't a good excuse to travel with others..."

Justin is about to say something, but then looks down. He slips his hand in his pocket, shrugging. "Yeah, I guess I went a bit too far there. My bad." He stares at the Axew. "Just thought it was weird to travel with someone because of a crazy backstory like that. But then I thought about why Ada, Ramon, and I are traveling and...Yeah, it was uncalled for."

Ada nods. "We're looking for our friends and family, too. And in Ramon's case: Recovering his memories."

"Memories?" Roan looks at the Zorua. Ramon shifts.

"Yeah. I have amnesia and...don't really know why I was in the Prospective Institute only to be chased by this Lucario for causing its destruction."

"Prospective Institute? A Lucario chasing after you!?" Roan walks around the Zorua, tapping on his chin. "Hmm hmm...Very interesting, Ramon."

"I'll tell you all about it on our travels." The Zorua looks ahead at the path before moving forward, Mesmeren following along.

"And what perhaps the other three are traveling for?" Roan asks Ada.

“Well Mesmeren is lost just like you so that’s why she’s with us.”

“And I want to participate in Glory Pride City’s tournament! Which is exactly where we’re heading, by the way.” Courtney raises her arms up in excitement as the group moves forward. “And my friend Sylock is coming along to support me, too!”

“I see, I see!” Roan smiles, folding his arms while closing his eyes. “I believe I’ll get along with you all just fine.”

“Since you enjoyed my humor, I believe it.” Justin smirks while Roan snickers, Ada rolling her eyes.

“You’re so silly, Justin,” she says as the group passes by a sign.

‘Now entering Lake of Purity’