

Chapter 49: A Proper Reunion.

Delia, X, Merlin, Serene, and Ethan eye the unconscious individuals, bewilderment spreading across. X sits on the boy's lap while Merlin, Serene, and Ethan sit on the edge of Ada's bed, Delia resting on the stool close to Justin.

"I...wasn't aware of so much happening to you two since our separation." Delia smiles, caressing her chin. "You've even met some new friends along the way!"

Justin nods. "Yep! I feel like y'all will like them, too: They're a blast to hang with." The boy sets his hand beside his lips, leaning forward. "Except for Sylock, though. He's my least favorite," he whispers. "Don't tell him that I said that."

Delia gasps, punching her son's shoulder softly. "Justin! That's not a very nice thing to say."

The teen chuckles. "I'm kidding, I'm kidding. He's cool, too." He rubs his nose. "Although, he *can* be scary at times."

X tilts his head. "'Scary'?"

The boy scratches his head, laughing in a nervous manner. "You'll see what I mean."

X and Merlin's face warp, squinting. *That doesn't sound like a good sign*, they think.

Ada sighs, her hand against her gray shirt. "It's just...*great* to see you all again after everything we've been through." She strokes her cover. "We've encountered all sorts of dangers along the way, including the culprit group themselves: Team Conjure..."

Merlin gropes his staff as X frowns, folding his arms. "So that's who those weird outfit wearing guys are."

"Mhm. We ran into them about three more times since," Ada looks over at Mesmeren. "The first was when we were saving Mesmeren at Avalon Forest." Everyone briefly eyes the tapir as Ada continues. "Second was at Majestic City solving its city issues, and then the third time was at Serenity during a raid." Ada caresses her chin, glaring down. "*Both* of those cases involved the group obtaining Spells and getting away with it."

Ethan quakes as Serene's ears lower. "Yeesh. That doesn't sound good."

X grits his teeth. "That means they stole the Spell from that Forest guy."

"They did indeed, X." Ada blinks. "Wait, he told you guys what Spells are?"

Merlin pounces up. "Of course! He noticed that I was snooping through his The Birth of Wizlore book and saw the Spell pages, happily explaining what they are to us afterwards."

"Ah, I see then." Hums. "Hmm..." Ada narrows her brows. "I'm curious: Why does Conjure want to obtain all eight of the Spells?" The girl shakes her head. "And where does catching Mesmeren even play a role in this?"

"Hmm..." Merlin taps his staff. "Those are pretty good questions."

Justin snaps his fingers. "Ayo, that reminds me: I remember seeing a girl throwing the mayor of Synchronic while holding a book. Think it looked pink, too."

Delia's hand presses her lips. "You saw what happened to Mayor Herbert?"

Justin nods. "Vaguely, though. All of those...fires made it difficult to see what was happening."

"I see." The woman's face warps into worries. "That explains why I haven't seen him since the incident."

"Yeah. Homie's gone." Justin sighs, scratching the side of his head. "But yeah, bout that pink book: I wonder if that's a Spell, yo."

Squinting, Ada's hand sits beneath her chin. "It has to be." She eyes Justin. "Team Conjure wouldn't go this far if it weren't for the book the mysterious girl was holding." Nods. "I believe Herbert was a Spell Guardian, too."

Justin folds his arms. "Wouldn't surprise me, fam." His eyes close. "Always thought Herbert was the secretive type, to be honest. Hardly saying hi to his people and everything." His head shakes. "Weird man."

"Weird is an understatement, Justin." Serene glances off, sweat drips. "I saw him one time sniffing a Florges' flower before saying 'Vanilla'."

"I-I saw that too wh-while at the house!" Ethan's face warps, his lips quivering. "Wh-What was that about?"

Serene's vines pop out, shrugging. "No idea."

Ada blinks. "Yeah...He really was the mayor of all time, alright."

The Leafeon lowers her ears, sighing. "No kidding."

"So..." The teen caresses her chin. "I'm wondering: What kind of Spell did Conjure take from Herbert? We already know about Forest's Transmutation Spell."

Justin lifts his finger. "And then the other one at Cash Course where we heard Nickel talking to someone from Conjure about it." He rubs his chin. "Think it was the Emotion Spell?"

Ada snaps her fingers. "Yes, it was."

X tilts his head, eyeing up the boy. "Cash Course? Nickel? The heck are you guys on about?"

Delia gasps. "Wait, Mayor Nickel was conspiring with Team Conjure?"

"Yes." Ada sighs, eyeing X. "And uh, Cash Course is a criminal organization designed to earn Nickel as much money as possible. It tied with the crime rate issues going on in Majestic City, and led to poverty being worse than usual."

"Huh..." X nudges his chin. "I see, then."

Ada points at herself and Justin. "Thankfully Justin, Clinton, Ramon, and I managed to stop Nickel and his schemes, bringing peace to that city." She quirks her brow. "We didn't get celebrated for our accomplishments though, which is weird."

"That is weird when it involves hindering a whole city. Especially with crime issues getting... bad." X trails off, images of his mother hugging him while he's crying spawn into his mind. The weasel strokes his arm. *It reminds me of that time. I—* the images persist. *I'm trying to remember it, but—*

"I'm surprised you weren't aware of Majestic City's issues. Didn't you go there like mom, Merlin, and Serene did?" Justin says, eyeing down at the Buizel.

X blinks. "Hmm?" He shakes his head. "Nah, Ethan and I went through Avalon Forest and reached Serenity first."

Ethan shudders. "A-After many...*many* fights with some Nativus."

X glares at the Flareon. "And you kept screaming while I told you to RUN."

"EEK!" Ethan nuzzles Serene, shielding beneath her cloak. "O-Once again, sorry!"

The Buizel sighs, waving his paw. "No worries. It happens." He then smirks at Justin and Ada. "See? You two ain't the only ones going through crazy travels."

The two teens snort, Justin smirking back. "Sounds about right."

Merlin interjects, "But anyways: What if the Spell at Majestic was Teleportation and not Emotion?" His head tilts. "Could even be Illusion. Perhaps Time?" Shrugs. "Admittedly, Forest couldn't show us what these Spells look like because—"

"Coffee stains were all over the Spell pages?" Ada finishes.

Merlin points at her. "Yes, correct."

"Sounds about right." She shakes her head. "The only Spells we know are Transmutation and Emotion: The former looks red while the latter looks rainbow-like."

Justin tilts his head. "So wait, the rainbow book we saw that Jester fart took *is* the Emotion Spell???"

Ada nods. "Positive. I see no other thing Nickel was talking about when discussing his deal with Conjure."

"Makes sense."

The girl blinks. "You...*agree* with me?"

The boy blinks back. "...I wasn't supposed to???"

Ada shakes her head and hands. "No no, I mean. Cool that you agree with me there, but I genuinely didn't expect it considering our headbutts before."

"Dude." Justin bursts into laughter. "Look, I may not agree with you MOST of the time. But there are those tiny, *tiny* times where I think you're in the right for once." He grins. "This is one of those times."

Ada huffs. "Oh hush you."

Justin lifts his arms up, shaking his head. "Cut me some slack, fam!"

Everyone laughs at the two banters, smiles spreading across.

X then says, "Wait, who's Jester? And is his last name really 'fart'???"

Justin slams his hands down. "Bruh, I WISHED that was his last name. Would make it really easy to poke fun of that clown." He snorts. "But anywho, he's the commander of Team Conjure or whatevs. He has voice cracks issues and thinks he's all that when his Magic move is literally named 'Pixie Flush'."

"Pi...*Pixie Flush*?" X chuckles. "Dude, how can someone think of a worse Magic name than Enchantment Claws!?"

"Ayo, that's what I said!"

The two laugh as Ada pouts. "I'm RIGHT here, you know?"

The two boys eye Ada, X covering his muzzles during snickering. "Our bad, fam," Justin says.

Soon, silence takes over: The group either staring at each other, the ceilings, or the floor. Serene pokes her vines together while Ethan sighs, Merlin twirling his brown staff. X strokes his arm, looking away. He shakes his head, gazing down.

"H-Hey, um—" Justin and Ada look at the Buizel, the orange weasel shrugging. "I'm...sorry."

"Hmm?" the two say.

"...For hurting Ramon." Sighing, X stares off into guilt. "I thought he was holding you two hostage with those shadows—the scary look in his eyes and everything." He looks at the teens, shaking his head. "I was really worried about you two after not seeing you for a while."

"I see." Ada nods. "It's alrig—" her and Justin gasp. "Wait, where's Ramon!?"

Justin looks around. "I ain't seeing him around, either. Shit, we gotta go find him." Justin and Ada move forward, a jolt of agony piercing them as they whimper. "Crap!"

Both wrap their arms around themselves, gnashing their teeth. Delia pats Justin's shoulder as the other three usher to Ada's aid, X eyeing at the boy with concerns.

"You two need to relax," Delia says. "The medics recently extracted the Weakener out of you. You can't move right now."

The teens pout. "But we need to see him, yo! I don't know if he's aight!"

"Yes..." Ada holds her hands together, pressing them to her chest. "I hope nothing bad happens to him."

Serene lifts her paw. "Ramon's at Noctis' house. He wanted to stay with him, for some reason."

Justin and Ada flinch. "Noctis?" the two say, frowning.

Serene tilts her head. "Yes?"

The teens eye each other, nodding before moving.

"We got to go. Now." Ada grunts, moving pausing.

X tilts his head, sliding off of Justin to sit on the bed. "Why?"

"In case Noctis harms him, dawg." Justin grits his teeth and grunts, stopping.

"Huh?" Merlin adjusts his hat. "Why would Noctis hurt Ramon?"

Ada glares at the teen. "He's a friend of someone named Travis, who tried to kill Ramon over the Prospective Institute incident."

X shakes his head. "Whoa whoa whoa, wait wait. I'm lost here: Prospective Institute? The destroyed facility Merlin saw from the newspaper?"

"Yes."

The Buizel tilts his head. "And apparently this Ramon guy has something to do with it and that's why he wants Ramon dead?"

"Yep, fam."

X's maw drops, eyeing everyone else: They all shrug and raise their brows with the same confusion. "I—" X taps his head. "What's going on?"

Ada and Justin look at each other for a brief moment, sighing. They close their eyes, taking deep breaths, before opening them.

Ada smacks her hands together. "Okay. There's a lot to unpack here so...strap in."

Ada and Justin go over the Prospective Institute situation: How Ramon escapes the abandoned facility, how Travis is this Lucario who's willing to kill him for Dr. Yvonne's death, how Ramon doesn't even *remember* causing the scientist's death, how Project Transvian is formed because of Noctis regretting his evolution, and so much more. The five gaze at each other from such rigorous information, horror plastering.

"Oh dear..." Delia's hand nudges her lips. "That's...a lot to take in."

Justin folds his arms. "It's some crazy shit aight, fam."

Merlin frowns, stroking his staff. "My sympathies for this Travis guy, but he shouldn't harm Ramon over this."

X and Serene nod. "Yeah. The guy sounds like a prick for assuming an amnesiac would remain there after destroying the building." The Buizel shakes his head. "What kind of logic is that, anyways?"

Ada throws her arms up. "I know, right!?"

"That's why Ada and I do our best to help him because the Ramon we know now *ain't* the Ramon that Travis bozo is describing." Justin sighs.

Ada nods. "Agreed: He means you no harm, everyone." Sighs. "I feel like he couldn't even hurt a Joltik, for instance."

X scratches the back of his head nervously. "I...can confirm that claim: He hasn't attacked me at all during our fight."

"I see." Ada folds her arms. "About Noctis though, how did you all meet him? And—" she whimpers. "Is he going to hurt Ramon?"

Delia holds her hands together. "We were roaming around Glory Pride City with nowhere to live. And then some criminals attacked us during a crime scene at the city's square." She sighs in relief. "Luckily, Noctis was there to save us." The woman taps her chin, eyeing up. "Maybe that explains what that crook earlier said about getting payback on Noctis."

"Eh???" Justin and Ada say in perplexion.

Delia shakes her head. "Earlier, we were fighting against some crooks trashing Noctis' place and almost killing those two." She points at Serene and Ethan, the Flareon trembling beneath the cloak. "If it weren't for Kellie and their Roserade friend saving us, we would've been in a lot more trouble. Possibly dead, too."

The teens clench their teeth, stroking their sheets.

"Yikes." Justin shrugs.

"I...guessed you all have been through a lot since our unconsciousness," Ada concludes.

"Yeah." Delia nods. "Back to how we met Noctis, I asked him if we could stay at his place and he said yes." She clasps her hands together, smiling. "So to answer your question earlier: I'm sure Noctis wouldn't hurt Ramon since even if he knows about his origin." Delia then frowns. "From what you two are telling us, Noctis sounds more reasonable compared to his revenge hungry Travis friend."

"Tell me about it," Justin and Ada say, sighing.

Ada nods. "Regardless, that's a relief to hear that Noctis won't harm him."

"Yeah, Mom." Justin smiles. "Thanks."

The woman nods. "Mhm." She then leans forward, poking her fingers together. "Sooo, have you two been mingling more since our separation?" Smug writes all over Delia's face as the two teens blush, shaking their heads.

"Wh-What!? Nah, man!"

Ada waves her hands. "Absolutely NOT!" She folds her arms. "Wh-Why does everyone insist that he and I have a thing for each other?"

Delia giggles, the others following suit. "Because it's funny and cute to see you two's reactions."

X raises his paw. "Besides, there's some truth to it, too!" Snickers.

Ada reddens further. "W-Well what about you and Serene!? CLEARLY there's something going on between you two with the amount of times you like to mess with her!" she scoffs.

Serene and X casually look at each other: Blank gazes. And then a head shake follows.

"Nope: She's not my type."

"I agreed." Serene lifts her vine, closing her eyes. "I'm not into guys."

X quirks his brow. "That's not how you acted earlier when I was hurt: You legit hug me and everything, dude."

The Leafeon rolls her eyes. "X, that's because you're my *friend*. Of course I'll be worried sick enough to hug you like any friend would after seeing them get hurt!"

"Ah." X caresses his muzzle. "Fair point."

Merlin chimes in, "Wait, you're not into guys, Serene?" The Leafeon nods, the boy gasping. "Oooh. That explains why you were eyeing that Alice girl at the village before."

Ada points at Merlin. "You mean the Mienshao that owns that cosmetic shop?"

"Mhm."

"Sweet! She sometimes has a human friend with her who's, um, admittedly cute." Ada giggles behind her hand, blushing. "I think her name was Romilda. She's pretty talkative compared to Alice."

“Y-Yeah.” Serene blushes as well, looking away. “I-I hope Alice’s doing okay. And Romilda, too.” She sighs. “I got my nail file thanks to them.”

X smirks. “Well at least that explains your obsession with sharpening your toenails.”

Serene snaps a glare at X, reddening further. “Shhh.”

Justin sighs. “Honestly fam: I hope *everyone* from the village is alright.”

Delia folds her arms. “It’s tough times for us all, yeah.” Smiles. “All we can do is hope for the best as we keep moving forward.”

“Yeah...”

Silence rises for a brief moment. Until...

“U-Ugh...” Mesmeren groans along with the other four, shifting around.

Everyone eyes them, the five opening their eyes and lifting forward. Courtney caresses her head, sighing.

“Man, that damn Weakener knocked my ass out good...” The Lopunny blinks, eyeing Delia and the others. She squints. “Um, who are y’all?” Sylock glares as well, attempting to get up before groaning. Courtney looks at him, sighing. “Don’t strain yerself, Sy.”

Sylock gasps. “*Wait, where’s our—*” he grunts. “*Swords!?*”

“Ah shoot, you’re right. Where are...” The rabbit looks to the side: Her familiar silver sword sitting beside her bed. “Okay, I found my sword. Whereabout yours’?” Sylock looks beside his bed: Same ordeal. He sighs, lifting his thumb. Courtney sighs as well. “Good to know.”

Mesmeren looks to her side: Her lips quivering, her body trembling. “O-Oh no...” She covers herself. “*People*. E-Everywhere...”

X looks to his left, raising his brow. “Uh?”

The Drowzee whines. “Wh-Where’s Ramon? Is he okay!?”

Ethan shivers, snuggling close to Serene. “MEEP!”

Ada looks over at the tapir, then at the canine—then back to the tapir. Her hand lifts. “Relax, you two. Everything’s fine.” Nods. “Ramon’s at Noctis’ home safe and sound.”

“N-Noctis? You mean—” Mesmeren warps into anxiousness, feeling as though her eyes are shrinking. “T-The guy Travis wanted to *avenge*!”

“What the Binnacle!?” Coleo exclaims, everyone eyeing Ada.

Ada blinks rapidly. “Oookay then.” She stares off. “I...see that things are starting to get a little chaotic.”

“Aight.” Justin slaps his hands together. “Nutshell version: Noctis’ harmless, Travis’ an ass, and the institute incident wasn’t caused by a fox with no memories. Y’all got that?”

The confused five blink: Silence exchanging between them. The Lopunny shakes her head, rubbing her forehead. “Gotcha, then. I’ll take your word about this Noctis guy being harmless. I’m just...exhausted, ya know?”

Justin’s hands collapse, the boy groaning. “Aren’t we all?”

A quiet snort comes from Serene before the rest laugh, too. Everyone but Mesmeren, Ethan, and Sylock chuckles: The former two shake nonstop at so many individuals in front of them while the latter glares cautiously at the rest of Justin’s friends.

Ada sighs, her elbows resting. “So, uh, with that out of the way: Why don’t you introduce yourselves to our old friends?” She eyes Courtney and co.

Roan bounces up. “Oh certainly—OW!” He rubs his back, whimpering. “Ugh, I’m all hurt.”

“It’s the effects of the Weaker.” Serene laughs in an awkward manner. “I’d...suggest you don’t jump around too much.”

The Axew nods. “Will do!” After he and the others introduce themselves, with Mesmeren and Sylock struggling to do so at first, Roan smiles. “A pleasure meeting you, Justin’s mother and his friends!” He claps his hands together. “Oh this is pleasant! Very pleasant, alright!”

“And why’s that, lad?” Coleo asks.

Roan waves his arms out, eyeing Justin and Ada. “These two finally met their goals at reuniting with their beloved friends and family at long last!” Squeals. “I’m so happy for them!”

The teens look at Roan for a moment before eyeing their old friends, smiling. “Thanks, man. I’m happy to see our old buddies as wel—” Justin flinches, snapping his fingers. “Wait. Someone’s missing.”

“Who?” Courtney tilts her head. “Ramon?”

“Nah, fam. I’m talkin’ bout someone who we knew for a long while.” Justin frowns. “Terran.”

Ada looks down. “My...father isn’t here, either.” Her hand lays underneath her chin. “I wonder where he and Terran are.” Gasps, a smile spreading across. “Perhaps they’re at Noctis’ house with Ramon, too?”

Merlin looks down, shaking his head. “I only found Mrs. Phoenix and Serene before we met X and Ethan at Serenity.” Sighs. “There...was no sign of Terran nor Mr. Cheng along our travels, unfortunately.”

Justin and Ada droop their eyes with melancholy. “Dang, that sucks man.” The dark skin boy sighs, stroking his white shirt.

Ada caresses her arm. “Very much so.” She whimpers. “I...was hoping to see my father again.” Sighing, she closes her eyes.

Justin looks at her, lifting his thumb. “Hey, man: We’ll find Mr. Cheng, sooner or later. Just like how we found our friends after traveling for so long.” He smiles.

Ada looks back. “I...” A small smile forms. “I suppose so. Yeah.”

Roan nods. “I believe in your reunion with your father, Ada ma’am!” His hands curl into fists. “Don’t give up! As Justin stated, you two have found your friends. Maybe not all of them, but at the very least: You’ve found *some*!” Lifting his hands, he closes his eyes and smiles. “See it as an accomplished progress rather than a shameful burden!”

Justin snaps his fingers at the Axew, his usual finger guns on display. “Now THAT’S the positivity I’m talking about, fam.”

The Axew giggles. “Thank my mentor for giving me some helpful advice during our travels.”

Ada’s smile grows even further, nodding. “Yes, you two are right: That is a good way of seeing things. Thank you.”

The two smile back before Justin looks at X’s eyes, the black scleras ringing around the orange irises.

“Eh?”

X looks around for a bit, lifting his brow. “...What?”

“Your eyes, dawg: I don’t remember them looking like that.” Justin scratches the side of his head.

Delia tilts her head. "Come to think of it, I've been meaning to ask you that too, X."

"Same," Serene follows.

"Oh." The Buizel shrugs. "I have no clue why they look different, too. It just...*happens*, I guess."

"Hmm..." Ada caresses her chin. "Reminds me of Ramon's eyes looking like this, too."

Courtney's hands rest on her hips. "Must be X using his Rune," she answers. "Similar to Ramon's case, come to think of it."

Delia, X, Merlin, Serene, and Ethan all eye the rabbit. "What?" they say, perplexion everywhere.

"Um, the heck is Rune???" X tilts his head.

Courtney lifts her finger. "Glad that ya asked: It's this hidden power specific kinds of Pokémon have. By kinds, I mean those who are Intellicates or Transvians, the latter being extinct."

"Oooh. Sounds kickass!" X smirks. "Didn't know Intellicates like me even have one."

"Understandable: Most Intellicates go on with their lives without bein' aware of it."

Merlin nods. "Interesting, interesting. Reminds me of the Sceptile Gym Leader I've mentioned using some kind of unknown power." He pouts. "I wasn't sure *how* to describe it exactly though since the newspapers are always gray colored..."

X squints. "Hence why no one likes them," he mumbles.

"Hey, I heard that!" The light skin boy puffs his cheeks. "Anyways, I think whatever power I saw her use on her opponent *could* be her Rune. Because it doesn't look like any sort of Grass nor Pokémon move at all."

"Oh?" Courtney taps her chin. "Interesting. I guess she has that there Rune, maybe."

Justin eyes the Buizel. "Man, I had a feeling he'd have it considering the eye color. But I had to ask, just in case."

X taps his snout. "I did hear an unknown voice saying 'Dark Tendrils' while I was attacking Ramon. I even formed these tentacles as it happened." The Buizel shakes his head quickly. "Which by the way, again I'm sorry about doing that! Was only trying to help Justin and Ada..."

Courtney waves her hand. "You're good: I appreciate the apology and honesty." Smiles. "And hearin' you say 'unknown voice' further confirms that you're using Rune. Since that's the very thing folks will hear when usin' Rune for the first time."

X's eyes widen with glee. "COOOOL!" X hops up and down. "I've used something awesome this whole time, and I didn't know what it was until now!"

"Heh." Courtney frowns. "Just be careful usin' it, though: You *can* die if you use it too much."

X gnashes his teeth, shock spreading throughout. "Yeesh!" His head shakes. "Now that's *NOT* cool!"

Justin snaps his fingers. "Yo, I just remember something: The History of Wizlore."

X tilts his head. "What about it?"

The boy frowns. "It involved my ancestor, Pauline Phoenix."

"Oh yeah: Ethan, Serene, Merlin, Mrs. Phoenix, and I were at Forest listening to the whole backstory and everything, too!"

Justin turns towards his mother, sternness painting him. "I've learned about her, Mom: How she ended The Dne War and saved Wizlore. Her and her partner, Vincent Silver, did." The boy forms a fist. "They were the ones who found this region, discovering Intellicates, Transvians, and most importantly: Magic type itself."

Delia nods. "Yes. I was...shocked to learn about my distant ancestor, too." Her hand presses her chest. "Wasn't even aware of Pauline until Clinton told me about her."

"I mean, we have been living our whole lives in one secluded village so...I get it." Justin scratches the back of his head. "Still feel bad that I didn't know about her, especially when she saved the whole region let alone the world too, man."

Delia laughs softly. "I feel that, son."

"Bette' late than neve', am I right buckos?" Coleo enlightens.

Now Justin is the one laughing softly, he and Delia nodding at the Blipbug. "I guess you're right." Delia then gasps. "Oh! Which reminds me, Son..." Her finger lifts. "Let's walk to the Glory Pride's square together: There's something I wanted to show you."

"Eh?" Justin raises his brow with intrigue. "What is it?"

"It's a surprise, sweetie. Your friends can join, too." Delia closes her eyes, smiling. "I think you'll like it."

X grins. "Oh I know what you're talking about, Mrs. Phoenix: The sta—"

“SHHH! Don’t ruin the surprise now, Xexy,” Delia says, her finger to her lips.

The Buizel puts his paws up. “Alright alright! I’ll keep my mouth shut!” *Also, ‘Xexy’??? What.*

Justin blinks. “A...ight then.” Shrugs. “We’ll do it later though since I’m still recovering from this stupid Weakener.” Justin pouts, his arms folding. “We...should be better by then, right?”

Delia lays her finger to her chin, gazing up. “I believe so.” Sighs. “The nurse didn’t tell us *when* you’ll be fully ready to leave. I should’ve asked that myself, whoops.”

Merlin glares. *Were they THAT much in the rush to not tell us?*

“Regardless, she told us you, Ada, and the others have gotten the Weakener out of your systems. So I guess you’ll have to rest for a bit until your bodies feel good, again.”

Justin nods. “Gotcha.”

. . .

The sun settles itself, the rays of light barely lighting through the side windows. Everyone is looking at Justin and X, the two flailing their arms around in exaggeration.

“So I said to this guy, ‘Wanna *Beedrill* with me’ and the dude looked at me with disturbance before outright saying ‘Bro, I don’t swing that way.’” X snorts, covering his stomach. “The interaction was priceless!”

Delia gasps, snickering. “Oh that’s so inappropriate, X!”

Serene giggles, covering her maw with her paw. “Your antics never fails to amuse me, X.”

Merlin raises his hand. “I second that!”

Justin chuckles. “Good bit, dude.” He snaps his fingers. “Oh shoot, I just thought of a joke myself. Peep this: What do we use to turn the TV on? A *Rotomote* controller!”

X slaps his knee. “No way you just said that, bro!”

Mesmeren giggles to herself. “Can’t believe that actually got me...” she says quietly, covering her maw.

Everyone bursts into laughter except for Sylock, Ada, Ethan, and Coleo, the latter two tilting their heads while Ada shakes her head, smiling.

“Oh Justin, that joke was really bad, but I’ll let you slide there.” The girl sighs.

“I...don’t get it, lad.” Coleo quirks his brow.

Sylock squints at the boy. *Wow. He actually got the whole squad laughing here.* Sighs. *Unfortunate.*

Justin waves his hand, smirking. “I know, I know: My jokes are too much for you to *Bewear.*”

“STOP! MY LUNGS!” X wheezes, falling on the ground and hitting the floor. Serene squints at the Buizel, lifting her brow.

“Oh the pun wasn’t *that* funny, X,” she says, rolling her eyes.

Justin stretches his arms out, yawning. “Man, do I feel real energetic or what.” He eyes his mother. “Actually, I think I’m ready to go.” The boy wiggles his fingers. “I’m feeling all healed up and everything.”

“Same here,” Ada follows.

Courtney and Sylock nod. “We’re right behind ya!”

“I-I’m feeling better, too...” Mesmeren pokes her fingers together.

Roan jumps up and down on his bed: Soaring pain lacking his presence. “Yep! I’m as good as good can be!” The Axew snickers.

Coleo blinks. “What the lad said, argh.”

Delia stands, holding her hands together. “Then it settles!” She points towards the window at the buildings afar. “Next stop: Glory Pride’s square!”

Merlin lifts his finger, smiling. “Can’t wait to admire the beautiful sky there.”

Serene perks up, her tail wagging. “Same!”

“I’ll let the nurses know that you seven are good to go.” Delia walks towards the double-doors, everyone eyeing her with enthusiasm.

. . .

Everyone walks along the sidewalk, descending down a steep road. Buildings pass by the group, becoming bigger and bigger one after another. The Pikipeks soar into the orange sky, the sunrays depleting as the dark blues seep in.

Merlin gasps. "Oh dear, we better hurry!" He points at the sky. "The sunset is about to end soon!" Streetlights turn on after he says that.

Delia waves her hand, smiling. "No need to rush, Merlin. I'm sure the statues will still look gorgeous at night, too."

"Hello!" Roan waves at a couple passing by, his attention soon turning towards four other individuals. "Hello!" he says once more, a Wooper waving back with her tail before moving forward. Roan then waves at a driven car, smiling.

"So many people to say hi, too! And we haven't even gotten to the square yet!"

Coleo looks down, being on top of Roan. "Aren't ye the energe'ic lad, eh?"

The dragon giggles, covering his maw. "I just *love* people. Can't help myself."

Mesmeren and Ethan shiver, shielding themselves while behind the group. The two bump into each other and yelp, straying away immediately.

Courtney looks at them, smiling. "It'll be fine, y'all."

Mesmeren caresses her arms, nodding. "O-Okay..." Serene pats Ethan's back with her vine, the Flareon shakiness decreasing.

Everyone soon reaches the bottom, Delia folding her arms: Eyeing up.

"We're here!"

Justin, Ada, and the other five of their new friends widen their eyes. "Whoa..." they all say.

Many shops and businesses circulate the square along with the roaming crowds. And in the middle of it all are two gray, giant statues: One is a woman with short hair, the other is a man with long hair—Both hold their hands out as if using an attack. The woman has a smile on her face, spreading her legs in confidence. Meanwhile the man simply frowns, his legs together in judgement. At the very bottom of the statues lies a few Pokémon being in their own heroic poses as well.

Courtney smirks. "My golly, this looks awesome!" She points to the woman's smugness. "Loving the cocky pose Pauline is doing here!"

Merlin's hand nudges his chest. "Personally more of a fan of Mr. Silver's menacing gaze." He spreads his arms out. "I can *definitely* sense that he was serious about saving the world."

X points at Merlin. "Agreeing with the wizboy here: Vincent looks DOPE here."

Roan raises his arms. "I think they both look awesome!"

Sylock takes one good look at the statues before smirking, closing his eyes. *The kid isn't lying. Whoever designed these statues did a really good job.*

"Man, this is what you wanted to show us?" Justin eyes Delia, who sticks her tongue out playfully for a moment.

"Yep!" She closes her eyes, smiling. "Thought it'd be a pleasant surprise since I always wanted to see the statue of my ancestor."

"I see. Forest did mention something about that when I asked him where you went." The boy smirks at the statues, folding his arms. "Welp, that book wasn't lying: There really were two statues of my ancestor and Silver built here."

Ada nods. "Yeah, even after all these years."

Delia caresses her arm. "I can't believe Pauline would do something this daunting after discovering this region, let alone sacrificing herself."

"Yeah..." Justin scratches the back of his head. "Can't imagine myself in her shoes, fam: Being in charge of leading a whole resistance group against a *deity*." He looks at his mother. "She probably felt nervous during it, ya know?"

Delia nods. "No doubt about it." The sun fully goes down, the dark blues taking over. The woman strokes her chest. "Let's...hope the world doesn't have to deal with Dne anymore."

Merlin lays his hand beneath his chin. "Hmm..." The group looks at him.

"What is it, fam?"

"Team Conjure are out there *collecting* Spells." He stares at Justin and Ada. "If what Forest said is true, then...I'm afraid of the horrifying possibility Conjure can do when obtaining them all." His brows lower. "Including *reviving Dne*."

The cheerful admiration has turned into dreadful silences: Serene and X eye each other with worries, Courtney and Sylock frown at the boy, Mesmeren and Ethan's shakiness return stronger than ever, and everyone is uneasy overall.

Justin forms his fist, glaring off. "Yeah..."

Ada forms her fist, looking away. "Agreed..."

. . .

Ramon looks behind him, staring at the front door while Noctis is laughing his butt off at the TV. Two words come to he and Nomar's mind:

Gloria Falls.