

Chapter 18: The Truth and the Escape Part 1.

Cloyster Kingdom Arc.

Her breath exhales in a dreadful tone. Her eyes slowly open to see nothing but blurriness. Or as she would like to describe it as, 'waking up to another day in chaos'. These are no other than Iris' thoughts forming throughout her head as she hears a male voice telling her to wake up. "Ugh..." She says, gradually rubbing her eyes. She then looks up to see the voice coming from a Cloyster guard, her leaning against the wall sleepily. She notices about five other guards trying to wake the rest of the gang up as well, them opening the cells for the Pokemon. Two of them enter Mark's cell, two of the others enter Anna's cell, and the fifth guard enters Trent's cell.

While paying attention to everything, she notices that something's not right about the crew, especially Anna, Mark, and Claire. "Hmm?" She looks at them curiously, fully becoming awake now. Anna and Mark look tired, their eyes being half-closed while Claire seems infuriated and growls at the guards.

"Where's mistress!?" The Shinx shouts, demanding them to answer. Anna and Mark groan in a tired yet gloomy manner.

"Yeah...Where's Natalie?" Mark asks in a sorrow tone, almost as if his body has been completely drained. One of the guards looks at him and shakes his head.

"If you're referring to the Zorua, she'd probably escaped while the guards were after her." The guard says.

Claire's eyes widen and glance at the guard. "Escaped!? Mistress didn't escape! She's still here!" Claire yells, scratching the ground rapidly.

Ashen raises his brow at the Shinx. "Uh...?" He says, confused by the Shinx's action.

"I can sense her presence here! And she's in trouble!" Claire scratches the ground more quickly as the gang gasps.

"I-In trouble!?" Mark asks, slowly beginning to feel paranoid.

"Yes! Her presence doesn't feel close to good *at all*! So I have to go rescue her!" Claire then tries to dash out of the cell.

"What the!? Hey!" The first guard says before he and the second guard get in Claire's way, preventing her from escaping. "We lead you out. Not you, you crazy 'presence-sensing' Shinx."

“Grr. GAH!” Claire launches up in the air and claws at the first guard’s face, leading him to yelp in pain before landing onto the ground. “I frankly don’t care, you annoying mortals!” She then takes off running. “MISTRESS!”

The first guard looks down at the ground, noticing blood landing onto it. Three scratch marks appear on his face as he grits his teeth in anger. “Grr. That little rascal of a Shinx!” The guard yells, immediately turning around and chasing after the Shinx. The second guard follows and the two slam Claire to the ground, pinning her down.

Claire whimpers and struggles to get out of their grasp. “Let me go right now!”

“No!” The second guard says before he and the first guard throw Claire back into the cell. Claire’s back hits against the wall, causing her to gasp.

“Claire!” Anna shouts, her eyes becoming wide open in terror. She tries to escape herself but the guards in her cell prevent her from doing so. She grits her teeth into frustration. *D-Dammit.*

The second guard looks at the first, his face beginning to form an uncomfortable expression. “Holy crap!” He says, sweatdropping. The first guard looks back, pinning Claire against the wall with his spear.

“What?” The first asks.

“U-Um, your face...Seems like that Shinx must had cut it real deep.”

The second is right about the face being cut deep: The three scratch marks are all lined up beside each other symmetrically, blood dripping down quickly from each one of them and lands onto the ground. The first notices this by looking at the ground and seeing blood forming into a small red pond. The guard then looks at Claire, glancing at her. “Say...before we take them outside, let’s beat the crap out of this Shinx.”

The second guard nods. “Alright.”

The first guard smacks Claire with his spear, having her fall onto the ground. “Gah!” Claire yelps before being hit by the second guard’s spear. The spear cuts the side of her body, leaving her to screech in pain. This leads to the guards repeatedly hitting her with their Weapon Mischiefs.

“Hey! Stop hurting her!” Mark shouts, running towards the second guard and hitting him with his fist.

Due to having a outer shell, the guard isn’t harmed by the punches but more so feels annoyed. He glances at the Riolu. “Stay out of the way or you’ll be next!” The guard exclaims before pushing the Riolu against the bars harshly. Mark slams against them, whimpering from the amount of pain he feels from hitting the iron.

“MARK!” Anna yells, frustration and fear streaming throughout her body. Ashen looks at the two guards in front of him and tries pushing through them.

“Move out of the way!” Ashen exclaims, trying to shove the two guards aside.

“Like hell we would!” The third guard says, pushing Ashen back with his spear. Soon, the whole gang tries to force their way out: Iris pushes the guard in front of her aside, Trent grabs one guard’s shell and pins him against the wall, and Anna, Ashen and Lucas try shoving against the guards as well.

Norah and Brook back away from the violence going on. “Get behind us, Azure dear.” Norah tells her daughter as the Shellder nods and gets behind the two Cloysters. The guards then decide to pin everyone against the wall with their spears. The gang are restrained from the Mischiefs, all grunting during so.

Iris looks at Claire’s cell and sees her still being hit by the spears, gritting her teeth into frustration. *Shit...If what Claire said about Natalie is true, then we really need to go find her and get out as fast as possible. This...* She stares in terror at the menacing swings from the spears the guards are giving to Claire. *IS GOING TOO FAR!*

. . .

Broad daylight shines at the guards and the prisoners within the Zero Forest. The guards continue patrolling the area while the prisoners are on the hunt for rare items. Hidden in the bushes nearing the dark part of the forest are Cerise, Jimmy and Zeke. The three poke their heads out of the bush and scan around the area, being aware of its surroundings. They see a pathway containing two guards roaming by one tree, one commanding the prisoner by the tree furthest from the first, and another two chatting with each other in the middle.

Cerise looks at Jimmy and Zeke, tilting his head slightly. “Despite us stealthing our way through here, we may attract attention as soon as we’ve reached the exit.” He says firmly. “Get ready to run for the castle when that happens.”

Jimmy and Zeke nod. “Got it.” They both say, turning their attention towards the guards. Cerise looks at the guards as well, concentrating on the two that are roaming. Without warning, he dashes towards the two, leaving Jimmy and Zeke to shield their faces from the strong winds generated by his speed.

“Whoa!” Jimmy says, noticing the numerous of leafs flinging off from the bush thanks to Cerise. The two then see the canine launching up in the air and collides the guards against each other with his paws. The guards hit against their inner shells hard enough to knock themselves out, falling to the ground during the process. Cerise lands onto the ground and looks at the two Pokemon behind him, tilting his head towards the guard commanding the prisoner.

The two look at the Cloyster guard whipping the prisoner furiously with his brown whip, rage spreading throughout his face. "I SAID KEEP GOING!" The guard shouts, the prisoner whimpering to the amount of pain she has to endure. Jimmy and Zeke look at each other, nod and run towards the guard. The guard stops whipping and sees the two. "Huh?" Before he could do anything else, Jimmy punches the side of the guard's shell, causing it to crack. The guard then crashes against the tree and gets hit by a multicolored beam, causing the tree to break and collapse onto him. The guard is knocked out.

Jimmy sees the beam attack and blinks curiously, looking beside him to see Zeke's horn stop forming a multicolored orb at its tip: Aurora Beam. Zeke smirks at the Heracross before floating towards the prisoner. The female Cloyster weakly looks up at Zeke, backing away slowly in fear. "Don't worry, lady. We're not guards." Zeke says confidently, smiling at the prisoner to let her know that she's okay. The prisoner blinks and looks at Zeke and Jimmy, still unsure if she should trust them.

"If we were real guards, we wouldn't be disobeying the king's orders by doing this." Jimmy elaborates, stretching his arms. The prisoner continues staring at them for a moment before she nods and floats close to the two. "That's more like it! Now stick close to us, fellow citizen. We'll get you out of here, alright?" Jimmy smiles at the prisoner. The prisoner nods quietly. Zeke and Jimmy then notice Cerise dashing past them immediately. "Oh right! Let's go!"

The three follow the canine, seeing the two middle road guards up ahead. "By the way, did you hear something crashing earlier?" The first guard asks the second. The second shrugs, having some toothpick in his mouth.

"Nah, must be our imagination or something." The second answers.

"Oh. Well back to what I was saying: Mat is the greatest senator ever! Like, he has more humor than Sheer, knows how to take it easy in serious situations, and didn't I mention his brilliant humor?" The guard squeals a bit, having the second raising his brow at him. "I just wish to be as humorous and amazing as he is!"

"Huh. Someone is being quite the fanboy of Senator Mat."

"I know! He's just that amazing to me, dude!" The first guard sighs in relief before blinking in confusion. "Hmm?"

"What is it?" The second looks at the first in a concerning manner.

"Is it me or am I hearing fast footsteps approaching u--"

The Cloyster is then interrupted by Cerise's Dragon Pulse, the multicolored-dragon shaped beam causing the Cloyster and the second to get blown away by the attack. "Ah!" Both of them scream, the two landing into the bushes separately.

"Sorry fellas. Got friends to save here." Cerise says calmly as he keeps running within a fast pace.

Jimmy and Zeke pant heavily while following the canine. "Wait for us, dude!" Zeke shouts, trying to catch up with Cerise. "Also, that attack was pretty cool!" The Cloyster smiles at Cerise.

Cerise nods. "Thanks." He says before continuing to run. He soon comes across a bunch of trees and bushes leading up to the wide area of the forest. He stops and hides behind a tree, seeing about two guards patrolling the black gate within the open area. He also sees about three more roaming around the area as well. Jimmy, Zeke and the prisoner manage to catch up with Cerise. Cerise turns to look at them, having his brow raised at the prisoner.

"She's harmless. No worries." Zeke says, the prisoner clinging close to him.

"Hmm. Alright then." Cerise nods before turning his attention towards the guards, glancing at the gate. "We're at the gate so you two remember what I told you, right?"

"Yeah. Head for the castle, right?"

"Exactly." Cerise then dashes out in the opening, heading towards the gate as the three Pokemon follow along.

One of the guards stops within his tracks, seeing the four Pokemon heading into his direction. "What the--" He is then interrupted by Cerise's Dragon Pulse, him and the other two guards being blown back by the Dragon type attack. After the three land on the ground, far from the four Pokemon, the two guards by the gate wield out their spears instantly. Cerise glances at the two, his body beginning to be surrounded by light-green outline as he runs faster than before: Extreme Speed.

The two guards try to block the pathway for Cerise but the canine bursts through them, causing the two to fly off to the side and crash into the bushes. He also breaks through the gate, having it spread wide open. Jimmy and the other two have their eyes widened at the impact, with Zeke being the only one having his jaw drop. "Holy crud, that was amazing!" Zeke says in a surprised tone. He looks at Jimmy, tapping on his shoulder constantly. "Did you see what your friend did? He just rammed right into those two guards like they were curtains and kept on running!" The Cloyster chuckles. "And I thought his other attack was cool. This one takes the cake by a long shot."

Jimmy blinks at the dashing canine, tilting his head a bit. "Huh...with the amount of speed Cerise used to blow those guys away, that must be Extreme Speed." Jimmy says, following the canine

along with the other two. "In fact, the move he used on the other guards before was Dragon Pulse..." *Hmm...*

"I believe the noises are coming from the gate!" A male voice shouts, seeming to be coming from afar.

Zeke hears the voice and yelps. "YIKES! The guards are heading this way! Let's pick up the pace, you two!"

Jimmy looks at Zeke and nods, him and the two Pokemon exiting out of the Zero Forest. The three run on the linear pathway for a moment until they see Cerise sitting there, staring up at the white castle. The three head towards him, the canine continues to stare at the castle as he speaks. "You can let the prisoner go here. I already checked Ster Town's gate and no guards are guarding it as of yet." Cerise says in a calm manner.

Zeke looks at the prisoner and nods. "Gotcha, cool dude." Zeke says, guiding the female Cloyster on another pathway. "Follow me, lady. I'll lead you to safety." The Cloyster nods softly and follows the male Cloyster. While that happens, Jimmy gets besides Cerise and stares at the castle.

"Say Cerise, I saw you used two Pokemon moves earlier." Jimmy says to the canine.

Cerise slightly looks at the Heracross. "Yes? What about them?"

"Well I noticed that you are using those moves in general...meaning that you are indeed a Pokemon. Right?" The Heracross has his eyes turn to Cerise.

Cerise becomes quiet for a moment, lifting his paw up and looking at it. "Yeah...at least I'm aware of that now."

"Hmm, the question is though," Jimmy puts his nail against his chin, thinking. "Why couldn't you use these moves before when you were in that blob appearance?"

Cerise looks up at the castle in surprise. "Huh. That's an interesting question, Jimmy: During the fight with the Grant Crusaders, I couldn't defend myself while in that appearance. I'm not exactly sure why. I just had a feeling that I couldn't...And when I changed into this canine-like...form, I should say?" Cerise closes his eyes. "It's like I suddenly remembered how to use my Pokemon moves, as you so called it."

"I see." Jimmy takes his eyes back onto the castle as Zeke returns back to the two.

"Anyway, let's go save Iris and the others." Cerise suggests.

Jimmy nods. "Right."

The three then head off on a road towards the castle with Cerise being the lead. The canine glances at the castle while thinking, *What matters most, however, is me finding out who I am after all of this is over.*

. . .

Inside of the castle is a hallway containing Mat, Sheer and Cocoon having a conversation with each other. Mat and Sheer are besides the king: Mat on the right and Sheer on the left. They pass by some decorations and Cloyster portraits during the chatting.

"I mean, your highness, the future of this kingdom could go downhill because of the changes you made here." Mat says in a worried tone.

Cocoon looks at Mat. "Well so far, no one in town seems to be making that complaint to me. Therefore, everyone is okay with the changes, right?" Cocoon replies calmly.

Mat shakes his head. "I wouldn't exactly think that, honestly. Because that likely means they're *afraid* to tell you the complaints due to the amount of folks you tossed in prison and executed. Admittedly, the 10 folks that got executed were bad Pokemon in general. But the folks beyond those numbers...have questionable executions. If even, close to not being right either." Mat shrugs.

The king sighs. "Those folks did bad deeds in my kingdom. They deserved to be punished. Rather through death or imprisonment..." Cocoon blinks, stopping for a moment to look up confusedly. "Though, imprisonment does sorta count as death, huh?" Cocoon shrugs and continues floating. "You understand what I'm trying to convey."

"I mean, those 20 others were executed for going against your strict and unnecessary rules, sir. They don't deserve that punishment because...it is true." Cocoon glances at the Cloyster as he continue speaking. "These rules harmed your citizens and their environment. Just take a look at Cloy Town, for an example."

Sheer then jumps into the conversation. "I'm sorry but I would like to disagree with you on that, Senator Mat." Sheer says humbly. "Those folks that the king executed deserved to be punished because of them disobeying simple rules. And also of them being jealous of the king."

Cocoon nods. "Precisely, Sheer."

"And about Cloy Town, don't they have an mayor patrolling that town or something?"

Mat looks at the two, raising his brows at them with a 'What the heck?' expression. "What?" He says confusedly. "Firstly, those rules aren't anywhere *close* to being simple. Secondly, I never said anything about the executed folks being jealous of the king. Nor the folks who are alive,

too. And lastly, *there's no mayor patrolling Cloy Town*. Mainly due to the king watching over both it and Ster Town!"

Cocoon tilts his head at Mat curiously. "Really?"

Mat sweatdrops while giving him another 'what the heck' look. "Yes! You're the ruler of both towns because they're a part of the Cloyster Kingdom, remember?"

"..." Cocoon remains quiet for a moment before coming into a realization. "Oooh right. Cloy Town. And you say the town isn't doing so well, right?"

Mat nods. "Yes."

"Well then, I'll fix that issue whenever I get the time to. Gonna lower the pricing range for the stores from two thousand and twenty-five pokedollars to two thousand and twenty-four in Cloy Town."

Mat frowns. "Are you insane? That doesn't help that town *at all*! You only decreased the pricing range by *one*, what difference does that make?!"

Sheer laughs humbly. "Why yes but it still counts as a difference, right?" Sheer says.

Mat glances at the large barbed Cloyster. "That's just *barely* a difference and you know it, 'Senator' *Sheer*! In fact, that might as well not be a difference considering how much the town is struggling already!"

"What would a joker like you even know about how to 'fix' the kingdom?"

Mat gets in front of Cocoon, facing up close to Sheer. "Who are you calling a joker, asshole?"

Sheer glares back at Mat. "You, you useless waste of a Senator. You always like to joke around and think that this job is nothing but fun and games." Sheer then leans closer to Mat, whispering. "Hence why you didn't receive the *King's Respect Badge*. You're nothing but a joke to him and everyone else."

Mat grits his teeth in anger, his eyes widening in pure rage. "Don't you *dare taunt me*!" Then he tries to swing his black spear at Sheer, who grins and dodges it. Mat then tries again and Sheer dodges once more. Mat repeats the swinging over and over while the king watches in shock.

"Hey hey now. No need for you to fight Senator Sheer, Senator Mat." Cocoon says worriedly. Mat continues to swing his spear at Sheer as the large barbed Cloyster laughs. The shiny Cloyster frowns and slams his staff towards the ground. "I demand you to stop this nonsense, now!" The two stop, taking their attention onto Cocoon. "Now then, I wanted to say that I'm doing the best I can to protect and secure this kingdom of mine."

The three soon comes across a big window at the end of the hallway. The window showcases a view of Ster Town from above, allowing them to see the town and the pathways as well. Cocoon floats in front of the two and stares down at the town with a stern look on his face, like a general commanding his troops to go into the enemy's base. "I know what I'm doing and I know what's right for the kingdom. Rest assured though, that everything is doing fine." Cocoon says before turning towards the two. "Alright?"

Mat blinks and becomes silent for a moment, staring back at the king with a raised brow. He then lets out a sigh and floats next to him, looking out of the window himself. "Yes sir." He says before shaking his head.

Sheer floats next to Cocoon as well. "Affirmative." Sheer replies with a smile. Then soon, the three direct their eyes down onto three figures heading to the castle. "What in the...?" Soon, the figures are no longer in their view due to that being as far as they can look down from the window. Sheer then looks at the two Cloysters. "Who in the world are they?"

"I...don't really know." Cocoon answers, feeling uneasy. "Something's not right after seeing those three."

After that, an explosion noise occurred from below the castle. The three become alerted by the explosion and look out of the window, seeing black smoke coming from the bottom of the castle. "What the heck was that!?" Mat shouts, eyes widening at the impact.

Cocoon shakes his head. "I don't know but I know that it doesn't sound good."

Soon, a male voice can be heard from behind the three. "King Cocoon!" The male voice shouts, catching the three's attention. They look to see a male guard panting heavily before eyeing at them. "My king, intruders are infiltrating the castle!"

Cocoon forms a stern look on his face while looking off to the side. "I see. Those intruders must be those three figures we saw just now." Cocoon says to himself. He then looks back at the guard. "Lead me towards the intruders."

"Yes, your highness!" The guard turns around and floats away. Cocoon, Mat and Sheer follow the Cloyster, Mat being close to the shiny Cloyster during so.

"What about me and Sheer, sir? Do we follow you, too?" Mat asks, being quite concerned about the situation.

Cocoon looks at Mat slightly. "You and Sheer go find Exo for me, please." Sheer hears the word 'Exo' and sweatdrops, anxiety beginning to form throughout his body as he looks at the two. "I haven't seen him around the castle since yesterday."

Mat looks up, thinking for a moment. "Yeah, you're right. He's probably sleeping in his room, dreaming about being on a date with some ladies or something." Mat chuckles.

"This is no time for jokes, Mat." Cocoon exclaims, seeing the guard turning to his right and heading downstairs.

"Y-Yeah..." Sheer agrees, his voice cracking shortly after.

Mat raises his brow at Sheer's voice crack. "Uh...sure, king." Mat says. Cocoon nods and follows the guard downstairs. Mat and Sheer remain in the hallway and look around. "Now then, time to find that silly Cloyster..." As Mat searches around, opening Exo's bedroom first, Sheer looks at the bedroom with a grim expression before floating off.

Meanwhile in the center of the castle, Jimmy punches a guard in front of him. The guard gets blown away by him and slams against the wall, knocked out. Cerise and Zeke are beside the Heracross as they look around their surroundings. Cerise takes his eyes towards the dining room entrance hallway and the stairs.

"More guards will be on their way here shortly." Cerise says firmly. He looks at the hallway that leads to the dungeon area, letting his leash point at that direction. "If I recall correctly, Iris and the others are imprisoned there, right?"

Jimmy looks at the direction and nods. "Yep. You pinpoint it exactly, my friend." Jimmy says in a heroic tone. He then puts his hands by his hips, looking up at the ceiling. "FEAR NOT, FELLOW COMPANIONS! THE HEROIC JIMSTER, THE TRANSFORMING CERISORY, AND THE SPARKLING ZEKSTON ARE HERE TO RESCUE YOU!"

Cerise and Zeke sweatdrop at what the Heracross said, slowly looking at him with an embarrassed expression. "Um, what???" Cerise says confusedly.

"Sparkling Zekston? Really? Is that's the best you can think of?" Zeke says, raising his brow at Jimmy.

"Heh heh heh..." Jimmy laughs nervously, scratching the back of his head. "At least the name I gave to myself is better than the name those folks in the Noctis Forest gave me: The Incredible Vermin."

Zeke blinks in surprise. "What!? Incredible Vermin sounds miles better."

Jimmy whines. "But that's an insult to Bug types! The word 'Vermin', I meant."

"Well replace the word 'Heroic' with 'Incredible' for Jimster then, at least."

Cerise sighs. "Guys, this is no time to be chatting about nicknames. Let's go help the others, please." Cerise says calmly.

Jimmy nods and says, "Right.". Then the three head off into the hallway, moving as fast as they possibly can. As they leave the center, a bunch of guards appear from the other hallway and the stairs.

"Huh? Where did the intruders go?" One of the guard asks.

The other guard shrugs. "I don't know. We should spread out to go find them, if that's the case." The other guard says. All of the guards nod at each other and go in separate directions: Some go into the hallway where they just came from, some go into the hallway Cerise and the others went down.

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Back at the dungeon area, the two guards in Claire's cell stop hitting her with their spears. The crew all watch from their cells in terror, speechless to see their friend getting beaten so badly. "Phew...that's enough of teaching this Shinx a lesson. My rage is all gone and relieved, now." The first guard says, sighing in relief.

Claire's body is covered in cut marks all over the place: From her face to her lower part of her body. Blood is leaking from each any every one of the marks, slowly sliding off from her body and landing onto the ground as if they were rain drops. "U-Ugh..." Claire says weakly, her voice sounding raspy as she could barely move.

The guard looks at Claire, eyes widening. "Holy crap! We must had bruised her up real badly!"

The second guard nods. "Yeah, definitely." The second says in a surprised tone.

"Cl-Claire." Mark says, showing a grim look on his face as he strokes the ground in frustration.

Anna grits her teeth and looks at the guard that's pinning her. "Hey, didn't I hear some noise coming from outside of this dungeon?" She asks boldly. Norah looks at her curiously and thinks thoughtfully.

"Yeah...I recall hearing something while you guards are too busy going against our wills and beating up a child." Norah says, frowning at the guards along the way.

The first guard looks at Norah and chuckles. "Heh, you and that Ninetales lady must be hearing things or something." The guard says.

Norah gasps as if she's being insulted. "Why I never trip with myself, dear sir. I know what I heard and so did the Ninetales."

“Yes! Now let us see what’s going on!” Anna agrees with Norah, snarling at the guard in front of her.

The scratch mark guard glances at Anna in her cell, shaking his head. “You two ladies forget that *we* let you out of the cells, not *you*. So no, you may not see what is going on there.” The guard says, leaning his spear against his shell gently. “Alright boys, we can escort them out with no problems whatsoever.” The guards nod and try forcing the gang out of their cell. All of them, even Trent, are close to being out until they hear Claire’s grunts. Her grunts are loud yet...off. Eerie and paranormal, to be exact. The scratch mark guard and the second look at the Shinx, the second holding Mark captive during so. “Oh what now!?”

“How...are you in charge of letting us out of our cells...if you’re going to lead us out either way...?” Claire says, spitting out blood onto the ground as she weakly gets up. The ground underneath her is becoming the color red as the cut marks she received begin to glow crimson red. Red electricity begins to form throughout her body, making crackle noises as she looks up at the two guards in pure rage.

The two guards stare at the Shinx’s yellow eyes slowly becoming pure black, including her irises. “Uh...Is it me or is that not normal for a Shinx’s eyes to turn like...that...?” The scratch mark guard says, sweatdropping.

“It...makes...no...” Claire then lets out a menacing roar. The type of roar that has a sound of a distorted, terrifying monstrous tone to it as she releases a huge Discharge attack towards the two guards. “SEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEENSE!!!”

“AAAAAAHHHH!” The guards are hit by the attack, Mark being dropped from the second guard due to the impact and backs up against the bars immediately. The Riolu watches the attack with wide eyes, feeling quite stunned by what he’s witnessing. The two burst through Trent’s cell and hit the fifth guard, causing him to receive the same amount of damage from the massive electric attack. The three collide against the wall and scream in pure suffering, their faces slowly begins to melt during so. Trent’s eyes widen at the attack along with everyone else.

What. The. Hell? Iris thinks, staring at the attack in shock. Norah, her family and the other three guards stare at the attack in horror. All of them are shaking constantly as they watch, especially the three guards.

“Oh gosh, this...this is...” Norah pauses for a moment to look at her daughter. “Look away Azure! Please!” Azure stares at the terrifying electrical madness before hugging her mother, looking away.

Soon Claire stops the attack, her Discharge slowly fading away while the three Cloysters become nothing but burnt shells. The shells themselves drop to the ground, landing onto the black and reddish pool underneath it. The Shinx walks out of the cell slowly but menacingly, as

if she were a serial killer herself. She stops and stares at the two cells that contains the two guards in it, her eyes remaining black and her body continuing to glow crimson red. "Anyone else wants to join them in the afterlife?" Claire says in a eerie, little girl voice.

The third guard in Anna's cell begins to cry, a noise able to be heard coming from his inner shell. "I want my mommy!" He whines, tears raining down from his eyes like a waterfall. Ashen then realizes that he felt something touching onto his arm from the third guard. He lifts his arm up and sniffs it, forming a disgusted look on his face.

"Dude...did you just...?" Ashen says, raising his brow at the guard. This leads to everyone, except for Claire, saying 'Ew' and forming a disturbed look on their faces.

"Alright. I've seen enough." Iris exclaims before punching the guard (that's in her cell) in the face, leading him to burst through the cell's door and lands onto the ground knocked out. Then Anna and Ashen fight back: Anna jumps in the air and spins her body around to smack the fourth guard with her tails while Ashen slashes the third guard in the face. The two guards back away, groaning at the action being performed as Lucas gets in front of them. He lays down on his back.

"Hmm?" Anna says, looking at him curiously.

Lucas grins and slams his tail down in front of him, launching himself in the air with a singly frontflip towards the two guards. In between launching himself and reaching the guards, he performs a backflip and begins another. "FIRE IN THE HOLE!" Lucas shouts before kicking the two guards, finishing the second backflip and performing a third afterwards to land on the ground. The guards move further away from Anna and the other two due to the kick and collide against the other guard drastically. The two then fall to the ground and pass out. Everyone then exits out of their cells safely, with Lucas having a confident look on his face. "Now that's what I call: Smooth Prison Break."

Mark sighs in relief and closes his eyes while Anna sweatdrops and looks at the eye-patched Furret. "Um, firstly, that break wasn't smooth at all. We just saw a Shinx annihilate three Cloysters brutally and violently with her flipping Discharge...*with no remorse at all.*" Anna says, shrugging uneasily. "And secondly, how did you do that?"

"Oh you mean the break?"

Anna rolls her eyes. "No, the launching thing that you just did, silly."

"Oooh, that. I believe that I'd been practicing on launching myself from my tail since I was a Sentret." The Furret looks at the Ninetales and winks with a smirk. "See? Now you can't say that I'm always the dumb one in the group *since I take pride of my work.*" Lucas says that part of the sentence loud enough for Iris to hear. Iris looks at him and just sighs. "I also think of clever jokes *and* have been thinking up some strategy method all along."

Anna blinks at the Furret before giggling. "Whatever. I can agree with you on the pride part but I'm not so sure about the clever jokes and that 'strategy method' of yours should've happened in those past situations we were in."

"I, erm, um..." Lucas crosses his arms and frowns. "Oh someday, you'll appreciate the things I do for you, mate!"

Anna smiles and shakes her head. "Again, whatever."

Then as Anna and Lucas continue chatting with each other, Norah looks at the two and smiles. "They seem to be getting along swell, huh Iris?" Norah says, looking at the Dragonite. Iris sees her friends conversing happily with each other, looking down at the ground.

"Yeah...I suppose you're right about that..." Iris says in a sorrowful tone. Brook notices the look on her face and floats towards her.

"Is something wrong?" Brook asks, curiosity forming throughout his face. Iris looks at him and shakes her head.

"It's...nothing, really." Iris looks to the side.

Brook stares at Iris for a moment before sighing. "It's about that fight you started between you and your friends a few days ago, right?" Iris takes her eyes back onto the old Cloyster, glancing down at him. "If you truly feel sorry for what you did, then tell them. It's okay to admit that you're wrong for causing that situation."

"I know but...it'll seem like I'm lowering my defense to them. I'll look weak to them by apologizing."

Brook shakes his head. "Not that I recalled...You'll only become weak if you treat a situation like this as a win or lose thing. Because there's no winner or loser in a apology. And you'll be a fool for seeing it as such."

Iris thinks for a moment while looking at Anna, Ashen, and Lucas about to converse with Claire. The Shinx talks back with a smile. She stares at them for awhile, thinking about what Brook told her before letting out a huge sigh. "Alright. I'll go apologize to them then." Brook reveals a soft smile at Iris as she walks towards the four.

"I mean, jeez Claire, that attack was as gruesome as my Mixturing Move plus Mythical Power attack." Anna says while smiling nervously.

"Yeah, mate. Was that even the same Discharge attack I saw from you in Verdant?" Lucas asks, scratching the side of his head.

Claire nods. "It is. It's just that it was more powerful than its normal Discharge attack due to me being quite injured." The Shinx says, beginning to pant a bit. "Which I still am, to be honest..."

"Oh. If only there was a way to heal your wounds, Claire..." Ashen says, thinking.

Claire laughs softly. "Even with the healing materials, it's not gonna do enough to heal me, personally. I'll need Natalie's healing powers to heal me instead."

Ashen and the other two look at Claire, a bit freaked out by her calm yet eerie laugh. "Are...you sure...?" Anna asks, raising her brow at the Shinx.

"Precisely. It's the only way that I'll return back to my full strength. Even though that Discharge attack was powerful, it did take a lot out of me and well...further increased my pain." Claire then randomly spits out blood onto the ground, causing the three to back away a bit. Claire shrugs awkwardly. "My sincere apology for that."

Then the four Pokemon see the necklace Dragonite walks towards them, all immediately glancing at her. "What do you want?" Anna says firmly.

"Well, I..." Iris pauses for a moment, poking her tiny nails against each other. "I just wanted to say that I'm--" She is then interrupted by the dungeon door bursting down, everyone taking their attention towards it.

"What the heck?" Trent says, seeing the broken door on the ground. He and the others then notice Jimmy, Zeke and Cerise entering inside of the dungeon with Jimmy having his foot in the air.

"YOUR HERACROSS IN SHINING ARMOR IS HERE!" Jimmy shouts in a heroic yet dramatic tone after putting his foot down.

Iris and the others gasp upon seeing the three. "Jimmy!" The crew shouts, all heading towards the three immediately. Mark's ear flickers from the word 'Jimmy', leading him to open his eyes and see the Heracross.

"Y-You're back!" Mark shouts, getting up himself to join the others.

Zeke looks at the Heracross, raising his brow at him. "Do you have to be *that* dramatic, pal?" Zeke asks while forming an odd expression.

Jimmy chuckles and scratches the back of his head. "I'm very passionate towards saving others, especially my friends." Jimmy says happily.

Anna, Mark and Lucas walk close to Jimmy eagerly. "Glad to see that you're alive in one piece, mate." Lucas says, smiling.

Mark whimpers. "Yeah...Me and Natalie were so worried about you, Jimmy." Mark states before hugging the Heracross, sniffing melancholy. "We thought that we were going to lose you..."

Jimmy hugs back and nods. "Yeah...thought I was done for too, honestly. It was such a scary and unbearable feeling having to deal with being executed." He shakes his head. "I shouldn't received such a treatment for having to save this fellow Cloyster right here." Jimmy pats Zeke on the shell. "Meet Zeke, everyone."

Zeke bows. "Greetings, you all. It's a pleasure to mee--" He is then interrupted by Claire's disturbing appearance and jumps. "HOLY SWEET JEBUS OF THE HOLY LORD ARCEUS ABOVE, WHAT IS THAT THING!?" Zeke shouts, forming a worried look across his face.

"I'm a Shinx, for one. Two, the name's Claire." Claire answers calmly before raising her voice a tad. "And three, how *dare* you mention that name around me!?"

Jimmy looks at Claire as well and yelps. "Great Clarity, what happened to you, Claire?" Jimmy asks. "You look so...*not right*."

Claire snarls a bit at the word 'Clarity', causing everyone to shiver a bit. Claire then sighs. "Long story short: I was beaten up badly, powered up my move to eradicate three guards due to my injuries, and now I'm in dire need of mistress' assistance to heal me because as you can see *I am bleeding*." Claire shrugs. "Apology for the blood trail when we escape out of here."

Jimmy notices the blood slowly dripping down from Claire's slash marks, forming a disturbed look on his face. "I see...wait, Natalie's missing?"

"Yes. She thought of a plan to go spy on Sheer and never came back since then..." Anna answers, looking down.

"Indeed. And I sense her presence in trouble." Claire says, growling deeply. "We got to find her before we escape."

"Hmm. Alright then. We shall find our Zorua friend, if that's the case." Jimmy says in a brave tone.

"Right." Claire nods. She and everyone else are about to leave the dungeon until Iris gets in front of everyone.

"Wait wait wait." The Dragonite says.

"What is it, Iris?" Anna asks in a annoyed tone.

"We need to address the Donphan in the room."

Anna sits down and folds her forelegs. "And that is?"

"Well firstly, the rest of us need to introduce ourselves to Zeke here." The gang looks at Iris for a moment and nods. They then introduce themselves to Zeke.

"Alright. Then what?"

Iris points at Cerise, who seems to be standing there calmly. "That thing over there."

Anna looks at Cerise and blinks. "Oh yeah...Who are you, si--" Anna pauses for a moment to have a better look at the canine. "Wait, are you that thing that took Jimmy?"

Cerise nods. "Yes. How do you know?" Cerise asks softly.

"We saw a figure running off with Jimmy yesterday. We weren't exactly sure if it was you or not due to the figure glowing green but you seemed to match that figure's body formation, anyway. Also, a friend of mine thinks that you're Cerise...Please tell me that he's lying." Anna sweatdrops.

"Well Anna, he predicted it correctly: I am Cerise."

"WHAT!?" The whole crew, except for Jimmy, shouts in complete shock. Lucas leaps up in the air excitedly as Anna begins to shake in place.

"Y-You're C-Cerise?" Anna asks again just to clarify. Cerise nods before the Ninetales looks as though she's close to fainting. "Wh-Where have you b-been, dude?"

"Yeah...We were curious to where you'd went since we were imprisoned here." Ashen says with a concerned look on his face.

Cerise looks at the Linoone and sighs. "Well in short: I was trying to figure out a way to save you guys while in my blob appearance. Then when I came across a plan to save Jimmy, I helped him and Zeke escaped by being in this...canine-like form. The idea just so happened to come across my mind during the time and I honestly can't explain how I'm able to do this other than knowing that I can." Cerise nods firmly. "So now me, Jimmy and Zeke are here to rescue you guys."

"Huh...I see. It seems like the more we know about you, the more interesting things we encounter from you, Cerise." Ashen smiles.

Brook blinks at Cerise. "Ah, no wonder why you seemed familiar to me, Cerise." Brook says.

Anna continues to shake in place. "Hahaha, th-that's great. Gl-Glad that we're having a wonderful re-reunion h-here." Anna stutters. Cerise looks at Anna confusedly.

"Um...is something wrong?" Cerise asks the shaky Ninetales.

"SHE LOST THE BET, MATEYS! WOOHOO!" Lucas yells while wrapping his arm around the Ninetales' neck. He then gives Anna a noogie and laughs. "We made a bet on whether or not the glowing figure was you and it was. Meaning I won the bet and she'll have to be nice to me for six days starting now. Heh heh."

Anna whines. "I hate my life right now..."

Cerise blinks and sweatdrops. "Oookay then, um. As much as I'd like to continue this lovely conversation, we need to go." Cerise suggests.

Jimmy nods. "Right." The Heracross replies, forming a fist. The canine looks at him firmly.

"Jimmy, I want you to go retrieve the egg from the other dungeon area while me and the others go find Natalie."

Jimmy nods once more. "You can count on your heroic, I mean, Incredible Jimster."

Anna tilts her head curiously. "Wait, you guys saved the egg?" The Ninetales asks. Cerise nods at her.

"Yes. I managed to save it and had Jimmy and Zeke to keep it hidden in their cell for the time being." Cerise answers calmly.

Anna sighs in relief. "Well at least that's a relief to hear compared to what I'll have to deal with for six days..." Anna looks at Lucas, seeing him form a devious grin on his face before shivering in terror and looking back at Cerise. "Anyway, thank you so very much, Cerise."

Cerise nods softly. "Alright. Let's go." The canine begins to exit out of the area before everyone else follows along.

Claire and Mark being the last ones out as Mark speaks to Claire. "Guess me and Natalie were right about Cerise not betraying us after all, Claire."

Claire sighs. "Didn't say I was right about my prediction, anyway." The Shinx says.

"Riiight." Mark chuckles before the two exit out completely.

...

Back at the hallway, Mat and Sheer search all over the place for Exo. Mat exits out of Exo's bedroom, shaking his head. "Jeez, I can't find this guy anywhere in his room. He normally used to be in there a lot and do...whatever Exo does." Mat says, sighing heavily. He then sees Sheer coming from his right. "Found him yet?"

"Nope." Sheer answers sharply. "The darn senator has lost himself, somehow."

"Well when was the last time you seen him, Sheer?"

"I honestly don't quite know, really. How about you? When was the last time you seen him?"

Mat shrugs. "Since the king's feast. Then after that, I haven't seen him since."

"I see."

Mat then looks up at the ceiling, thinking. "Although, I heard that the king sent Senator Exo to your room so that he can deliver that Respect Badge to you." Sheer sweatdrops, shifting a bit awkwardly. "Were you in your room when Exo gave you the badge?"

"U-Um, no. I was outside patrolling the guards in Zero Forest."

"Then how did you get the badge?"

Sheer rolls his eyes. "I returned to my bedroom and grabbed it when I saw it on my bed, obviously."

Mat looks at him. "So you mean to tell me that you didn't see Exo at all when being delivered that badge?"

Sheer glances at Mat, frowning. "If I told you that I was in Zero Forest, then what do you think, genius?"

Mat backs up a bit. "Hey now, I was just clarifying. No need to get all defensive and such."

Sheer shakes his head. "Oh talk to the shell, Mr. 'I think I'll go find Exo on my own', thank you very much." Sheer turns around and floats off.

Mat raises his brow. *Wait, wasn't that the way he just came from...?* He thinks, concerns forming throughout his head.

"For the meantime, you can return back to the king."

“...” *Okay, first last night with him yelling for literally no reason and now this. Something’s not right about him today.* Mat floats towards Sheer, following him as the two turn towards to their left. “Sheer, I have a legit question to ask you: What’s up with you lately?”

Sheer blinks confusedly and looks at Mat. “Why Mat, there’s nothing wrong with me. I’m just my dear ol’ Sheer self, that’s all.”

“Really? Last that I recalled, Sheer doesn’t yell in excitement for a new day in the Cloyster Kingdom like a maniac. Nor would he act defensive when I try to ask him questions.” Mat glances at the large barbed Cloyster.

“I mean, I was in a good mood yesterday. And those questions you asked me were ticking me off due to me having to repeat myself to you.”

“Good mood? You’re always in a high-and-mighty mood, Sheer. So what I saw yesterday wasn’t a good mood...” Mat pauses for a moment, stopping within his tracks along with Sheer. “It was more so of a panicky mood.”

Sheer gulps silently. “And why would you think that?”

Mat slowly looks at Sheer. “Because if I recall correctly, your face looked terrified and panicky last night...the total opposite of ‘being in a good mood’.” Sheer grits his teeth slightly. “So I ask you this, Sheer: What’s going on with you lately?”

“...”

“...Well?”

The two remain silent for a moment before a loud noise occurs. The two jump from the noise, immediately looking at where the noise is coming from. The noise comes from Sheer’s room, black smoke arising from it. *Shoot...* Sheer thinks, taking his eyes onto Mat now.

Mat looks back. “What the hell was that?” The Cloyster asks. “And why am I seeing smoke coming from your room...?”

“U-Um, it’s nothing, really. I tend to, you know, do some lab experiments in my room, Mat. Hehe...” Sheer sweatdrops.

“Sheer.”

“Yes?”

“You do realize that we have *no* science materials in this kingdom whatsoever?”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“Please don’t investigate my room.” Sheer whines.

“...” Mat takes off floating within a second, heading straight towards Sheer’s room. Sheer yelps and dashes after the Cloyster. As Mat reaches Sheer’s room, he opens the door and gasps. “What in the world of Blizzard!?”

Mat sees the closet doors being against Sheer’s bed and Natalie and Exo tied up. Natalie closes her mouth as Exo streams tears from his eyes like waterfall. “Oh thank you so much dear Zorua for using Shadow Ball!” Exo exclaims, whimpering. “The name is Natalie, right?”

“Yeah, Exo. You got my name right.” Natalie says, sweatdropping while smiling a bit. Exo then looks over to see Mat by the door, gasping.

“Oh thank goodness you’re here, Mat!”

Natalie looks as well. “Ooo. Is he our potential ride on getting out of here?”

“Exo? What the heck is going on!?” Mat says, confusion forming throughout his face.

“I-It’s Sheer, sir! He’s gone mad. MAD I SAY!”

“I knew there was something up with that guy. Look, I’ll get you out of here along with your...Zorua friend over there.”

“Hello.” Natalie says casually.

Then Exo sees Sheer dashing right behind Mat and screams. “AAAHH! MAT, BEHIND YOU!!!!” Exo shouts.

“What?” Mat says before being pushed inside of Sheer’s room and brushing against the floor. “Oof!” He then hears the door being closed and instantly gets up to head towards it. He tries to push the door open but couldn’t. “Hey! What gives!?” Sheer blocks the door with some furnitures such as a couch or sofa. He goes to grab a nearby table to further block the entrance and sets it on top of the couch. “Let us out, Sheer! Right now!”

“Apologies, Mat. But you pressured me to do this to you. If you had just gone off to join the king like I told you to, then this wouldn’t happen.” Sheer says with a calm yet sinister tone. “Now if you’ll excuse me, I got a plan to complete.” He then floats away from the door as Mat continues to bang on it.

“Hey! What do you mean by ‘plan’!? Come back here, Sheer! COME BACK!” Mat shouts as Sheer continues to float away, grinning. Sheer then makes it to the stairs and heads down.

. . .

Returning to the hallway, everyone is sprinting away from the dungeon area with Jimmy not being with them for the time being. A couple of guards spot them trying to escape and try to stop them. “Halt, intruders!” One of the guards says, preparing to use his spear. Cerise uses Dragon Pulse on the group of guards, firing his multicolored dragon-shaped beam from his mouth. The attack lands onto the guards, causing them to scream and yelp as they get blown away.

Iris blinks at the attack and looks at Cerise. “You can use Pokemon moves!?” Iris asks, shocked to see this from him.

More guards come by, charging at the group as Cerise nods. “Yes, I can.” He says before Claire releases a terrifying roar, using her red Discharge attack to electrified a bunch of Cloyster guards. They all scream in agony as their faces melt and become a bunch of empty shells. The shells drop to the ground as the gang pass by them.

“So why couldn’t you use those moves in your previous form?” Ashen joins in, curious about the conversation.

“Well...” After Cerise explains his situation to everyone, they all nod in understanding.

“I see now.” Iris says.

“By the way, are we just gonna ignore *that terrifying attack the Shinx did earlier?*” Zeke asks in a concerned manner. Cerise blinks and looks at Zeke.

“What attack again? I probably didn’t pay attention.” Cerise says.

Zeke looks at Claire, seeing her panting heavily while blood trails behind her. He then sighs and shakes his head. “Never mind.”

Iris soon notices a guard trying to hit her with his spear. She grabs the spear and lifts it up, causing the guard to be lifted himself. She then throws the spear to the side along with the guard, causing the guard to crash into a wall face first. “Ooo, that’s gotta hurt.” She chuckles softly before taking her attention to Anna. She runs next to her, beginning to pant a bit. “Hey Anna...about earlier.”

Anna looks at her, blinking. “Hmm?” She says curiously.

“I meant to say that I’m--” Iris receives an interruption by everyone stopping within their tracks, noticing that they all make it to the main center. The problem is though: It’s surrounded by a

bunch of Cloyster guards. One group is on the right side of the area, another is on the left, and a bunch more are in the middle with Cocoon being their lead.

Cocoon adjusts his crown a bit with his staff and begins to speak. "I see the intruders are trying to escape with some prisoners. Not on my watch." Cocoon says before pointing his staff at the gang. "Seize the intruders and return the prisoners to their cells at once."

The guards nod. "Yes sir." They all say obediently.

Norah shakes her head. "Your highness...please stop this at once." She says a sorrow tone.

Cocoon glimpses at her. "And why should I, troublemaker?" The king asks.

"Because what you're doing is wrong! It's not what suits best for the Cloyster Kingdom. Go outside to witness your errors! Just take a look at how many folks you've frightened under your wrath. And the poor lifestyle my hometown, Cloy Town, is in right now."

"Why those folks aren't afraid of me. They're just jealous of my power as ruler. And about Cloy Town, I'm planning to decrease its pricing just by 1."

Norah raises her brow. "Jealous? JEALOUS!?" The female Cloyster frowns. "That's the most idiotic excuse I'd ever heard. Like anyone under a poor condition and timid fear would be jealous of some damn power!"

"You tell him, girl!" Anna exclaims, rooting for Norah.

"And about the price decreasing by 1? You must've been dropped on your head fifty times before thinking *that* will improve our lifestyle condition."

"Oh she just got you there on that one, king! YIKES!" Zeke says, snickering.

Cocoon raises his brow at the gang. "Why I never! How dare you oppose the king's rules!?" Cocoon says, slamming his staff down.

Norah stands up tall. "I only oppose the rules when they are deemed unfair and cruel."

"That's because life *is* unfair and cruel, you blinded commoner." A familiar male voice says, coming from behind the king. Cocoon turns around to see Sheer floating towards him. "Mat told me to come help you, since he wanted to search for Exo himself."

"Ah, I see. You're just in time, too." Cocoon says before turning towards the gang. "Because we're just about ready to take them away by force."

Sheer looks at Trent and smirks. "I see."

The gang all prepare themselves, all except for Norah and her family, getting into their battle position. The guards ready their spears as Sheer and Cocoon gaze at the gang. "Shit...Since Sheer is involved, this fight won't be so easy. In fact, it's far from it now." Iris says, gritting her teeth into frustration. "Get behind us, Norah. You too, Brook and Azure." Norah nods as she and her family get behind the gang.

Anna snarls, glaring at the guards. "Just be ready to stay focused, everyone." Anna says sternly.

Mark nods. "Even without my Weapon Mischief, I can still try to fight." The Riolu says confidently.

Ashen and Lucas form glowing white claws from their paws, ready to use their Fury Swipes at any moment. "Alright, mate." Lucas says in a stern tone. "Bring it on!"

To be continued...

End of Chapter 18.