What the Cat Dragged In

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Summary

Nanu thought his night would be uneventful until he finds his Persian outside the station, and with it, an unconscious Guzma. Nanu was wrong; his night and the following days were going to be more eventful, and interesting, than he bargained for.

A year and a half later, Nanu is recruited to help either kill or capture the Ultra Beasts that had come to Alola through Lusamine’s actions. When the hunt for the UBs starts, Nanu does not like how many people begin to involve themselves in the dangerous matter. But the only person that Nanu really doesn’t want to get involved in the Ultra Beast hunt is Guzma, because anyone who is a Faller is in danger. And Nanu doesn’t want the past to repeat itself.
Notes

I have discovered a new ship, and in a Pokemon game, at that. This fic is just for the heck of it, so don't take it too seriously. Meant to be half silly and half serious. I tried my best to keep the characters IC but we'll see how it goes as the story progresses.

Edit 3/9/18: FYI, it became a longer story after all. And more serious, too.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

Nanu knew that it was going to be yet another boring, dreary night, seeing as the rain continued its relentless assault on the police station and surrounding area. With a long, drawn out sigh, Nanu resigned himself to the weather never changing, and patted a Meowth on his lap absently.

Another Meowth, about to launch itself up onto Nanu’s lap as well, instead hissed when there was a strange thump against the front door to the station.

Nanu frowned at the door, wondering why his humdrum existence was being disturbed. With a light shake of his head, Nanu shooed the Meowth off of his lap so that he could see what was making the noise and thus interrupting his relative peace and quiet. Nanu opened the door, and seeing nothing at eye level, looked down. Nanu’s only outward reaction to his Aloalan Persian sitting there with the crumpled form of Guzma next to it was for his brow to rise in question. Nanu looked from Persian to Guzma and then back to his Pokémon.

“I thought I told you not to bring trash home.”

Persian tilted its round head to one side, and then squeezed its eyes shut as the Pokemon purred in response.

“He isn’t dead, is he?” Guzma was suspiciously still, from what the officer could see. “I don’t want to deal with bodies of the recently deceased.” Nanu seriously doubted the young man was dead; if anything, his question was meant to try and get a rise out of Guzma.

Nothing happened but the rain continuing to hammer down and drench the Team Skull leader further.

Persian got to its feet and leaned over Guzma to grip him by the back of his jacket. A semi-conscious groan rose from Guzma at Persian’s actions, answering Nanu’s question as to whether the man still had any life in him or not.

Nanu could tell that Guzma was clearly not feeling his best over the fact that he made no protest whatsoever at the way the feline Pokémon had started to drag him over the threshold of the station.

“And what makes you think I want that in here?” Nanu asked dryly, though he stepped back in any case to allow his Persian to bring Guzma’s limp form inside, and out of the rain. Nanu closed the door and turned around to watch Persian, curious as to where his Pokémon intended to take Guzma. At the sight of water pooling down from both Pokémon and Guzma to leave a trail on the floor, Nanu added, “Don’t soak the rugs, Persian. I’ll never get them dried out completely if you lot keep tracking all of that water in and lying down on them.”

Persian made an affirmative huff around the clothing in its mouth, clearly remembering the last time three drenched Meowth crowded on one of the rugs. The feline Pokémon carefully avoided the rugs in the station as it heaved Guzma along, its tail twitching as Persian got lost in deep concentration to do as its trainer asked.

The Meowth that were in the station drew close to see what their fellow feline Pokémon had brought in, though when they realized who it was, half the Meowth lost interest, while the other half took turns carefully batting at Guzma’s head, as if to see if he were alive or not. They scattered when Guzma weakly raised a hand to shoo them away, though he went limp again when Persian swatted his arm gently with a paw, before it resumed dragging the tall man along.
By now, Nanu was half amused by the situation, and half concerned with how his Persian had come across Guzma in this state, and why it had chosen to drag him along from who knows where. Not to mention that Persian thought the best place to bring the punk was to the station, and not back to Po Town, where Plumeria could have handled the situation.

Nanu followed his Pokémon, though when the red eyed officer saw his Pokémon’s destination, he half smiled at the sight.

Persian fussed over Guzma as it let go of his jacket before it poked and prodded him with its head and paws until the young man lay partially in a Pokémon bed. Persian, satisfied, curled up on the bed against Guzma, and started to groom him with rough swipes of its tongue.

By now, Nanu could tell that Guzma was awake, if barely, and was making minute movements as if to slip away from Persian.

The feline Pokémon discouraged this by resting one paw on Guzma’s shoulder to turn him toward it. Persian increased its efforts to groom him, which drew another, more awake sounding groan.

Nanu stepped closer and craned his head down, and saw that Guzma had his eyes open, though it appeared as if the younger man had a moment where he was not completely aware of where he was.

Guzma let out a low huff of irritation, however, once his mind seemed to piece together what was currently happening to him.

Persian let out a purr and increased its efforts to rid Guzma of the rain he was soaked with.

Guzma groaned something about rough tongues and overly friendly Pokémon as he dazedly lifted a hand in an attempt to shove Persian away.

The dark furred Pokémon merely pressed closer to Guzma, claws lightly sinking against the Team Skull leader's shoulder in warning. The Pokemon let out a low growl, as if daring Guzma to try and move away from it again before it was finished with grooming him.

A rare, genuine smile tugged at Nanu’s lips at the disgruntled look on Guzma’s face, but as soon as the punk turned his head to the side and met his gaze, the smile was gone, replaced with an indifferent expression. It was a stare-off as Persian continued to groom Guzma, until Nanu decided to break the silence with a faint chuckle and a wry comment.

“Well, well, look at what the cat dragged in.”

The look on Guzma’s face was priceless; perhaps the night wouldn’t be as boring as Nanu thought it would be.
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Updated sooner than I thought I would.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Guzma issued a weak burst of laughter in the short beat of silence that followed Nanu’s words.

“Bet you’ve wanted to say that forever… old man.” Guzma sounded exasperated, even if his voice was short. It was as if he were struggling to get his breath back. Guzma shoved a hand up against Persian’s side despite the Pokémon’s earlier growl. “…and get your damn Pokémon… off of me.”

“Good job bringing him here, I guess.” Nanu ignored Guzma in favor of Persian, though the officer’s mind was turning over what could have possibly happened to the younger man to put him in this state.

Persian squeezed its eyes shut again, pleased with the praise.

“The smell didn’t bother you, huh?” Nanu half smirked at the way his Pokémon rubbed its face against Guzma’s with a purr, though the officer knew something had to be wrong. Guzma would normally have had no trouble fending off Persian’s attempts to give him affection. “Guess he must have gotten really soaked with the rain if your nose hasn’t fallen off yet.”

“I’m right here, you know.” Guzma said hotly, clearly not liking the way that Nanu continued to dismiss him in favor of a Pokémon. “And are you trying’ to say I don’t take showers?”

“Probably would have died in a ditch out there if you didn’t bring him here.” Nanu still spoke to his Persian as if he hadn’t heard Guzma say anything. “Better to deal with a beaten up punk than a dead one.”

“I ain’t dead, geezer.” Guzma bristled, some life coming back to him at the jab, and with it, some more breath. “You ever fall off a rocky ledge before, old man?” Whatever pain Guzma was currently in was clearly outweighed by the idea of Nanu continuing to dismiss him.

“Can’t say I have.” Nanu replied dryly. “Not that I’m going to go about traversing those ledges in the rain.”

“Cause you’d… slip and fall over…” Guzma sucked in a breath, his body apparently reminding him to take it easy, as the younger man wheezed his next words out “…probably break all your damn bones.”

“I’m not that brittle.” Nanu frowned down at Guzma. “And exactly why were you even over by those ledges? Fancy yourself a flying-type trainer now?” Nanu highly doubted it; he’d mainly just wanted to confirm that Guzma was reacting normally, to rule out a concussion. The silent snarl at his words seemed promising. “Not looking where you were going, then?”

“Keep it up, old man and I’ll…” Guzma started to threaten, though he had to take a moment to suck in a harsh breath before he finished, which lessened the effect the younger man was going for. “…I’ll beat you down good.”
“Not in that state, you won’t.” Nanu pointed out.

“Wanna find out?” Guzma grit out; the punk looked angry at the fact that Nanu had once again dismissed him, and as not a threat this time around.

“Are you done?” Nanu asked, stifling a yawn.

“Oh, I see.” Guzma grinned, as if something had just occurred to him. “I get it.” Trying to appear menacing even as Persian continued to rub its face against his cheek, the Team Skull leader taunted Nanu, “You’re just scared of your boy Guzma here, yeah?”

“Not really.” Nanu replied, completely monotonous, and added, just because he could, “It wouldn’t be much of a challenge, anyway. I don’t think a one sided fight would do either of us good.”

Guzma looked on the verge of exploding, probably because of the way that Nanu wasn’t even rising to the bait, but also because the older man seemed to be treating Guzma like a child that had misbehaved and was waiting for them to fix their behavior themselves.

Nanu’s attention went to Persian, completely ignoring the evil look Guzma had fixed on him as the officer addressed his Pokémon. “I hope he was unconscious when you found him. I wouldn’t have bothered with him if he was spewing out nonsense like this.”

Persian gave Nanu what appeared to be a reproachful look, before it resumed grooming Guzma despite his continued tries to slip away.

“You lookin’ for a beating?” The Team Skull leader bristled over the fact that Nanu wasn’t even looking at him.

“I already told you there’s no point to it.” Nanu spared Guzma a glance then, red eyes bored, “Besides, in this case, you’re the one who’d be beaten down. Not me.” Nanu had a brief moment to be surprised over the sight of Guzma looking as if he’d been punched in the gut, his eyes wide and almost…fearful. The look was gone in an instant, to be replaced with pure, seething rage. Nanu thought that was an odd way to react, so he tucked the information away. Nanu figured he’d touch on it later, when Guzma didn’t look like he wanted to throttle him.

“You're dead, old man.” Guzma snapped, as he broke away from Persian and surged to his feet, a crazed look in his eyes. Though his breath was coming in and out raggedly, the punk still seemed intent on holding his promise of a beat down. Despite the pronounced limp in Guzma’s left leg, he headed straight for the older officer, Pokémon battle be damned.

As much as Nanu thought that the younger man needed to blow off some steam, now was not the time for it, it seemed. Guzma was clearly more injured than he let on; if he swung his fists and connected with anything right now, Guzma would only harm himself in the process.

“You sure you want to do this?” Nanu asked mildly.

“Bring it, old man.” Guzma wheezed in return.

Nanu looked resigned more than anything over the fact that he now had an angry young man to deal with, even if he had been responsible for baiting Guzma into that anger to begin with. As Nanu backed out of range of the first punch Guzma threw at him, the red eyed man wondered if Guzma had hit his head after all. Why else would the Team Skull leader think it a good idea to fight while he was already hurt? The sight of Guzma wearing what appeared to be an expression of surprise over not making contact with his fist caused Nanu to crack a crooked smile.
“You think I haven’t been in a fist fight before, kid?” Nanu questioned, as he stood in the middle of the station without a trace of concern about the taller man attempting to rough him up. “I’d stop right now, if I were you.”

“Stop me if you can.” Guzma taunted, and, despite still breathing heavily and clearly in a lot of discomfort, threw himself across the room. It seemed like he intended to hit Nanu with his entire body this time.

Nanu side-stepped the charge, his expression one of indifference as he reached out and gripped Guzma’s forearm. Pivoting, Nanu used the taller man’s momentum to send him straight into the nearest wall.

“Shit.” Guzma grunted as he hit the wall.

Nanu hastily pressed his body against Guzma’s to keep the younger man from pushing away from it. The red eyed officer used a hand to wrench one of the punk’s arms behind his back, as Nanu’s free hand went to his belt for the handcuffs he’d thought to have on him that day.

“Get off me!” Guzma cursed a few times as he tried to shake Nanu off, but the officer was pressed close enough that Guzma couldn’t get enough leverage to free himself. At least, not until Nanu rattled the handcuffs, which made Guzma strain to free his trapped arm with renewed vigor as he seemed to realize Nanu’s intentions.

“Why are you carrying handcuffs on you right now?” A beat of silence, along with a few breaths. “You got a kinky side to you or something, old man? What gives?”

Then again, maybe Guzma was jumbled after all, even if the officer hadn’t seen any sign of a head injury yet.

“You do remember that I am a cop in addition to being the kahuna, right?” Nanu sighed as he kept the younger man pressed to the wall. “What would make you think that I use these handcuffs for anything other than arresting punks like yourself?”

Guzma sucked in a breath and didn’t respond, his body taut from where Nanu was leaning up against him.

“Do you want me to use these handcuffs in a different way? Get you to let off some steam without using your fists?” Nanu heard something that suspiciously sounded like ‘perverted old man’ though Nanu was a bit distracted when Guzma suddenly arched back against him in an attempt to force the officer away.

Guzma let out a little curse at being foiled when he didn't get the officer to budge.

Nanu ignored him, as he had noticed, with some trepidation, that after Guzma had taken a swing at him and right now, having him pinned there against the wall, that Nanu's body was becoming a little too interested in the situation. Which had not at all been Nanu’s intention, nor had he realized that it was even a distinct possibility that he would ever react like this to the punk. Nanu knew that he’d waited a bit too long to subdue Guzma, because the younger man seemed to have gotten a second wind when a sharp elbow to his gut made Nanu abruptly let go of Guzma’s arm as he doubled over.

Guzma turned away from the wall and followed up with another swing of his fist, but not before Nanu noticed the faint blush on the other man’s face. Nanu hastily ducked back from the fist, though as soon as he straightened up, the older officer had to twist his body to the right in order to avoid another full bodied tackle attempt from Guzma. Nanu winced as his hip protested the action but
didn’t care as he was just thinking that he should have been quicker about subduing Guzma to prevent an extended fight. When the younger man was in a temper, the fight would likely only get nastier the longer Guzma stewed in his anger. Therefore, since the other trainer was on the floor again, Nanu needed to try and prevent him from making another tackle attempt.

“Are you done?” Nanu asked in a bored tone, as he rested a foot lightly on Guzma’s chest when the younger man managed to turn over. It seemed like the brief tussle was over, as it appeared as if all the fight had left Guzma when he hit the floor.

“Damn, you play dirty.” Guzma groaned, going limp beneath Nanu’s light but steady press of his foot to his chest. “Who the hell uses the idea of sex as a distraction in a fight?”

“I seem to recall you bringing up the other use for handcuffs in the first place.” Nanu commented, catching the quick embarrassed expression on the younger man before Guzma scowled and looked away. Nanu eyed Guzma critically for a moment before moving his foot away as he started to think about how best to get Team Skull’s leader to cooperate with him. Nanu felt that he must have been getting a bit too old for one on one fights, because he should have known better than to drop his guard, as evidenced by Guzma’s sudden breathless laugh.

“Gotcha.” Guzma grinned as he rolled over and knocked Nanu’s legs out from underneath him with a swift crack to the side of his nearest knee.

Nanu grimaced as he hit the floor and barely had time to move to one side to prevent the taller man from grappling his legs. Luckily for Nanu, he recovered quickly enough that Guzma fell short of his legs, ending up face down on the floor with a curse.

“Since when do you have so much stamina?” Guzma grumbled against the rug before he managed to lever himself up to his hands and knees.

Nanu was breathing heavily by this point, but he knew that he needed to end this now, before his own body decided to give out on him. No matter how terrible a state Guzma was in, the punk was younger than him and fitter, to boot. If Guzma managed to pin him down, Nanu would be hard pressed to fight back at that point, and the red eyed man believed he’d likely give into fatigue before Guzma passed out from overexertion.

This night was most certainly turning out to be anything but boring.

Chapter End Notes

I'm glad there's some interest in this fic-that makes me feel better about posting it.

I have the next chapter written up mostly, but it's about twice as long as this one. It'll take some time to edit, but I hope to get it up within the next few days if I've got time after work to get to it. Otherwise, I'm going to start aiming for weekend updates, when I know I'll have time to stare at a screen and type/edit.
A few curious Meowth had wandered over to watch the sudden fight between the two trainers, as if interested in why there wasn’t a Pokémon battle. One of the bolder Meowth got close to Guzma in order to tap Team Skull’s leader on the head. He was still on his hands and knees, which made it easy enough for the curious feline Pokémon to get in a few good bats of its paw against Guzma’s head. The Meowth batted its paw a bit harder when the taller man didn’t respond to the first few attempts.

Nanu, despite feeling winded and a little concerned with how the tussle may escalate between himself and the younger punk, couldn’t help but smile faintly at the Meowth. It just figured that the Pokémon didn’t care that there was an ongoing fight; it wanted attention from Guzma, and it was clear enough that he wasn’t in the mood to give it.

Guzma irritably swatted away the Meowth when it got too close, and lifted his head to glare at Nanu.

“You done yet, kid?” Nanu seriously doubted it, but figured there was no harm in asking just in case the punk did realize he was in no shape to be picking a fight. The intensity of the glare being leveled at the older officer said otherwise.

“You kiddin’ me? That was nothing, old man.” It seemed to be too much of an effort to retain his stare, because Guzma ended up hanging his head again as he struggled to even out his breathing.

“Gonna…” Guzma appeared to be struggling for both air and an answer, and that was when Nanu decided he should take advantage of the fact that the younger man was still on the floor and unable to throw a punch at present.

“You going to wheeze at me or fight?” Nanu deadpanned as he crossed the short distance between himself and Guzma.

“Back off, geezer.” Guzma warned, though the threat fell short when the most he could do was keep himself on his hands and knees while trying to breathe. “Or I’ll…”

What Guzma was going to do was cut short as Nanu crouched down alongside Guzma and pulled the young man’s legs out from beneath him, causing Guzma to let out a shot ‘omph’ as he ended up on his stomach.

Guzma hissed a cuss under his breath as he propped himself up on his forearms, intent on getting up, when Nanu spoiled the plan by pinning the younger man against the floor.

What Nanu forgot was that Guzma still had some fight left in him, which was shown when the younger man suddenly rolled over, pitching Nanu off of him. The red eyed man grunted as he hit his back, and bit back a groan when Guzma flopped onto him.
“How you like that?” Guzma laughed breathlessly, shifting so that most of his weight was pressed to Nanu’s chest. “How ‘bout I break some of those ribs for ya?”

Nanu hastily jerked his body to one side, which moved the younger man off of him enough so that he could roll over. Nanu hit Guzma’s back and hastily hooked an arm around the punk’s throat. Nanu held on for dear life when Guzma began to buck and try to throw him off, the younger man obviously displeased with the way the tables had been turned on him.

“Heh, tired out already…old man?” Guzma taunted, clearly hearing Nanu’s labored breathing. The younger man’s own tone, however, gave away the hint of nervousness over what Nanu would do to him in this position.

Nanu didn’t bother responding; he just held his forearm tight across Guzma’s throat.

“Get off of me.” Guzma wheezed out, trying to use one of his arms to lever himself up off of the floor enough to give him enough room to shove the older officer against the nearby wall.

Nanu held on as he rested his legs on either side of the punk’s, to make it even more difficult for Guzma to free himself. Nanu supposed the error the younger man had made was allowing for Nanu to get a grip on him. Guzma had no way to get the officer off of him, as Nanu had the upper hand in leverage for the time being.

“Hey! Stop…that.” Guzma began to desperately try to roll to the side to get Nanu off of him, but the older officer held on grimly and kept up the pressure, forcing Guzma to remain pinned to the floor. Guzma swore, “You tryin’ to kill me…old man?”

Nanu said nothing.

Panic seemed to take hold of Guzma then as he apparently came to the conclusion that Nanu wasn’t going to let him go anywhere. The idea made Guzma become more desperate in his erratic movements to free himself, and the younger man eventually resorted to reaching for his belt for his Pokéballs.

Nanu noticed in time and got to the Pokéballs before Guzma, using his free hand to sharply swat the punk’s hand away from them. Despite Guzma’s frustrated hiss, Nanu plucked the Pokéballs off of Guzma’s belt and laid them out on the ground just out of reach.

“Oy. Don’t go stealing my Pokémon, geezer.” Guzma breathed out, one hand stretching out for the nearest one.

Nanu again prevented Guzma from reaching his Pokémon, though it was more of a gentle swat than before, as the older officer raised his head and met the gaze of several Meowth.

“Take these over there.” Nanu indicated the two Pokéballs, and then pointed the far side of the station.

The nearest Meowth picked up the Pokéballs, though they appeared almost reluctant to separate other Pokémon from another trainer.

“Dammit.” Guzma cursed, though he almost sounded scared at the temporary loss of his Pokémon while Nanu continued to choke him.

“I thought you wanted to fight me yourself.” Nanu reminded Guzma, careful to keep his forearm tight across Guzma’s throat, his free hand locking around the other to make certain the younger man had no way to escape his grip. “A Pokémon battle kind of defeats the idea. Unless you were giving

“And you weren’t going to?” Nanu replied, wondering when Guzma would get it through his head to calm down and stop with all of the nonsense. From the way Guzma’s hands went straight to Nanu’s and gripped his wrist and forearm tight, he wasn’t going to calm down any time soon. Nanu closed his eyes and breathed through his nose. This was not something the red eyed officer foresaw doing that night, and it was something he would have rather avoided altogether, but seeing as Guzma went in for a fight, Nanu had given him one, though it clearly had not gone according to the younger man’s plans.

“Stop…” Guzma wheezed out, when he felt Nanu pull his arm against his throat a tad bit more firmly.

“You done fighting me yet?” Nanu hoped he was; the red eyed officer wasn’t sure how much longer he could keep Guzma pinned down. Not to mention choking the younger man felt wrong to him, even if Guzma had seemed like he had wanted to throttle him earlier. “Give up already. This is pointless and you know it.”

Guzma’s weak trickle of laughter indicated he would do no such thing, regardless of the fact that he was losing, and badly, at that.

“Have it your way, then.” Nanu said with a sigh. It seemed to take ages of keeping his forearm locked around Guzma’s throat before the younger man’s struggles finally became weaker. Worse yet, small whimpers had begun to issue from the Team Skull leader; yet another sound Nanu never would have associated with Guzma.

Nanu was going to continue to let the pressure hold until the younger man beneath him passed out, but that was when the Meowth in the station all let out varying degrees of angry and startled hisses. It was the only warning Nanu got before two large, claw tipped limbs seized him from behind and all but wrenched the older officer away from Guzma.

A series on furious chitters sounded behind his head as Nanu was unceremoniously dumped on the ground by Golisopod, which had sprung out of its Pokeball because it had sensed its trainer’s distress.

Nanu winced as he sat up, noting that Persian was now pressed up against him with its teeth bared at the Golisopod.

The large bug-type Pokemon let out an enraged hiss in return as it crouched over its trainer, its smaller limbs poking its trainer while the two larger limbs provided a protective barrier should Nanu try to get too close to Guzma.

Nanu sucked in a harsh breath at the sight, some guilt seeping in that he’d been very close to choking the younger man out.

Persian pressed its face against Nanu’s cheek before making an inquiring sound in his nearest ear.

“IT’s fine. I’m back.” Nanu automatically reached around with his left arm to hug his Pokemon’s head against his own. The red eyed man’s breathing slowed to something more manageable and at that point, Nanu let out a slow breath. “I know. I know he isn’t one of those criminals.”

Persian pressed its body tight against its trainer’s before it returned to growling lowly at Golisopod, the larger Pokémon still letting out a series of angry chitters as its smaller limbs continued to prod its
A semi-conscious groan rose from Guzma, prompting his Golisopod to carefully pick him up with its small limbs, and cross its two clawed limbs to make sure its trainer wasn’t going to be attacked by Nanu again. The apparent glare the bug-type Pokémon sent Nanu made him realize he may have gone a bit too far, if Guzma’s Pokémon had felt the need to intervene.

Exhaustion swept over the officer. Shoulders slumped, Nanu let out a long breath before he stilled at the soft, barely there plea that issued from Guzma.

“Please…don’t…I’ll stop…I’ll stop…”

It sounded like Guzma wasn’t even speaking to him.

Golisopod let out a soft click as it leaned over and nibbled Guzma’s hair. It even held its trainer closer to its body, as if trying to offer some comfort to whatever was troubling Guzma.

Nanu exchanged glances with his Persian again, before he rose to his feet and approached Guzma, acutely aware of the fact that the Golisopod had started to chitter and then let out a loud, angry hiss when the officer apparently got too close for the Pokémon’s liking.

“Your trainer started the fight.” Nanu told the hissing Golisopod, “And I know I shouldn’t have done that, but I’m not going to risk him throwing a punch at me again when he gets his wits about him again.”

Golisopod’s hiss turned into a series of clicks and chitters, none of which Nanu had any idea what to make of.

“I’m going to handcuff him.” Nanu told the Golisopod, as he proffered the cuffs he’d retrieved from the ground. “You can even keep holding him so long as his hands are behind his back so I can cuff them.”

Golisopod made what sounded like a disbelieving click, before it seemed to consider the situation thus far. Then slowly and very carefully, Golisopod maneuvered its trainer over with its limbs, and gently prodded Guzma.

“Hey, don’t go…listening to him…” Guzma muttered, aware of his surroundings now for the time being. “Gonna…beat him down good.”

Golisopod bit down on Guzma’s hair in what appeared to be an affectionate way, before it used one of its bigger limbs to maneuver one of Guzma’s arms behind his back so Nanu could secure the handcuff around it. Golisopod chittered against Guzma’s hair when the younger man made what sounded like the beginning of a protest before it gently prodded its trainer’s other arm behind his back.

Nanu would take any help he could get at this point, because honestly, he was exhausted, and if one of Guzma’s own Pokémon knew that the punk shouldn’t be fighting, the older officer would take advantage of that.

“Stop…” Guzma’s mutters had dropped back to the younger man sounding as if he weren’t in the present. “Please….stop..."

As soon as Nanu finished securing the handcuffs, Golisopod turned Guzma back over so that it was cradling its trainer again. Upon hearing a faint whimper mixed with some inaudible words, Golisopod held Guzma closer as it chittered reassuringly against its trainer’s head.
Guzma’s delirious apologies and mutters were a reminder to Nanu that Guzma was just a misguided young man who, from what Nanu could now hear, had suffered from some abuse earlier in life. And here Nanu had been about to choke the life out of him over something that could have been easily prevented by just letting Guzma wear himself out.

Not that any of this would have even happened in the first place if Nanu hadn't goaded the younger man into a fight.

“What is wrong with you?” Nanu let out another, slower breath. “Do you really have to cause such a fuss?”

Nanu heard Golisopod’s concerned hiss before the older officer realized that the punk had begun to breathe more erratically than before. It was then that Nanu belatedly realized that he had repeated a phrase that was often reported by others that Guzma said to himself whenever he was upset over losing a battle or the like. The breathing wasn’t leveling out, and Guzma was beginning to take in fewer breaths, almost to the point of hyperventilating.

“Hey.” Nanu steeped closer and managed to get the Golisopod to let him get near enough to grip Guzma’s shoulder.

Nothing.

Guzma didn’t even seem to be aware of his presence, let alone his words. Nanu could tell that the Team Skull leader was panicking, and did the only thing that he could think of on the spot. He urged the Golisopod closer, and then leaned in and pulled Guzma to his chest, the taller man’s head pressed to his shoulder as the Golisopod hunched over to offer its support as well. It seemed calming Guzma down was more important than keeping Nanu away from its trainer for the moment.

“Breathe.” Nanu said, not sure what else to do. When Guzma’s breath didn’t even out, Nanu jabbed a few fingers into Guzma’s abdomen, causing the other man to let out a harsh breath before he sucked in a gasp of air like he finally remembered how to breathe.

“I’ll stop…” Guzma suddenly mumbled against Nanu’ shoulder. “Please…"

Golisopod let out a worried click and started to nuzzle the side of Guzma’s head.

Nanu absently reached up to pat Guzma’s head, because he could, and found that the younger man actually sagged against him with a soft sound. With a frown, Nanu let his hand sink into hair further and gave a firmer stroke of his hand, and this time, Guzma pressed closer, handcuffs clinking against his back as if he wanted to return a touch of some kind. Nanu abruptly let go of the younger man's hair as he awkwardly patted Guzma's shoulder. “You should get your Golisopod to set you down.”

“Don’t want to.” Guzma mumbled.

Nanu wasn’t sure what to make of that, but he did know that he probably should move his head because he could feel Guzma breathing against the side of his neck. Nanu stepped back and watched as Guzma sagged back against Golisopod, though Nanu didn’t like what he saw.

Guzma was looking at him with a lost expression, and when Nanu had moved away from him, the younger man had almost looked…hurt, about something or another.

“Gonna call in reinforcements?” Guzma asked, his usual confidence gone and replaced with something bordering on bitterness and disappointment.

Golisopod seemed to hold its trainer more snugly against it, thought the bug-type Pokémon was
careful, as it must have known its trainer was hurt even before the young man had been brought to the station by Persian.

Nanu really was getting to old for this, and threw caution to the winds as he sighed and shook his head. “I don’t know what’s going on in that head of yours, though I do have to wonder about your comment about the handcuffs.”

Guzma’s expression morphed into a guarded look, some bluster returning as he looked away and huffed.

“Don’t try and analyze me, old man. The handcuff thing just came out wrong. Nothing to read about it.”

“Really.” Nanu had a feeling there was something to it.

Guzma twitched in response to Nanu’s dry tone, and the younger man turned his head back to bare his teeth at the officer. “I said it was nothin’.”

“Sure it was.” Nanu agreed, as he looked up at the Golisopod. “Hey, hold him still, okay?”

“What. No, Golisopod, don’t listen…to the old man.” Guzma said breathlessly, though he bit out a curse when Golisopod did, in fact, hug him closer, though it put Guzma’s face level with Nanu when the older man approached him.

“What? You still want to fight, geezer?” Guzma bristled, though to recover the situation the punk tried for a grin. “Bet you wouldn’t have…much trouble ‘cause you handcuffed me.”

“Who said I was going to fight you?” Nanu queried, and just to wipe the grin off the other man’s face, Nanu went ahead and kissed the punk, digging one of his hands into Guzma’s hair as the other gripped the younger man’s chin. If nothing else, Nanu figured he would have some peace and quiet by embarrassing Guzma and hopefully getting him to stew in that embarrassment for the rest of the night. It wasn’t like Guzma had said the things he’d said earlier with Nanu in mind. The whole comment about the handcuffs had caught Nanu slightly off guard earlier, but the older man figured it was probably something dumb Guzma or one of the other punks living in Po Town had talked about before.

Tomorrow, Guzma would be back to mouthing off at him, taunting him and otherwise making a nuisance of himself.

Tomorrow…

Nanu hadn’t actually thought that far ahead quite yet, as he was quite distracted by the fact that the kiss he’d intended as something to embarrass Guzma with had had an unexpected response. Guzma had made a small gasp against his lips like he hadn’t expected Nanu to do something like then, before the punk had immediately moaned into the kiss while trying to clumsily return it.

Wait.

Wait just a damn minute.

What was going on? Guzma wasn’t supposed to be...well...enjoying this, and from his reaction right now, he was.

Nanu was acutely aware of his lips pressed to Guzma’s, and the fact that there wasn't a perverted old man joke somewhere within the gasps of breath during the kiss sent off alarm bells in the back of the
"...Nanu." Guzma moaned softly against the officer's lips, and it seemed like he was absently trying to maneuver himself out of his Pokemon's grip so that he could be held by the older officer instead.

Nanu stopped dead mid-kiss at the shock of hearing the younger punk moan his name, instead of some derogatory term or crack at his age.

That was not what Nanu thought would happen.

At all.

Nanu hastily drew away from the younger man, never thinking for even a second that Guzma had actually been interested in him in that regard. If Nanu had even gotten the slightest inkling that Guzma had been wanted for Nanu to kiss him breathless, the older officer would have dragged the young man to Po Town himself, and then gone back to the station to reflect on his life. What in the world did someone at least half his age see in him other than a sorry wretch who lived alone with too many Meowth and whose mood swayed between disinterest and sarcastic bitterness?

Golisopod let out a confused chitter in the silence that followed the kiss.

Nanu ignored the Pokémon as he narrowed his eyes at Guzma, searching the other's face as he tried to figure out why Guzma had wanted to beat him up and then almost immediately melted into a puddle of goo the moment he was kissed. It didn’t make any sense, and Nanu was seriously concerned that he'd only found out by kissing the punk. Though right now, Nanu was wondering why he felt the tiniest bit guilty over the fact that Guzma looked put out that he'd stopped kissing him.

Persian let out a soft sound that suspiciously sounded like a laugh.

Arceus, did Nanu need some sleep, and after that, he needed that serious time to reflect hard on where his life was leading him. Working on and off with the Looker and the others, as well as being Kahuna left Nanu drained most days, and even when he didn’t have any big trouble, there was always Team Skull and their shenanigans to deal with. Nanu couldn’t catch a break, and Tapu Bulu didn’t seem to be bothered with dealing with the punks itself, as that honor was apparently left to Nanu. The red eyed officer groaned. His head hurt, his body was sore from the tussle with Guzma and Nanu could feel a headache forming. The older officer knew that he clearly didn’t have his head on straight if he had thought kissing Guzma for any reason was a good idea. It didn’t help that the younger man was now trying to goad him back into doing it again for some horrible reason.

“What, you out of breath already, geezer?” Guzma taunted, seemingly recovered from the sudden kiss, and acting, it seemed, as if Nanu hadn’t done anything.

Nanu shouldn’t have risen to the bait. He knew that he shouldn’t have, but he was mentally and physically exhausted, and there was only so much taunting the older officer was willing to put up with from the punk.

“Was that supposed to be a kiss? ‘Cause if it was, no wonder you’re all alone with a bunch of Meowth for company.”

Well, it had been some time since Nanu had actually kissed someone. Nanu fixed Guzma with a hard stare, wondering if the punk just wanted to see if he could get a reaction out of him again, or if he actually wanted to be proven wrong. Well, the officer would react, just not on Guzma’s terms. Nanu had had enough for the night, and while it didn’t overly bother him, because he’d heard it all
before, somehow hearing Guzma insinuate the reason he was alone was that he was a terrible kisser rubbed him the wrong way.

Nanu weighed his options as he turned that idea over, and since he just wanted silence and sleep right now, he wasn’t interested in humoring the younger man right now. Nanu was already going to have to deal with Guzma bitching the next morning while the officer figured out what his injuries actually were. If Guzma had been badly hurt Persian would have never moved him, so it couldn’t be that bad.

“Meowth got your tongue, old man?” Guzma ventured at length, though there was a thread of nervousness that overlaid the sarcasm.

Golisopod made what sounded like a hiss of laughter over its trainer’s statement.

Nanu silently stepped right up to Guzma, and knew that the younger man had nowhere to run with the Golisopod holding him in a snug hug. It gave Nanu some form of grim amusement that the younger man seemed confused, at least until Nanu reached up and cupped Guzma’s cheeks in his hands out of sheer curiosity as to the punk’s response.

Guzma’s reaction was to still and give Nanu a hard, rebellious stare, as if daring him to do something.

Nanu wondered if Guzma been serious about the kiss, then? Not just joking around or making fun of him?

“Well?” Guzma asked, straightening himself up the best he could with Nanu’s hands holding him in place. “You all talk, or can you actually use your tongue?” Guzma dared to lean in close and stick his tongue out a bit, meeting Nanu’s eyes with his own. “Bet you can’t old man. ‘Cause you were just messin’ with me.”

“I really can’t imagine why you’d want someone like me to kiss you anyway.” Nanu deadpanned, because he really couldn’t understand why. “Unless you’re so desperate that anyone will do.”

Golisopod chittered something that sounded like it was responding to Nanu.

“Hey, you keep outta this.” Guzma directed to his Pokémon, before he leered at Nanu. “You scared?” The younger man taunted. “Is the big bad Kahuna of Ula’Ula Island afraid to kiss the leader of Team Skull?”

Nanu wordlessly slid his hands from Guzma’s cheeks into his hair, gripping the punk’s hair firmly. Nanu noted the absence of the ridiculously over sized glasses before dismissing the thought as the officer pressed his lips to Guzma’s in another kiss. Nanu didn’t really think about any consequences as he licked a firm line across Guzma’s lips, though he did crack a smile when the younger man gasped and parted his lips. But Nanu drew back, only ghosting his lips along Guzma’s while the younger man let out a few rapid puffs of breath like he was startled.

“Don’t go heaping abuse on me in the morning.” Nanu warned. “Just giving you what you asked for.” Nanu didn’t give Guzma time to respond to that, and instead went to work making sure that every brush of his lips against Guzma’s and every nip of his teeth registered in the other man’s mind. Nanu figured to prove Guzma wrong about his skill at kissing, and hope that it ended things there.

Guzma’s lack of verbal abuse while Nanu was kissing him senseless, however, indicated just how much the younger man wasn’t going to say a damn thing to stop Nanu from what he was doing.

Nanu was concerned that he was actually enjoying the kiss a bit too much when he started to drag
his fingertips lightly along Guzma’s scalp, drawing out thin groans and gasps. Nanu couldn’t help but like the way that Guzma let him use both of his hands to maneuver the younger man’s head to the angle he wanted it without a whisper of protest. Only when Guzma’s breaths became more ragged did Nanu remember that Guzma had been having trouble breathing.

Golisopod interrupted the two trainers with a series of clicks and hisses in what was a clear warning.

It was difficult for Nanu to end the sudden make out, mainly because of the way that Guzma had begun to return the kiss with a low groan of frustration. It was rather satisfying to know that Guzma wanted Nanu to kiss him enough that he was frustrated with the older officer for teasing him with licks and nips.

“You’re a terrible kisser.” Guzma wheezed in between the kisses, even if he was laughing a little while saying it.

Nanu threw caution to the wind and slipped his tongue in Guzma’s mouth, and the shudder that passed through the younger man almost did Nanu in, as Guzma moaned something into the kiss like he hadn’t anticipated that Nanu would actually do that. Nanu shifted the grip he had on Guzma’s hair in order to tilt the younger man’s head to the side as he explored the inside of Guzma’s mouth until the punk let out a soft sound and went limp, just letting the older officer do as he wanted.

Nanu became a little too aware of the fact that he liked the way Guzma had given in and let him do as he liked with him. Nanu enjoyed it so much, in fact, that he noticed his body was ready to move things along, and that was enough for Nanu to break the kiss abruptly. Nanu believed he must be getting old if he was this worn out, not to mention he was not thinking things through like he ought to have been. Nanu grudgingly reached over to pat Persian’s head when it drew near. “Lot of help you were.”

Guzma finally seemed to remember the need to breathe. The moment Nanu broke the kiss and drew away from him, Guzma immediately sagged against his Golisopod with a shaky exhale before he just passed out then and there.

Nanu stared at Guzma as Golisopod prodded its trainer gently with a smaller limb. Apparently, overexertion from kisses worked just as well as letting out some steam in a fight.

“What a mess.” Nanu let out a slow breath. He was exhausted from the brief scuffle with Guzma. The subsequent unintentional kiss, followed by an intended kiss, was something the older officer tried very hard not to dwell on. Nanu believed he must be getting old if he was this worn out, not to mention he was not thinking things through like he ought to have been. Nanu grudgingly reached over to pat Persian’s head when it drew near. “Lot of help you were.”

Persian tilted its head to one side, as if not understanding why, since Nanu hadn’t been harming Guzma with the kiss.

Nanu rested a hand on Persian’s back, before he glanced up at the Golisopod holding the unconscious Guzma. “Hey, bring your trainer over here. May as well let him rest on a bed.” Nanu could only hope Guzma said nothing about it, as Nanu felt he were already crossing lines with just kissing the punk.

Why had he even let Guzma taunt him into that in the first place?

As Nanu led the way to one side of the station and began shifting the couch away, he let out a slow sigh. His best bet was to get Plumeria and some of the other youths lazing about Po Town to collect
their leader, but after what he’d seen, Nanu felt that it would be best to allow Guzma to let off some
more anger against a wretch like him. Nanu felt he may deserve it for trying to choke the kid out,
though he was going to take care to pretend that he’d never kissed the punk. It’d be better for the
both of them in the long run.

Persian and Golisopod both watched as Nanu tapped the bare wall, before revealing a bed within the
wall. Nanu ignored Golisopod’s surprise at the sudden bed, before turning around and waving the
bug-type Pokémon over. Nanu stopped Golisopod short of laying its trainer on the bed, and
indicated Guzma’s clothing. “We’ll need to get him out of those wet clothes first.” Nanu did not
want to deal with an injured and sick Guzma, though getting the wet clothes off of the younger man
presented another challenge.

With a deep breath, Nanu removed the handcuffs cautiously, as it would just figure that Guzma
could have potentially been feigning unconsciousness for this moment.

Nothing.

With a slow sigh, Nanu set the handcuffs aside, and removed Guzma’s jacket, followed by the tank
top. Nanu couldn’t help but look Guzma over. The officer was mildly amused over the fact that
Guzma wasn’t as fit as he had initially thought the punk would be, but it was clear that he must have
worked about for some definition to the muscles he did have.

Golisopod laid Guzma on the bed, and poked at the belt around its trainer’s waist.

“Shoes.” Nanu prompted the large Pokémon, figuring that Golisopod could manage that. Nanu
turned his attention back to Guzma, and carefully kept his eyes on Guzma’s face as he undid the belt,
before Nanu accidentally glanced down as he pulled the pants off once Golisopod had removed the
shoes.

It seemed like Nanu wasn’t the only one affected by the kiss and earlier fight.

Nanu decided to leave the briefs on, as well as the ridiculous bug-type Pokémon patterned socks that
the older officer was certainly going to bring up to tease Guzma with. Nanu's gaze swept Guzma
again before he averted his eyes as the officer wondered if maybe he was the desperate one.

Golisopod must have sensed Nanu’s desire to do…something, with its trainer, because it let out a
low hiss as it moved Nanu away from the bed before it tugged the sheets and blankets over its
trainer and settled down on the floor alongside the bed. It rested it head on the mattress and let out a
soft whirl as it gently bumped its head against Guzma’s.

Persian jumped up onto the bed and settled on the other side of the Team Skull leader.

Nanu frowned when Guzma subconsciously shifted away from the feline Pokémon and closer to
Golisopod. The officer’s face was blank when the punk began to mumble in his sleep, his voice a
far cry from the confidence that was usually present.

“Please…don’t…” Guzma mumbled, sounding lost and frightened. It seemed like he’d reverted to
remembering whatever Nanu’s careless words from earlier had dredged forth. “Please…please
stop…”

Persian pressed its body closer to Guzma’s, and with a concerned meow began to groom the young
man more vigorously than before as if to comfort him. Golisopod shifted close from the other side of
the bed, using one of its large clawed limbs to gently pat Guzma’s head.

Nanu slumped in a chair nearby, running a hand over his face as he let out a long, heavy sigh. He
really hoped that Guzma would forget about the kisses, and focus on getting all up in his face again with his usual bravado. Or even try to punch Nanu in the face for the kisses.

“Maybe I should go out and buy you guys some treats.” Nanu knew for sure he was ready to sleep when he talked to his Meowth about getting them food. Nanu shook his head and picked up a Meowth that had wandered close by. After petting the Pokémon a little bit, Nanu leaned over and pressed his face into its soft grey fur as he let out another drawn out sigh.

This was not how the Kahuna of Ula’Ula Island had intended to spend his night, and the following morning wasn’t looking to be any better.

Chapter End Notes

I think I will stick to weekend updates but if you don't see a chapter posted every weekend, it is likely because the chapter isn't finished yet but it would be posted as soon as it's done.
Nanu couldn’t sleep.

Not even with several Alolan Meowth lying on and around him on the chair he was seated on. Instead, the red eyed officer had spent the better part of the past few hours mulling over what had just happened between himself and Guzma. The brief fight was nothing; they’d fought with one another before in the past, though it normally didn’t have as much rage as there had been this time around. Nor even an actual spar. It was usually posturing and words with Guzma, and perhaps the occasional shove if the younger man had been close enough to Nanu to do so.

Nanu’s gaze lingered on Guzma’s slumbering form, before the older officer turned his attention to the Meowth curled up on his lap. With a sigh, he patted it on the head. “Hey, get down.”

The Meowth opened an eye, met Nanu’s briefly, and then promptly closed it again. The Pokemon appeared to have no intention of moving any time soon.

“I mentioned treats.”

A soft, disbelieving hiss emitted from the Meowth.

“Well, all right then, if that’s the way it’s going to be, I’ll move you myself.” Nanu told the Pokemon on his lap. Nanu slid his hands underneath the Meowth’s soft fur and lifted it off of his lap with ease.

The Meowth protested being moved, but the red eyed officer held the smaller feline firmly, murmuring some comforting sound to it until the Meowth stopped squirming. Running a hand over the Pokemon’s back reassuringly, Nanu crossed the station to deposit it onto an empty Pokemon bed. The Meowth, seeing where it was being brought to, let its paws stretch out, anticipating being set down. Nanu couldn’t help but smile at that, and as soon as he gently set the Pokemon down, the Meowth yawned widely as it curled up again and promptly went back to sleep.

Nanu envied his Pokemon for being able to fall asleep so quickly. Nanu considered the couch closer to the entrance of the station, before he dismissed it. There would be no sleep for him tonight. He had too many thoughts whirling around, and since many of them involved Guzma, and the punk was sound asleep in the same room as him, Nanu knew there was no way he would get any rest.

It figured.

Nanu hadn’t been sleeping well the past few months but that was nothing new. It was just unfortunate that he couldn’t just have a Pokemon use sleep powder on him tonight. The sleep might not last for very long, but it would be something. The rain hammering down on the station seemed heavier than usual, and it made Nanu believe that he was going to be stuck with Guzma for at least a day, if not more, until the rain let up. There was no way Nanu was going to let Guzma go off on his own, even with his Pokemon, if the visibility was horrid.

“Maybe the rain will stop tonight.” Nanu commented aloud. The few Alolan Meowth that were still awake gave him incredulous looks, as if wondering why he would even think that when it was always raining.
Nanu let out a hollow laugh. He really was tired. And sore. While Guzma may not have made contact with any of his punches, that one elbow to his gut still stung. Nanu absently rubbed the spot through his shirt, before he sighed again, knowing that he would have to be deal with Guzma when the punk woke up. The younger man was obviously injured, not badly, but enough that he hadn’t been at his best when he’d started the fight with Nanu.

Nanu frowned to himself, before he went over to his desk that his laptop was on, and dug around in the drawers until he found a roll of bandages. At the very least, he figured he could tape Guzma’s ankle. It didn’t seem like the punk had broken it, but it would do him some good to have the limb seen to.

Preferably while Guzma was asleep.

Nanu didn’t have the energy to take being bitched out at this point. Even if he likely deserved it for what he had done to the younger man. Nanu walked to the end of the bed, though he paused with his hand over the blanket when Golisopod, which had been dozing, let out a long, loud whirl of warning.

“I’m just taping his ankle. That’s all.” Nanu assured the large bug Pokemon, as he shifted the blanket off of Guzma’s legs, exposing sock covered feet. Nanu cracked a small smile at the sight, having already forgotten about the bug patterns, and was careful as he removed the sock off the left foot. Or Nanu made the attempt to do so, anyway.

Apparently, the limb hurt, because Guzma let out a groan in his sleep, scrunching up slightly and tucking the foot back underneath the blanket.

Nanu paused, before he shifted the blanket again and grabbed Guzma’s shin as he carefully pulled the leg back in sight. The sooner he got this over with, the better. Of course, Nanu holding onto the younger man’s leg was precisely the moment that Guzma chose to wake up.

“What the hell, old man?” Guzma sleepily grumbled, scrunching his larger body up beneath the blanket again despite the firm hold Nanu had on his left leg. “What are you doing?” Guzma paused, shifting, before his face became a mixture of annoyance and embarrassment, “And what the fuck did you do with my clothes, you sick pervert?”

“You were soaked through. I left your briefs on, if you hadn’t noticed.” Nanu figured he deserved the glare, reminding him that he hadn’t exactly given Guzma the choice of what he could sleep in. “Didn’t want you to catch a cold. You’d be more aggravating to deal with injured and sick.”

“I’d rather be sick then have you take my clothes off while I’m unconscious, geezer.” Guzma tried to free his leg from Nanu’s grasp. “You do anythin’ else to me in my sleep? Have yourself a little fun?”

“No.” Nanu felt appalled by the very thought, before he reminded himself that he also hadn’t given Guzma much choice when he’d kissed him hours earlier either. “I’m not that depraved.”

“ Couldn’t fooled me.” Guzma said sullenly as he rested his head on the pillow. He didn’t take his eyes off Nanu’s as he added. “And let go of me. Didn’t you do enough already?”

That hit Nanu unexpectedly hard, because Guzma was right. Even though Guzma had started the little scuffle between them earlier, Nanu was the one who had taken things too far. And on top of that, the older officer had had the gall to think it’d be a good idea to kiss Guzma, and when the younger man couldn’t resist it. Even if it was wrong, right now, Nanu was determined to finish taping Guzma’s ankle. Nanu began taping the limb despite the fact that Guzma had hissed an
expletive and tried to kick him with his other leg. Nanu stopped the gesture by gently tapping a finger against the top of Guzma’s ankle.

Guzma immediately abandoned the kick in favor of hissing in pain and calling Nanu a son of a bitch.

“Did you sprain your ankle when you took a tumble down that ledge?” Nanu asked calmly as he ignored the steady stream of curses Guzma was uttering under his breath. When there was no response, Nanu’s gaze rose to meet the younger man’s angry one. “Well?”

“Bite me.” Guzma bristled, clearly not wanting to have that particular conversation.

“I could, if you wanted me to, but you’d probably kill me.” Nanu commented, as he resumed taping Guzma’s ankle while mentally chiding himself.

“Perverted old man.” Guzma flushed a little as he seemed to realize his choice of words, before he sat up and successfully swatted Nanu’s hand away. “Gimme that. I can do it myself.”

“Lie back down.” Nanu raised a brow as Guzma pried the tape out of his hand with a bit of difficulty. “You don’t seem to be doing too well…”

“Obviously. After earlier, you shouldn’t be surprised.” The younger man tossed the bandage tape at Nanu once he finished with it, though Guzma intentionally bounced it off the officer’s chest, where it then fell to the floor and rolled off somewhere under the bed. A Meowth flashed underneath the bed to give chase.

“Besides that.” Nanu didn’t care that Guzma had thrown the bandages at him. “I meant do you have any other injuries from before?” Nanu frowned at the away Guzma moved so gingerly, and for a moment, wondered if the punk was more hurt then he was letting on.

Guzma kept himself in a seated position as best he could and glared at Nanu, as if daring him to belittle him.

Nanu merely stared, clearly not giving a fuck about the younger man’s attempt to intimidate him. The red eyed officer’s main concern was whether he needed to get the other man medical attention, or if Guzma just needed to get some more rest.

“What the hell are you looking at?”

“Someone who has either had their ass handed to them or slipped and hurt themselves on those ledges.” Nanu said dryly in response.

“I didn’t get in a fight, other than with you.” Guzma snorted, “And I told ya before, the rocks were slippery.” The younger man said nothing more as he shifted and began to try and get out of bed. “And where the hell are my clothes at? They gotta be dry by now. Not gonna hang around here almost naked with you acting all weird and shit.”

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you.” Nanu cautioned, not sure if Guzma should be moving around with the uneven breathing he could now hear. “I’m surprised that you can even sit up.”

“Fuck you, old man. I’m tougher than you think.” Guzma snapped, his anger rising again. And to prove Nanu wrong, Guzma shoved the blankets aside, and made as if to swing his legs to one side to get out of bed. The punk ignored his Golisopod’s concerned click from the other side of the bed, and Persian’s low growl of being disturbed from its nap.

Nanu still didn’t know if Guzma were just sore or if he was injured, so he didn’t want the younger
man to be moving around so much. At least not until he could have a quick conversation, without
insults.

Guzma grunted as Nanu unceremoniously shoved him back down onto the bed and tossed the
blankets back over him. With a grumble of irritation, Guzma immediately made as if to get back up,
getting the blankets down to his waist before Nanu set his hand on his chest and gently urged the
punk to lie back down. The younger man laughed like he thought Nanu was being stupid, and
shoved his hands at the older officer’s, Guzma clearly thinking he could dislodge the hand and be on
his way.

Nanu’s arm didn’t budge, and those red eyes merely looked disinterested, as if Nanu couldn’t be
bothered to do much more to prevent Guzma from hurting himself.

“See? You’re in no shape to be moving around right now. As much as I’d rather have you go back
to Po Town, I guess you’ll be staying here until the rain lets up and somebody can come get you.”
Nanu informed Guzma, even though he knew there would be vehement protest over the idea, and for
good reason.

Nanu was proven correct.

“Like hell I’m gonna stay here with you.” Guzma grabbed Nanu’s forearm with both hands,
straining to remove the officer’s hand from his chest. Guzma must have realized by now that he
didn’t have the strength to resist, but that didn’t mean he was going to lie down without a fight.
“Who knows what you’d do to me if I stay any longer. ‘Sides, it seems you misplaced the handcuffs
you had on me before, so might as well get out of here before you find them again.”

“I don’t think you understand the position you’re in.” Nanu commented, not caring that Guzma was
still trying to remove his hand from his chest. Nanu didn’t want to chance having Guzma hurt
himself on his way back to Po Town, so for now, Persian having brought him here was a good
thing. Unfortunately, Nanu hadn’t trended carefully enough, and he wanted to tell Guzma that he
planned to go on a nightly patrol since there was going to be no sleep for him tonight.

“I understand perfectly fine, old man. You’re gonna arrest me, and your boy Guzma here ain’t
gonna stick around for that to happen.” Guzma froze when Nanu was suddenly on the bed, and the
officer had his hands on either side of Guzma’s shoulders instead of his chest. Guzma pressed
himself against the bed, anger lighting in his eyes before he sneered at Nanu. “You get off on this?
Gonna kiss me again and move things along? Already mostly naked, you know.” Guzma’s sneer
deepened. “Gonna take me and make me like it, old man?”

“I already told you, I’m not that depraved.” Nanu said calmly. From where his hands were resting
lightly next to the younger man’s shoulders, Nanu could all but feel the way Guzma’s heart was
hammering, and he wasn’t sure if that meant Guzma expected him to tear what little clothes he had
left and have his way with him, or move away and give him space. The very idea of raping the punk
repulsed Nanu, and even the mere fact that Guzma was suggesting that he’d do such a thing made
him a little angry. But it wasn’t like Nanu hadn’t prevented the idea from coming to mind,
considering he’d damn near choked the punk out then kissed him senseless, and all when Guzma
could do nothing to stop him.

“You say that, but I bet you want some of this, don’t you?” Guzma’s sneer hadn’t lessened, and in
fact, he seemed to be all but preparing himself for the inevitable. “I can’t fight right now. I know I
can’t. You know I can’t. So what’s stopping ya, huh? You were fine earlier when you took my
clothes off. What stopped you then?”

“I told you I didn’t want you to get sick.” Nanu’s voice was monotone. He didn’t know what to say
that would convince Guzma he wasn’t going to do what the younger man was insinuating he might. Nanu wondered if he should have left the station sooner.

“Sure, and that’s why you’re practically straddlin’ me and holding me down.” Guzma narrowed his eyes. “If you aren’t gonna do anything, then leave me the fuck alone.”

“Fine.” Nanu seemed to realize that yes, he was in fact just about straddling Guzma, as well as preventing the other man from resisting what he might choose to do with him. Nanu didn’t like it and straightened up.

“You move slow as hell.” Guzma pointed out. “And you better not stop me from leavin’. I just got some bumps and bruises. I can travel just fine.” Guzma held up an arm to fend Persian off when the dark furred Pokémon inched closer. “And you stay back. Don’t go licking me again.”

Persian squeezed its eyes shut and purred a little as it rubbed its face against Guzma’s hand.

“Damn cat.” Guzma scowled, even if he didn’t dissuade the Pokémon.

“Just know that if you do get up and go fall in the downpour out there that Persian will likely just drag you back.” Nanu was too tired to argue much more than that. Better to let Guzma do as he pleased, and hope the younger man would tire out and the older officer could just get him back into bed. And then leave him to sleep in the station as Nanu himself went about his duties as an Alolan cop that night.

“You moving any time soon, old man?” Guzma leveled a glare at Nanu, though his whole body was taut, as if he still expected Nanu to try and do something to him.

“I am.” Nanu shifted to one side, and in the process, pulled something in his side that made his breath hitch, and his body freeze up. Shit. Nanu grimaced, trying to figure out what he had just done to his own body, when another spasm went through his back this time, which made him lose his balance and collapse with a grimace.

Right on top of Guzma.

“The hell? Get off of me!” Guzma snarled, even if there was a thread of panic mixed in with the anger.

Nanu tried to move, but he ended up just wincing because of that damn kink in his side that stole his breath and made it hard to suck a breath back in. But it put him off balance enough that Guzma, even in his weakened state, was able to take advantage of. Nanu groaned in pain when Guzma’s knee caught in him the gut, followed by a punch that clipped one shoulder. It threw Nanu further off balance, and that was when Guzma gathered up enough energy to shove the older officer off of the bed with an inarticulate snarl. Nanu hit the floor, hands barely managing to catch himself but not fast enough to prevent his head from hitting the floor. The sudden contact made Nanu’s body give out on him and he went limp.

“Why the hell didn’t you catch yourself?”

Nanu closed his eyes, head spinning and unable to piece together the fact the Guzma was shifting around on the bed now, and Persian was letting out a low growl.

“Hey, old man?”

Nanu winced when a hand gripped his shoulder and gave it a firm shake.
“You’re just fucking with me, right? I didn’t hit you that hard.”

From overheard, there was a low, concerned meow from Persian, and a few inaudible curses from Guzma.

"Shit. You seriously have your own body give out on you like that?"

Nanu was worn out, and made no outward response to the sensation of someone picking him up. Maybe Guzma would leave him outside in the rain. That would be rather fitting, as Nanu had planned to let himself get soaked to the bone as he patrolled that night.

“Nanu?”

The officer felt himself being set down on something…soft? It felt like it might be one of his couches. Nanu felt himself drifting. His head hurt from where it had hit the floor, and the sensation of several small, warm bodies clued Nanu into the fact that several Meowth were going to be using his soon to be unconscious body for a bed. Nanu didn’t fight the exhaustion that swept him into an almost welcome sleep. Unfortunately, it didn’t prevent the thought of having fucked up by falling on top of Guzma unintentionally, and figured that the punk would be well within his right to beat the shit out of him in his sleep.

-x-x-x-

“Hey, officer Nanu?”

“Sis, is he dead?”

“Did the boss beat him up?”

“Move aside, you dummies.”

Nanu’s brow furrowed at all of the voices speaking up at once, and when he opened his eyes, he found a couple of Team Skull punks peering down at him, along with Plumeria, who looked as if she hadn’t walked through a rainstorm as the others had.


Nanu was lying on one of the couches, as he had thought before he’d fallen unconscious. The Meowth weren’t on him, however, and that allowed Nanu to carefully sit up. With a frown, the red eyed officer wondered why Guzma had said he’d passed out, instead of Guzma saying he had thrown Nanu to the floor. Nanu looked around at the punks and Plumeria, before he spotted Guzma behind the rest of them, dressed in his clothes again, and actively avoiding his eyes.

“Old injuries acting up on me.” Nanu said in response to Plumeria’s question. “It’s nothing. Just happens more often than I’d like.” Nanu met Plumeria’s eyes. “You here to take your boss back? He took a tumble down those rocky ledges.”

“Yeah, he said as much.” Plumeria gave a quick glance to the side before she dropped her voice so that only Nanu could hear her. “He probably didn’t tell you, but he slipped and fell because he was helping a Wimpod.”

Nanu should have known. It made sense, seeing how much Guzma loved bug Pokémon, though the officer hadn’t realized that that kind of Pokémon could get to those ledges.

“We’re taking Guzma back with us to Po Town.” Plumeria added, this time louder, so everyone in
“Do what you want.” Nanu said wearily as he closed his eyes. Some peace and quiet would be very welcome right now, as his head was feeling very tender from where it had hit the floor. Nanu heard the door open and close, and figured that he was alone once more until someone none too gently kicked his shin. Nanu started and opened his eyes, raising his head to meet Guzma’s.

“Don’t get too comfortable.” Guzma’s usual confidence was back full swing, and the younger man’s unfriendly gaze bored into Nanu’s. “Once I’m feeling back to normal, I’m gonna come back here and beat you down.”

“Shut the door on your way out.” Nanu said in response as he promptly shut his eyes again.

“Don’t go dyin’ on me before I get a chance to beat you down, old man.” A pause. “And fix those kinks in yer body so they don’t do you in first.”

“No promises on that. I don’t usually have control over my body when it locks up on me like that.” Nanu didn’t hear Guzma move. “Is that all? You were in a hurry to leave earlier, weren’t you?” Nanu heard a low curse, some footsteps, and the sound of the door to the station slamming shut. Nanu smiled to himself. Finally, silence.

“The hell are you smirking for, geezer?”

Nanu started again, displeased with himself for not realizing that he wasn’t alone. But the older officer had no time to react, because he suddenly found himself with Guzma on his lap, the younger man straddling him as Guzma’s hands gripped his shoulders. Nanu regained his composure and gave the punk a disinterested stare.

“Why aren’t you gone yet?” Nanu didn’t like the way Guzma was looking at him, though mainly because there almost appeared to be concern in the other man’s eyes. “I’m not going to be dropping dead anytime soon, if that’s what you wanted to know. I’m sure I’ll be around for you to take a swing at later.”

“I figured that. I just didn’t want you to be smug and have the last word, is all.” Guzma said, hesitating before he leaned over and roughly pressed his lips to Nanu’s.

Nanu supposed he should have seen this coming, though why Guzma was suddenly kissing him when before he wanted to kick the officer’s ass for stripping him of his clothes was a mystery. Did Guzma want to be kissed, or was he just getting back at him for what Nanu had done earlier, as the punk seemed to be implying? Nanu grimaced when Guzma nipped his lower lip roughly, and growled something into the kiss. Nanu sighed, though he hadn’t intended for Guzma to take advantage of it and slip his tongue in, mirroring the way Nanu had kissed the punk hours before.

“Nothing to say, old man?” Guzma breathed into the kiss, before he gripped Nanu’s shoulders even tighter.

Nanu hesitated for a moment, not sure if Guzma actually wanted him to do anything, before he gave in and reached up for Guzma’s hair, only to have the punk stop him with one larger hand smacking his hand away. Nanu held back a grimace when Guzma’s hand went back to his shoulders to the point it was almost painful. Nanu paused again, before he lightly brushed his hands along Guzma’s side, in what amounted to an unasked question, since he wasn’t going to be forming words any time soon. Nanu still didn’t know if Guzma was thinking clearly or if the punk was just trying to get back at him.
Guzma mumbled something into the kiss he held Nanu locked in, but did nothing to dissuade the officer, as one hand moved from the officer’s shoulder to rest against the back of his neck.

Nanu slowly ran his hands along Guzma’s sides beneath the jacket while wondering when Guzma would break the kiss and heap abuse on him for being a pervert or whatever terms the younger man chose to use.

Instead, Guzma’s breath hitched at the touch, and he seemed to lean in closer to Nanu, as if wanting more, the hand against the nape of Nanu’s neck pulling the officer closer.

Nanu stopped what he was doing, abruptly jerking his hands away as he hastily broke away from the kiss. No. He couldn’t do this. Guzma was sending him too many mixed signals, and Nanu didn’t want things to go any further until he knew for certain that Guzma wasn’t yanking his chain. Or getting back at him for earlier. The older officer didn’t want to regret anything more when it came to Guzma, and before the younger man could even get a chance to say anything, Nanu upended him onto the couch. Nanu hastily rose before Guzma could do anything more than curse in what sounded like surprise. The red eyed officer made it to the front door, and exited the station, heedless of the rain pouring down as he addressed the other Team Skull punks loitering outside the station.

“Hey. Go get your boss and get back to Po Town, all of you.”

The grunts hastily moved to obey Nanu, which amused the older officer, though Nanu pointedly avoided Guzma’s gaze as the punk emerged from the station with his lackeys. Nanu remained where he was until Guzma and the others were out of sight. Nanu stared at the walls that enclosed Po Town from the rest of the world, before he turned and entered the station again. Nanu locked the door behind him before he leaned against the door with a drawn out sigh, looking around the now quiet station. A bigger Pokémon pressing against his legs made Nanu look down.

Persian.

With a bag of ice.

“What a mess.” Nanu muttered to himself, not taking the offered ice for his head. It didn’t occur to him where it might have come from. Nanu honestly had no idea what to do about Guzma’s sudden interest in him. Mainly because Nanu didn’t know if the interest was genuine, or if Guzma merely wanted to get a form of revenge for the older officer taking advantage of his weakened state earlier and kissing the younger man.

Nanu sank to the floor as he gathered two Meowth that had wandered close enough into his arms.

“You lot enjoy sleeping on me?” Nanu rested his head against them, and let the Meowth press their faces against his cheeks. Nanu stilled when he felt Persian press against his side, and cold soon followed on his head.

Persian was holding the bag of ice on his head for him.

Nanu shifted his body slightly to press against his Pokémon, and half smiled when his Pokémon growled something around the bag in its mouth. Before Nanu knew it, he was guided across the station, to Persian’s Pokémon bed. Nanu let his Pokémon curl up next to him to begin to groom him while one of the Meowth held the bag of ice to the sore spot on his head.

“I’ll be all right.” Nanu assured the Pokémon around him.

Persian pressed itself closer, its round head tilting as it let out a chuff of uncertainty before it pressed its cheek to Nanu’s and purred. Other Meowth joined the Persian and all the purring and soft fur
against him made Nanu cover his eyes with an arm as he let out a humorless laugh. The kahuna of Ula'Ula island, and an Alolan cop, had been reduced to a sorry older man being comforted by his Pokémon.

Nanu really was getting too old for this, if he had been too slow to prevent an injury that could have easily been avoided years ago. Nanu sighed and wrapped an arm around Persian, face pressed against the dark fur as the purring ramped up. Nanu was also too worn out to deal with Guzma and the red eyed officer could only hope that they could steer clear of one another for the time being.

Nanu needed some time to think, and he felt that Guzma did too.

Chapter End Notes

FYI update on this fic and some IRL stuff:

I really do apologize for not updating this fic sooner. I have appreciated the patience about not having as regular of updates as I had hoped, and am glad that people enjoy the fic enough to reread the first few chapters. 2017 was a rough year for me in regard to motivation/inspiration to type, which was why my fic updates were all over the place in regards to which fic I did happen to update. It mainly had to do with the fact that I had 3 different jobs over the course of the year, and it is always difficult for me to adjust to a new job (plus when I was in-between jobs, I had to focus on applications, which was another kind of stress altogether, and all of this affected my ability to focus and write).

This year is a bit better, because I am still working at the 3rd job I got last year, but it is more mentally stimulating, which makes it hard for me to focus and update all of my fics as often as I would like once i'm done with work for the day. But I was struck with inspiration for this fic earlier in the week out of the blue, and I went on a writing rampage for writing out the outline, which has changed since March due to Ultra Sun and Ultra Moon coming out in the fall. I added some things to the outline I made for this fic, so of course, as is usual for me when I write, this story is going to be longer than initially thought. In case people are curious, I have the fic divided into two timelines (where there is a year and a half gap between them):

1.) Initial chapters where Guzma is the Team Skull leader (shorter timeline-likely to ch 6/7 before time skip-Nanu and Guzma trying to figure one another out)

2.) Guzma is no longer the leader of Team Skull (disbanded it) and the story line becomes a mash up of post game in Sun/Moon, and some of the climax of Ultra Sun/Ultra Moon, but with differences.

My hope is that since my job appears to be more stable (in that I don't have to think about looking for another job any time soon), that I can work on typing in the evenings when I'm up to it, and perhaps start to post again on the weekends, depending on motivation and the annoying 'am I in the mood to stare at the screen for x amount of time today after staring at screen for x amount of time at work.'

AKA I hope to not have nearly a year long gap between updates, as I hate derailing the reading experience, as I know it gets frustrating waiting for a new chapter and wondering, as time goes by, whether or not the writer plans on continuing a fic. I don't have any plans on abandoning this story, because I am ridiculously excited to get to
some future chapters, but it will likely take me longer to finish it.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

This weekend has been really good for writing this fic out.

Nanu felt that he should have known better than to think that Guzma would leave him be. However, a few weeks after their last encounter, Nanu was a little surprised to see Guzma enter the station in broad daylight. It wasn’t surprising that Guzma hadn’t bothered to knock; what was surprising was that he didn’t say a word as the younger man went straight for the small kitchen area.

“Any particular reason you’re here?” Nanu commented from the couch he was lounging on. The red eyed officer watched Guzma load up a bag of food from the small pantry. “Other than taking my food?”

“You gonna eat all of it before it goes bad?” Guzma responded, not bothering to look at Nanu as he began to fill a second bag.

“Probably not.” Nanu quietly watched Guzma a moment longer, before he added, “Acerola brought a lot of the groceries to the station because she said I didn’t go out often enough for food. Other than for all the Meowth here.”

Guzma snorted, as if not at all surprised by Nanu’s admission that he would get food to feed his Pokémon before himself. With a shake of his head, Guzma opened up the small fridge to investigate. That was when the door to the station door was knocked on.

Nanu rose, relieved in a way that Guzma didn’t do anything other than peer around the fridge door. It looked as if the younger punk was wondering who would bother visiting him. Nanu sometimes wondered that himself, but since someone was knocking, instead of just entering, he had a feeling he knew who it was going to be. A trainer who wanted to start their island challenge. With a final look at Guzma, Nanu went over to the door without a word and opened it. When the red eyed officer didn’t see anyone at eye level, he looked down.

A bright eyed girl who appeared to be around 11 years old stood there, positively beaming in her travelling outfit while she stood there in the rain with her umbrella.

“You the one who wants to start their island with an Alolan Meowth?” Nanu searched around for the name he’d heard. "Amy, right?”

“That’s me!” The girl, Amy, smiled cheerfully. “I was thinking about a Litten, but I decided I liked Meowth better after reading up on them.”

“Well, come on in out of the rain.” Nanu stated, stepping back to allow Amy to come inside, and close the door behind her. “Wait there. I’ll go get the Meowth you’ll choose from.”

“Oh, hi.” Amy giggled when several other Meowth came over to inspect her. “Wow, there are so many of you.” Amy turned, and her eyes went wide at the sight of Persian trotting over to greet her. Amy cautiously held out a hand for Persian to sniff, and smiled when Persian rubbed its round face against her hand. “Hello to you too.” Amy said, petting Persian’s head carefully. Amy laughed
again when the Meowth around her began to insist upon getting their heads scratched too, which
Amy happily gave to them in turn.

Nanu nodded to himself after watching the interaction, and as he headed toward the back of the
station, he avoided Guzma’s confused look. Nanu didn’t feel like saying anything about the
exchange until after Amy and the Meowth she would choose were gone. Nanu stooped behind one
of the couches and waved a hand under it, softly calling for the Meowth. “Hey, you three. We
talked about this last night. Come on out.” Nanu frowned when the Meowth didn’t appear. “I can’t
stay like this forever. You know my knee gives out sometimes because of what happened to it.”

“What the hell are you doing?” Guzma questioned, as he crouched down next to Nanu.

“Weren’t you in the middle of clearing out my pantry and fridge?” Nanu asked blandly in return as
he held his hand under the couch again.

“Watching you bend over like this is painful to watch.” Guzma commented, and, flashing a grin at
the frown Nanu turned on him, added. “Watch this, old man.” Guzma tapped a few fingers on the
ground.

Almost immediately, several Meowth darted out from underneath the couch to pounce on Guzma’s
hand.

“I guess they like you.” Nanu commented. Ignoring the grin that was still aimed his way, Nanu
picked through the Meowth who had appeared from beneath the couch. After brief consideration, he
scooped up three of them, again not saying anything in response to Guzma’s questioning look. Nanu
carried the three Meowth toward the front of the station, and smiled a little at the sight of Amy
surrounded by all the felines. “Hey now, give her some space.” Nanu shooed the Meowth away in
order to make room to set down the three Meowth he had retrieved.

“Here we go.” Nanu knelt down and gave each Meowth a few head scratches, before he turned his
head toward Amy. “You ready?”

“I need to choose from three?” Amy eyed each of the Meowth in turn before she looked at Nanu.

“Well, yeah, that’s how the other kahuna do it. Just because they’re the same species doesn’t mean
they are all the same. Need to see which one’s temperament would fit best for you.” Nanu indicated
the Meowth on the far left, “For instance, this Meowth loves to battle, but it can be very vain about
wanting to be groomed after each battle.

The Meowth cleaned its whiskers and offered a sly, toothy smile.

“And this one here.” Nanu indicated the middle Meowth, which looked alert, “This Meowth is very
curious and enjoys looking for items. It might take it a little time to understand battle, but it’s a
steady learner and will do well with proper guidance.”

The Meowth stretched out and sat down.

“And then there’s this Meowth.” Nanu patted the last Meowth on the head as he smiled a little,
“This one loves to cuddle and is very loyal. It’ll stick with whoever ends up being their trainer. It’s
very attentive and unlike some Alolan Meowth, doesn’t mind waiting to be groomed. Should make
battles go smoothly.”

The Meowth stared at Amy, squeezed its eyes shut, and offered a somewhat shy smile.

“Um…” Amy stared at each of the Meowth quietly, all three watching her closely in return. Amy
stayed in place for a moment, before she knelt down in front of the last Meowth, and held out one of her hands. “If you’re okay with me as a trainer, I’d like to go on a journey with you.”

The Meowth made what appeared to be an affirmative sound and placed a paw on the girl’s hand. The Meowth even purred a little, before it leapt at Amy and got caught in her arms. Amy laughed at the Meowth, and glanced up at Nanu, a little frown replacing the smile. Amy studied Nanu for a moment, petting the Meowth absently. “Are you all right, Island Kahuna?”

“I am. Here.” Nanu offered a Pokeball to Amy, which she took. Nanu turned his attention onto the Meowth in her arms. “You behave.”

The Meowth smiled, which could really mean anything with the Pokemon.

“You be sure to take good care of it.” Nanu told Amy.

“I will.” The 11 year old held up the Pokeball, which Meowth pressed its cheek to. It went into the Pokeball, and when the light faded, indicating that the capture was a success, Amy let the Meowth back out. Seeing Nanu’s raised brow, Amy beamed up at him. “I want my partner Pokémon to be out of its Pokeball. It’ll make travelling more fun.”

The Meowth let out a pleased purr and pressed up against Amy for a hug.

Amy gave a quick hug to the Meowth, before she looked up at Nanu again. “Thank you.”

Nanu gave a jerk of his head in acknowledgment, not understanding why he just got another smile from the kid in return.

“Oh!” Amy checked a watch. “My mom’s expecting me to check in with her soon.”

“Well, better get going then.” Nanu said, crossing to the station door and opening it.

“Right.” Amy opened up her umbrella again, and ran outside, the Meowth chasing after her. She waved to Nanu, and then set off down the path with Meowth walking by her side.

Nanu remained in the doorway, watching a little sadly the sight of the Meowth as it walked away with Amy. Nanu watched the pair until they were out of sight, before he sighed and closed the door to the station, already having forgotten that he had had an audience.

“I didn’t know you were such a softy under all that gloom and doom.” Guzma commented from over by the pantry.

“How would you feel about raising bug Pokémon and then giving one of them up to let another person go on their own Pokémon journey?” Nanu asked quietly, not looking at Guzma as he spoke. He was trying to keep himself together until the Team Skull boss decided to clear out.

No answer.

“So you get it.” Nanu commented as he bent over to pick up one of the Meowth that hadn’t been chosen, and poked it in the belly. “You were baring your teeth on purpose, weren’t you?”

The Meowth smiled a toothily, giving off the air of being very smug.

“Hey, old man. Don’t go ignoring me like that.”

Nanu held still when Guzma plucked the Meowth out of his hands, set it down, and stepped into the red eyed officer’s space.
“If this is about the food, then just take what you want and clear off.” Nanu gave Guzma a tired look. “I would like to be alone.”

“It isn’t about the food.” Guzma said, as he reached out and grabbed one of Nanu’s arms, and forcefully steered him over toward the couch. “And you’re alone most of the time, so don’t give me the bullshit that you want to be alone.”

“I never said I wanted company.” Nanu should have been prepared for Guzma to give him a shove toward the couch, but he wasn’t ready for it, so Nanu ended up hitting the couch at an awkward angle. Nanu grimaced a little as his hip protested the action. “You going to give me that beat down now? The one you said you’d give me when you were feeling better?”

“Shut up, geezer.” Guzma grumbled. “Or I really will beat you down here and now.”

“Well, you got me on the couch here. Might as well have a swing at me if you’re not going to leave me alone.” Nanu deadpanned. He wasn’t prepared for Guzma to manhandle him into a seated position, or for Guzma to pick up two Meowth by the scruff of their necks and shove them into his arms. Nanu automatically held on to the Pokemon protectively, not sure what Guzma was up to. Nanu's back was against one cushion of the couch, and Guzma chose to sit down on the opposite arm of the couch, staring down at him.

“What?” Nanu asked, holding the two Meowth a little closer to his body as the feline Pokemon squirmed, trying to get into a more comfortable position.

“Why do it?” Guzma asked, taking his eyes off of Nanu briefly to look at the front door to the station. The younger man fixed his eyes back on Nanu, and the way the red eyed officer held onto the Meowth. “Why give ‘em away?”

“The Pokémon?” Nanu asked, absently running his fingertips along the soft gray fur of the Meowth he held.

“Yeah, why give ‘em up if you don’t want to?” Guzma asked, jabbing a finger at the Meowth. “You look like someone stole one of your Pokemon when that kid picked a Meowth as a partner Pokemon.”

“I need to let some of them go.” Nanu looked away as he allowed one of the Meowth to press a cheek to his. “They’ll be better off exploring the world with a bright-eyed kid instead of hanging around the station with me.”

“But you don’t like it.” Guzma pointed out.

“More Meowth will turn up. They always do.” Nanu sighed as the other Alolan Meowth he held rubbed its face against his cheek too. “They seem to like me, for some reason.”

“I like you, when you’re not being depressing all the time.” Guzma said with a snort.

“What could you possibly find to like about me?” Nanu turned his head to meet Guzma’s eyes at that. “We got into a fight, among other things, the last time we saw each other.”

“You’re not intimidated by me.” Guzma offered with a shrug.

“And this is impressive to you?” Nanu asked wryly. “Does it really not take all that much to impress you?”

“You’re an asshole, old man.” Guzma grumbled.
“So I’ve been told numerous times by you.” Nanu replied, sounding bored.

“Just take the damn compliment.” Guzma said with an aggravated sigh. “See? You’re irritating as hell when you act like that.”

“And yet you keep coming back here.” Nanu said, releasing the Meowth to allow them to hop down and play with the other Meowth in the station. “Speaking of, are you going to be leaving any time soon?”

“Maybe I’m trying to liven up the place.” Guzma ventured. “And I’ll leave when I’m good and ready.”

“It certainly was lively last time.” Nanu agreed. “I couldn’t sleep that night.”

“Do you think you could can the sarcasm, old man?”

“It seems to be doing its job.” Nanu looked down at Guzma’s clenched hands. “You ready to leave yet, or are you going to take a swing at me already? I want to relax after doing my Kahuna duties.”

“You just stood there and watched a kid pick a Pokémon.” Guzma said, giving Nanu a disbelieving look. “Does that really tire you out that much?”

“What do you think?” Nanu asked, sagging against the couch.

“I think you’re full of shit.” Guzma said bluntly, “And I’m gonna steal all the food I can carry from ya, and give it to my Pokémon.”

“You’re full of shit too, kid.” Nanu shot back, head turning to the side so that red eyes could bore into Guzma’s. “You’re not taking that food for your Pokemon. You’re going to give it to the rest of the punks hanging out in Po Town, aren’t you?”

Guzma broke eye contact first, and muttered something under his breath before sliding off the arm of the couch to his feet.

“Oh? Are you going to leave now?” Nanu asked mildly.

“Bite me, old man.” Guzma said automatically.

“Not in the mood to.” Nanu said dryly, closing his eyes, but not before he caught a glimpse of a blush crossing Guzma’s cheeks.

“I’ll come back another day to teach you a lesson.” Guzma said after a beat of silence. “You wouldn’t be any fun to beat the shit out of right now anyway.”

“Guzma.” Nanu opened his eyes and sat up on the couch. “What do you want from me anyway?”

“Who says I want anything from you other than your food?” Guzma returned dismissively as he retrieved and carried three plastic bags loaded with food toward the front of the station.

“Think about it before you come back here.” Nanu said.

Guzma gave Nanu a narrow eyed glare over his shoulder before he exited the station without a word, slamming the door behind him with a foot.

Nanu remained on the couch, and allowed the two Meowth that weren’t chosen by Amy to hop up onto him to comfort him. Nanu was glad that Guzma didn’t see him shed some tears for the Meowth
that wasn’t in the station any more. While Nanu knew that it was necessary, he didn’t always like performing his duties as a kahuna. But no matter how often he did give a trainer their starter Pokémon, it didn't change the fact that it always hurt each time Nanu had to let one of his Meowth go.

-x-x-x-

Guzma got only a short distance away from the police station before he was able to pass off the bags of food to a grunt loitering around the outside the station. Guzma watched the punks run off, before he followed along after them at a slower, more leisurely pace, his mind elsewhere. As Guzma made his way back to Po Town, he frowned over what the hell Nanu had been talking about. About what he wanted from the older man. Guzma didn’t exactly want anything, per say, apart from Nanu not interfering with Team Skull’s activities. He wasn't going to stop stealing Nanu’s food, because the man always had way more than he needed for the month. It didn't matter that the red eyed officer never protested about the food being taken away. So what else could Guzma want from Nanu? Unbidden, Guzma thought back on the kissing, and cursed under his breath.

What the hell?

Why would he want to think about that? There was no way in hell that Nanu was interested in actually starting something with him. It was more like Nanu was messing with Guzma’s head and teasing him. Which kind of made Guzma angry, because he didn’t like being toyed with. But Nanu responding so blithely to the offer of biting him…Guzma shivered. Nanu had looked very intent then, like he would consider it if Guzma gave the go ahead, despite claiming to be too tired. Guzma stopped that thought right there and left it alone. He wasn’t sure what he wanted from Nanu after all. And it scared him a little to think that he wanted to be kissed again. That didn’t seem like such a good idea, what with Nanu being a cop and all. Even if Nanu hadn’t been a cop, it didn’t seem like the best idea to get involved with such a dour person. Guzma could all but sense the gloom whenever he went over to the police station and saw Nanu there. And looking like he didn’t give a fuck that Guzma was there.

Which kind of also ticked Guzma off because he was used to being feared by most of the Alolan populace. Nanu merely seemed to be annoyed by his presence, like he wanted Guzma to clear off and leave him to wallow in his own despair. When pushed, however, the man fought dirty.

Guzma halted in his tracks despite the rain falling down on him, and half glanced back to the station behind him in the distance. Running a hand over his throat lightly, Guzma dropped his hand to his side and frowned. He wasn't entirely sure what was going on in the other man's head, but Nanu had clearly been doing some thinking since the last time they’d seen one another. Especially if Nanu was asking things like what Guzma wanted from him, and for him to think about it. But Guzma didn't have an answer.

Not right now, anyway.

With a shake of his head, Guzma continued onward, only to stop walking again a few minutes later. This time, it was because he heard a furious snarl and a hell of a lot of hissing coming from the wall that bordered Po Town. The sounds were very close to what Nanu’s Persian would sound like, but Guzma knew that Nanu’s Pokémon was still back at the station, meaning that it was a wild Pokémon that he was hearing. Guzma hesitated briefly as he debated whether or not to interfere. But since it was happening fairly close to Po Town, Guzma decided to do something about it. He didn’t want an angry wild Pokémon around that could potentially attack the other punks lower level Pokémon. Standing in place for a moment to figure out exactly where the noise was coming from, Guzma went in the direction of the snarls from the Persian.
Guzma pushed past a bush in time to catch sight of a Persian heavily striking a small dark furred Meowth roughly with a clawed paw. It sent the tiny thing rolling along the grass as it mewled frantically and tried to right itself, only to be struck again. Guzma ground his teeth at the sight, an uncomfortable feeling settling in the pit of his stomach.

“Hey, knock it off.” Guzma yelled at the Persian, not liking the look that twisted the features on the feline. The wild Pokémon looked like it was out for blood. Guzma’s hand went for one of his Pokémon’s Pokeballs as the Persian made a lunge for the tiny Meowth, paws outstretched and fangs bared. “Scizor! Bullet Punch!”

The red colored bug Pokémon burst out of the Pokeball and landed in front of the tiny Meowth, intercepting the Persian and sending it flying backwards with a Bullet Punch.

The Persian shrieked furiously at the Scizor for its interference.

Guzma took a quick look around, and noticed the amount of egg shards lying around in the immediate area. Guzma turned his head and caught sight of other baby Meowth with soft gray fur watching from nearby with wide eyes. Guzma noticed the Persian getting back up and narrowing its eyes at the tiny Meowth crying on the ground. Guzma took a step toward the Persian. “Hey! Clear outta here with your babies and leave that one alone!”

The Persian turned its round head to Guzma, and bared its fangs as it let out a hiss.

“You want some of yer boy Guzma?” Fists tightened as a wild grin split the younger man’s face. “I’ll kick your ass, you damn cat.” Guzma’s hands shook. “A parent shouldn’t hurt their own children.” Hearing that come out of his own mouth made Guzma briefly drop his guard, and the Persian apparently decided that attacking a human that day was fine. Luckily for Guzma, Golisopod popped out of its Pokeball to defend its trainer, and swatted the Persian through the air to cause it to land near its brood. Golisopod let out a series of angry hisses and clicks and waved its many limbs in warning.

Scizor joined Golisopod, depositing the crying baby Meowth near Guzma as it readied itself to continue the fight.

The Persian peeled back its lips in a silent snarl, before it appeared to think better of continuing its attacks, and instead herded its other babies away from the area after a final evil glare at both Pokémon and Guzma.

Golisopod let out a long whirl of concern as it nudged Guzma gently, since the younger man had taken to staring off into the distance as if caught in some unseen memory. The bug Pokémon’s touch seemed to draw Guzma back into reality.

“I’m okay…” Guzma said after he took a long breath and let it out. He gently waved Golisopods’ limbs away from him. “Seriously, I’m good.” Guzma crouched down to inspect the tiny dark furred Meowth, and carefully turned it over in his hands, noticing how big they were compared to the Meowth.

The tiny Meowth shivered like a leaf, wide eyed and fearful as it looked up at Guzma, as if thinking he was going to bat it around too.

“I got you. You’re gonna be fine.” Guzma muttered to the Meowth as he carefully picked it up, and then stared at a few scratches down its back where blood had been drawn. Some of the scratches looked deep. Guzma rested the Meowth on his knee as he hastily zipped up his jacket, feeling the baby Pokémon shivering. Guzma carefully picked the Meowth up, before he tucked it into his jacket.
The Meowth, likely having had its wounds jostled, began to mew frantically between its shivers.

Guzma pet its head gently with a finger. Poor thing was probably still calling for its mother despite the mother trying to kill it. Guzma flicked some dirt off the tiny coin on the Meowth’s forehead, before he scowled in the direction the Persian went. Guzma hated the fact that the damn Pokémon had dredged up some unwanted memories. Guzma had never been in danger of dying, but seeing the Persian bat around the helpless baby Meowth pissed him off.

“Don’t worry, I’m gonna get you out of the rain.” Guzma murmured over the mewling as he had his Pokémon go back into their Pokeballs. If the Persian showed up again, Guzma wasn’t too worried about them popping right back out to deal with the wild Pokémon. Guzma headed back in the direction of the police station, not really wanting to bring the feline to Po Town, despite some of his team being more than happy to have a Meowth on their team. But with the way that Guzma had found the Meowth, he felt it might be better to take it to someone else. Like to Nanu, who was always surrounded by them, and would probably know better what to do to calm the baby Pokémon down. Guzma only briefly hesitated before he had made his decision, since Nanu had a Persian.

With a shake of his head, Guzma continued onward, as he figured that since it was a trainer’s Pokémon, that it might be more willing to overlook differences. The more Guzma looked down at the Meowth curled up in his jacket, the more he realized he hadn’t been imagining the color difference. Guzma reached the station, and, upon finding it locked, hammered on the door with a fist, and raised his voice to shout through the door.

“Hey, old man! Open up! Got a Pokémon to give to you.” Guzma grinned when the door opened and Nanu was there, giving him an aggravated look. “What? Did I wake you up from your cat nap?”

“If you’re just here to bother me again, go away.” Nanu said shortly, his expression suspicious. “And why not give one of the punks in Po Town another Pokémon?”

It didn’t escape Guzma’s notice that Nanu’s eyes appeared to be redder than usual, as if…as if he had been crying. Guzma frowned at Nanu. Did giving up a Meowth to another trainer really upset him that much?

“Well?” Nanu prompted. “Are you going to come in or stand in the rain and stare at me?”

“Get outta the way.” Guzma grumbled, as he reached out with a hand and pushed Nanu back, so that he could get inside and shut the door behind him. Guzma then stuck his hands into his half open jacket, not noticing the raised brow from Nanu. But Guzma didn’t miss the longing on the older man’s face when he saw Guzma pull out the tiny soaked bundle of fur.

The baby Meowth had quieted but began to cry again frantically when removed from the warmth of Guzma’s jacket. It squeaked out when it twisted its body and pulled on the scratches down its back. It started to actually cry then, little tears leaking down from its wide eyes to mix with its already wet fur.

Guzma had not at all expected the amount of emotion that washed over Nanu’s face then, nor how quickly Nanu reached out his hands for the Pokémon. Guzma handed it over with a quiet laugh, supposing he would do the same thing with a bug-type Pokémon. Guzma followed along after Nanu as the older man carried the Meowth over to a small bathroom hidden in the back of the station, and carefully set the Meowth in the sink to keep it from crawling away.
The tiny Meowth didn’t seem inclined to go anywhere and cried at the loss of more warmth.

Nanu seemed to find the supplies in the bathroom he was looking for more quickly at the sounds, and, casting a quick look in Guzma’s direction, spoke quietly.

"Can you help hold it still? It's going to need some medical attention right now, from the looks of it."

“Not at a Pokémon Center?” Guzma asked, even as he went to the sink to run a reassuring finger along the Meowth’s head. Guzma then picked up its lightweight body in one hand, turning it so that Nanu could clean the long scratches and dry the fur as best he could with a towel.

“Not for this type of an injury on such a young Pokémon.” Nanu said in return, apparently not caring that his towel was getting stained with some blood.

The Meowth crying at its injuries being seen to drew in many of the Meowth from the station. Persian had even squeezed itself inside the room and hoisted its front paws up on the sink so that it could watch. The baby Meowth seemed to calm immediately upon seeing the Persian, and let out a little mewl that Persian answered with a soft chuff. The Meowth quieted, wincing as Nanu stitched some of the wider scratches shut, despite having the area numbed a little, before tracing some antibiotic for Pokémon over the scratches. Nanu finished by wrapping the tiny body with bandages, which covered and went around most of the Meowth’s torso.

“You didn’t steal it, did you?” Nanu asked, after he’d cleaned up. He offered some medicine to the Meowth, which it took with little encouragement. It seemed too exhausted to resist and apparently decided that doing what someone wanted it to do was best for now. The older man picked the Meowth up in his hands carefully, and offered a small smile to the Meowth, causing an uncertain one to rise from the Meowth in return. Nanu glanced at Guzma. “Well, did you or didn’t you steal it?”

“I didn't steal it.” Guzma said defensively. “I just chased off a Persian that was attacking it. There were a few other Meowth that looked like they just hatched too.” Guzma reached over and ran a finger over the dark purple fur. “Didn’t look like this guy though.”

“Ah.” Nanu retrieved the towel and dried the Pokémon off, careful of the bandages. The motion seemed to calm the baby Meowth in the process but it was not long before it started to cry again. Nanu stroked the fur as he spoke emotionlessly. “Sometimes there are Pokémon that end up being different colors than you’d be used to seeing. Not all Pokémon will accept them if they look different.” Nanu turned his attention to the Meowth that had crowded around him curiously, along with Persian, whose round face was intently watching the towel, ears tilted forward and tail twitching.

“You be nice to this Meowth here. It just has different colored fur.” Nanu crouched down to allow the other Meowth to get a good look. Pretty much all of the Meowth wandered off after inspecting the newcomer, and appeared disinterested. None made as if to swat a paw at it.

“What do you think?” Nanu asked his Persian, as the larger Pokémon came over and sniffed the shivering Meowth.

Persian carefully began to groom the Meowth, almost instantly quieting the smaller Pokémon. With a squeeze of its eyes, Persian carefully picked the Meowth up by the scruff of its neck.

“Be careful of the bandages.” Nanu cautioned his Pokémon.

Persian let out an affirmative huff around the fur in its mouth, and carefully carried the Meowth out of the bathroom, and over into the main living space of the station to curl up in a Pokémon bed.
Persian set the Meowth down, tucked it in close to its body carefully, and then resumed grooming it.

“Well, Persian seems to be all right with it.” Nanu breathed out a sigh of relief. “I’m guessing the wild Persian would have been vain about its offspring looking the same. Since that wild Persian isn’t related to mine, or any of the Meowth here, I think, I don’t believe any of them care about its fur being darker.” Nanu glanced at Guzma, and offered the punk one of his half smiles. “Guess you’re a softie too, under all that posturing.” From the smile remaining, it was clear the older man was echoing Guzma’s earlier words regarding Nanu and his Meowth.

“Don’t push your luck.” Guzma hunched his shoulders up. “I’m still gonna beat you down, you know. I just didn’t want to do it when you were lookin’ so down about having to have one of your Meowth go to another trainer.” Guzma looked away. “I thought that the Meowth shouldn’t be around any violence or Pokemon battles for awhile. Either could happen in Po Town, but not here in this place.” Guzma glanced down at a Meowth standing near him. “Your Pokemon here are pretty calm, too.”

“Guzma.”

Guzma twitched when Nanu came up close to him and ruffled his hair as Nanu offered a half smile again.

“You did good.”

“What the hell, old man.” Guzma griped, shooing Nanu’s hand away from his hair. Guzma pressed his back against the bathroom wall and narrowed his eyes when Nanu smirked at him. “I’m not one of your damn cats.”

“You’re not.” Nanu agreed, and stepped forward, closing the distance between them again.

Guzma met Nanu’s eyes, and realized that the older man was looking at him with an unasked question in his eyes.

“Do what you want to do.” Guzma grumped, figuring he knew what was on the other man’s mind.

“You sure?” Nanu asked, sounding doubtful.

“Either shut up and kiss me or get outta my way.” Guzma barely had time to finish speaking before Nanu leaned up to press a kiss to his lips, one hand resting lightly on Guzma’s shoulders. It was brief, and before long, Nanu stepped away and walked out of the bathroom.

Guzma fidgeted, before he grumbled something and left the bathroom as well. Meeting Nanu’s gaze from where the older man had propped himself up against a wall with an indifferent look, Guzma decided that Nanu was like one of his damn Meowth.

Aloof and confusing as hell.

Guzma settled for a sneer, though there wasn’t much effort put into it. “You kiss like an old man.”

“That all you got?” Nanu raised an unimpressed brow.

“Make sure that Meowth gets lots of treats.” Guzma bristled at the amused smile that tugged at the corner of Nanu’s neck, and the Team Skull boss prowled right up to Nanu and loomed over him. “Got something to say?”

“That you may be a punk, acting all tough, but your actions don’t always reflect that.” Nanu glanced
over at the baby Meowth slumbering with his Persian. “You care enough to at least make sure a defenseless Pokémon didn’t get hurt further.”

“I just happened to be around.” Guzma tried for a hard stare, but Nanu merely stared at him in return, as if he were thinking about something. When the red eyed officer merely continued to stare, Guzma shook his head irritably and turned to stomp toward the door. “Just make sure it doesn’t get hurt again.”

“Guzma.”

“What?” Guzma snapped, hand on the door knob.

“Don’t slip on any of those ledges on the way back to Po Town.” Nanu said, straight-faced. “You don’t want Persian to drag you all the way back.”

“I’ll be fine. Save your concern for that Meowth.” Guzma jabbed a finger at the Meowth in question, before turning away. He paused just before stepping outside, hesitating as a something occurred to him. Guzma knew that he was unlikely to get any sleep that night, but if he did, he was only going to wake himself up with memories of the past. And probably break a piece of furniture again.

“Forget something?” Nanu asked.

“Hey, old man.” Guzma said without turning around. “Got a question for you.”

“…What is it?”

“What do you do when you see something that makes you…think about something you’d rather forget?” Guzma realized what he’d just said, and waved a hand, words tumbling out of his mouth when he heard Nanu start to say something. “Forget it. It’s nothing.” Guzma twitched when Nanu suddenly came up alongside him, and Guzma tried to brush off the discomfort of not hearing the older man by grinning a little, “Damn, you move like one of your Meowth.”

“Guzma. What happened?” Nanu sounded oddly serious, red eyes assessing Guzma carefully. Nanu seemed more alert than he usually appeared to be.

“I said, it’s nothin’.” Guzma said, taking a step outside into the rain as he pulled up his hood to block it out as best he could.

“If anyone is still awake when you get back to Po Town, talk to them or hang out with them. Distract yourself.” Nanu’s voice followed Guzma as he walked off into the rain. “Don’t do what I do.”

“What’s that?” Guzma came to a halt, and heard Nanu’s quiet response.

“I’d rather not say. If you can’t figure it out, it’s probably for the best.”

“What the hell are you talking about?” Guzma looked over his shoulder.

“If you want to talk about it, you know where to find me.” Nanu said from where he was leaning against the doorway of the station.

“I don’t got anything to talk to you about.” Guzma said defensively.

“Don’t do anything stupid back in Po Town. Those punks living with you don’t need to see you
lose your temper.”

“I’m fine.” Guzma insisted, and scowled when Nanu merely stepped back into the station and closed the door. Shaking his head, Guzma continued onward to Po Town, jamming his hands into his pockets. The idea that Nanu had actually offered to listen to his troubles almost seemed laughable, because the man was so apathetic most of the time. It seemed more that the man would half listen, just to humor him, and then send him on his way. Guzma allowed a sneer to rise. Like hell anyone would listen to him and take him seriously. More tell him to get over it and move on, so really, there was no point in talking about his troubles to anyone.

Some dark shape flew overhead, but since it didn’t dive down at him, Guzma wasn’t overly concerned what Pokémon had just flown by.

Guzma made the attempt to ignore the feelings welling up inside him, despite his very best efforts to crush them down. But he couldn’t deny that he didn’t feel a little good about the smile he’d made appear on Nanu’s face. Nor had the hair ruffling overly bothered him. Guzma figured that with the way that Nanu spent so much time around Meowth that it was probably just a way that Nanu expressed affection or whatever.

Guzma was a little more flustered by the time he got to the mansion within Po Town and it irritated him because he didn’t know what to do about it. Other than to go back and check on the baby Meowth, as well as bother Nanu again at some point to see what kind of rise he could get out of the red eyed officer. Guzma flushed over the thought of getting another kiss, before immediately getting annoyed with himself for wanting to be kissed by Nanu specifically. Guzma prowled into the mansion, past several grunts, and said nothing as he went and shut himself in his room on the second floor.

Guzma growled under his breath as he sat down on the bed, fidgeting again before clenching his hands into fists. Why the hell did Nanu kissing him and then ruffling his hair make his body react like this? Guzma ran his hands through his hair, narrowed his eyes at his lap, before closing them and letting out an aggravated, drawn out sigh as he swore again.

Dammit.

What the hell was going on?

A knock on the door drew Guzma’s ire some minutes later, and he snapped at the door. “What?”

“Boss, there’s a Honchkrow in the hall out here.”

“I think it might be Mr. Nanu’s.”

Guzma let out a huff of breath. Couldn’t that old man leave him be for the day? Guzma got up off of his bed, and opened the door, nearly hitting one of the Team Skull punks.

“Over there, boss.” One of the female punks said, pointing over to where the window had been broken and remained broken.

A Honchkrow was standing there, shaking its feathers free of the rain. It spotted Guzma, and stalked up to him to hold up a bag in its beak with something in it.

Guzma took it, and as soon as he did, the bird Pokémon about faced, brushed past the Team Skull punks loitering nearby, and flew out the window.

“Boss?”
Guzma shook his head wordlessly and merely turned back to go into his room. “Let me know if it comes back.”

“Sure thing, boss.”

Guzma closed his bedroom door behind him, and, shaking the bag free of some rain, couldn’t help but laugh when he took out what was in the bag.

It was a photo, and it had obviously been taken recently.

Guzma couldn’t help but laugh again over the idea that Nanu had an instant camera to take pictures of his Pokémon. To have the Kahuna of Ula’ Ula’ island send his Honchkrow out to deliver a photo of the baby Meowth to the Boss of Team Skull struck him as hilarious. Guzma thought about harassing Nanu about his obsession over Meowth the next time he saw him, until Guzma turned the photo over and saw a short note scrawled there.

*If it helps, instead of dwelling on the past, think about the future you saved instead.*

Guzma didn’t know how long he stared at the photo of the tiny Meowth after that, mainly because he hadn’t expected the words that had been written on the back of the photo to strike a chord with him.

It was a long, but quiet, night.
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Nanu spent the next few days checking up on the shiny baby Meowth. Much to his relief, Guzma seemed content to leave him alone those few days, whether it was because he was busy as the leader of Team Skull, or because he was doing some thinking. Nanu wasn't sure what the younger punk would have made of the photo of the baby Meowth, or the words he had written, but there had been no confrontation, and Nanu took that as a good sign. He had meant it; to have Guzma focus on the Meowth that he had saved. Nanu wouldn't have expected it of Guzma, but then again, there seemed to be conflicting reports from other cops, as well as citizens, from around Alola about Guzma. It made Nanu consider if there were some false reports; things that Guzma had encouraged in order to make himself seem more intimidating.

The red eyed officer couldn't help but half smile over the ridiculous idea that Guzma would actually hurt another person's Pokémon. That report Nanu knew for certain was false. It was far more likely for the younger man to have one of the other Team Skull punks steal Pokémon and keep it in Po Town. Nanu usually retrieved it if someone came directly to him complaining of a lost or stolen Pokémon. Otherwise he didn't always patrol Po Town to see if anything was amiss. The only thing Nanu had noticed these past few days was the sound of someone picking around outside the police station, though no one ever came inside. But it was usually followed by the Meowth in the station perking their ears up and following a shadow that passed by windows.

Nanu dismissed it, as he had a feeling that it was Guzma, and the Team Skull boss was at odds over whether to come into the station or not. Nanu would find out later that he was half-right, though it would be nearly two years before he found out who else was outside the station those few nights.

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On the evening of the fourth night since Nanu had been given the shiny Meowth, the red eyed officer checked on the stitches in bare spots along soft fur to make sure they held as he changed the bandages. The baby Meowth shook as Nanu took a look at the stitches in its back, even as Nanu spoke soothingly to it under his breath. Nanu was aware of his Persian watching him, and as he began to wrap new bandages around the Meowth, Nanu spoke aloud.

"The Meowth will be all right. I'll give it back to you in a moment." Nanu finished tying off the bandages, and, after settling the tiny Meowth next to Persian, he stood with a sigh. Aware of the many pairs of eyes watching him, Nanu shook his head. "And yes, I know most you are hungry. I'll go and get some food for you lot." Pleased purrs and meows erupted from around the station, and Nanu couldn't help but smile. "You're all very are spoiled, aren't you?" With another fond shake of his head at the innocent looks he received in return, Nanu headed toward the front door of the station. Might as well get the shopping over with, and with that accomplished, he could come back and get some sleep. Nanu frowned on his way toward the door, when all of the Meowth in the station suddenly stared at it, whiskers twitching, before they relaxed again.

Odd.

Nanu didn't know what to make of that, but just to be sure, he went over to a cabinet and took out a gun from a locked box. Sometimes he thought he should hand it off to Looker, since Nanu hadn't had to use the weapon once since he'd left the organization the other man worked for. Nanu hadn't bothered to take the gun out of storage either but for one rare instant since he'd lived in Alola, and he
hadn't had the need to actually fire it. Nanu stared at the weapon for a moment, thinking he was being paranoid over his Meowth reacting like they had. But still, he couldn't be too careful. Alola was peaceful enough, and most of the Pokémon were friendly but that didn't mean that something couldn't go wrong. Nanu retrieved a holster, and after securing it to his belt, tucked the gun inside, hoping he was on edge only because the Meowth had acted a little out of the ordinary than they usually did. And not because his own body seemed to be telling him that something wasn't quite right. With a shake of his head, Nanu went toward the front door to the station.

The moment Nanu opened the door the baby Meowth let out a frantic cry and began to try to get itself out of Persian's Pokémon bed. The crying was insistent, as the young Pokémon apparently did not want Nanu to leave it behind.

"I won't be gone long." Nanu commented, though he fell silent when the Meowth managed to wriggle out of the Pokémon bed, and made Nanu reconsider bringing it with him to the Pokémon Center. The way it limped over to Nanu on all fours gave the officer concern, though he was distracted by the poor thing letting out a series of little meows of distress.

Persian had gotten up and given pursuit, though it appeared reluctant to pick the Meowth up while it was agitated. It instead let out of huff of concern, as the Meowth's cries turned almost accusatory as it got to Nanu's leg and clung to it with a paw, tiny claws latched in the fabric as large eyes welled up with tears.

Nanu took a breath and let it out, running a hand over his face briefly before he dropped it to his side. He couldn't resist when the baby Pokémon was so genuinely sad and fearful of being left behind.

"All right. You can come along, I guess." Nanu retrieved a rain jacket from nearby and, careful not to dislodge the Meowth from his leg just yet as he zipped the coat up and flipped the hood over his head. Nanu picked the Meowth up carefully, drying its tears with the corner of a sleeve. "Keep in the jacket." Seeing the shy smile, Nanu couldn't help but smile in return as he tucked the Meowth carefully within his jacket. Sometimes he wondered whether the tears were genuine or not with some of his other Meowth. He was sure some of them would try to cajole something out of him with tears as well. At which point Nanu would have to decide whether to give in or not. Nanu waited until the Meowth had settled comfortably within his jacket, before he opened the front door of the station the rest of the way, and spoke over his shoulder. "Come on, Persian. I know you want to keep watch on this Meowth."

As soon as Persian flashed out the front door of the station in a blur of fur, Nanu closed the door. Nanu let out a soft sigh over the thought of trekking through the rain, before he set off in the direction of the Pokémon Center through the Ula' Ula' meadow. The journey was a wet one, until Nanu reached the meadows, but then it just seemed to become a somber journey as fog settled over the surroundings.

Persian's ears pricked up now and again, letting out soft growls, but apart from that, there were no wild Pokémon that attacked.

Nanu counted that as a good thing, as he didn't want to have the tiny Meowth curled up in his jacket have to deal with that. As Nanu walked, his mind wandered, not really settling on anything. He failed to notice that there was a pair of unfriendly eyes watching him and his Pokémon as they walked along. Neither Pokémon nor trainer would know of their silent watcher, until they were on their way back from the Pokémon Center, laden with supplies bought from the mart.

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Nanu had hoped for a quiet journey back to the police station that night, but apparently that wasn't
going to happen. The red eyed officer became alert when Persian came to an abrupt halt and started to growl.

"What is it?" Nanu asked, the stupor he'd been in gone as the red eyed officer surveyed the area as if expecting to see another Pokémon. Nothing was there, and Nanu half turned to his Pokémon. "You imagining things or-"

Persian suddenly let out a loud and angry hiss.

Nanu didn't have time to react to his Pokemon, because he suddenly found himself shoved out of the way by his Persian. The feline Pokémon had abruptly thrown its whole body against him to get him out of the way of something that shot out from a nearby bush. Nanu hit the wet ground, almost immediately half rising because he didn't want to be caught defenseless on the ground if they were being attacked. His Pokémon never attacked him without reason, or with intention to hurt him. It was done to get him out of the way of something dangerous. And as soon as Nanu could focus on what he was seeing, he knew he'd been hit so roughly for his own protection, as he had assumed.

Still hurt like a hell anyway, and Nanu wasn't as young as he used to be, so it caused him more pain than it would have years ago.

Nanu held a hand lightly against the quivering Meowth curled up in his jacket. Peering through the rain, he caught sight again of the two Alolan Persian facing off against one another. Both Pokemon's hackles were raised as they bared their teeth and hissed and shrieked at one another, sharp claws digging up the wet ground. Nanu cursed under his breath when he saw his Persian struck with a thunderbolt attack, and then rammed roughly into some nearby rocks by the wild Persian. Nanu was concerned the wild Pokémon might go after his Pokémon further while it was stunned. After all, there were wild Pokémon that disliked trainer Pokémon, whether they were jealous of that Pokémon, or disgusted with the idea that a Pokémon would work with a human. Nanu's body tensed up when he saw the wild Persian turn its head to narrow eyes at him with a lash of its tail. Nanu realized that he should have saved some concern for himself. While wild Pokémon didn't always attack humans, it wasn't out of the question. Nanu barely had time to back up and half flatten himself to the ground as the wild Persian leapt at him with a snarl.

Nanu automatically braced his arms on the ground to prevent himself from squashing the Meowth, having no time to try and reassure it. When Nanu felt the weight of the angry Pokémon half land on him, Nanu had a feeling that this wild Persian was likely the one that Guzma had chased off days ago. Apparently the wild Persian was hard pressed to forget about the Meowth that didn't look like the rest of its offspring. Nanu winced as clawed paws scratched his bare arms in an attempt to get to the Meowth that was quivering in fear. The claws weren't digging in as deep as they could go, but they were still causing scratches that started to bleed immediately after they'd been inflicted. Nanu grit his teeth and tried to throw the Persian off of him, but the Pokémon continued to attack with a furious shriek, a warning bite landing dangerously close to the back of Nanu's neck, ripping into fabric. The bite made Nanu briefly tense up, knowing that it had been done intentionally, to show that the wild Persian could hurt him badly if he didn't give it what it wanted.

The Persian hissed again and began to paw at Nanu's right arm, before it attempted to lift the limb up off the ground to give it access to the Meowth that was now crying out fearfully, tiny claws hooking into Nanu's red shirt.

Nanu couldn't hold back a hiss of pain when the wild Persian suddenly sank its teeth into his right forearm. Nanu fumbled with his left hand awkwardly beneath his jacket, finally spurred into action from the pain as his hand closed around metal. The Pokémon had given him another bite near the back of his neck, teeth ripping fabric of the rain jacket to expose skin. Hot breath spilled over Nanu,
and had the Pokémon not held human level intelligence Nanu was certain it would have bitten down.

Instead, the wild Persian flipped him over onto his back, and Nanu took that instance to prevent further attack. Wincing, Nanu jammed the muzzle of the gun he'd retrieved into the underside of the wild Persian's throat as the Pokémon loomed over him. Nanu didn't want to think about the idea of how close the Persian's mouth was to his throat, and for a moment, wondered if the Pokémon had meant to scare him by resting its mouth over his throat. He'd seen some wild Persian fights before, years ago, and the Pokémon tended to defeat their opponents by getting their jaw latched over part of the throat. Battles quickly ended and the loser would retreat. Unfortunately for this wild Pokémon, Nanu was no Persian, and he had a bigger deterrent than teeth and claws, loathe as he was to use it.

The wild Persian stilled at the gun pressed to its fur, still growling softly, but it appeared to understand that Nanu was threatening it in some way. Especially since Nanu was careful to go for the throat, as another Persian might, in hopes that the wild Pokémon would get the intention.

"Enough." Nanu met the wild Persian's eyes and even though he was short of breath, he spoke darkly, red eyes serious. "Get out of here. I don't care that you don't like that your offspring is a different color. You're already ensured that it won't be able to survive on its own, or be a trainer's Pokémon because of the damage you did to its back." Nanu dug the muzzle of the gun in warning against fur when the Persian shifted, as if to try and move back for another attack. "Leave." Nanu was a little concerned that the Persian didn't seem to have any intention of moving, and Nanu didn't want to have to shoot it. But before the red eyed officer had to decide, an angry shout rang out from somewhere in the pouring rain.

"What the hell? Damn cat! Get the hell outta here!"

Nanu dropped the hand holding the gun down from Persian's throat as a Golisopod swept the wild Persian up into the air before the bug Pokémon sent the other Pokémon flying through the air a good several paces. Nanu had sat up with a grimace and watched as Guzma materialized out of the sheets of rain to chase after the wild Persian like he was going to fight it himself with his bare fists. Nanu couldn't help but crack a smile when Golisopod prevented its trainer from getting too far. Nanu sat up the rest of the way with a sigh, about to holster the gun when Guzma wandered over.

"Since when did you have a gun, old man?"

"Isn't it a bit late at night to prowl around?" Nanu tucked the weapon out of sight and fixed his eyes on Guzma. Seeing the Team Skull boss cross his arms and look at him, Nanu ended up shrugging his shoulders in response. Nanu grimaced and pressed a hand to his right forearm where he'd been bitten, as the scratches on both arms didn't hurt as much. "I don't usually carry a gun. Alola is a peaceful enough place for the most part. I just...had a feeling I might want to have it with me tonight." Nanu was a little bit concerned that he'd felt the wrongness of the evening along with his Meowth acting oddly in the station. Had they sensed the wild Persian outside in some way? How had he felt that something wasn't quite right?

"I prefer your hands-on approach with the handcuffs better." Guzma commented warily as he watched the area where the gun vanished beneath Nanu's jacket. "A gun would have made the fight we had boring in an instant."

"I wouldn't aim a gun at you or the other Team Skull punks." Nanu frowned at Guzma, before he smiled wryly. "A Pokémon battle is more than enough." Nanu wasn't going to tell Guzma that there happened to be no bullets in the gun at present. He'd forgotten to load it before leaving the station, because he hadn't thought he would actually need the weapon.
"Why the hell do you have a gun then?" Guzma huffed indignantly.

"Got attacked years ago and had to shoot something." Nanu hedged, not really wanting to think about that one instance.

"A Pokémon?" Guzma asked skeptically.

"No. Not a Pokémon." Nanu shook his head, hand pressing tight against his forearm. The wound the wild Persian had inflicted was starting to throb.

"Fine, be a mysterious, cryptic asshole." Guzma said with a roll of his eyes.

"Dangerous criminals that hurt people and Pokémon would be a reason." Nanu offered after a brief moment of silence, as he kept his hand to his right forearm. Nanu felt a little faint and he wasn't sure if it was from the shock of being bitten or if his body was reacting badly to the bite. "Or if a wild Pokémon attacks humans and Pokémon." That didn't happen often, especially in Alola, and usually, the sight of the gun was enough to get even the angriest of Pokémon to back down. Nanu watched Guzma pat his Golisopod's nearest shoulder, and went quieter when the younger man got closer to him and crouched down, presumably to get a better look at him. And presumably saw the blood underneath Nanu's hand.

"That wild Persian bit you?" Guzma asked, scowling briefly in the direction said Pokémon had run off in.

Nanu's Persian had recovered and went over to its trainer with a pronounced limp as it pressed itself against Nanu's side with a concerned growl. Persian also appeared to have a hurt paw. Nanu didn't say anything to the fact that Guzma helped him to his feet.

"Need to go to the Pokémon Center. Persian…" Nanu managed.

"And you too, geezer." Guzma added, apparently finally getting a look at the bite wound. "That looks like a nasty bite." Guzma noticed the shiny Meowth when it poked its head out of Nanu's jacket as it let out a worried meow. Guzma pet the tiny Pokemon's head briefly before looking down at Nanu, who was carefully avoiding his eyes while pretending to not be in as much pain as he was. "You and your damn Meowth, old man." Guzma teased, before he frowned. "Maybe I should have had Golisopod get another attack in.

"Pokémon Center." Nanu reminded Guzma. He felt a little unsteady on his feet and as he felt Guzma urge him into a walk, Nanu felt that that was wrong. He should have been able to walk just fine on his own. To have Guzma continually urge him along with grumbles and teasing didn't seem right. Or the fact Nanu's own Persian kept close to his other side and batted his leg gently when he stopped walking for whatever reason.

Briefly blacking out and suddenly opening his eyes to the sight of the Pokémon Center didn't seem good either. Going mostly limp against Guzma seemed even worse, though it felt better to just close his eyes and just let Guzma nudge him along. Exhaustion pulled at him, and Nanu allowed it to sweep over him, vaguely hearing the younger punk curse him out for acting like a damn Persian that decided to nap.

That would have been funny if Nanu hadn't nearly passed out.

-x-x-x-

It was a calm night at the Pokémon Center until Guzma all but dragged a nearly unconscious Nanu into the building. Guzma snarled inarticulately at the staff that was on duty that night, which didn't
particularly help, but Guzma didn't want to let go of Nanu over the idea that the man would just
dimply fall to the ground. And his Persian didn't seem to be in much better shape despite it trying to
remain upright to help Guzma keep its trainer up. While Guzma impatiently waited for the frightened
employees to stop thinking he was going to attack them all, Guzma nudged Nanu again and
grumbled under his breath.

"C'mon, snap outta it and say something to these guys. I think they think I did this to you." Guzma
felt that it was not a good sign that Nanu didn't say anything or outwardly react to him. A minute or
so passed, and then Guzma shook his head over the idea that no one was doing a thing about him
bringing a pretty much unconscious cop, and a kahuna, at that, into the Pokémon Center. Guzma
brushed past an employee and found a room in the back of the building where he could set Nanu
down on a chair. After making sure that the older man wouldn't fall over, Guzma prowled back into
the main area of the Pokémon Center, ready to drag some unfortunate person back with him to see to
Nanu. "Hey, someone go help Nanu. A wild Pokémon attacked and bit him. And in case ya didn't
notice, he's all out of it right now."

That appeared to galvanize some of the employees into action as they snapped back into the present.
Two nurses immediately went into the back where Guzma had brought Nanu.

"Someone take care of his Persian, too." Guzma added, jabbing a finger down at the Pokémon in
question that looked ready to fall over just like its trainer. Guzma glared at everyone in the vicinity as
Persian went along with a nurse with a limp but purred in pleasure when its head was gently petted.

Guzma gave one final glare to those lingering in the Pokémon Center before he turned sharply and
nearly ran into a nurse that had come out of the back room with a tiny Meowth wrapped in bandages.

"The Island Kahuna wanted you to watch this Meowth." The nurse said nervously, though she
appeared reluctant to hand it over to the Team Skull boss until the little Meowth stated to audibly
purr at the sight of Guzma.

"Yeah, I can watch it till he gets off his ass." Guzma took the Meowth in one hand, forgetting how
small it was. The younger man couldn't help but smile a little at the way the little feline's body
vibrated with happy purrs. Guzma began to pace back and forth, but when he noticed nervous
trainers watching him, he let out an exasperated sound. Seriously, he wasn't doing anything wrong.
Yet. Why couldn't they mind their own damn business?

"Tch." Guzma went to go sit down at the café since it was still open, and carefully set the Meowth
down on the counter. "Tapu Cocoa. And get this Meowth something too." Guzma passed some
money across the counter, and once the drinks were brought over, Guzma fell into silence as he pet
the still putting baby Meowth with a few careful fingers. "Looks like you didn't get nicked at all."
Guzma frowned to himself, reaching up with his other hand to ruffle his hair, sending water flying
everywhere. He didn't give a damn that some people nearby didn't appreciate the action, because
Guzma was thinking back on what he had seen in the rain. The sight of Nanu on the ground and
being attacked like that...

Guzma didn't know what to think about the panic that had gripped him in that instant. He hadn't been
expecting to see that at all. He had merely gotten the courage to go tell Nanu to not send him
to pictures of Meowth, even if Guzma was secretly grateful of the short note Nanu had written days
ago. The older man hadn't needed to do anything for him. Hadn't had to go out of his way to send
another message along after Guzma had said he didn't want to hear anything. To forget what Guzma
had asked, and instead, Nanu had followed up with trying to tell Guzma to focus on the Meowth
he'd saved instead of dwelling on the past...

Guzma didn't know what to do with the feeling that had washed over him when he'd read the line of
writing, and didn't know what good it would have done him to confront Nanu about it. But thoughts of the conversation had fled when the person that had given just a bit of a damn about what was going on in Guzma's head was being attacked...

It made Guzma see red. That damn wild Persian was lucky he'd sent Golisopod out instead of diving and grappling the damn thing himself.

At the sound of a quiet squeak of a meow, Guzma turned from dark thoughts and did as Nanu suggested. Focused on the tiny bundle of fur he'd saved. Guzma was sure that that was the only reason why he remained in that Pokémon Center. He wasn't sure why he hadn't left yet otherwise. It wasn't like he cared what happened to Nanu now that he got him somewhere for help, right?

Guzma cast an anxious look in the direction he'd taken Nanu, before he realized what he was doing. With a scowl, Guzma turned his attention back to his Tapu Cocoa. He didn't miss the hostile and suspicious looks he was being given by other trainers in the Center. Not even when a few looked like they wanted a piece of him.

So why did he choose to stay?

Guzma took a long drink of the cocoa, hiding a faint flush that threatened to cross his features. The Team Skull boss stayed because he actually did give a shit how Nanu was doing, and that scared him, because Guzma didn't know what to do about the emotion. Normally he would have found it hilarious that Nanu got attacked by a Persian of all Pokémon, but it was anything but funny now. Guzma set his mug down, no longer thirsty but a good deal more nervous, because he didn't know what to do.

"Tch." Guzma decided to stay after all, because he decided that he had a bone to pick with Nanu. Especially when Guzma thought about the way the red eyed officer had looked when he had found him in the rain. How Nanu had seemed more resigned than anything after being pinned down by a wild Pokémon. Like he didn't give a shit what could have happened to him had he not been armed or had someone show up to help chase the wild Pokémon away.

The Team Skull boss's scowl deepened.

Damn it all to hell.

Sitting there in the Pokémon Center, stealing glances in the direction he knew that Nanu was in, made Guzma realize that he did actually care what happened to Nanu. If only because Guzma didn't want to lose a source of entertainment. Or at least, that was what Guzma told himself the reason was, as he waited impatiently for someone to tell him what the hell was going on with Nanu after being bitten.

After a few hours passed with no word on Nanu, Guzma decided to go check on the older man himself. It wasn't like any of the staff in the Pokemon Center was going to stop him, and seeing Nanu would put aside some of the anxious feelings if Guzma saw for himself that Nanu was going to be all right.

Chapter End Notes

I tend to update the tags of the fic before I post a new chapter, but as an FYI, there will be more tags for the next chapter, as Nanu does end up drinking a bit too much, and
there's some issues Guzma has with that. The PTSD tag will also be added within the next few chapters.
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Well, things get a bit dark this chapter and the next. Remember to keep an eye on the tags with each chapter update.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Nanu might have insisted upon going back to the police station on route 17 if the nurses hadn't given him something to dull the pain of his injury. Unfortunately, Nanu hadn't had the time or the energy to tell them not to give him enough to knock him out. When one was injured, that sort of coherent conversation didn't always occur. So Nanu had unwillingly fallen asleep, though he supposed being unconscious while being treated for the bite wound would be best. He might have otherwise cursed up a storm, and that wouldn't have been very kahuna-like of him.

But at the same time…after an attack like that…Nanu would have preferred the pain. Would have preferred the potential curses he might say in order to remain awake, as dreaming after something like that was never a good thing. Attacks like those tended to bring forth unpleasant memories, which surfaced as nightmares. A specific nightmare, in fact, was drawn forth, which happened to be one of Nanu's worst memories. As always, the scene began in as a somber, stormy night, when Nanu and two others managed to track down a creature they had been after for weeks.

Try as Nanu might, his subconscious never allowed him to escape the nightmare, no matter how hard his body tried to wake him up. So he was forced to relieve the vivid scene, never able to do a damn thing to change the outcome. And this particular time was worse, ensuring that when Nanu did wake up, he would likely stay awake for days in fear of it creeping up on him again.

-x-x-x-

A flash of lightning through sheets of rain lit the area briefly. The pouring rain did nothing for the three of them. It made it harder to see, which made this mission far more dangerous than Nanu or Looker could have ever anticipated. And their Faller, a sweet young woman, had been separated from them when a landslide occurred due to the rain. Both of them managed to avoid any serious harm, because some local Pokémon had seen them, and had assisted them out of danger.

The Faller wasn't so lucky. She had slipped down the slope, miraculous uninjured, but not for long, as something had found her before Nanu or Looker could get to her. Neither man thought the creature looming up behind the Faller was a Pokémon. It looked too monstrous to be one.

'What is that?' Looker seemed frozen in place, hesitating. 'Do you think we really need to kill it?'

Nanu made as if to go to the Faller, but he slipped on the surface beneath him, going down hard on his back, nearly knocking the back of his head in the process. Nanu twisted to the side with a harsh gasp, shaking at the agony flaring up his back, only to go completely still when a tortured scream pierced the night. Nanu looked up sharply and the moment he realized the creature had grabbed the Faller, forcibly pushed himself up, despite the pain racing up his back, and started to run.

Running.
Always running.

Always trying to prevent what would always happen, no matter how fast Nanu ran. To always see the fear in her eyes, before the creature began to tear into her with sharp fangs and claws. Torn ground that made it hard to navigate, slowing the possibility of a rescue.

It came back to the hesitation Looker had had in that moment.

It always did.

And as usual, the flashes of blood and tears and the loud snarls intermixed, and Nanu had to make a split second decision when the creature moved.

Save one of them.

Nanu had chosen Looker, because the younger man was the closest, and the easiest to drag out of the way of the thrashing creature. But Nanu would never forget the look of betrayal in the Faller's eyes. That he hadn't gone to save her instead, when she was in mortal danger, within the clutches of a creature slowly rending her flesh bit by bit.

"You'll pay for this."

A hand seemed to lightly trace Nanu's bandaged forearm. Nanu shifted in his sleep, still caught within the confines of the nightmare. Those words...Nanu couldn't ever recall hearing those words being said by the Faller from eight and a half years ago, so Nanu passed it off as something he made up in his own mind. It had to be merely something thought up to match her expression when the creature dragged her off, still screaming in agony.

The nightmare changed abruptly, not ending how it usually did. Instead, it went abruptly dark, and gleaming eyes, along with a crooked smile looked at him. Something shifted around in the dark, and then, clear as if someone had been standing right next to him, a voice spoke. It was the Faller from so long ago, her voice short of breath but full of venom and malice.

"You'll pay for this, Nanu. Your partner, too. Even if it takes me years upon years...you both will know my pain."

Fingertips dug harshly into Nanu's injured forearm, and the flare of agony from the wound was enough to wake him up.

-x-x-x-

With a harsh exhalation Nanu jerked himself out of the nightmare, his heart hammering in his chest as he shakily pulled himself up into a seated position. Nanu placed his left hand protectively over his injured right forearm. Entire body tense, Nanu surveyed the immediate area as if he would find someone right there, whispering in his ear. But there was no one. He was alone. But that didn't make things any better, as the fog hadn't quite cleared, and Nanu still wasn't quite sure whether or not he was going to be under attack in the immediate future.

Nanu took a few deep breaths, trying to calm his breathing. It helped, marginally, and he began to piece things together as he sat there on a bed, in an unfamiliar room. The soreness of his arm, though not as bad as it could have been, made Nanu focus on it as he lifted his hand to peer down at it. There was blood dotting through the bandages. He was injured? How? Nanu closed his eyes and let out another, slower breath.

That was right.
He'd been bitten by the wild Persian, and he had been taken to the Pokémon Center by Guzma. Nanu carefully touched his bandaged forearm, and knew, without needing to ask anyone, that there had had to be stitches. He could tell by the tug of the skin beneath the bandages, though some had torn free. Had he grabbed the limb in his sleep, tearing those stitches? It was a better idea than someone Nanu thought to be dead and gone appearing in the room to torment him after all these years. Nanu glanced at the palm of his left hand and felt little relief over the blood that was there. He had touched the bandages after he'd woken up, so he was still at a loss of whether he had torn the stitches himself or not.

Nanu rested his arm on his lap, and with another slow breath in and out, began to try and get his heart rate back under control. It wasn't good for his body for so much panic to be welling within it. He wasn't being attacked, obviously, and the words, that had sounded almost too clear for the nightmare, had just been that. Part of the nightmare. No one from his past had reached out to grab him. The voice…the words…they were likely something to do with the guilt of surviving an attack by the creature. Neither Looker nor Nanu had been able to find where the creature had gone off to, taking with it the wounded and dying Faller.

"Just a dream." Nanu murmured to himself as he wiped his left hand on the sheets absently before he ran it through his hair. Nanu felt that he had to be imagining things from the pain, and of tearing the stitches in his sleep. He soon noted that he was in a windowless room. There would have been alarm raised if someone had gone into his room. Nanu dropped his hand from his hair to his lap and gave his head a shake. He supposed he ought to be grateful that Guzma had made certain that he had gotten to the Pokémon Center. Nanu didn't want to think of the reaction he would have had should he have woken up bleeding in the rain. It would have been…too much.

Nanu closed his eyes. It disturbed him greatly that he couldn't remember much of the journey to the building, apart from bits and pieces. Those pieces being the shiny Meowth meowing in concern as Nanu's Persian urged him along whenever he came to an unsteady stop. Nanu frowned, furrowing his brow. He recalled Guzma's steady stream of insults and teasing, but even as disoriented and hurt as Nanu had been, Nanu didn't miss the concern beneath the bluster.

The door to the room opened and it caused Nanu to turn his head. The nightmare was pushed to the back of his mind when he saw an Alolan Persian poking its head into the room.

The Pokémon noticed Nanu's gaze on it and, once it was inside the room, gave the door a shove of its body to close it. The Persian let out a huff and approached the bed, eying Nanu knowingly.

"You've gotten better at opening doors lately." Nanu's thoughts were still a little muddled, but he didn't miss the look on his Pokémon's face. "And yes, I had another of those…nightmares." Nanu was relieved to see that his Persian was walking without a limp, "Guess you're doing better, in any case. It looked like it had to hurt, being thrown against those rocks like that."

Persian squeezed its eyes shut and let out a purr of pleasure. It was clearly pleased that its trainer was awake and aware once more. The Persian hopped up onto the bed to rest itself against Nanu, careful not to bump his injured right arm, but close enough to curl against Nanu's right side to press its cheek against Nanu's. A low growl of concern emitted from the feline, both from the idea of its trainer having a nightmare, and because it noticed that Nanu suddenly tensed up. With another, understanding growl, Persian moved to rest its head on Nanu's lap near his hand, giving the limb a careful lick. Persian gave another swipe of its tongue when it saw the blood, and turned its round head to fix a concerned expression on Nanu.

"Sorry, knee jerk reaction." Nanu reached over with his left hand to stroke the soft fur on Persian's head. "That wild Persian got close to the back of my neck and throat with its teeth."
Persian let out a growl over the very thought and reached one paw over Nanu's lap as if trying to cover its trainer with its body for protection. Persian again looked from the blood seeping through the bandage to its trainer.

"I'll be fine. The nurse can re-stitch it, or I can, when my hand is steadier." Seeing another look thrown his way, Nanu added, "I used the gun to ward the wild Persian off." The red eyed officer heard an inquiring sound and caught sight of a gleaming eye that peeked up at him. Nanu smiled faintly at his Pokémon. "It wasn't loaded. Wouldn't have hurt that wild Persian anyway. Not like… back then." Nanu saw the Persian shift as it looked across the room to where Nanu's gun was. Nanu let out a sigh and patted Persian's head. "If it'd make you feel better, put it in one of the drawers of this nightstand."

Persian let out a worried chuff and did as its trainer suggested, though Nanu had to reach out with his left hand to open the drawer for Persian.

"Guess drawers are still tricky for you than when you were a Meowth." Nanu watched Persian give him an unamused look before it gently set the gun inside the drawer.

The Persian raised a paw and pushed the drawer shut, tilting its head to give Nanu a pleased look.

"Quite the feat." Nanu said dryly. "Well done."

Persian rolled its eyes at its trainer's teasing, and then hopped right back onto the bed, this time curling against Nanu's left side. Persian trapped Nanu's arm against his side.

"I'm not anywhere near the mood I was in before all those years ago. You know that, right?" Nanu quietly asked Persian, as the feline Pokémon urged him to go from a seated position to lying down. "I'm not going to do anything stupid."

Persian pointedly looked at Nanu's wounded arm, the bandages darkening with blood where the bite marks were, and then back to its trainer's face.

"I didn't bite myself. I may have torn some stiches in my sleep."

Persian gave a shake of its head, and, once Nanu was on his back, started to groom itself and then Nanu, ignoring the token of protest its trainer made.

Nanu gave in pretty quickly, as he was apt to do with Persian, and instead turned his head to press his face against soft fur. Nanu was about to doze off to the low rumble of a purr when the door to the room opened again.

"You dead, old man? No one's telling me shit."

Guzma.

Nanu wasn't sure why it made him feel a little less worthless when Guzma's tone seemed to indicate worry, despite the words. Nanu wasn't used to having someone worry over him, or his health, apart from Acerola, and sometimes the other kahunas.

"Well, it looks like you're still breathing." Guzma could be heard walking closer to the bed. "You always sleep with your cats?"

Nanu couldn't be entirely certain but it almost sounded as if Guzma were jealous of Persian resting alongside him.
"You're bleeding." Guzma's voice held a bit of a waiver. "What the hell? I thought they would have already stitched you up." Heavy footsteps could be heard, and then Guzma shouting something out of the room. Footsteps returned, and this time, the quiet murmur of a nurse could be heard.

Persian pressed its face close to Nanu's when the bandages were removed, and some of the stiches were reset.

Nanu managed to keep completely silent, apart from a twitch or two, but his feigned sleep seemed to fool the nurse. The moment his arm was bandaged again, Guzma scared the nurse out of the room, and shut the door. Nanu wondered what was going on in Guzma's mind and it caused Nanu to briefly think about the potential of jealousy over Persian sleeping on the bed with him. Nanu was going to dismiss the idea altogether when the bed suddenly dipped, and a warm body pressed up against his right side. Nanu was not at all expecting this close of contact with the younger punk, as Nanu was still not entirely certain what he thought about their interactions thus far. Nanu was unprepared for Guzma's breath to spill over the side of his neck as the leader of Team Skull whispered in his ear.

"You suck at pretending to be asleep."

Nanu opened his eyes at that. Instead of being able to respond in any way to Guzma's words, however, Nanu ended up wincing faintly when Guzma dug a hand into his hair to turn his head to the side. Nanu had half a moment to wonder if Guzma had just been waiting for him to wake up to give him a beat down. Nanu studied the younger man's face, which was a little too close for comfort.

"You look confused." Guzma said after a moment, cocking his head to the side so he was in line with Nanu. "Did one of the nurses give you the good stuff?"

"Whatever it was, it's enough to take the edge off the pain." Nanu responded. To himself, Nanu thought it hadn't been enough to prevent the nightmares from surfacing.

"But enough to muddle you." Guzma sounded amused. "Good."

"How is being muddled at all good? I feel terrible." Nanu replied with another grimace. "And stop jostling my arm. There are stitches, and as you saw, they had to re-stitch some of them."

"Damn cat got you good." Guzma commented, hand going to cup the back of Nanu's head.

"Are you finished?" Nanu deadpanned.

"Not yet." Guzma hesitated, before he gripped the hair in his hand tight and leaned in to press his lips firmly against Nanu's.

Nanu let out a faint breath of surprise, and Guzma's hand tightened, bringing him closer. Well, that was unexpected, but what was also unexpected was the way that Guzma was going in for the kill, like he and Nanu had already kissed more than the few times they actually had. Nanu closed his eyes, too tired to fight, and not really even wanting to. He just had little to no energy to actually return the kiss.

Guzma drew back after some time had passed and grinned.

"That it?" Nanu decided to ask with a raised brow. "I could use some more sleep if it is."

"Dour asshole." Guzma shot back, though he didn't seem to be overly offended.

Nanu merely kept his brow raised, waiting. He probably shouldn't have said anything, because
Guzma was suddenly half flopped over him, having moved Nanu's injured right arm out of the way. The red eyed officer stilled when Guzma rested his chin on his shoulder. Nanu shifted uncomfortably, before he let out a sigh and carefully ruffled the white hair with his right hand, avoiding the oversized sunglasses, before his fingers dipped down to where the hair was black. The motion pulled on the stiches a bit, but it was worth it for the faint embarrassment on Guzma's face when the punk jerked away from him.

"Quit touchin' my hair, old man." Guzma bristled.

"It is soft, like Persian's." Nanu said quietly, amused at the flush that crossed Guzma's features.

"Whatever." Guzma grumbled. "And what did the nurses say?"

"I'll live, if that's what you're wondering." Nanu said with the barest hint of a smirk. He didn't recall hearing his prognosis, but Nanu knew enough to know that he would be fine, and would likely just scar. "It'll take more than a bite to kill me. Most I'll have to be careful of is to not let the stiches tear again."

"Guess you're hard to take down, huh?" Guzma snorted. "I didn't want a wild Pokémon to do you in anyway, when I haven't even gotten the chance to beat you down yet."

"Oh? And when is this going to happen?" Nanu asked, feigning interest. He highly doubted this so-called beat down was ever going to occur. It was far more likely that at some point, one of them would get fed up with the other's hesitation and make a move. Nanu had seen the way that Guzma had looked at him. Nanu also knew that Guzma had to have known there was some interest beneath Nanu's indifference. It wasn't out of the realm of possibility that clothes could go flying at some point in the future, as baffling an idea it was. But there wasn't likely to be any violence apart from perhaps grappling to get said clothes off. Nanu couldn't help but shiver over the idea, and tucked the thought far away. He couldn't be thinking about that right now.

"Just wait, it'll happen before you know it." Guzma said, puffing up importantly as he crossed his arms over his chest. He didn't seem aware of Nanu's thoughts. "Team Skull's leader needs to follow through on his threats, you know."

"Sure you do. So why don't you trash the station while I'm gone?" Nanu asked vaguely, settling on something safe that didn't involve Guzma being alone with him. "I wouldn't be around to stop you lot from doing whatever you wanted if I'm not there."

"That's an idea. But no, your Meowth would probably beat the crap out of some of the other punks." Guzma shook his head. "I figured once you're outta here and back at the station, we could have a little chat about one of the ways that you've been interfering with Team Skull."

"Why don't we have that chat now? It's not like I can do anything about it if you want to beat me up." Nanu said in a dead sort of voice. Before he had become kahuna, Nanu almost would have welcomed the violence, to take his mind off of other things. But after the nightmare he'd had… perhaps he shouldn't be encouraging someone to attack him. Nanu let out a muffled sound of surprise when Guzma leaned over and kissed him again, roughly this time and with a hint of a bite. Nanu grabbed a handful of Guzma's jacket and tugged him closer, desperate in that moment for something to chase away the images in his head. Guzma grumbled into the kiss, but allowed Nanu to reach up and dig his hand into his hair.

"Do you want to talk or not?" Nanu managed to breathe against Guzma's lips. Narrowed eyes met red ones, and Guzma shook his head as he went in for another kiss. Nanu didn't know what he had said or done for this sudden amount of attention that Guzma was piling onto him. Nanu did notice
that Persian had hoped off the bed to give them some space, and really, Nanu had not at all expected for the younger punk to go ahead and straddle him mid-kiss.

What the hell?

Guzma broke off the kiss and, breathing hard from exertion, glared down at Nanu as his hands went to his shoulders.

Nanu was quiet, his breathing also a little quick, but he would rather be out of breath from a kiss than a nightmare.

"Driving me crazy, old man." Guzma growled unhappily.

"Oh? And how am I doing that?" Nanu was rather grateful for the sheets over his lap. He was a little embarrassed that his damn body was trying to react to the sudden situation, and it made him feel pathetic that it didn't take much to turn him on. Clearly, he hadn't been with another person for a long time, but that was only because Nanu didn't want to let anyone get too close and see his bad side when things went south.

Like after waking up from a nightmare and going days without sleep. If Nanu could have, he would have been drinking right now, in an attempt to chase away memories of the past.

"You're not messing with me, are you?" Guzma asked crossly, hands resting against Nanu's shoulders heavily. "Or do you get it?"

"I'm not messing with you." Nanu said quietly, aware of the fact that in his weakened condition, he wouldn't be able to get Guzma off of him. "I just don't understand, is all. Why me?"

"You know, for a cop and a kahuna, you don't seem to have a high opinion of yourself." Guzma pointed out.

"Why should I?" Nanu thought back to the nightmare and to the past where he couldn't protect the Faller. Nanu's entire life had shattered after that, and even after picking up the pieces, he couldn't work up the energy to do much more than was necessary after that point. He only did things for others out of a sense of obligation, when he worked up the energy to actually do something. Other than that, he just took care of the Meowth at the station, since they didn't give a shit who Nanu was or what his past was. "It isn't like anyone cares what I do, so long as I do my duties as a kahuna now and again and make sure that you and the other punks don't blow something up."

"Damn, you're such a depressing bastard." Guzma maneuvered off of Nanu with a sigh of exasperation, and sat down on the bed next to him, staring down at Nanu with a frown. "I ain't gonna beat you down right now when you're already down, old man. It wouldn't be any fun if you can't fight back."

"If you're not going to pick a fight with me right now, then I'd like to get some rest." Nanu said tonelessly, really hoping that Guzma didn't take the sheets off of him. It would be awkward to explain. "I could have my Honchkrow let you know when I'm back."

"I'll know when you're back at the station." Guzma said cryptically, offering a confident grin when Nanu gave him a curious look.

"Oh? And how is that?" Nanu didn't think the younger punk had any psychic type Pokémon.

"The atmosphere of the area gets gloomier when you're there." Guzma said, straight faced. "Gotta cheer up sometime so the rain doesn't come pouring through the ceiling into the station with all that
gloom floating around you."

"I'm going back to sleep." Nanu promptly closed his eyes. He shouldn't have been surprised by Guzma's words, but there was a small part of him that wondered if he really did give off some unseen doom and gloom vibe. He'd seen enough shit in his past that there was likely a permanent dark cloud over his head, weighing him down. It wasn't like Guzma was saying it to be mean, however. The younger punk likely didn't realize that the words struck Nanu a little too hard.

"You better be ready the next time I see you." Guzma said, a taunting tone back in his voice.

Nanu's eyes flew open when one of Guzma's hands went beneath the sheets and rested over him, giving him a light squeeze through clothing.

Well…that was unexpected.

"Maybe next time we'll do somethin' about this, after we have that talk." Guzma's hand gave another press, causing Nanu to shift. "I know you want me. You just trying to deny it, huh? Think you're too old for me?"

"Something like that." Nanu admitted quietly. "And don't forget the first time I kissed you was likely not the best time to do so." Meaning Nanu shouldn't have kissed Guzma when he was having some flashbacks of a past Nanu didn't know much of.

"Tch. I meant after that, Nanu."

The red eyed officer was relieved when Guzma finally moved his hand away. Were Nanu in better shape, he might have done something about it once Guzma left him, but instead, Nanu was sure he was going to stare at the ceiling instead and wonder what his life was coming to. It didn't come as a surprise to him that Guzma was…interested in him. Not after their repeated interactions. But still, Nanu was having a hard time wrapping his mind around the idea. He didn't want to do anything he might later regret.

"And there you go again, thinking too much." Guzma broke into Nanu's thoughts with a snort of derision. "I can make my own decisions, you know. And just to let you know, I don't give a shit how old you are." Guzma slid off the bed at that, and headed for the door. "Oh, and I gave one of the nurses that baby Meowth to look after 'till you get outta bed. Not gonna take it with me to Po Town."

"I'm sure the baby Meowth would be fine. It likes you." Nanu commented, though he felt a little better, oddly enough, to hear that the age difference didn't seem to bother Guzma in the least bit. If the two of them chose to do anything about…whatever the hell was going on between them. "I'm sure Meowth would stick with you and not go wandering off."

"Told you before that I didn't want it to be around fighting." Guzma said, sounding a little awkward over the idea of a Meowth liking him of all people. "Though maybe I should take it with me, just in case another damn cat attacks you on your way back to the station."

"I'll have Honchkrow take me back." Nanu replied with a faint shrug.

"You do that." Guzma snorted in reply. "Wouldn't want to come across a body in the rain."

"Don't let the door hit you on the way out." Nanu drawled, hiding his discomfort of the image that sprang to mind at Guzma's words. Nanu knew that Guzma could take care of himself, and all Nanu had to do right now was to get some rest and allow his injury to mend. He was going to try and not think about Guzma implying something of a sexual nature the next time they were face to face. It boggled Nanu's mind that Guzma would even bother with him in the first place, when there were
other people closer to Guzma's age in Alola. Not to mention they were likely not a cop. "And don't you get attacked on your way back. I think the nurses could do without having to treat someone else that isn't a Pokémon."

"Nanu, you seriously need to lighten up. I know you're a dark type trainer and all, but it's kinda a bit much sometimes, don't you think?" The door opened and slammed shut, signaling Guzma's departure.

Nanu half smiled at the incredulous tone that Guzma had had. Nanu couldn't help it, being sarcastic and apathetic. If he cared too much, it would also hurt too much. It was better to stay detached and uninvolved. Nanu let out a sigh as a thought occurred to him. It appeared as though becoming attached to Guzma was unavoidable, as Nanu was fairly certain that any talk he and Guzma would have in the near future would not involve Team Skull. Not for long, if at all. And Nanu knew, from Guzma's words, that the younger punk was interested in more than just the occasional kiss from him.

"I think I'm getting too old for any sort of relationship, Persian." Nanu pressed his face against his Pokémon, not saying anything in return to Persian's confused meow. Now that Nanu had thought it, he was sure that was what was happening. The idea of any kind of relationship with Guzma seemed baffling, but it was something that Nanu didn't want to think about at the moment. But soon, he would have to, whether he wanted to or not, though preferably when he wasn't hurting and not thinking very clearly. Nanu didn't want to make any rash decisions, nor did he want to encourage Guzma, until he had some more time to himself to think.

As it turned out, Nanu was correct about not speaking with Guzma about Team Skull the next time they met. The topic that was landed on was all because Nanu had had the damn nightmare again, though this time, mercifully, the nightmare hadn't had the voice of the Faller enter it. The nightmare was still bad, as it always was, whether or not there were voices from the past speaking in Nanu's dreams. It was just really unfortunate that Guzma had chosen to come speak to him when he did. Nanu hadn't slept in days, and unlike when he'd been in the Pokémon Center, he had access to alcohol in the station. Since sleep had continued to elude him, Nanu was desperate enough to try and drink the visions of the past away.

The resulting confrontation was not something Nanu could have anticipated, considering the reports he'd received now and again of alcohol being smuggled into Po Town.

Chapter End Notes

I am making some assumptions about the post game of Sun/Moon, and therefore I only have the English translation of things to go off of. And bits from Tumblr, where some people point out that in the past, the UB Nanu and the others had gone after was a Guzzlord. So that's what I'm going with for the purposes of this fic, since it being that UB actually works well for later on in this fic plot-wise (the game itself it was vague during the UB side quest, over which UB it was just that they'd gone after a creature. I don't know if anyone has the source of where the Guzzlord stuff had come from, just out of curiosity).

Also, as shown at the end of this chapter, Nanu is going to be drunk for part of the next chapter, and there will be references to attempted suicide in the past as well, in case that will make anyone uncomfortable. That tag will go up before the next chapter is posted. And then the year and a half time skip happens at the tail of chapter 8 will bring it to ten
years later after the incident in the past (as in this chapter, Nanu indicates it had been 8 and a half years)
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

Guzma decided he wanted a chapter to himself, so the next chapter will include the time-skip. The new tag of implied/referenced non-con/rape is in regards to something that happened in the past. Probably just a few lines in this chapter but there all the same.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Guzma went back to Po Town with his thoughts a jumbled mess. He hadn’t even realized he’d scattered a group of other punks when they had seen him prowling back to the mansion in Po Town. It likely had to do with the scary look on his face, but on the inside, Guzma’s thoughts were whirling around like crazy.

“Hey boss, I was thinking of making some pancakes in the morning.” A female punk called from one of the rooms as Guzma stalked by. “Do I need to send someone out for the mix or berries again?”

“Nah.” Guzma paused briefly as he glanced over his shoulder. “Check the refrigerator. There should be some berries left over from yesterday, so long as someone didn’t feed it all to a Pokémon.” Guzma frowned. “There should be extra pancake mix in storage. Upper shelf.”

“Thanks boss.” The female punk went back into the room, presumably to check.

Guzma continued onward, the brief distraction welcome, because it gave him time to think things through a little more without embarrassing himself overly much. The next distraction, however, did not do him any favors, and in fact pissed him off instead.

“Boss!”

“Yeah?” Guzma grumbled, about to go outside through a window in order to get to his room. He looked back and saw a male punk standing there and looking very nervous. “What is it?” Guzma asked impatiently.

“Oh, um…” The punk fidgeted, before sighing. “Max is drunk again, and he was throwing things at me.”

Guzma twitched before his anger started to build. Guzma gestured wordlessly at the younger punk before him, not trusting himself to speak.

The younger punk took the hint and led the way to the aforementioned Max.

The following minutes passed by in a slew of yelling and arguing, before Guzma emerged from a room, carrying a bag full of several bottles of alcohol. With a final glare at the drunken punk, Guzma stalked off and headed for his room. He had said his piece, and had told Max that if he didn’t get his shit together, he was done being in Team Skull. Guzma didn’t want any drunken idiots getting themselves or their teammates harmed, or any of the Pokémon around them, if they weren’t thinking clearly. A drink now and again Guzma didn’t give a shit about but constant drinking he would not tolerate in Po Town at all.
By the time Guzma got to his bedroom on the second floor and slammed the door shut, he was highly agitated. Setting the bottles from the bag onto a nearby shelf, Guzma was very tempted to open one and get himself drunk. But that was a very, very bad idea, considering what had happened to him years ago when he had actually drunk himself silly. It hadn’t been a good time, and in order to distance himself from the full bottles of alcohol now on his shelf, Guzma’s thoughts strayed back to Nanu and stayed there. It was safer, relatively speaking, to think about the cop instead of the alcohol.

The more Guzma thought about Nanu, the more Guzma began to pace around his room. The embarrassment he’d felt earlier deepened as Guzma thought about what he had done back in the Pokémon Center, and how Nanu had responded to his touch. How it had been clear to Guzma that Nanu had wanted to kiss him back, but the older man’s mind and body had been obviously too worn out to follow through. The acceptance of the kiss, however, had given Guzma a boost of confidence he hadn’t known he’d needed. Confidence to push Nanu a little farther, just to see what would happen, because Guzma’s thoughts then had gone to what they could do with one another apart from argue.

But now that Guzma wasn’t in the Pokémon Center any longer, doubt began to creep in, despite the fact that Nanu had given no indication that he hadn’t liked Guzma’s touch. In fact, Nanu had almost seemed to crave the contact, in a way. It had made him stop acting like an indifferent bastard, for one, Guzma thought with a smile. The younger punk didn’t think he’s imagined the brief look of shock that had crossed Nanu’s features. Guzma smiled a little bit more. He liked the idea that he’d surprised the damn cop. But now that Guzma was thinking more clearly…he began to wonder what Nanu would choose to do about his none too subtle offer to, well…

Guzma went over to his bed and sat down as he dug his hands into his hair. Fingers bumping into oversized sunglasses, Guzma seized them and tossed them aside in order to properly run his hands through his hair. Guzma’s hands slowed as fingers gripped white hair tight as he let out a low groan. Had he actually offered to give Nanu a hand job the next time he saw the older man? Or at the very least insinuated that he would do something about the rather obvious erection?

What the hell had he been thinking?

Guzma stood back up and paced his room, unable to prevent a flush from crossing his features as he thought about the idea. It wouldn’t be much of a stretch to give someone a hand job, since Guzma wasn’t exactly a stranger to jacking off. Not that he would admit to masturbating to Nanu’s face. Damn cop would probably be able to tell without Guzma saying a word. Guzma chose in that moment to not think too much about that. Or the fact that he got a bit turned on over the idea of Nanu giving him that fucking half-smirk.

Guzma paused in the middle of the room as he came to the conclusion that he was sort of curious to see what would happen if he pressed Nanu’s buttons. If he had any. Man didn’t seem to be fazed by much, taking surprises in stride and acting as if they were just another daily occurrence in his boring dreary life. Guzma frowned thoughtfully as he wondered whether or not Nanu had had any sex life to speak of. He lived in a station full of Meowth, for crying out loud, so the chances were that he hadn’t recently had any promiscuous encounters. Unless there was some person out there that loved Meowth nearly as much as he did. Not that that would have been a turn on, per say. Guzma actually didn’t know what made Nanu tick, and the idea of finding out seemed like it could be fun. After all, Guzma had quite liked the way he’d managed to surprise Nanu back in the Pokémon Center.

Guzma’s thoughts turned to his own encounters in the past, wondering if there had been anything he had done that would be useful when dealing with Nanu. It was coming as a bit of a surprise to
Guzma that he was even thinking about Nanu in such a way. Guzma half wondered if Nanu would be flattered or horrified that it was his action of pinning Guzma down in the first place that had got the ball rolling, so to speak. Guzma wasn’t used to people overpowering him, so it was turn on of sorts even if the situation hadn’t been ideal. Guzma grumbled something under his breath, and tried to think about his own relationships, or lack thereof, in the past.

Guzma had only ever slept with women before, maybe once or twice with another man that he couldn’t really remember properly. Or, at least, one of those times Guzma told himself he couldn’t remember. If he tried to, Guzma would start to get sick to his stomach, and he’d promptly banish any other thought about the man in question. The Team Skull boss felt he was better off not remembering the particulars of that encounter.

Guzma scowled up at the bedroom ceiling as he thought about his past…sexual encounters. Most of the time he’d unfortunately been drunk off his ass and his partners usually just left him to sleep it off. Only once did Guzma vaguely remember having kind of, sort of, sex with a woman during that dark time, though if Guzma recalled right, he hadn’t really been into it. Hadn’t wanted to do anything but sleep, but the woman had pushed him, and had gotten him turned on enough that she was able to use him to get off. Something Guzma vaguely recalled not caring for at all. Never saw her again after that. Soon after, Guzma stopped drinking altogether, and threw himself into training his Pokémon with renewed vigor, determined to make something of himself.

Guzma shook his head, banishing the unpleasant memories. He’d made a shit ton of bad decisions thought the years. One of which had been to drink so much at the age of 18, and continue to drink too much on and off for two years. Guzma hadn’t given a shit about the consequences at the time. Nor the potential of having the cops bust his ass if he’d been caught in public drunk and beating people up. It wasn’t the smartest idea Guzma had come up with to deal with his problems of feeling like a failure of a trainer after so many losses in a row with his bug-only Pokémon team. By the age of 18, and not ever being chosen to be a trial captain leading up until that point made going home something that was out of the question. It had led to another, more fatal decision that Guzma would have followed through on if not for his Golisopod caring what happened to him.

The Team Skull boss shook his head roughly with a growl of annoyance. What had he been thinking about before the bullshit had started to come back to him?

Nanu.

Right.

The curiosity was getting the better of Guzma, and the more time he spent around Nanu, the more interested he became. As Guzma had been thinking before, his interest had been drawn when Nanu had managed to overpower him. After the cop’s cat had dragged him to the station that one night. And then later, when Guzma had woken up nearly naked, and had taken an immediate defensive nature due to waking up minus most of his clothes. Guzma probably should have mentioned that it was a very similar to the way he’d woken up with the woman that had decided to have sex with him years ago. Except then Guzma had been fully naked. It hadn’t been the most pleasant experience, and had turned Guzma off from sex for a good long while. It had therefore been a shock to wake up, sober this time, and find himself in a similar position, though this time around, Nanu hadn’t seem to be interested in doing anything other than making sure he didn’t get sick.

The panic Guzma had felt when Nanu collapsed on top of him had been genuine, though for a different, far more unpleasant reason than the one night stand with the woman. One he did not decide to dwell on. Guzma had realized that Nanu had not intended to fall on him when Guzma had been so easily able to throw him off despite feeling like shit and shaking like crazy at the time.
Shaking, partly, because he had liked the sensation of Nanu’s body pressed against him and holding him down. Guzma considered the touch later, after he’d moved Nanu over to the couch. Thought a long time about why his heart had been racing, once he had determined that Nanu had not meant to trap him against the bed. It was further solidified when Nanu had quietly admitted to his body acting up on him.

It had made Guzma realize that Nanu was older than him, but really, Guzma didn’t think that Nanu could be older than 50. More like his middle to late 40s. Guzma was in his late 20s, though he really didn’t give a shit about the age difference. But Guzma did believe Nanu’s mentions about old injuries acting up on him. Clearly the man had seen some crazy shit if he carried around a gun at times and could take someone Guzma’s size down without batting his eyes.

Guzma ran his hands through his hair more slowly, before he let out a slow, exasperated breath. He hated thinking about things from the past. It was better off left forgotten. Right now he was more concerned over the fact that he couldn’t stop thinking about Nanu. He was a damn cop for crying out loud, and a kahuna, even if Nanu didn’t do his damn job as one often. Before, when Guzma had first met Nanu, the younger man had merely found the older cop a nuisance. And then Guzma found out that Nanu couldn’t be bothered to do much about Team Skill causing trouble around Alola, and specifically, in Po Town. The only time the man bothered to get up off his ass to do something was when Team Skull attempted to do something dangerous or stole someone’s Pokémon.

Guzma went over to the chair in his room and perched on it moodily as he made the attempt to shove down all of the emotions battering his mind. He was the leader of Team Skull. He couldn’t afford to be distracted by a cop, and a kahuna. A person that could actively disrupt Team Skull’s day to day activities if the man would bother to give a damn about what went on around him. Guzma knew that he had a job to do himself, and he did it well. He would just have to try and ignore his desire to go and check on Nanu.

For now.

Guzma figured that he could always go pester the other man later, once he was back at the station.

-x-x-x-

One week later…

-x-x-x-

Guzma thought that he might be able to focus on the things that he believed he needed to do for Team Skull, but of course, he couldn’t focus on a damn thing. He needed to go bother Nanu. Guzma had wanted to go with the excuse of shaking the cop down for some more food, but as that had already been done recently, Guzma felt that he needed another reason to go. Guzma didn’t want any of the other punks in Po Town thinking that he was going soft for worrying over the health of an Alolan cop, even if said cop didn’t exactly do anything to impede them.

Not often, anyway.

Guzma could have gone to the police station any time in the past few days. Guzma knew he would have found Nanu there, because one of the punks that tended to loiter outside of the police station had informed Guzma once the older cop had returned. Guzma had been busy after that announcement, cleaning up after some messes that the other Team Skull punks had made.

And now, Guzma had nothing left to do that day. In a way, that was great news, because Guzma couldn’t take it any longer. He had to go to the station, and sooner rather than later. Guzma had been
losing his damn mind not knowing what Nanu had thought of what he had said and done in the Pokémon Center. And when Guzma did end up seeing the other man, he wasn’t sure whether he would punch Nanu or kiss him. Guzma couldn’t help but be a little amused over the fact that he hadn’t worked up the nerve to leave Po Town until well into the night. It figured that he always seemed to end up going to see Nanu sometime during the night.

Guzma was on pins and needles that evening as his eyes darted around route 17 as he made his way through the rain toward the station. When Guzma got closer, he halted mid step at the sight of a figure standing outside one of the side windows of the station. It was hard to make out who or what it was through the rain, but Guzma could see the figure silhouetted by the light coming out from inside the station. From what Guzma could tell, the figure appeared to be looking inside the station. As soon as Guzma saw what looked like a hand reach out for the window, he started to move again. Bristling over the idea of someone harassing Nanu other than himself, Guzma raised his voice and yelled at whoever or whatever the hell was standing there.

“Hey! What’re you doin’ out here?” Apparently, the sight of Guzma’s tall frame running toward it caused the figure to retreat and vanish behind the station. “Get back here!” Guzma went straight past the side of the station in pursuit. When Guzma rounded the corner, he stopped short, frowning in confusion.

There was no one there.

Guzma rocked back on his heels as he surveyed the immediate area behind the station. There weren’t very many places to hide back there, and Guzma didn’t think that a human could vanish so quickly without him at least catching sight of the person as they beat a hasty retreat. Guzma figured that a Pokémon could move fast enough to avoid detection, but the silhouette of the figure that he had seen had all but screamed human. Guzma wondered if perhaps he had imagined things. After taking another brief cursory look around the area, Guzma shook his head and walked back to the window at the side of the station. Guzma peered through the window himself and realized that he got a decent view of the station and its interior. And when Guzma glanced down, he saw Nanu sitting on a couch, a bottle in one hand. Upon further inspection, there was a glass sitting forgotten on the table in front of the cop.

Unease crept over Guzma at the sight, and he didn’t want to believe what he was seeing, but there it was, right before his eyes. After having confiscated bottles from the drunken punk in Po Town, Guzma had hoped he wouldn’t have to see anyone else inebriated. But apparently that was too much to ask for, and so Guzma again was reminded not only of his unpleasant time where he had been drunk, but to further back in his past, when his father had had a bit too much too. That was a memory Guzma would love to forget, as he was fairly sure he still had scars from some of the beat downs that occurred.

With a silent snarl, Guzma banished those thoughts as fast as he could, and focused on the present. On the fact that Nanu was in the station, drinking. The sight made Guzma see red. He hated seeing reminders of his younger self, and he knew he couldn’t police what other people chose to do, but Guzma couldn’t help himself. He didn’t actually want to chase Max off from Team Skull, but Guzma was trying to think about the safety of the team as a whole. Hell, Guzma himself struggled to keep away from alcohol himself. Had to think of some way to distract himself when he really wanted a drink. Or worse had a drink and had to stop himself from having another one, which was always difficult. Guzma’s Pokemon usually helped by insisting on his attention.

Guzma shook himself back into the present. Right now, he felt he had to do something, anything, about a cop, and, for Arceus’ sake, a kahuna, drinking himself into oblivion. Guzma wouldn’t have cared if was a glass here and there but the sight of Nanu drinking straight out of the bottle sent
Guzma into a bit of a panic despite the anger.

Guzma stomped off to the front of the station, his hand resting on the doorknob as a brief flash of unease rose up within him. Guzma stubbornly pushed it down. He was big bad Guzma. He wasn’t afraid of anyone or anything. He made people fear him.

It was just Nanu in the station. Nanu wasn’t going to hurt him even with a few drinks in him. There was no reason to believe that Nanu would react the same way as his father had in the past…

Guzma grit his teeth as he opened the door and prepared to shove it open the rest of the way. Guzma wasn’t sure if he was willing to go any further with the older cop if it was what it looked like. Guzma didn’t want to think about the alcohol that Nanu was drinking, because it kept making him flash back to his teenage self….to his father when he was younger, and neither memory were something he wanted to focus on. Guzma desperately pushed down the worry over what Nanu would happen to do if he was drunk. Guzma had decided, years ago, that would be better to beat someone when they were sober than when they were drunk, and would likely not remember it. Guzma would know, after he’d drunk so much in those two years after he’d turned 18, even after he’d seen what had happened with his father when he’d been younger. Guzma had made so many terrible decisions, and he didn’t want whatever was happening between him and Nanu to be another one.

Guzma closed his eyes and took a deep breath. There was no going back. He was going to go in the station and find out what the hell was going on. Guzma let out a slow breath, opened his eyes, and, squaring his shoulders, pushed the door open roughly to step inside.

Chapter End Notes

I literally have the 'hello darkness my old friend' going through my head when I think about/work on editing the next chapter. It's the more angst-filled, depressing/distressing chapter.
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

FYI, added 'implied/referenced suicide in the past' tag for this chapter (and tossed in some future tags before I forgot them).

Also added to the summary of the fic.

There is just a little bit of drunk Nanu in the beginning of the chapter. And this time, the chapter does include the time skip plus intro to main plot at the end.

Nanu had all but forgotten about Guzma's promise to come talk to him, as the red eyed officer was well on his way to drinking himself into oblivion. A nightmare had surfaced out of the blue, the same one that Nanu had had in the Pokémon Center. The nightmare had been as vivid as before, so much so that Nanu hadn't slept for days in fear of it surfacing again for a third time. And when sleep deprivation didn't help him forget, Nanu went to the bottle despite knowing that it would do him more harm than good. But Nanu didn't want to remember so vividly the nightmare that kept him from sleeping. Even almost a decade later it was still fresh. The screams never left him. They never would. And it seemed like the voice of the Faller was going to occasionally join in with those unhappy memories.

Nanu wasn't entirely sure how long he had been drinking but he was at the point where he couldn't remember why he had begun in the first place. Good. He didn't want to know what it was he was trying to forget. Blissful ignorance was better for the time being. Nanu was too far gone to notice the sound of the station door open. He was too far gone to hear the various hisses of warning that came from the Meowth around him. But Nanu did notice when the bottle that he had been drinking from was taken out of his hand. Nanu glanced up, not really all that surprised to see Guzma standing there. What seemed out of place was the way the younger punk stared at the bottle before his eyes settled on Nanu.

"I didn't know you drank." Guzma's voice held something, a wavering of sorts, of some emotion that Nanu couldn't place at present. "Maybe you should put a curtain over the windows of the station so that people don't see a cop drinking himself into a stupor."

"If you had gone through some of what I have, you would drink too." Nanu waved vaguely toward the window behind him. "It's raining all the time out there. Why would anyone bother peeking through a window at me?" Nanu managed to not slur too many of his words together as he held out his hand. "Give that back and get your own."

Guzma's eyes seemed to darken at that, before he merely turned and headed right into the small kitchen at the back of the station. Eyes on Nanu, Guzma poured the rest of the liquid in the bottle down the drain of the sink.

"What are you doing?" Anger flashed through Nanu at the sight, a glare fixed on Guzma. "That wasn't cheap."

"What does it look like I'm doin'?" Guzma sneered at Nanu, "That's a new look on you. I didn't think
you could work up the energy to be angry about anything." Guzma set the empty bottle in the sink. "And isn't that too damn bad? It looks like you wasted your money then."

Nanu wasn't sure how he got off of the couch but he sure as hell didn't miss the flinch that went through Guzma's bigger frame. Even if it was gone in an instant, Nanu hesitated, the alcohol clouding his judgment. He couldn't be entirely certain but Nanu could have sworn he had seen a hint of fear and then resignation flash across Guzma's features. Both were gone in an instant, to be replaced by the sneer once more.

"You lookin' to get a piece of your boy here?" Guzma spread his hands out, presenting a target. "Why not get a hit in? After all, I did foil your plan to prevent some people from joinin' up with Team Skull the other day." When Nanu made no move, Guzma shook his head and moved over to the pantry, opening the doors and removing two bottles of alcohol. "What the hell is a kahuna doing getting drunk for, anyway? Shouldn't you be sober in case of an emergency?" Guzma grinned and set the bottles down, hearing Nanu approach him. Half turning, Guzma reached up and caught Nanu's right wrist before Nanu could reach the bottles, and twisted the captured arm behind the older officer's back. Guzma shoved Nanu up against the nearest wall. "How drunk are you?" Guzma breathed against the side of Nanu's neck. "Gonna remember any of this?"

Nanu strained to get out of Guzma's hold but the younger man had leverage over him. Nanu attempted one last time to get away, despite the fact that his right arm was still sore from being bitten, even a week later.

Guzma didn't budge, and in fact seemed to press the older man more heavily against the wall.

Nanu rested his forehead against the wall and let out a slow, shuddering breath. In that moment, he knew that he couldn't fight with Guzma. Nanu didn't want to anyway. Besides, the punk was stronger than him right now, and because of that, Nanu didn't put up much of a struggle. Not even when Guzma pulled him away from the wall and maneuvered him toward the floor.

"Oy, cat. Hold your trainer down before he hurts himself."

Nanu grunted when his legs were kicked out from beneath him, and Guzma let go of his arm to let him fall the rest of the way to the floor. Nanu caught himself, barely, but before he could lever himself up, a large paw rested gently on his upper back, a low purr of concern emitting overhead from Persian. Nanu allowed himself to sag back against the floor, though he couldn't help but tense up briefly when he heard the telltale sound of handcuffs being picked up from somewhere in the station. Nanu felt Persian's paw rest heavier, and Nanu closed his eyes, too worn out to resist at this point. Somewhere in his disjointed mind Nanu believed that he'd done something wrong. Or almost did something wrong. And when the metal cinched around both wrists, the tension left Nanu's body entirely as he went still. Persian moved its paw away before it curled up tightly against its trainer and started to groom his gray hair.

Nanu heard Guzma moving around, followed by the telltale sound of bottles opening and then being drained. The look on Guzma's face from before suddenly began to make sense. Though Nanu wasn't entirely with it, he wondered if Guzma's father had perhaps gotten drunk in the past. Nanu didn't think he would ask because Guzma wasn't likely to answer. Scattered thoughts were bad enough at the moment, and Nanu wondered whether he had hit Guzma when reaching for the bottles or not. Nanu let himself drift off, the haze of the alcohol still too much for Nanu to sift through his own thoughts.

-x-x-x-

Nanu hadn't realized that he had dozed off. When the red eyed officer began to wake up, he noted
that Persian wasn't against him anymore. Nanu was a little confused as to what had woken him up until he saw something close to his face staring at him.

It was the baby Meowth, whose eyes were wide and teary, the young Pokémon clearly concerned.

The moment Nanu had opened his eyes that expression changed from worry to relief as the small feline Pokémon pressed its cheek to Nanu's with a purr. Nanu closed his eyes as he let the small Meowth shower him with affection, as Nanu felt he would have liked to have been passed out a bit longer. He wished he hadn't woken up, actually, what with the pounding in his head, but there he was. Awake and miserable, though Nanu realized he was now on a couch instead of the floor, and after that, noted that he wasn't handcuffed anymore. Nanu let out a soft groan. His head hurt. He'd had way too much to drink.

A concerned growl emitted from Persian from somewhere nearby, and the baby Meowth began to tentatively groom Nanu's face. The tongue wasn't nearly as scratchy as Persian's, so Nanu didn't mind. It also gave him the excuse to try and piece together what had happened. It was all a jumbled mess, but Nanu soon became aware of the act that Guzma was still in the station, because the punk decided to speak up.

"You know, I almost didn't think you were so bad." Guzma said calmly from nearby. "Guess I was wrong though, huh?"

"Did you come here for that talk you mentioned before?" Nanu asked, moving a hand in order to give the baby Meowth a few scratches on the head.

The Meowth purred at the attention and wrapped its front paws around Nanu's hand. Then it gave a tiny growl and swatted a paw against the hand.

"Sorry, MaryAnn." Nanu murmured as he gave the baby Meowth a scratch under the chin. "Got carried away last night. Didn't mean to drop you off my lap."

"Who the hell is MaryAnn?" Guzma asked. "And don't avoid the question, cop."

"This Meowth. Asked if it wanted a nickname, even though none of the other Meowth want one. Probably have their own names that I can't guess, so I stuck to what humans call their species in general." Nanu stared down at the baby Meowth pressing its cheek to his hand. "I don't think this one got a chance to get a name, considering how it started its life. So I asked, and it seemed to understand. Said a few names, but it appears to like the name MaryAnn best. So that's what I'll call it."

"Is the Meowth female? They all look the same, so how can you tell? And why give it a human name? That's kinda weird, old man." Guzma moved into Nanu's range of view, and his expression became unhappy. "And stop sidetracking me with talk about all your damn cats. Why the hell were you drinking?"

"What's it to you?" Nanu asked, his attention still on the baby Meowth.

"Gee, I don't know. Maybe because you're a cop and a kahuna?" Guzma crossed his arms, and in that moment, looked almost...uncomfortable. "Why the fuck would you drink so much? Don't you have to set a good example or somethin' like that?"

"Have you ever seen someone start to be torn apart and bloodied right in front of you?" Nanu asked, his voice nearly a whisper, his hand still within MaryAnn's paws. "Were you unable to do a damn thing about it as that same person was dragged away to be killed or eaten, because you chose to save
someone else?" Nanu's tone was devoid of any emotion. "Did you ever feel that you should have been the one to die instead? Did you ever try to kill yourself? Do you see that same person in your dreams, unable to do anything to help them? Forced to see them start to get torn apart again, and see the blood, smell it, over and over? Do you hear the voice of that person hating you for choosing to help someone else first, just because that other person happened to be closer?"

There was dead silence in the station.

Nanu kept his eyes closed even as MaryAnn let out a concerned little mewl and pressed its cheek against his. Nanu didn't normally talk about the nights following the incident from nearly a decade ago. Hell, Nanu hadn't even told Looker, who had also been witness to the gruesome sight at the same time. Nanu realized that he had never mentioned the attempted suicide to anyone either.

"Old man?"

Nanu opened his eyes reluctantly and raised his head. Guzma was closer than Nanu thought he'd be and the punk had an uncomfortable look on his face.

"What?" Nanu prompted

"You're not the only one who drinks." Guzma crossed his arms and avoided eye contact but the younger punk's body language caused Nanu to become alert. Or as alert as he could be with a hangover.

"What do you mean?" Nanu eyed Guzma carefully.

"I…I started to drink a lot when I was 18." Seeing a raised brow from Nanu, Guzma sighed in exasperation. "Yeah, yeah, I know I was under age. Can't arrest me for that now." Guzma took a breath, let it out. "I couldn't stop until I was around 20, after I almost…" Guzma abruptly stopped speaking, looking troubled, as if he wasn't sure whether to continue or not.

"You didn't hurt yourself, did you?" Nanu may be apathetic most of the time but that didn't mean he didn't understand what Guzma was hinting at. Nanu knew that, much like himself, Guzma didn't want to admit certain things. After all, Guzma was in Team Skull and happened to be in a higher position of power within the group as their leader. Much like how Nanu was a cop, as well as a kahuna, though at the time when it all went to hell, Nanu hadn't been the latter yet.

"When things got really bad…I started making really stupid decisions. Not being able to be chosen as a trial captain year after year got me real bad. Messing up more and more once I realized I'd never be chosen…all the drinking and the bad choices started getting worse after that." Guzma muttered reluctantly, unable to meet Nanu’s gaze as he spoke. "Started picking people up at random to sleep with. Drinking 'till I couldn't remember much of anything the next day. I couldn't go home. I wouldn't go home. Not with the drinking. The parties. Not after seeing other trainers become trial captains. Not after seeing Kukui decide to go off to try and become a Pokémon professor." Guzma crouched down near the couch as he ran a hand through his hair, knocking his sunglasses askew. "And there I was, the loser that couldn't do anything right."

Nanu couldn't tear his eyes away from Guzma. He hadn't realized that the younger man had had such a dark turn so early in his life. Why hadn't anyone noticed? Why hadn't anyone done something to help him? Why would Guzma avoid going home? Nanu almost reached out to touch Guzma's nearest shoulder, before he jerked his hand back, thinking that Guzma might not appreciate it at the moment. Nanu rested a hand lightly on MaryAnn's bandaged back, the little Meowth's body vibrating with pleased purrs at the attention.
"I guess after I turned 20 it just got to be too much." Guzma didn't seem to notice that Nanu seemed to want to reach out to touch him again. "I couldn't stand being here anymore. I didn't have anywhere to go after I failed to become a trial captain. Among other failures as a trainer along the way." The larger punk shrugged indifferently. "Went to the beach and tried to drown myself. Figured no one would miss me. My dad wouldn't. My mom would have, I suppose, but it wasn't like she bothered to step in when my old man came at me." Guzma stared at the floor. "Didn't think I had anyone in my life that would give a shit if I were gone. Everyone kept leaving one way or another, so I didn't see the point. The alcohol was starting to make things worse instead of better, so I thought, why not just disappear, if no one would notice? So I jumped into the water, where no one would see me."

Nanu actually couldn't imagine someone like Guzma trying to kill himself like that, and Nanu was uncomfortable over the thought of what Guzma's father did that was bad enough to drive the younger man to consider it. The implied abuse was part of it, but Nanu had a feeling there was more to it, including Guzma's reaction to Nanu himself drinking. Had Guzma's father been a drunk while Guzma had been growing up? It would make it more painful if it was true, especially since Guzma had ended up drinking away his own problems over the course of two years.

Unease settled into the pit of Nanu's stomach, remembering the way Guzma had been mumbling apologies the one night they had actually fought with one another, seemingly not aware of his surroundings at times. Had the fight back then…triggered memories of the past that still lingered with Guzma? Nanu knew certain things could trigger his own past, but he was far more violent when it happened. Nanu had been relieved the only thing that hit him over the years was the nightmares….better to deal with sleep deprivation and drinking than violence.

"Wimpod tried to drag me out of the water, but it was too small." Guzma continued on as he absently traced a finger along Golisopod's poke ball beneath his jacket. "It wasn't so small and weak when it managed to evolve. It dragged me out of the water and pinned me on the beach so that I couldn't go back into the water. Made all these angry sounding clicks at me."

Nanu understood that part well. It was similar to the furious hissing from Persian and other upset and scared sounds his other Pokémon made when they found him. How they had all converged on him and prevented him from ending it all. Even after many years, Nanu was certain his Pokémon were still wary whenever he took his gun out of storage. Nanu frowned. Come to think of it, none of the Pokémon in the station had been perturbed when he'd taken the gun out a week ago, when he'd been attacked by the wild Persian later on.

"You listenin' to me?" Guzma grumbled, "Or don't you give a shit? Maybe you think it would've been a good thing to have yer boy here dead and gone? That way, you wouldn't have to deal with me."

"Guzma..." Nanu did not like the hurt seeping into Guzma's words at all. It was almost like Guzma still thought he might be better off dead after all. Nanu's head might still be hurting, but he wasn't going to let that slide, "I'm listening. And don't say that. No one's better off dead." Nanu hesitated, and then decided that since Guzma was suddenly laying out some clearly painful memories, he may as well be perfectly clear about some of his own. "It just made me think about how my Pokémon knocked me over and kept me pinned down for hours when I..." Nanu broke off, the memory of what he'd almost done something hard to admit to, even after all these years.

"Gonna make me guess?" Guzma asked in the silence that followed. At the very least, he sounded mostly back to normal. "You try to go for a swim too, old man? Or did you maybe go bother Tapu Bulu to see if it would get off its lazy ass?"
"When you saw me with a gun last week…it was the first time in eight and a half years that none of my Pokémon were worried that I was going to try to use it on myself.” Nanu said softly.

Guzma went completely silent. Whatever response the younger man thought he was going to give was gone as he stared at Nanu.

"I didn't live in this station at the time. I was working for the International Police." Nanu took a shuddering breath before continuing, "After Looker and I finished our mission, minus a person…we found someone on the beach. We took her back to headquarters with us." Nanu shook his head, "The two of us were put on forced time off after the incident, and the nightmares stared soon after that. I was alone most of the time." Nanu picked up MaryAnn and held the little Meowth close. "I didn't leave one of the bases for weeks. I hardly left my room either so I didn't usually see another person for days on end. Only my Pokémon. And when they were out of the room one night to go find food, and I was all alone in my room…it just became too much that night. I thought I could move on well enough…it wasn't the first time I'd seen someone taken off to their deaths but…it was the first time that I couldn't do anything about it."

"Shit." Guzma apparently picked up on where Nanu was going with his story.

"My Pokémon found me in my room, probably seconds away from eating a bullet." Nanu smiled bitterly, "I guess I found out that Pokémon, even if some are slow to move at times, can move really quickly when they see their trainer almost shoot themselves. I've never seen Persian move so quickly…well, it was a Meowth at the time, but the way it smacked the gun out of my hand and clawed me while crying…it made me realize that my Pokémon would at least miss me if I were gone."

"Shit." Guzma repeated softly. When Nanu lapsed into silence, Guzma tentatively continued his own story, eyes on Nanu petting the baby Meowth on his lap, "I...decided that if Golisopod wasn't going to let me go that I could at least keep going and give it battles. Got some help with the drinking…and once I got my shit together, I started to actually do pretty well with Pokémon battles. S'how I ran into the few people that still considered themselves a part of Team Skull a couple years later. They saw me in battles with my Pokémon and decided I should be their leader, 'cause I was the strongest amongst them. Group grew bigger and we moved into Po Town. Somethin' I think you remember." Guzma offered a tiny grin as he gestured at himself. "And now I'm big bad Guzma of Team Skull. I can beat people down before they can do the same to me." Guzma hunched up a little at the way Nanu stared at him. "What is it, old man?"

"What about the reports of alcohol in Po Town?" Nanu asked, though his cautious tone indicated that he was prepared for angry backlash.

"Oh, that. Some of the other punks like to drink a little now and again." Guzma gave a shrug, though he seemed troubled. "Makes them feel like they're breaking the rules. Makes them feel like they have some control." Guzma shook his head. "I do put some of the full bottles in my room, when one of those idiots gets a little too into drinking. No one's gonna try and steal from the boss." Guzma scowled at Nanu suddenly. "And before you ask, after nearly drowning myself and then kicking myself back into shape, I ain't gonna drink again." Guzma offered a tiny, yet insincere, smile. "I'd rather drink a Tapu Cocoa, but I ain't gonna deny that I'm tempted to crack open one of those bottles from time to time. It's hard not to, but I've managed with help from Golisopod and my other Pokémon."

"I'm sorry." Nanu really was. He hadn't thought about how Guzma's past could be affecting the younger man now. Just as Nanu's own past affected him. Nanu knew that he could do something for at least one of those memories. One that was still clearly affecting Guzma. Nanu gestured to the
pantry in the small kitchen. "There are a few more bottles of alcohol behind the panel in the back." Nanu was relieved that Guzma didn't press him about the incident with the gun. Nanu didn't want to think about it any longer either. It had been a very dark time, those weeks after witnessing the Faller torn apart and presumably left somewhere to die. 'Or taken somewhere to be eaten.' Nanu thought with a shudder, before he shoved those particular memories to the back of his mind. Nanu didn't want to be back in that headspace ever again.

"You hide alcohol?" Guzma frowned but went over to the pantry to find the bottles where Nanu said they'd be. And when Guzma found the bottles, he glanced over his shoulder at Nanu with narrowed eyes.

"You're not the only one who tries to get rid of the bottles." Nanu said with a shrug.

"Acerola." It wasn't a question.

"She doesn't take all of them, but she does worry about me." Nanu sighed again. "She doesn't know that I sometimes drink more than I ought to at times. I don't normally drink at all unless I've had a bad nightmare where I can't sleep for days."

"You can get rid of 'em yourself." Guzma said as he put the bottles back where he found them. That accomplished, Guzma stomped over to Nanu and hauled him to his feet with one hand, the other hand picking up MaryAnn, much to the small feline Pokémon's delight.

"What are you doing?" Nanu asked dryly, before he noticed that Guzma was leading him in the direction of the bed. "I can't sleep right now, you know. The nightmares will just wake me back up. Haven't slept well in days."

"Just lie down." Guzma grumbled, waiting for Nanu to do so as soon as he let go of the older officer. The younger punk absently pet MaryAnn, the little Meowth arching up, or trying to, beneath Guzma's hand.

Nanu just shook his head wordlessly. He couldn't explain that he couldn't even close his eyes without seeing flashes of the past.

"Damn, just lie down already." Guzma said in exasperation as he set MaryAnn down on a pillow, and reached out to seize Nanu's nearest arm.

Nanu had not at all expected for Guzma to drag him closer to the bed and shove him down onto it. Nanu hit the bed with a grimace, but before he could even think to get back up, Guzma joined him on the bed. Nanu rolled over, back to Guzma as he spoke. "I told you already that I can't sleep." Nanu held still when Guzma was suddenly pressed up against his back, one leg hooking over Nanu's to hold them in place. One of the punk’s arms curled over Nanu's waist to further deter thoughts of escape. Nanu went completely motionless when he felt Guzma press his face against his neck. Nanu felt that this was far more contact then either of them had had with one another, and he wasn't sure what to think of it. There was no way Nanu would be able to fall asleep like this with Guzma's limbs over him.

"Sleep." Guzma demanded against skin.

"Can't like this." Nanu murmured in reply a moment later, as MaryAnn lay down next to his head and curled up as best it could.

"Too damn bad." Guzma grumbled against Nanu's neck, the younger punk's arm tightening around Nanu's waist. "Do it anyway. Your cat looks ready to sleep."
Nanu gave in once he realized that he couldn't get out of Guzma's tight hold. Nanu closed his eyes, wary of why Guzma was using him as a living, breathing pillow when he had been upset with him before. Much to Nanu's surprise, when he finally fell asleep, there were no nightmares to wake him up.

Yet there were no answers as to why Guzma had chosen to stay in the police station instead of leaving Nanu to his misery.

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When Nanu woke the following morning and found Guzma fast asleep behind him, Nanu wondered if he gave the Team Skull leader something to do. Or rather, gave him someone to focus on instead of past failures, and for Guzma to prove that he wasn't going to let anyone push him around. For Nanu, he supposed it was the distraction of dealing with Team Skull, and their leader, that gave him something in return. It was far better to be dealing with the punks, as it helped Nanu distance himself from the past.

Nanu let out a self-deprecating laugh even as he rolled over carefully and reached up to hesitantly ruffle Guzma's hair, trying not to wake the younger man up. MaryAnn seemed to find this great fun, as the Meowth gently started to kneed small paws into the hair alongside Nanu's hand, the small Pokémon smiling up at Nanu. The red eyed officer couldn't help but faintly smile in return, even as his thoughts drifted to the snoozing punk beside him. Both of them were broken in different ways but Nanu couldn't deny that he felt a little better lately when Guzma came to pester him at the police station. Nanu wondered if the feeling was mutual, despite the big fight he and Guzma had had weeks ago. Nanu dozed back off, but when he came to some hours later, he found himself alone, along with a note on the pillow next to him that had been hastily scrawled on.

I'll be back, old man. Don't go getting bitten again.

Nanu couldn't help but smile at the note. He wouldn't be surprised now if Guzma did randomly show up in the station as he had been doing lately. Not after Nanu had done nothing to deter him. Nanu held MaryAnn a little too tightly, and the baby Meowth let out a mewl of alarm when its nearly healed over wounds on its back were disturbed. Nanu immediately loosened his hold, and brought MaryAnn to his chest and cradled the Pokémon carefully.

"Sorry MaryAnn. I was thinking too deeply." Nanu apologized to the Meowth.

Persian came up to Nanu then, its round head tilting to the side as it looked at MaryAnn and then Nanu before it let out an inquiring meow.

Nanu sank to the floor from the bed and let his head press back against the frame of the mattress. He ran a shaking hand along Persian's head. Memories washed over him, and now that he was sober again, Nanu was sorely tempted to start drinking again. But when Persian pressed against him and started to groom him with a worried growl, Nanu just sagged further against it and the bed behind him as he closed his eyes and ran a hand over his face. Nanu couldn’t help but recall a carefree smile, still so clear after so many years had gone by.

Hey, do you think we’re close to finding that creature? What do you think it’ll be like? Maybe it won’t be as bad as the reports say.

It isn’t a Pokémon so that’s doubtful.

Don't be so glum, Nanu. If you expect it to be bad, then it will be.
Please try to remember to proceed with caution. We don’t really know very well what we are up against.

Not you too, Looker. Both of you should try to be a bit more positive. Don’t just jump to conclusions. I’m sure everything will work out just fine!

Nanu was silent for a several minutes, lost in somewhat happier memories but when he spoke aloud, his voice was a choked up, broken whisper.

"I'm so sorry, MaryAnn."

The young Meowth let out a purr of curiosity as Persian increased its efforts to groom its trainer. Both Pokémon knew that something was wrong, but only Persian really understood what was going on in its trainer's mind. While MaryAnn didn't understand entirely, and tried to join in on the grooming, Persian knew that Nanu hadn't been directing his second apology to the baby Meowth. Nanu had been saying it to someone from his past.

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As the weeks passed by, Guzma didn't show up to the station as often. Nanu could only think that it had to do with the fact that Team Skull seemed to be getting up to something, and Guzma didn't want to accidentally spill the beans to Nanu. After all, the red eyed man was the kahuna, and a cop, as Guzma liked to remind him. Both of those positions would have spelled trouble for Guzma and his team should Nanu choose to actually do something about the lot of them.

Nanu tried to tell himself that he didn't care that Guzma wasn't showing up as often at the station after their latest encounter. That the silence was something he much preferred. But as the weeks turned into months, Nanu attempted to convince himself that it was probably for the best that the younger punk wasn’t around as much. Perhaps Guzma had found someone else to put his attentions on, and that Nanu should perhaps feel grateful for that. Only, he didn't, because Nanu found himself realizing that he actually did miss Guzma being around, and Nanu thought he should think about why. And keep that tiny part of himself that actually cared from caring too much about Guzma's sudden absence.

It wasn't like it had actually meant anything. Nor did the few times Guzma had chosen to stop by the station to snatch a sudden kiss. That didn't really mean anything, did it?

-x-x-x-

A year and a half passed by quickly, and a single letter delivered by a Croagunk derailed all of Nanu's passing thoughts about Guzma and what the younger punk had been up to. Suddenly, Team Skull and their shenanigans, along with those of Lusamine, the president of the Aether Foundation, were briefly sent to the back of his mind. Nanu couldn’t prevent his hand from shaking a little as he stared at the letter. It contained a short message, coded, but Nanu could read it all the same.

I need to speak with you, 000, despite no longer being a part of the International Police. The creature we tracked down ten years ago, there are now reports of more varieties of the beasts, due to Lusamine opening up the Ultra Wormhole. You may have heard from some former contacts, but we now call these creatures Ultra Beasts, otherwise known as UBs. Please meet me at the motel on route 8. I need your opinion on how best to proceed without causing alarm amongst the population of Alola.

-Looker
P.S. Don't go looking for the UBs on your own. I know you, 000, so please come speak to me first.

Nanu's surroundings seemed to close in on him, and the red eyed cop found himself sinking to the floor, staring numbly at the piece of paper clutched in his hand. The Meowth in the station crowded in on him, letting out various sounds of alarm, but Nanu didn't hear them. All Nanu could do was stare at the letter, horror mounting each time he read through the note. But as soon as the information registered and the implications sank in, Nanu was struck with dread.

No.

Not again.

Chapter End Notes

I decided to have Nanu nickname the shiny Meowth in this fic for a reason (I used the name I gave the shiny Meowth in my Pokémon Sun game, in case anyone was wondering where the name came from—I picked it at random). I had Nanu choose the name because I made the decision that I wanted the original Faller to have an actual name, so when Nanu (or Looker) talk/think about her in future chapters, she actually has a name instead of just ‘the Faller’ (I’m pretty sure she remained unnamed).

Also, can you all tell that I’m excited to be writing this/happy to be writing at all? I’ve got most of the plot hammered out so really it’s just keeping motivated and getting around to typing (also the nanuxguzma explicit stuff will happen eventually. You’ll know they’re going to do something when I change the rating. Not smut right away but enough I’ll be changing the rating. It’ll just take a bit to get there but once it starts to happen it’ll keep happening throughout the rest of the fic and only be interrupted due to plot (UB stuff and Looker/other characters popping in at unwanted times).
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

I’m probably taking some liberties with Nihilego and its poison in regards to how an attack would affect a human but I'm just rolling with it for purposes of this fic (I know what effect the neurotoxin has—that’ll show up later on. I’m just keeping its poison attacks separate from that).

Nanu couldn’t believe that the creatures were back, and yet there he was, looking at the letter sent to him by Looker. If Nanu hadn’t had the information from his contacts around Alola’s other islands, he would have perhaps dismissed Looker’s letter. But the facts were staring him in the face, as were some reports he’d heard from his fellow kahuna. Reports of unfamiliar creatures. Nanu himself had seen something unfamiliar, from a distance. The creature had gone off into a cavern before he had been able to get a good look at it, but what he had seen made Nanu unnerved. It had suspiciously looked like the creature from years ago. And it likely had been according to Looker’s letter.

It was…unsettling, to get a better look at the creature, and not know that it had likely been the exact same monster that had attacked MaryAnn all those years ago.

Nanu closed his eyes and took a deep breath. Around him, Meowth were crowding around, some poking him with paws while others let out various sounds of concern. Nanu opened his eyes and gave the nearest Pokémon a few reassuring pats on the head. He might be on the floor of the station right now, but it was mostly due to shock. Nanu had hoped that he would never again have to deal with the creatures. The last time had been enough. Nanu ran a hand through his hair slowly, considering how they could have gotten to Alola in the first place. It’s didn’t take long to land on a likely culprit from the information he’d received.

Lusamine.

Aether Paradise’s president had somehow opened up an ultra-wormhole. No one, not even Wicke or the other Aether employees, had realized just how deeply obsessed Lusamine had become over the Ultra Beasts. Or one in particular that Nanu had come to learn was called Nihilego.

Nanu frowned. The reason he knew what the creature was called was due to Sun dropping by and letting him know what he and Moon had seen in Ultra Space. Where they had found Lusamine and many Nihilego. Nanu gave his head a shake. He still couldn’t believe that two 11 year olds on their island challenge had defeated Aether Paradises’ Lusamine. Nanu couldn’t recall if it had been Sun or Moon, as he remembered that he had challenged both kids as Ula’ Ula Island’s kahuna. Secretly, Nanu was relieved that Tapu Fini had finally chosen someone else to be kahuna for Poni Island. It had been getting tiresome, going between both islands, and Nanu knew that his Pokémon appreciated less battles.

MaryAnn the shiny Meowth let out a quiet mew and crawled onto Nanu’s lap.

“I’m all right.” Nanu assured the Meowth, as he looked down and pet the feline Pokémon’s head gently. MaryAnn was still only about half the size of a normal Alolan Meowth, and Nanu wasn’t sure if it had just been born that way or if the deep, painful scratches across the Pokémon’s back as a baby had stunted its growth. MaryAnn didn’t seem to mind, and neither did any of the other
Meowth in the station. Persian, in fact, had been delighted at the dainty size, as it meant that the larger feline could carry the Meowth around as it pleased. Not that it needed to, as MaryAnn seemed to see the Persian as its surrogate parent, and hardly ever left Persian’s side, or Nanu’s. The smaller Meowth liked Guzma’s presence as well, on those rare occasions that the punk had chosen to pay a visit to the station. After all, Guzma had been the one to save the baby Pokémon in the first place.

MaryAnn’s purring started up at the attention, before it swatted a small paw at the letter in Nanu’s hand. Unable to reach it, the small Meowth shakily stood on its hind legs to swat a paw at the darkinium z around Nanu’s neck, and succeeded in batting it around. MaryAnn’s eyes squeezed shut in pleasure at the accomplishment, and Nanu couldn’t help but smile faintly at the way the small Pokémon had picked the habit up from Persian. Even now, Nanu could see Persian squeeze its eyes shut similarly and let out a growl of approval at MaryAnn, both for trying to stand up, and for succeeding in batting the darkinium z.

Nanu absently held MaryAnn against his chest, because he knew that it could only remain on its hind legs with help. Nanu had been correct when assuming that the damage was great enough that MaryAnn wouldn’t ever participate in Pokémon battles. MaryAnn could get around fine on all fours, but it clearly pained the little feline to try and stand up, even if the other Meowth in the station tried to help it up. Nanu was just relieved that MaryAnn didn’t seem to put out about not being able to stand upright, and it likely came from the idea that Persian walked around on all fours.

Nanu closed his eyes. He was stalling. He didn’t want to think about what the letter he held meant. The red eyed officer presumed that he would be asked about helping track down the creatures, as he had ten years ago. Nanu doubted that he was just being asked for advice, as Looker had insinuated in the letter. Frankly, Nanu had no desire to have anything to do with the International Police after what had happened the last time he had worked for them, before leaving it altogether to come live in Alola.

But there was other news that held Nanu’s attention, even before the letter had been delivered to him. It was the fact that Guzma had disbanded Team Skull. Nanu had yet to find out why. It wasn’t that he really cared, but he hadn’t seen the young man much over the past year and a half. And when he had seen Guzma, it was only for brief instances, as the younger punk seemed distracted in some way. If anything, Nanu wanted to get into contact with Guzma, even for a little while, to see how the younger man was dong. After all, Team Skull had given Guzma something to do, and Nanu was a little concerned what Guzma was going to do with himself now that he didn’t have that to distract him. And anything the punk might choose to do from now on might be impacted because of the fact that he had been leading Team Skull. There were still people around Alola that feared Guzma, and while that might stroke Guzma’s ego, it wouldn’t do him any good now that Team Skull no longer existed as a group.

Nanu let out a soft sigh and considered Looker’s note, before he set it aside. Apart from figuring out where Guzma had gotten to, it wasn’t like Nanu had anything better to do now that Team Skull was no longer something he had to worry over. Not that he had actually bothered to do much about them. Nanu felt that he may as well go do something useful, since after Team Skull has disbanded, he had taken to staying in the station alone with his Meowth. Something he did do but not quite as often as he did now. Despite the late hour, Nanu figured it would be good to get the initial talk with Looker over with. The red eyed officer would prefer to learn just how bad the situation was, and then decide how involved in the matter he wanted to become.

Persian let out a sudden growl, before it rose and trotted over to the front door of the station.

“What is it?” Nanu asked his Persian as he stood up, holding MaryAnn against his chest.
Persian reared up and opened the door with a few scrabbles of its paws, clearly thinking that its trainer was taking too long. Once the door was open, Persian seemed to startle before it let out a low, confused growl.

Nanu frowned, before he turned his attention to what his Pokémon was staring at. The sight Nanu saw made him feel as if he had been punched roughly in the gut, because out there, in the rain and standing very close to the entrance of the station was a Golisopod.

At first Nanu had thought it was a person, until bug Polemon got closer. It was an injured Golisopod, as Nanu could make out where lacerations had cut through the hard shell of the Pokémon, one of its larger arms twitching close to its body where another very nasty-looking injury was bleeding through the armored shell. The wounds almost looked like they were...poisoned. Nanu brought MaryAnn back into the station and closed the door before the smaller feline could follow, drawing out a quiet mewl of protest.

Nanu and Persian moved closer to Golisopod, which held still as it seemed to sense that both human and Pokémon wanted to look at its injuries. It did let out a low whirl of worry, as if it were preoccupied with something. Golisopod shied away from Nanu’s touch, before it let out a series of distressed clicks and made motions with its uninjured limbs.

It was then that Nanu realized the Golisopod was alone, no trainer in sight.

“Where’s Guzma?” Nanu asked the injured Pokémon. There was no doubt in his mind that this particular Golisopod was Guzma’s.

Golisopod sunk to the ground with a wince, and made some hissing and clicks, motioning with its limbs again.

The Persian meowed back and forth to it, and in cases like these, Nanu would have given anything to be able to understand what they were saying to one another.

Honchkrow suddenly popped out of its pokeball and flapped its wings as it let out a loud screech, beak hooking and tugging Nanu’s collar.

“I know.” Nanu told his Pokémon, freeing himself from Honchkrow’s sharp beak. Nanu got Persian into its Pokeball before turning to Honchkrow. “Let’s go.” As Nanu shielded his eyes from the rain, he let Honchkrow take him who knows where. Nanu was far more concerned over the fact that the Golisopod had abandoned its trainer in the first place, and could only wonder what the hell Guzma had gotten himself in to. The only reason Nanu could think of for Golisopod to leave its trainer would be to find help. Which was apparently Nanu. That Golisopod believed Nanu would help its trainer was interesting. Not that Nanu wouldn’t. The older officer just hadn’t expected that he’d have been the first choice, since he hadn’t really seen Guzma all that much during the past year and a half.

Nanu held tight to Honchkrow as the bird Pokémon flew a little faster, crowing something that sounded like alarm the closer it got to wherever it was flying. Nanu soon recognized where they were headed.

The Lake of the Moone.

But why in the world would Guzma be there? It was nothing but ruins.

Nanu had his answer the moment his Honchkrow landed on the ground near the altar. As soon as Nanu realized what he was seeing, he immediately decided that it was something he never wished to
see ever again in his life.

Guzma was there all right, and he was struggling with several strange jellyfish-like creatures that were attempting to wrap his limbs with tentacles while some of them tried to flop over Guzma’s head. Guzma was swatting and batting them away as best he could, clearly cursing in some way as the creatures merely drifted back to try and grab a hold of him.

Were these Ultra Beasts?

Nanu hadn’t even realized that he had begun to run, panic seizing him, and fast. It was too much of an echo of the past, even if these creatures had no visible teeth. It was too much. The closer Nanu got, the faster he tried to push himself to get to Guzma. Apparently the creatures could sense Nanu in some way, because a few closest to Guzma appeared to become agitated over how quick Nanu was moving toward them. The realization that one of the creatures was preparing to attack in some way made Nanu call out a warning.

“Run!”

Guzma didn’t seem to hear Nanu, as he appeared to be frozen in place when one of the creatures actually wrapped a limb around his arm.

“Krokorok.” Nanu said, hastily letting out his Pokémon. “Use Rock Throw.”

The attack knocked back a few of the creatures drifting toward Guzma from behind, but it didn’t stop the one that was closing in, limbs thrashing.

Nanu knew that his Pokémon wouldn’t get to the attacking creature fast enough, but he could. Nanu didn’t even think about the consequences as he hit Guzma hard, shoving the younger man out of the way of the creature before it could land the strike. Nanu wasn’t so lucky, as he took a sharp hit to his right side, finding out too late that the creature’s tentacles had a poisonous touch. The creature’s poison went straight through Nanu’s clothes, leaving behind a long laceration and more worryingly, a burning pain from the site of the wound.

Krokorok let out an angry cry and kicked up the ground to send another rock throw at the creature that had attacked its trainer. More falling rocks appeared to be the cue for the creatures to leave the area. One moment, there were many floating about, the next, they were all gone, as if they had never been there in the first place.

The moment the creatures were gone was the moment Guzma snapped back into the present.

“Thought I told you to run.” Nanu wheezed at Guzma, swaying a little as his hand hovered over his injured right side. He ought to look at the wound. The burning sensation was getting worse.

Guzma stared at Nanu for a moment, as if not seeing him, or comprehending that he was there. Then, the ex-leader of Team Skull’s eyes widened, and he sucked in a sharp breath. “Shit. Did one of those Nihilego get you?”

Nanu couldn’t help but let out a rasp of a chuckle over the concern in Guzma’s voice. They hadn’t seen one another face to face very often over the past year and a half. Before he could think to actually say anything, Nanu ended up collapsing to the ground beneath him, the creature’s, Nihilego’s, poison much more potent than Nanu had expected.

“Hey, old man? What the hell?” Intermixed with Guzma’s words was a worried meow from Persian and a low grumble from Krokorok.
Nanu faded in and out of consciousness, aware of Guzma’s presence as the younger man crouched down next to him. Nanu wasn’t able to take in whatever else Guzma was saying, though the punk sounded almost...afraid. Panicked. Nanu felt the sensation of someone picking him up, but apart from that, all Nanu could focus on was the fact that Nihilego’s poison was taking him down quick. Nanu had a brief, morbid moment where he thought it would be a fitting end to a wretch like him. To have a different creature be the cause of his death, when Nanu had hunted down another kind of creature a decade ago. Nanu closed his eyes, his vision swimming and his breathing labored, shaking and feeling feverish already. The poison was potent. He wanted to tell Guzma something about that but what was it? He couldn’t think clearly.

Mercifully, Nanu passed out soon after, and didn’t have to think about anything at all.

-x-x-x-

Guzma had been transfixed when those damn jellyfish abominations had attacked him out of the blue. He had been on his way to visit Nanu, figuring that the cop was due to have some entertainment in his life. Entertainment meaning a Pokémon battle, because Guzma had been ready for one. He wanted to beat someone down, and figured that Nanu would at least consider a Pokémon battle with him.

Nihilego appearing out of nowhere to converge on him had been a shock, and he’d barely managed to dodge out of the way.

Guzma hadn’t thought the Nihilego would follow him all the way to the Lake of the Moone, but he had guessed wrong. He didn’t know where Golisopod had gotten to, and was concerned that the Nihilego had taken his Pokémon down somewhere to poison it to death, or to take it over and…

Persian let out a cornered growl from nearby, while Krokorok pokes his side, and the sound and touch snapped Guzma back into the present.

Shit.

Right.

He, as well as Nanu’s Pokémon, were now headed away from the Lake of the Moone and were currently in the cave that led to the meadow. Guzma was carefully carrying Nanu, not liking at all how feverish and shaky the older man was. He wasn’t all that heavy to Guzma, so that wasn’t the problem right now. What was the problem was the poisonous cut that the Nihilego had given to Nanu’s side. Guzma had all but ripped both jacket and shirt off of Nanu with Persian’s help, lest the poison touch anywhere else and cause more damage. The uneven breathing was worrying, and Nanu was far too hot to the touch.

“Dammit.” Guzma set Nanu down on the ground, resting him against a pillar in the long cave that led to an altar. The poison seemed to be spreading and it looked to be melting the skin along the wound now. Guzma checked Nanu over and after frowning at the z crystal shining around Nanu’s neck, Guzma had a thought. He let his Ariados out. “Hey, use string shot and see if it sucks up the poison.”

Ariados shifted back and forth on its legs, head tilting to and fro as if trying to pick how best to go about its trainer’s request. Then, it turned and shot out sticky web with precision.

“Hey, I said string shot. Not sticky web.” Guzma griped, though he kept a hand on Nanu’s bare
shoulder to make sure the older man didn’t fall over.

Ariados let out several clicks, before it turned and pulled at the webbing it had placed, and carefully pulled the strands back.

Guzma could see the web melting, and he couldn’t help but stare in awe, not realizing how strong the poison had been. “Shit, I guess I should be grateful that your poison isn’t as bad as that Ninhilgeo’s.”

“Did you say Nihilego?” A taut voice asked. There was an intake of breath. “Is that Nanu?”

“Who’s askin’?” Guzma stood abruptly, blocking Nanu from the man that had appeared in the gloom of the cave.

Persian remained near Nanu but Krokorok joined Guzma to look the newcomer over suspiciously.

Guzma frowned at the other man. He was wearing a suit and a brown trench coat over it. Brown hair was swept to one side. The man’s gray eyes conveyed concern.

“My name, you may call me Looker. I sent a letter to Nanu, requesting to speak with him. He didn’t turn up, so I decided to go to him.” Looker’s expression became serious as he stepped around Guzma and Krokorok to watch Ariados carefully remove webbing from the wound. “Was he..?”

“Attacked by a Nihilego, yeah.” Guzma responded, still a little suspicious.

“He needs an antidote. That creature’s poison can be fatal to humans. It isn’t anything like the creature’s neurotoxins.” Looker jogged back the way he had come, voice rising. “Chief! Anabel! Do you have that antidote in hand? We need it right now!”

Guzma settled on the ground next to Nanu, and in time to catch the older man as he sagged to the side. “Shit. Shit.” Guzma held Nanu carefully as Ariados finished pulling the webbing off of Nanu’s wound. Guzma craned his neck, and decided that the wound looked a little better without as much poison eating away at the flesh. “Do it again.” Guzma urged his Pokémon.

Ariados turned with a hiss and a click and repeated the process. It was partway through pulling the webbing off when Looker returned with a small vial and crouched down.

“We need him to drink this, now, before the poison gets spread too far into his system.” Looker popped open the top of the vial, but it soon became clear that Nanu couldn’t be roused enough to get him to drink the antidote himself.

“Give it here.” Guzma said impatiently, and took the antidote when Looker handed it to him.

“Make sure he drinks most of it, or it won’t do any good.” Looker cautioned.

Guzma tried a few different ways to get Nanu to drink the antidote, but when that didn’t work, Guzma decided he didn’t give a fuck that he had an audience. There was one surefire way he knew he could transfer the liquid, and it would give him an excuse to kiss the cop in the process for being a damn idiot. Guzma carefully used his left hand to tip Nanu’s head back. Without preamble, Guzma downed the antidote, pried open Nanu’s jaw with his other hand, and transferred the antidote from his mouth to Nanu’s. Guzma felt amusement wash over him at the sound of Looker’s surprised gasp, but Guzma was more concerned with Nanu drinking the damn antidote. Once satisfied that most of the liquid had gone down Nanu’s throat, Guzma stuck in bit of an actual kiss before drawing away and checking on Ariados’ progress with the web.
“Do it again.” Guzma repeated to his Pokémon, as he jabbed a finger at Looker. “You have any medical supplies on you or do we gotta get to the police station for those? It’s closer than the Pokémon Center.”

“Those supplies I do not have.” Looker said, recovering from his surprise. “Let’s go. I already sent Anabel ahead to the station. She should be bringing more antidotes.”

Guzma had Ariados leave some webbing over the wound, and picked Nanu up once more. The cop was still shaking, but he seemed to be doing a little bit better, considering the poison wasn’t eating away at him anymore. Or didn’t seem to be. Guzma didn’t even notice the rain once he and Looker reached route 17. All Guzma was concerned with was that Nanu was a little too limp in his arms, and that the darkinium z against his chest was too bright for a z crystal. When Guzma reached the station and got inside, the darkinium z was back to its normal dark color, which made Guzma wonder if he’d imagined the bright light that had emitted from it in the cavern.

-x-x-x-

Nanu was honestly surprised to wake up after the poisonous attack that had taken him down and out. Nanu could have sworn that he had heard voices apart from Guzma’s but couldn’t be entirely certain. His whole body ached, exhausted and beaten down from the poison that had gotten into his system. Nanu had trouble trying to figure out what part of him didn’t hurt. Nanu became a little more aware the longer he was awake, and realized with a jolt that he was back in the station outside of Po Town.

“You’re awake, 000.” A voice commented from nearby. “You’re lucky to be alive after being poisoned by UB 01 Symbiont.”

“I don’t feel up for a chat right now, Looker.” Nanu promptly closed his eyes, the idea of speaking when he felt like shit undesirable. “Leave me be.”

“Could I at least ask how you managed to be poisoned in the first place? According to reports, the Nihilego do not move very quickly.”

Nanu opened his eyes and sent a tired glare in the general direction of the other man.

“Can’t I be at least a little concerned for your health?” Looker asked, hands in the air in a placating gesture even as his expression remained serious. “I just don’t ever recall seeing you injured like this when we worked together.”

Nanu considered Looker quietly, trying to figure out how much he wanted to tell the other man. Nanu knew that he wouldn’t breathe a word about suspecting that Guzma was a Faller. The younger man had enough to deal with, especially after being harassed by the Nihilego. Not to mention Guzma was probably floundering over what to do with himself now that he was no longer running Team Skull as the leader. Nanu considered Lusamine’s actions, and had an uneasy feeling that Guzma had been the one to go through an Ultra Wormhole with her. It would explain why so many Ultra Beasts had descended on Guzma at the Lake of the Moone.

“Nanu?”

The whole situation was already a mess, and even though Nanu hadn’t really wanted to get involved, he now knew that he would. And Nanu was certain that Looker knew it as well, despite the other man not knowing about what had happened to Guzma.

“I can come back later.” Looker offered, unaware of Nanu’s racing thoughts. “But I do need to
have you take an antidote every few hours. Anabel had had one on hand, and we gave it to you. Sort of. It was lucky, because you looked…” Looker’s jaw briefly tightened, as if not wanting to think about it. He continued speaking. “It’s thanks to that antidote that you’re even awake right now. We’ve found out that UB 01 has very potent poison, stronger than a Toxapex. The effect is also worse on a human than a Pokémon, to the point that it could kill a human without treatment. You’ll need to keep taking antidotes for at least a week. The time between taking the antidotes will likely end up being further apart, depending on how well it works taking apart the poison in your system.”

“I thought you were going to leave me in peace?” Nanu remained Looker tiredly. All Nanu wanted to do right now was scoop up a Meowth or two and sleep.

“I’m not going to leave you all alone. Someone needs to be here to make sure you keep taking antidotes.” Looker said, some concern overtaking the serious expression. “I’ll make sure that you have enough antidotes. I should actually get more of them for you.”

Nanu wasn’t feeling his best so he couldn’t exactly argue against that logic. There wasn’t any harm in someone around to keep an eye out to make sure he was all right. Nanu watched as Looked opened the station door and poked his head out, presumably speaking to someone from the man’s quiet tone.

“I’ll be back, 000.” Looked had turned around to speak to Nanu. “So for now, he…” Looker indicated someone outside the station, “…will keep an eye on you.” Looker exited the station, saying something quietly, which was responded to with a laugh.

Guzma entered the station, and closed the door behind him, an unreadable expression on his face as he spotted Nanu awake and sitting up in his bed.

Nanu wasn’t all that surprised to see Guzma, as he figured that the younger punk had been the one to carry him. At least, Nanu thought Guzma had, since he’d felt himself being picked up before passing out. Nanu frowned at Guzma, “What did Looker say to you?”

“That you should be able to drink the antidote yourself, now that you’re up.” Guzma leered, though he seemed distracted. “No need for me to give it to you mouth to mouth again.”

“Is that so?” Nanu raised a brow at that before he half smirked. “Too bad I wasn’t awake to see Looker’s face.” Nanu’s smile vanished when he saw the look Guzma was giving him. “What?”

“What the hell were you thinking?” Guzma snapped at Nanu. “What kind of an idiot runs toward those freaky things?”

“Why do you think?” Nanu asked quietly, not at all put off with the punk’s angry display.

Guzma seemed to deflate at that, as if just remembering what Nanu had told him before. About what had happened to someone in the past when a creature had attacked them.

“You didn’t move when I called out to you.” Nanu pointed out.

Guzma was quiet at that, clearly not about to deny it.

“You’re all right?” Nanu asked.

“Shit.” Guzma groaned. “Of course I am. I didn’t get hit with any poison attacks.” Guzma looked over Nanu’s bandaged torso. “Damn cop. Should have let it attack me instead. Probably could’ve dealt with the poison better than you.”
“Come over here.” Nanu sighed.

“Why?” Guzma asked, hunching his shoulders and looking defensive.

Nanu just looked at him with an indifferent expression. He wasn’t going to repeat himself. He was simply too worn out.

Guzma let out a huff before he made it to the bed and sat down on the edge of it, eying Nanu as if expecting the other man to drop dead any second now.

Nanu reached out and managed to take hold of one of Guzma’s hands.

Guzma stared down at it as if not comprehending the touch.

“I won’t be kicking the bucket any time soon.” Nanu said quietly.

“Good.” Guzma mumbled, even as he twisted his hand within Nanu’s grasp to hold the hand in return.

Nanu wasn’t sure how long they sat like that in silence, but soon enough, Nanu began to doze off.

“Don’t do anything like that again, old man.”

“No promises.” Nanu replied as he began to drift back off to sleep, a few Meowth curling up by his head.

The dreamless rest was welcome, because then, Nanu didn’t have to try to explain to Guzma that going after any of the Ultra Beasts was a dangerous venture. Nanu had no intention of dragging Guzma into the situation, however, despite what the younger man might say.

Though convincing the former Team Skull leader to sit on the sidelines was going to be a bit more difficult than anticipated.
Chapter 11

When Nanu woke up, he found himself disoriented from some nameless nightmare. The dream had been a confusing mess of sounds and flashes of images that never quite solidified. It made no sense, as nothing connected to the past. The nightmare, however, had been vivid enough to jerk Nanu into a panicked wakefulness. Body taut and expecting the worst of whatever he had dreamed about caused Nanu to be on the defensive.

The shifting of someone or something nearby was cause for concern.

Nanu opened his eyes at the sound, trying in vain to blink away the bleariness as he attempted to make sense of where he was. But before that could happen, Nanu latched onto the fact that a tall shape was reaching out for him. Nanu reacted accordingly, because despite the state he was in, he wasn’t going to allow anyone to touch him. Especially when he couldn’t tell who it was or what that other person’s intentions were toward him.

Nanu acted without consideration to the fact that he was injured and weakened by poison. He saw what he believed to be a threat and therefore anything else was a moot point until that threat had been dealt with. A hand snapped up and seized the wrist of the hand that had almost touched him. Not giving the other person a chance to react, Nanu gave a firm pull to the wrist in his grasp. Nanu managed to catch his assailant off guard as the man fell over and onto the bed in front of Nanu.

Nanu didn’t register that he was on a bed, nor the fact that he was, in fact, hurt. Instead, Nanu chose to continue to neutralize what he saw as a threat before doing anything further. Nanu moved, wincing a little when his body protested the movement, but gripped the nearest arm of the man and held it behind his back. Nanu needed to make certain to prevent the man from turning over toward him and causing further trouble. Nanu heard the Meowth nearest him letting out various meows of confusion, and that sound gave him pause. Normally the Pokémon would be joining in on stopping an intruder, but they weren’t. Nanu hesitated, and that gave the other man enough time to get the leverage needed to upend Nanu onto his back.

Nanu flinched as his right side protested the sudden drop onto the bed. It was surprisingly difficult to figure out what was going on, as his senses still appeared to be muddled for whatever reason. Nanu attempted to maneuver himself up into a seated position, his mind still in fighting mode. He couldn’t remain lying on his back in a vulnerable position. But trying to get back up caused a flare of agony to shoot up his side.

“Shit.”

Nanu briefly stilled at the familiar voice, the rational part of his mind starting to take over the longer he was awake. Nanu began to piece things together, and knew that whatever he had been dreaming of had caused him to go on the defensive. The low burn of pain let Nanu know that he had not been terribly mindful of his wound.

The Meowth were still there, many of them now gathered around Nanu, and he could just make out a low growl of concern from Persian from somewhere nearby. Nanu blinked again and looked around. Was he…back in the police station outside of Po Town? That’s right. He’d spoken to Looker and then Guzma before he had gone back to sleep. And since Nanu was in the station, then that meant that it was highly likely that the person he had caught off guard, and then been caught off guard in return was…

"Stop that. You’re gonna open up that wound.”
Two large hands seized Nanu by his shoulders and shoved him back down onto the bed, and the pain flared again, no longer a dull throb. The sharp agony brought Nanu’s vision, if still a little blurry, into focus on the person holding him down. Being pinned to the bed by Guzma of all people, in what appeared to be an attempt to prevent Nanu from hurting himself further, was a rather sobering sight. Nanu blinked, trying to clear his vision the rest of the way as he stared up at the younger man.

“You awake now?”

Nanu was finally able to make out Guzma’s expression, which was angry, obviously, but also maybe a little...worried? Nanu supposed he couldn’t fault Guzma for being pissed off at him. It was Nanu’s mistake for not mentioning that being injured tended to make him more paranoid and prone to lashing out. That if someone was trying to wake him up, they would have been met with a similar outcome as Guzma had just gone through. It had happened to Looker several times before and it was the reason why Looker took it upon himself to throw pillows at Nanu now until he woke up.

Nanu’s attention was drawn to the present when those hands gripped his shoulders in a brief squeeze.

“What the hell was that for, old man? You wake up and attack people like that often?”

“Nightmare.” Nanu supplied tonelessly. “Didn’t know if you were attacking me or not, and I wasn’t going to chance it.”

“Wait.” Guzma frowned down at Nanu. “You wake up fighting?”

“Sometimes.” Nanu attempted an indifferent shrug but Guzma’s hands pressing down on his shoulders prevented it from being more than a twitch. “Better to get your opponent under control instead of potentially getting hurt.” Nanu grimaced when he tried to move his body and stilled, waiting for the pain to pass.

“Did you rip open the stitches?” Guzma demanded, crowding in on Nanu again.

“Could have.” Nanu sighed, before he frowned. The Nihilego hadn’t cut deep enough with its attack to prompt such a medical procedure, had it? “I needed stiches?”

“Yeah, the poison kept...melting the area of the wound so some of the skin needed to be...cut out.” Guzma’s frown deepened. “That guy from before had to cut deep, so yeah, you needed stitches.”

"Doesn’t feel like anything tore." Nanu said, after gingerly moving around beneath Guzma’s hold. Nanu must have been more weary than he thought if he thought the hands felt nice there.

“Did you rip open the stitches?” Guzma demanded, crowding in on Nanu again.

“Could have.” Nanu sighed, before he frowned. The Nihilego hadn’t cut deep enough with its attack to prompt such a medical procedure, had it? “I needed stiches?”

“Yeah, the poison kept...melting the area of the wound so some of the skin needed to be...cut out.” Guzma’s frown deepened. “That guy from before had to cut deep, so yeah, you needed stitches.”

"Doesn’t feel like anything tore." Nanu said, after gingerly moving around beneath Guzma’s hold. Nanu must have been more weary than he thought if he thought the hands felt nice there.

“You gonna check or what?” Guzma wondered, slowly moving his hands off of Nanu to allow movement. The younger man watched Nanu with something akin to suspicion, like he expected Nanu to throw a punch at him or something.

“I could take a look.” Nanu sighed again, and didn’t point out that now that the exhaustion had caught up with him, he wouldn’t be doing anything too strenuous for some time. “But it’s too much of an effort right now. It’ll be fine.”

“Tch. Don’t be stupid.”

“It’s-“ Nanu sucked in a sharp breath when Guzma unceremoniously shoved him onto his left side, and began to unwrap the bandages. “You don’t...need to do that.”
"Shut up and lemme take a look." Guzma snorted, sounding exasperated as he removed the bandages. "You're almost as bad as some of those punks that got stung by a bug Pokémon and acted like it was the end of the world."

"Some stingers are larger than needles." Nanu took slow breaths as he was moved around. He winced when Guzma got him to sit up to finish with removing the bandages. "And I don't think the world is ending, as nice as some quiet would be."

"You're so morbid." Guzma groused as he glared at the bandages. "And sure, those stingers are big, but only the stupid punks got stung." Guzma finished unwrapping the bandages, a few fingers brushing skin near the wound. "Huh."

"I guess the same could be said for the Meowth. You only get scratched if you don't heed the warning signs." Nanu presumed from the lack of reaction from Guzma that, apart from the dull throbbing, he had gotten lucky and hadn’t torn stiches. Might as well look. Nanu chanced a peek down, but what he saw made his stomach churn briefly. Nanu knew that Guzma had said that his skin had been cut in to but Nanu hadn’t expected to see that it had been deep enough to warrant a large line of close stitches nearly eight inches long.

"Better be careful so you don’t lose more blood." Guzma traced a finger alongside the stitches again. "Don’t wanna add fainting to your creaking joints and all that."

Nanu didn’t miss the way the finger shook as it traced along his skin. Nanu held still when Guzma moved in on him from behind, the punk resting his chin on Nanu’s shoulder.

"Breathe, cop. Or is that too much of an effort too?"

"I would prefer to continue breathing a while longer." Nanu held still at the muffled laugh, his breath a little uneven from the pain radiating from his side. Nanu wasn’t quite sure what Guzma was up to but against his better judgment Nanu waited instead of shooing the younger punk away from him. He hadn’t relalized he was a tad bit cold.

"Don’t let your heart rate get too high either." Guzma rested more comfortably on the bed against Nanu’s back, but he clearly felt Nanu tense again. "Damn. It’s like you’re expecting someone to attack you." Guzma seemed content to remain pressed lightly up against Nanu’s back and continue to trace skin, though it had moved away from the near the stitches to idly pass across his stomach. Nanu would have been amused at Guzma’s actions if he didn’t think that the punk thought anything of it but...

"So, when is this beatdown going to happen?" Nanu wasn’t really interested in the response because he already knew the answer. Nanu knew that Guzma only said it to cover up what his actual intentions were. At least, that was what Nanu thought. "Or are you going to give up on that idea?"

As soon as Guzma’s fingers stilled against his stomach, and Nanu heard the younger man suck in a breath, Nanu had confirmation that Guzma hadn’t actually been paying much attention to his actions.

"If I tell you my plans then it wouldn’t be any fun." Guzma drew away from Nanu, as if realizing how close he’d been and covered up what appeared to be embarrassment as he went about rewrapping the bandages. "Stitches weren’t tore so might as well cover it up again."

As the bandages were rewrapped around the wound, Nanu couldn’t help but notice that Guzma seemed to be more careful this time around when he maneuvered him onto his back again, absentely dragging pillows around to help Nanu prop himself up if he wanted to. Nanu wouldn’t have pegged
Guzma as courteous but he was rather distracted so that could have been part of it. Nanu turned his head to the side to watch Guzma rummage around on the table near the bed, and blinked when Guzma produced a small bottle.

The antidote.

“You’re supposed to drink one of these. That trench coat wearing weirdo mentioned it.” Guzma said, voice a little gruff as if it would cover up the fact he’d been so close to Nanu.

Nanu slowly got himself up into a seated position with help of the pillows, and nearly missed the sight of Guzma’s hand twitching, like the punk had been thinking of helping him up but thought better of it. Nanu didn’t say anything, and merely accepted the bottle, saying nothing of the way that Guzma had opened it up before handing it over. Nanu downed the content of the bottle, face flashing displeasure at the horrid taste.

“What? It didn’t taste all that bad.”

“You sure you weren’t distracted by the idea of kissing an unconscious man?”

Guzma chose to ignore answering Nanu as he plucked the bottle out of the older man’s hand and gave it a whiff. Guzma’s nose wrinkled. “Guess it doesn’t smell all that great. It kinda smells like a wet Lilipup.”

Nanu shrugged, inwardly feeling grateful that Looker had not yet chosen to come back to the station. Nanu was not exactly up for a UB chat, but Nanu knew that it would happen eventually. Nothing was said as Nanu settled back in bed to doze, and Guzma sat on a chair to stare at him.

Intently.

Hours passed by in relative silence, well into the evening and throughout the night, the only breaks in the silence being Guzma waking Nanu up cautiously to take more antidotes.

By whacking him in the face with a pillow, which wasn’t all that gentle.

Nanu rather appreciated the irony of Guzma being the second person to do that when unsure of the Alolan cop’s mood upon waking.

-x-x-x-

When morning rolled in, Nanu was feeling the slightest bit better, even if he still felt as if he might topple over at any moment. The Meowth that had been absent before had fallen asleep around him again. The feline Pokémon were pressed in close, purring contentedly, MaryAnn included. Nanu absently pet the closest Meowth, quiet as he watched Guzma in the nearby kitchen of the station. Nanu hid a smile when a grumbling Guzma pressed a glass of water into his hands as soon as he had sat up in bed. Nanu watched Guzma go lounge on a nearby chair to stare at him, the same as before, with a very intent expression. Nanu watched a few Meowth hop onto Guzma, amused when Guzma allowed the Pokémon to stay there, and merely pet them absently. Nanu raised his head to meet Guzma’s eyes and saw that the younger man as staring at him again, but not saying a word as he ran a large hand over one of the Meowth’s backs.

“I’ll be all right.” Nanu smiled to himself as he drank some of the water, before lowering the glass and meeting Guzma’s gaze. “I won’t be dropping dead any time soon, so long as I keep up with the antidote.”

“That’s good.” Guzma’s tone was the same as before when Nanu had given him the reassure the
day before. Guzma looked away quickly like he had been caught staring, which he had been. “I want to be the one to beat you down.”

“You can leave anytime you want, you know.” Nanu commented. Seeing the peevish glare, Nanu shook his head. “And covering up what you actually want with that threat is getting old. I asked you yesterday when this beatdown was going to happen and I’m fairly certain now that it never will happen.” Nanu raised a brow. “Care to confirm my theory?”

“Dunno what yer talking about old man.” Guzma shifted on the chair, not quite meeting Nanu’s eyes. “And I don’t really have anywhere to go right now.” Guzma’s expression darkened. “I ain’t gonna go home, that’s for sure. I’d rather sleep in the ditch.”

Nanu remembered what Guzma had told him before. The drinking. The attempted suicide. Nanu was quiet a moment longer, before he ventured to speak again. “You could visit Po Town. Some of your former teammates are there. I’m sure they’d be glad to see you.”

“I disbanded Team Skull.” Guzma responded after a moment of quiet staring at his hands on his lap. “It wouldn’t be the same.” Guzma ran a hand through his hair absently. “‘Sides, Plumeria is still mad at me for breaking up the team in the first place.”

“Why did you?” Nanu asked. Ordinarily, he could have written it off as something as his duty as a cop to find out, but knew, asking Guzma then, that it was more out of concern for the younger man. “I didn’t notice anything that would have indicated that you were done leading those punks.”

“…turns out that there’s some bigger and badder things than me in the world.” Guzma said, the punk’s voice quieter than Nanu had ever heard it. “Gettin’ help from 11 year olds got me asking questions about my life.” Guzma frowned again, his expression troubled. “I didn’t want to break the team up, but after I came back from that…thing’s home, I couldn’t sleep. And when I did…” Guzma let out a hollow laugh. “Hearing yer boss screaming in the middle of the night isn’t exactly the best way to feel safe yourself.” Guzma’s gaze flicked to Nanu’s. “Guess you know something about nightmares.” Guzma looked away and clenched his fists on his knees “I hate it. Feeling powerless. Not being able to wake up from the nightmare and stop from seeing it.” Guzma appeared to be speaking more to himself now. “After gettin’ back from Ultra Space it got…worse. Added to what was already there.”

Nanu’s suspicion about Guzma being abused when he was younger was back, based off of what Guzma had mentioned to him before, and now. About the nightmares that had been around apart from the Nihilego and their world. It wouldn’t be surprising that Guzma didn’t want to go home to bad memories. Bringing it up didn’t seem to be the best idea right now, not while Guzma was still agitated.

“Hey.” Guzma’s voice broke into Nanu’s thoughts. “You get attacked by those things before?”

“The Nihilego? No.” Nanu closed his eyes. “It was a different monster.” Even ten years later, the images were still with him, and it was best not to think of it lest he lose himself in a memory. It wouldn’t do him any good, especially if he was supposed to help Looker hunt the beasts down. Nanu hadn’t noticed Guzma get up off of the chair, but he did notice when Guzma sat down on the bed, expression assessing.

“There is a couch if you’re thinking of resting.” Nanu commented, “Or this bed if you’ll wait for me to get up. I need to be ready to deal with Looker when he shows up.”

“There’s enough room on this bed for two people and several of your cats, old man.” Guzma offered a hint of a grin. “And if you get up, then I’ll have it all to myself.”
Nanu turned onto his left side, and felt that perhaps he should have been thinking a little more clearly. Whatever had happened between himself and Guzma a year and a half ago still appeared to be in Guzma’s mind, because before Nanu knew it, a warm body pressed up against his back from behind, breath tickling the back of his neck as Guzma spoke in a rather taunting voice.

“Are you gonna actually get up or you just going to go back to sleep instead?”

Nanu let out a put upon sigh, realizing that the warmth from Guzma’s body was likely to send him back to sleep if the punk didn’t move. “Are you sure you’re not just trying to get me to stay here?”

“Don’t know what you’re talking about. Just get up and go.”

Nanu considered, and then decided that he would rather get a little more sleep after all. Perhaps the rest would allow the antidote to do its work.

“You’re not getting up.” Guzma pointed out, still pressed a little too comfortably against Nanu’s back.

“I’m more worn out than I thought.” Nanu stated dryly.

“You’re such an old man.” Guzma teased, though there wasn’t much force behind it. If anything, it sounded like Guzma had almost said it fondly.

Nanu closed his eyes after MaryAnn curled up near his head. Nanu felt that he might have been imagining it, but he could have sworn that Guzma had draped an arm over his waist, the limb shaking the faintest bit. Odd. Nanu couldn’t imagine why, until he dimly realized that he was injured and that Guzma was, in fact, being careful to not rest the arm over Nanu’s bandaged wound. Nanu eventually nodded off, but for how long, he wasn’t sure, because the next thing he knew, he was awake, and cold.

Guzma wasn’t on the bed anymore.

Nanu wasn’t quite sure what to make of the faint disappointment over the fact. Nanu slowly sat up, feeling stiff and sore, his right side aching beneath the bandages. Absently reaching out to pet MaryAnn and another Meowth on the head, he noticed that Guzma was fast asleep on a nearby couch a short distance away. Nanu couldn’t help but smile faintly at what he saw.

The punk was mostly on the couch, limbs sprawled out with his jacket draped over his chest as a makeshift blanket. Guzma was also covered head to toe in sleeping Meowth.

It made for an unusually cute sight, but the faint pick me up of a punk covered in cats and sleeping in a way that threatened to topple the larger man off the couch should he move to the side too much was dashed by reality.

Nanu opened his mouth to say...something, but was interrupted by a throat clearing.

“I have to say that it has been some time since I saw you smile like that.”

Looker.

Nanu’s expression shuttered.

“...it is kind of scary how fast you can school your expressions like that.”

Nanu turned a worn out, irritable glare onto the speaker.
“Good morning to you too. How are you feeling?”

Joy.

Nunu wasn’t even fully awake yet there Looker was to ruin a relatively pleasant morning. Not that Nunu hadn’t expected it with the topic that was to be discussed. Nunu’s gaze flicked to Guzma, whose mouth was slightly open before he looked back at Looker.

”If you’d get an antidote, I’ll be ready to talk.”

If Looker seemed confused it was likely for the best, even if the man went to do as asked.

”Where?”

”Kitchen.” Nunu said as he moved to the end of the bed and ran a hand over his face, a little miffed to feel stubble. Damn. Had it really been that long since he’d shaved? Dropping his hand, Nunu carefully got out of the bed and went over to the couch. This was probably stupid of him, but he couldn’t help himself. Nunu reached over and ruffled Guzma’s hair, voice lowered so that Looker couldn’t hear. “You could have stayed on the bed and not be drowning in Meowth.” Nunu had not expected a snicker to rise out of Guzma.

”You missed an opportunity to say ‘drowning in pussy’ old man.” Guzma said, eyes closed even as his lips twitched in a grin.

”Tasteful.” Nunu sighed and shook his head, checking to see that Looker was still in the kitchen. “So you are awake.” Nunu gave Guzma’s hair a final ruffle before he moved his hand away. “If you’re interested in eavesdropping, pretend to be asleep.”

”I’d just listen from outside if I got kicked out anyway.” Guzma kept his eyes closed even though a hand moved to pet a Meowth. “Thought for sure I would have gotten some kind of reaction out of you for the pussy comment.”

”Those former Team Skull punks overdid it with the crude jokes within a few weeks of living in Po Town.” Nunu commented blandly, cracking the faintest of smiles when Guzma peeked up at him with an incredulous look. “What? Didn’t they ever mention how they pestered ‘old man Nanu?’”

“No, they didn’t.” Guzma sounded a bit miffed to not get a reaction out of Nunu but he grinned some more as he freed a hand from a Meowth and motioned for Nunu to come closer.

Nunu let out a sigh but lowered himself down carefully. What he hadn’t expected was for Guzma to pull him onto him while wearing that grin.

”Are you certain there’s an antidote in the kitchen?”

”Yes.” Nunu lifted his head to say, before he fixed his eyes on Guzma, who looked complexity shameless of the fact that he’d pulled the cop onto him. “And what exactly are you doing? I am trying to avoid tearing the stitches.”

”I ain’t gonna tear your stitches.” Guzma said, one hand around Nunu’s back. A grin. “Was just gonna do this.”

Nunu hadn’t exactly been prepared for Guzma to kiss him but then again little things here and there indicated that it had been a possibility. Not to mention the way that Guzma had been touching him yesterday and there was no way the punk could write it off as checking that the stitches were in place.
"Shut yer damn head off and kiss me Nanu."

Well then. Nanu hadn’t actually expected Guzma to own up to what he wanted but really right now wasn’t exactly the best time to...

"C’mon, don’t be stingy, old man. You asked me what I wanted before didn’t you?"

“Now you tell me? Why not before?” Nanu glanced out of the corner of his eye and saw that Looker was still preoccupied.

"I needed to do some thinking.” Guzma said, as he curled his other arm around Nanu’s back but was careful of the older man’s bandaged side.

"If you’re sure...” Nanu didn’t want there to be any misunderstandings like a year and a half ago, and he certainly didn’t want to take advantage of Guzma if the younger man wasn’t thinking clearly.

"I am.” Guzma scowled at Nanu.

“Fine.” Nanu leaned over and kissed Guzma briefly before drawing away.

"The fuck kinda kiss was that?"

"The only one you’re getting until I feel better.” Nanu said, ire rising as he fixed his eyes on Guzma. “Be patient.”

"Driving me crazy.” Guzma grumbled but he didn’t make any move to let go of Nanu.

A throat cleared, and Looker spoke, sounding a little uncertain.

"I found the antidote. Do you...want me to come back later?”

"No, let’s get this over with.” Nanu covered Guzma’s mouth with a hand to prevent the anticipated protest. “I’ll be a moment.” After Looker went toward the front of the station, Nanu shot Guzma a look and instead of anger, he got something else.

A tongue to his hand.

"Really?” Nanu asked mildly.

Guzma let out a muffled sound and laughed as he teasingly dipped his tongue out against Nanu’s hand again.

Nanu extracted himself from Guzma’s loosened hold and stood up, but not before Guzma seized his arm and pressed his lips to Nanu’s wrist with a smirk.

The change in behavior was a little off putting but perhaps it had to do with whatever Guzma had thought about last night.

Nanu swatted Guzma’s shoulder when his hand was freed and the older man headed toward the front of the station. “Behave.” Nanu said, as it was the only thing that he could think of to say.

"No promises.”

Nanu said nothing about how those were the same words he had given Guzma before, though his own meaning had been different from Guzma’s just now.
As soon as Nanu finished his talk with Looker, he was going to have to figure out what was going on in Guzma’s head. If Nanu wasn’t mistaken, the kiss appeared to mean that Guzma had not lost interest in whatever had been going on between them a year and a half ago. Nanu chanced a look behind him and stopped walking.

An insolent smile was on the punk’s face as Guzma spread himself out on the couch, eyes open, and doing nothing to pretend to be asleep. Seeing that the older man was looking at him again, Guzma taunted him. “Don’t strain that old brain of yours too much.”

Nanu grabbed a pillow off the bed and tossed it with his left arm, pinging Guzma right in the face.

“Gonna get you for that later.” Guzma’s voice was muffled and then a curse emitted from the larger punk.

Nanu casually glanced over a shoulder and saw several Meowth hitting Guzma with pillows. Nanu offered a hint of a smile at Guzma when the punk locked eyes with him, and received a grumble in return as Guzma began fending off Meowth.

”Are you sure you don’t want me to...?” Looker trailed off as a pillow flew through the air and smacked him in the face.

“It’s fine.” Nanu said as he sat down in a chair. “It’ll keep him occupied so we can have our talk about ultra beasts.”

”I’m not a fucking child, damn cop!” An unintelligible curse. “Hey, stop that!”

Nanu looked over his shoulder and saw that Guzma was now swamped in Meowth again. Even Persian had joined in by lying comfortably across Guzma’s waist, its eyes squeezed shut in triumph.

“What?” Guzma grit out when he noticed Nanu’s eyes on him as he tried to push the felines off of him.

“Looks like you have all the pussy in the station to yourself.” Nanu said in a dead voice. A crooked smirk appeared in full force the moment Guzma realized what Nanu had just said.

“I knew you were a sarcastic bastard under all that doom and gloom!” Guzma said with a big grin, like he’d accomplished something monumental by getting Nanu to say something like that.

Looker appeared utterly confused and perhaps a little uncomfortable over the way Guzma started to laugh, and the way Nanu just looked away and appeared ready to discuss business with his next words.

“Now that you’re here, Looker, if you would hand over that antidote, I can take it and then we can talk about those ultra beasts.”

Guzma’s laughter in the background continued for a time before it quieted as the topic at hand began to be discussed. No matter how amusing Guzma found Nanu cracking a joke was, it was clear the punk was interested in the ultra beast discussion.
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

I am really enjoying writing this now that I’ve been getting back into the groove for it.

Also, Nanu’s voice in sun and moon ep. 73 sounds almost exactly how I was hoping it would be and it makes me want to write more. Now if they’d just get around to Guzma I’ll prob flip out and go really crazy with typing.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I didn’t realize that you had so many pillows in the station here.” Looker commented as he held up the one that had struck him in the face.

”The Meowth like them.” Nanu offered with a small shrug. “It’s kind of a hassle if they want to always lie down on me, so I end up buying more pillows and beds for them.”

”I am concerned that you let such small Pokémon dictate what you have in this place.” Looker set the pillow down and waved a hand to the bowls of food as if to indicate the lunacy of allowing the Meowth to overrun the police station.

”They’re not hurting anyone.” Nanu carefully leaned over and wrangled a Meowth, which dutifully curled up on his lap. “They don’t care who I am or anything. It’s nice, to not have someone judge you for what you’ve done in the past.”

”Nanu...”

”But we’re not here to talk about my living situation. It’s a talk that can be saved for another day, if necessary.”

”Indeed...but still...”

Nanu lifted his head to silently meet Looker’s serious gaze and gave a small shake of his head.

Looker frowned but dropped the topic and held out a bottle instead.

Nanu accepted the antidote and drank it down, shaking his head again as he watched Looker pace around. “Take a seat before I have Persian sit on you.”

At the sound of its trainer’s voice, Persian perked up from where it was sprawled over Guzma’s waist. Persian looked at Nanu, and then turned its eyes on Looker. The feline Pokémon squeezed its eyes shut and began to purr, clearly liking the idea.

Looker hastily sat down on a chair and Nanu couldn’t help but smile at his Pokemon’s obvious disappointment.

Nanu rested his left hand over the side of the chair and offered the hand out for Persian. The Pokémon immediately got off a Guzma, drawing out a grunt from the punk at the suddenness of the Pokémon moving. A few Meowth took Persian’s place, causing Guzma to grumble a few choice words even as he pet the Meowth anyway.
Persian went straight over to the side the plush chair and laid down, the feline Pokémon lifting its chin up to allow Nanu to rest his hand on its head.

Nanu gave Persian’s head a pat and the Meowth on his lap a scratch behind the ear before he went back to studying Looker. “What do you want from me?”

“You know what I want. What I want to ask. It has to do with the Ultra Beasts, as I mentioned in my letter.” Looker briefly settled his gaze on Nanu’s bandaged side, “If you recall, we spoke briefly about Symbiont 01. Nihilego. The beast that gave you that wound.”

“What about it?” Nanu asked, his hand resting heavier against Persian’s head, which elicited a louder, rumbling purr from the Pokémon.

“I’ve had some reports on Nihilego’s whereabouts before.” Looker produced a small notebook and pen. “Anabel and I still haven’t pinned down their exact location. That was why I had hoped that you would come to see me after receiving the letter. Or as soon as possible. When you didn’t show, I decided to come look for you, in case you may have decided to act… rashly.” Looker jabbed the pen in Guzma’s direction, not batting an eye this time when Guzma began wrestling with the Meowth to try to get them off of him. “He was the one who had been carrying you out of that cave near the Lake of the Moone. He demanded that I get help once we reached the station.” Looker shook his head at the way a Meowth flopped over Guzma’s face, even if Looker smiled briefly, breaking the serious expression as he looked back at Nanu. “I still don’t understand how you allowed that creature to get close enough to you to attack. Especially since you have good aim and could just…” Looker broke off abruptly, his discomfort making a reappearance.

It hadn’t even crossed Nanu’s mind to take his gun with him when he’d gone with Honchkrow to find Guzma. But in any case, Nanu felt that he couldn’t give Looker a completely truthful explanation, because Nanu didn’t want to bring up the likelihood that Guzma was a Faller. Even though Nanu knew full well that Looker wouldn’t be fooled with an offhanded response, that was all the other man was going to get for now. Nanu gave a shrug and resumed petting both Persian and Meowth to distract himself from the pain that was radiating outward from his right side. Had he taken any pain medication? He couldn’t remember.

“Nanu?”

“It has been ten years since I last saw one of those beasts. It would stand to reason that I wasn’t fully prepared to deal with one again.” Nanu said when Looker prompted him. Nanu didn’t bring up their shared past, as he already knew that Looker had been thinking about it, and was the reason he had cut himself off before. Guns had been used in the past and it was always a rather dicey discussion. Some images that came to mind…Nanu would be quite happy to be rid of them. “But you’re not here to talk about those Ultra Beasts right this moment. You’re here to find out whether or not the International Police will find old Nanu of any use to them.” Red eyes bored into gray ones. “Isn't that right?”

“Do you expect anything less?” Looker gave Nanu a hard stare, but let the sarcasm pass as he flipped a page in the notebook he held. “And yes, they may have mentioned something along those lines. Though they didn’t say you were old. They just weren’t confident…” Looker jabbed the pen at Nanu when he heard a derisive laugh. “Stop that. I see your sense of humor is still intact.”

“They're not confident...which could be said for a lot of the people in the International Police.” Nanu offered a half grin at Looker’s harassed expression and waved his left hand idly.

Sighing, Looker continued to speak. “You know that it would be my choice and Anabel’s to have you actually join us in this matter. As much as we’d appreciate support from the sidelines we’d rather
“I know that.” Nanu briefly closed his eyes. “Such a hassle. It’s that the higher ups aren’t confident that I’m capable of what I used to be. That would likely be the motivating factor.” Nanu let out an aggravated sigh. “I might have to agree with them for once. I’m not as good as I used to be. That last mission...” Nanu opened his eyes and turned his head to stare at Looker. “That mission...it wasn’t good for either of us.”

“They know you’re good. I don’t think they’d particularly care that your skills might be a bit rusty. They just had slight...reservations, about including you actively in the UB situation.” Looker glanced down at the notebook. “Like you said, that last mission of ours together was not good, for either of us. And of course, their concern stems from what happened during the mission back then. And about what happened after the end of that hunt that prompted you to choose to go back to being a cop here in Alola.” Looker was avoiding Nanu’s eyes now. “I think they would have forced you into retirement if you hadn’t left first. When they found out you’d almost...

”...I didn’t know that they told you. But that’s in the past now.” Nanu interrupted softly. “Let’s leave it there.” Nanu was quiet a moment longer. “I had my gun with me almost two years ago and didn’t feel any need to...”

“That’s...good to hear. And you’re right. Let’s leave it in the past and focus on the now.”

“How about you start with the reason why you’re allowed to investigate the UBs when we both had been on the same mission?” Nanu offered.

“The only reason they let me in on this case was because Anabel didn’t want to go with anyone else apart from me. Anabel knew that if she could get me to come along that it would be a near guarantee that she and I might be able to get your help without interference.” Looker sighed at Nanu's glower. “Believe me, I’d rather not have either of us be dealing with these Ultra Beasts, but as we’ve both had first-hand experience with one, it seems better to go through with it then drag anyone else inexperienced in. Anabel is a great trainer, but she does not know much about the beasts apart from the reports.”

“...are you sure that the higher ups aren’t going to interfere?” Nanu asked dubiously. He wouldn’t be all that surprised if the International Police chose to send other parties in to disrupt things if they caught wind that Nanu might choose to involve himself.

“No, they won’t. They’ve only agreed to provide back up should we request it.” Looker tapped the pen anxiously against the notebook. “The only reason for them to interfere would be if...” Again, Looker cut himself off, as if not trusting himself to speak. Nanu finished the thought for him.

“They’ll only interfere if one or more of us ends up dead this time around, is that it?” Nanu shook his head again, this time in disgust. “They really are terrible, playing with lives like they're nothing so long as the mission is completed.”

“I must agree with you, but there was either a choice of going into it knowing what to expect, or letting several new recruits handle it.” Looker sighed, sounding tired. "I think you know I wouldn’t stand for someone to go into this blind. Not with what these creatures are capable of.” Looker stopped tapping the pencil, “Anabel and I do want to ask for your help in tracking down the UBs that have appeared in Alola because of Lusamine’s actions.” Looker glanced at the bandages wrapped around the older cop’s side once more and frowned, worry overtaking the seriousness. “Considering how I found you, I think you understand why I am hesitant to ask you to actively join in the investigation apart from information gathering."
“It’ll take more than an attack like this to keep me down.” Nanu offered a half-smirk. “I was good at tracking the creature from before. If I knew more about what the other Ultra Beasts were like, I might be able to get some contacts I have to keep an eye out for anything suspicious.” Nanu gently gripped Persian’s fur in his hand. “Give me some time to recover, and I can look into things.”

“Are you certain?” Looker didn’t seem to be entirely convinced that it was a good idea. “If it might be too much for you, I’d understand if you’d rather…”

“Even if I don’t want to get involved, I’m bound to anyway, being both an officer and a kahuna.” Nanu moved his hands away from Persian’s head and the Meowth’s back. He had a terrible thought then, and Nanu jerked his head to lock a narrowed gaze on Looker, causing the other man to tense. “Anabel is a Faller.” At Looker’s prolonged and rather guilty silence, Nanu became irritable. Of course she was a Faller, considering the amount of energy coming off of her that pointed to her time in another world after he and Looker had found her. Nanu’s wound was paining him, but all he could think about was how those idiots at the International Police were definitely fucking around with people and Pokémon lives again.

“What are they thinking, sending a Faller here? She could be killed by those things.” Nanu glared at Looker, “You know that UBs are attracted to Fallers, thinking that that person is near a wormhole or can produce a wormhole that can take them home.” Nanu didn’t allow Looker to get a word in edge-ways, nor did he pay any attention to the sudden increase in displeased Meowth yowls. “Does she know?”

“No, she doesn’t, but this assignment. She chose this assignment herself.” Looker managed to say.

“Does she know that those beasts are attracted to Fallers?” Nanu reiterated, agitated now and ready to rise any second to grab Looker. How that would help, Nanu didn’t know, but he needed some kind of an outlet right now. He couldn’t think very well with all of the dull aching pain, and this conversation was doing nothing to quell his old demons.

Persian let out a concerned growl and came around the side of the chair to press against his legs in reassurance.

Nanu wondered if his Pokemon was trying to prevent him from getting up and hurting himself. Nanu settled for eyeing Looker, as if willing an answer to come out of the man.

“No, she doesn’t know.” Looker shifted uncomfortably when he finally spoke under Nanu's withering stare. “If she asked, I would tell her…but…”

“I didn’t think so. Of course they wouldn’t let her know before letting her come here. Or for you to want to spill the beans.” Nanu's jaw set. “I assume you haven’t told her so that you can have her be bait for the UBs, and, when you figure out where they are, you make sure she is sent away from them, if they haven’t found her already.”

No response.

“What’s your plan to deal with the Ultra Beasts?” Nanu left the method of drawing out UBs alone, for now. Nanu didn’t bother to bring up the past, because he knew for a fact that Looker wasn’t any more comfortable about having a Faller around than Nanu was. Even if another presence would help draw the creatures out into the open. As useful an ability that it was, it could be very dangerous for the Faller in question.

“We’ve been in contact with some visitors to Alola. They had been working with the Aether Foundation recently to create and develop specialized Pokeballs to capture the Ultra Beasts in. The
plan is to give the captured beasts to these visitors to bring them back to their own world.

“Another world?” Nanu asked dubiously. It could be possible considering the wormholes but…

“These people. They call themselves the Ultra Recon Squad. They came to Alola on the back of a Lunala out of an ultra wormhole. Apparently, they had been in contact with Lusamine before, but the moment that she opened the portal, they cut ties with her, since she had lied about her intentions. These people have only recently started helping out once again.”

“She went to the beasts world?” Nanu asked quietly. He vaguely heard several of the Meowth meow unhappily behind him, but his mind was on Guzma and the younger punk’s encounter with the Nihilego. The suspicion he’d had in mind….

“There were reports that someone else went with her, but we haven’t been able to figure out who that was. Lusamine has been taken to Kanto for treatment, so Anabel is the only Faller around. Apart from that mystery person. Oh, and Sun and Moon as well. They both went with a Sogeleo to stop Lusamine. Maybe I could ask…”

“No.” Nanu forcefully interjected. “I’ve met them, Looker. They’re only 11 years old. You are not going to use children as bait. Yes, their Pokémon could protect them, but what happens if the beasts get by their Pokemon? These UBs, as far as we know, can be incredibly violent. They won’t hesitate to attack a human, or a Pokémon.” Nanu waved away Looker’s start of a protest. “Yes, Pokemon can attack humans too, but not to the level of violence we’ve seen with Ultra Beasts. Or rather, one in particular. Or don’t you remember what happened to MaryAnn?” As soon as that last part left his mouth, Nanu felt like he may have gone a little too far. Looker’s expression was as if the man had been punched roughly in the gut.

“I remember.” Looker took a steady breath, clearly trying his best not to lose himself to that particular memory. “But perhaps Sun and Moon could…”

“Looker, no. Leave them alone. You are not dragging children into this.” Nanu ran a hand down Meowth’s spine, causing it to arch with a purr. “I won’t allow it. They’ve already been through enough as it is. We can’t risk the possibility of them getting harmed.”

“But…” At a red eyed glare, Looker backed down, albeit reluctantly, “Should we at least warn them about the UBs?

“Only if necessary. Their Pokémon will be able to sense the Ultra Beasts. Sun and Moon must have already seen one of the beasts, so they should at least except the possibility for others.”

“How many Nihilego did you see?” Looker asked after a moment of silence, leaving the topic from before alone.

“At least six of them.”

“Do you remember anything after you were attacked? If they were still there?” Looker pressed, scribbling in his notebook.

“No, I couldn’t say. The poison took me down quickly.” Far too quickly, Nanu thought to himself, but didn’t say that aloud.

“What about him?” Looker dropped his voice and motioned in the direction of where Guzma was.

“I’ll ask him later.” Nanu said, recalling how frozen up Guzma had been around the Nihilego. “I’d like to be left alone to think about things.” Nanu added.
“I can come back in an hour or…”

“See if you can get a meeting set up with those people you mentioned before. The ones who supposedly came from another world.” Nanu needed more time to think than an hour.

“They are from another world.” Looker insisted as he stood up. “They came out of a warp hole.”

“If they can develop a pokeball to capture those creatures then they may know about them more than we done.” Nanu pointed out. “Especially if they will share the technology for your mission and let you have use of those new pokeballs.”

“All right, I’ll see what I can do.” Looker glanced past Nanu, sucked in a breath, and then hastily made for the door. “I’ll be back later with more antidotes and hopefully a time to meet with those people, if they agree to a meeting.”

Nanu remained seated on the chair, blinking a little in surprise at how hastily Looker had made himself scarce. Odd. The other man didn’t usually get intimidated by…

A puff of breath tickled the side of his ear as Guzma spoke very close by.

“What the hell is going on?”

Unfortunately for Guzma, Nanu was keyed up after the discussion and did the only thing his mind allowed him to. He reached back despite the tug on the stitches in his side, grabbed Guzma, and pulled. The suddenness caused the punk to lose his balance and fall over the chair and onto the floor of the station on his back. Nanu let go when he realized what he had done, but in this case, Guzma merely laughed it off and got to his feet.

“Crazy old man.” Guzma huffed before he grinned and decided loom over Nanu, hands on either side of the chair.

Nanu would have been against whatever the punk had in mind had it been a rickety chair, but it was a nice solid plush one that the Meowth loved. Nanu wasn’t sure how to feel being trapped on the chair with a warm body close to him that wasn’t a Pokémon.

“You are way too wired for an injured man.” Guzma teased.

Nanu made a non-committal sound, and reached over to jab Guzma in the back of one knee, drawing a funny sound out of the punk, but otherwise not budging him.

“Gotta do better than that.” Guzma said. When he merely saw an unimpressed look, the punk kept talking. “So, since you’re not going anywhere, what the fuck is a Faller? It sounds kinda ominous.”

“Didn’t you hear everything?” Nanu asked, tilting his head up to meet Guzma’s gaze.

“No, your damn cats were purring and hissing and meowing too much for me to hear everything.” Guzma snorted. “You encourage that kind of behavior?”

“You’re acting like one right now.” Nanu pointed out, moving his hand from Guzma’s knee to give the thigh a squeeze, drawing a funny sound from Guzma. Nanu blinked down at the limb, and his lips twitched in a half smirk.

“What is so damn funny?”

“You.” Nanu said, and gave Guzma’s thigh another squeeze. Muscle twitched in his grip, and
before Nanu knew it, Guzma had freed his leg and flopped comfortably over Nanu’s lap, legs draped over one side of the chair. Guzma crossed his arms behind his head and rested them against the side of the chair so he could look up at Nanu, obviously please with himself.

“Now I’m annoying you like one of your cat.”

“Who said you were annoying me?” Nanu asked as he reached over to give Guzma’s hair a ruffle. Nanu blinked when Guzma closed his eyes at the touch and seemed to lean in to it.

Well then….

It seemed like Nanu had found something to do to pass the time while he waited for Looker to return. But he also needed to address Guzma’s earlier behavior toward him, and figure out exactly what was going through the younger man’s head. Nanu’s other hand joined the first in carding through Guzma’s hair, and despite any teasing Guzma may have intended for the position he was in, the punk ended up closing eyes in an instant as if enjoying the attention being given to him.

Nanu was going to ask if Guzma was going to end up purring like one of the Meowth but instead got something he really ought to have anticipated.

A soft, barely discernable moan.

Nanu’s hands stilled in the white hair, and Guzma half opened his eyes as he leaned into Nanu’s hand with a muttered “Don’t stop.”

Nanu felt trapped again from what he had hoped would be a harmless gesture, but now realized was something that might be seen as reciprocating interest. Thinking about the kiss from before, among other things, Nanu let out a soft sigh and resumed lightly carding his hands through the white hair, finding it surprisingly soft.

That Nanu didn’t do anything to dissuade Guzma from reaching up and hooking one of his hands in his to hold it against his chest was something Nanu wasn’t sure what to do about. He wanted to feel less shitty. Wanted to be able to think clearly. Wanted to be able to make the right decisions. Nanu closed his eyes, his hand faintly ruffling Guzma’s hair.

Most of all Nanu wanted to be in the right state of mind to respond to what appeared to be Guzma’s new approach to getting his attention. Why Guzma wanted attention from Nanu of all people was just something the red eyed officer was going to have to ask Guzma directly when he was feeling less shitty and more put together for rational thought.

“Gonna fall asleep just like that, huh?”

Nanu hadn’t realized that he had stopped trailing his hand through Guzma’s hair, but Nanu was already dozing off again. Something else he wanted to hurry up and leave him. Nanu wouldn’t be able to get anything done if his body continued to insist on making him sleep off the injury. Nanu felt the weight on his lap leave, and then something warm draped over him.

Warm, like a blanket. Nanu felt he had those lying around here and there. Nanu felt he might have wanted to move to the bed, or the couch, but where he was seemed comfortable enough, and more so when several purring Meowth surrounded him. Nanu cracked an eye open when someone bumped into the chair.

“Go to sleep, old man. You’re obviously not up for anything strenuous.”

Nanu felt he might have smirked at that, but who knew. Maybe he’d said something derisive in
return, because he could have sworn Guzma had laughed overhead. Nanu was already asleep by the
time he tried to remember, until he was rudely awoken some hours later by Guzma again acting
differently.

Although this time, it was because the punk was angry, as apparently he’d just figured out what
Nanu and Looker’s discussion had been about. All Nanu had time to latch onto was were the
Meowth being tossed off of him and the blanket being unceremoniously wrenched off. Then,
Guzma’s hands were on Nanu’s shoulders, the grip unrelentingly tight, as if the punk were just
holding back from shaking the half-asleep cop.

“Why the fuck would you want to track down those creepy things? What kind of idiot does that?”
The grip, if possible, tightened. “You got a death wish, old man?”

This was not how Nanu appreciated being woken up. And despite the shape he was in, Nanu was
certain that Guzma hadn’t expected to find himself doubled over on the ground after an expertly
aimed fist to abdomen.

“You’re too noisy.” Nanu offered at the angry look he received as he shook out his hand. That kind
of hurt, but at least he hadn’t broken a hand. Nanu gave Guzma a dead kind of stare when the punk
got up and loomed menacingly over him like he was thinking of returning the favor with a large fist.
Nanu closed his eyes. “Have at it. Just don’t tear the stitches.”

”Tch. You want to get hurt, don’t you?”

”Not particularly, but if it’s unavoidable, might as well get it over with.” Nanu stilled when Guzma’s
hands landed on his shoulders again, but this time not so roughly.

“Your face says otherwise. You want someone to put you outta commission so you don’t have to do
anything.”

Nanu didn’t like Guzma being able to pick up on that. Reluctantly, Nanu opened his eyes and saw
Guzma staring down at him curiously.

“Well?” Guzma asked.

“It’s a hassle, getting involved, but I’d rather it be me that gets done in instead of someone else.”
Nanu sighed. “No one would miss a wretch like me anyway.”

Apparently whatever he had said set Guzma off again. There was too much going on for Nanu to
wrap his mind around, but it was apparent that Guzma wasn’t going to leave him alone until they
talked.

Wonderful.

Talking about himself was one of Nanu’s least favorite activities but it seemed unavoidable. With a
sigh, Nanu decided that he might as well get it over with before anything else happened.

Like Nanu punting Guzma out of the station for daring to wake him up as he did and tearing his
stitches out in the process.

Chapter End Notes
FYI for the next chapter: Guzma is going to get lost in a memory that triggers a panic attack (about the Nihilego he had seen in Ultra Space). I’ll update tags before posting but I thought I’d give a heads up on that.

And in case anyone was curious, I’ve written out about 95 (single-sided) pages of outline/summary and still have yet to write the last section of this fic (the climax/ending). As of this chapter I’ve typed out to about page 20. So yeah. This is gonna be a long fic and I’m going to have fun with it so hopefully you all will have fun reading it.
Hi, I’m back with an update (finally). Thanks for waiting for me to get my mental block for this fic out of the way.

And like I said at the end of the previous chapter, as an FYI Guzma panics in this one. This chapter is also long, as I couldn’t stop typing.

Nanu was not entirely certain how to broach the subject, so he decided to start somewhere simple. Anything to delay the inevitable of having to admit to agreeing to participating in something decidedly dangerous. Or to address the way he’d just called himself a wretch, which apparently Guzma didn’t approve of. Being woken so abruptly meant that Nanu had little time to gather his thoughts. From the punk’s expression, Nanu figured he would have to wing it and go with the flow of the conversation as it went along.

“Did you get Looker to fill in the blanks from what you overhead earlier?” Nanu questioned, acutely aware of the way that Guzma looked over him, as if he were tempted to sit himself down on the injured cop until all his questions were answered to his satisfaction.

Which wasn’t likely to happen, no matter how hard Guzma pressed for that information.

Nanu rarely let slip information he didn’t want to offer. It had been useful in the past, when some fool tried to intimidate or torture it out of him. For some reason, the bigger punk’s hands on his shoulders didn’t bother Nanu as much as the unfriendly touches of his past tormentors had.

“Maybe he did.” Guzma said evasively, but from the way his hands held firm to Nanu’s shoulders, he wasn’t going to be easily dissuaded. “Don’t try and avoid the question, cop. You keep doin’ that shit and it gets real old real fast.”

Nanu didn’t say anything, distracted by the way Guzma’a larger hands lightened up a fraction so as to not hold on to him as tightly. Interesting. So the punk had noticed Nanu’s discomfort from the tight grip.

“Why the hell do you want to go deal with those creepy ass things any way? Sounds like it’d be a shitty thing to get involved in.” Guzma reiterated the question he’d woken Nanu up with. “Why the hell bother?”

“I would rather it be me who looks into it.” Nanu let out a worn out sigh. He wasn’t awake enough for this, his right side ached and Guzma’s hands were too warm and comforting on his shoulders. Nanu paused as that thought crossed his mind, and considered it before continuing to speak as he gave a disinterested shrug beneath those hands. “I would prefer not to drag 11-year olds into this mess.”

“What the hell are you talking about? Who ever said there were kids involved in that bullshit that trench coat guy was yammering on about?” Guzma’s eyes narrowed, something almost akin to concern crossing his face. “Are you actually fully awake, or not?”
“Of course I am. I was woken quite rudely from a warm nap.” Nanu said dryly. “And a dreamless one, at that.”

“A nap. Is that what you call recovering from being poisoned by jellyfish abominations from another world?” Guzma’s hands left Nanu’s shoulders as the younger man straightened up and crossed his arms.

“Did Looker not mention his terrible idea while he was ‘yammering’?” Nanu asked, frowning a little. It wouldn’t be out of the realm of possibility, especially if Guzma attempted to intimidate Looker for the knowledge. After all, Looker knew when to keep his mouth shut, if the man didn’t feel the other person needed to know certain information. It could have led to problems, as it had the past. Neither Looker nor Nanu were likely to make that mistake again, so they were tight-lipped and careful with important information out of habit.

“He was being all shiftly and was kind of being an ass, but I got the gist of it. Of, ya know, what I missed out on when yer damn Meowth were all over me.” Guzma said with a shrug, before he went straight back to staring at Nanu. “What’d he leave out? He didn’t tell me everything, did he?”

It wouldn’t be all that surprising to Nanu that Looker wouldn’t have mentioned everything to the punk. Looker was no pushover, not one to be easily intimidated, but when faced with someone like Guzma...Nanu presumed Guzma had tried to get in Looker’s face over wanting to know everything about what was going on. It was a high probability that Looker had merely given a brief summary to satisfy the punk’s demands. Meaning that Nanu would have to fill in the blanks where he felt it was necessary, despite not knowing all of what a Looker had let slip. “I told Looker that there was no way that I was going to allow him to drag Sun and Moon into this, despite both of them having visited one of the Ultra Beast’s homes, which makes them Fallers, despite the brief time spent in that place.”

“They got that Sogeleo, don’t they?” Guzma ventured, apparently not seeing the problem. “Seems like they’d have no problem dealing with more of those things, seein’ as that lion dealt with Lusamine and the Nihilego pretty easy.”

“I don’t really care if they have some legendary Pokémon on their side. They could be hurt if they attempt to confront any of these beasts, even with their Pokémon around to protect them.” Nanu stared down at his hands, noting the barely there scars that he sometimes forgot about. “Me, on the other hand? I’m the kahuna of this island, as well as a cop, so I may as well do my job once and awhile. Don’t need Tapu Bulu appearing out of nowhere to kick my ass in gear.” Nanu leaned back in the chair he was seated in and sighed, looking away from his hands as he absentely pet a Meowth that had clambered up and placed itself on his lap. “I would rather it be me facing these beasts, and not children. I mentioned to you before that I saw someone dying before my eyes the last time I confronted one of these Ultra Beasts, because they were a Faller and it was drawn to them.”

“I...” Guzma dropped his arms to his side, quiet for a moment as if trying to find some way to argue against Nanu’s logic. Finding nothing, from the way he let out an aggravated sigh, Guzma looked off to the side and grumbled. “You should just tell that trench coat-wearing bastard to clear off and let him deal with it. This seems like something bigger than you should have to deal with. Kahuna or not.”

“You don’t already know, old man?” Guzma had suddenly leaned in close again, resting his hands on the arms of the chair so that he could look Nanu dead in the eyes. “I don’t want some weird
jellyfish or some other beast to beat you down before I get the chance to beat you myself.”

“Are you going to finally give me that beat down you keep alluding to? The best down you’ve been threatening for at least two years?” Nanu asked in a deadpan tone, already knowing the answer. He felt it was some reflex of Guzma’s to hide what he was actually feeling toward him by saying such things. Because the younger punk apparently didn’t know what to do about how he was feeling. So it appeared to be easier for Guzma to continue to threaten to beat down Nanu in order to avoid dealing with an unfamiliar emotion. Nanu continued to calmly meet Guzma’s angry stare. “Well? What’s it going to be, boy? You gonna beat me down right this instant or not?”

“Nah, it wouldn’t be satisfying to knock you around with you already injured and still recovering.” Guzma offered a faint, mocking grin. “You should do something about that. Can’t be letting yer ass get handed to you like this. People might start to think yer a pushover. First a wild Persian biting you back then, and now a jellyfish monster poisoning ya.” Guzma’s hands gripped the chair arms as he averted his gaze, voice quiet. “And speaking of those damn jellies...um...thanks, for before.”

“What was that?” Nanu had heard the punk’s words, but he couldn’t quite believe it. Just like Nanu didn’t believe Guzma’s promise of a beat-down any longer.

“Do you need to get your hearing checked, old man?” Guzma growled, shoving away from the chair as he hunched his shoulders and slouched in front of the chair. “I said thanks, for shoving my sorry ass out of the way of those Nihilego.” Guzma reached a hand up to ruffle his hair in an agitated way as he continued to avoid eye contact. “Can’t believe I froze up like that. I couldn’t think straight with all of those things grabbin’ at me with their tentacles and-”

“‘You should thank your Golisopod for coming to get me.’ Nanu interjected quietly. “I wouldn’t have known that anything was wrong if it hadn’t shown up. It was hurt but it was clear that it wanted me to know that you were in danger.” Nanu studied Guzma’s profile and could tell, from the way the punk absently touched a finger to a Pokéball in a pocket, that he was thinking about the bug Pokémon.

“And you’re welcome, for not letting you be completely swarmed by floating jellyfish.” Nanu tagged on, knowing he would hear the grumble rise out of the younger man. Nanu’s lips twitched the faintest amount when he heard the expected grumble emit from the punk seconds later. Guzma was too easy to tease, even if the subject matter wasn’t exactly a joking matter. Any one of those Nihilego could have poisoned Guzma had they felt threatened. Several of them could have poisoned him all at once, and despite Guzma likely having been poisoned by his own Pokémon at some point...Nanu doubted he would have been resistant the the poison slowly being expelled from the cop’s system at present. Nanu presumed that his sudden move to shove Guzma out of the way, along with one of his Pokémon attacking the beasts, was the reason why the nearest Nihilego had lashed out.

But it had been a disturbing sight, to see one of those creatures trying to perch on Guzma’s head. From the reports that Nanu had read after receiving Looker’s letter, it wasn’t pleasant for the person involved. Nihilego was parasitic and could manipulate its host should the host be unable to fight back against the sensation, and if one of those creatures had done that to Guzma...

“I apologize.” Nanu said suddenly, as he reconsidered what he had said and what it could have meant to Guzma. “I shouldn’t have brought up the Nihilego. I can see that it makes you uncomfortable to hear about them. It’s the same for me, with another beast. One that I had tracked down years ago.”

“Tch.” Guzma seemed surprised over the apology, but tried to cover up his obvious discomfort with indifference. “Doesn’t matter. That ain’t around so it’s fine.”
It was a hard sight to see, and one that made some guilt settle into the pit of Nanu’s stomach. Guzma wasn’t fine, despite what he said. Nanu He was really fucking this up, interacting with other human beings. Nanu was so used to only being around his Pokémon most of the time that it was hard to remember how to be social. To an extent. And Nanu should have damn well known how Guzma would have reacted to bringing up the Nihilego, as Nanu himself didn’t react well to being reminded of the beast from a decade ago. Nanu saw Guzma shake his head when the punk caught sight of the other man’s expression.

“I said it’s fine. Might as well joke about it than let the thought of that thing scare me or somethin’.” Guzma seemed to hesitate a moment before he spoke again, his voice taking on an uncharacteristically nervous tone. “So...you said that those brats only spent a short time in Ultra Space with the Nihilego, and that they’re Fallers. So does that...does that mean that I would be a Faller too, since I spent more time there than them?”

“From the way those Nihilego converged on you, I would say that confirms that you are a Faller. Those beasts will continue to be drawn to you because of it.” Nanu studied the younger man before he sighed. “So you were the one who went with Lusamine to the beast’s world after all.”

“Shit.” Guzma sat down hard on the couch across from Nanu, as one of his feet began to tap on the floor. As proof to how uncomfortable over the revelation he was, Guzma didn’t protest over the way a few Meowth curled up next to and around him, including MaryAnn the shiny Meowth settling on his lap. So lost in whatever thought he was in, the punk even began to pet the Meowth as they began to demand attention from him. “I don’t know what the hell I was thinking. Goin’ into ultra space like that. I didn’t think Lusamine would have lost her mind like that. To be stuck in that place with all those Nihilego floatin’ around. To be trapped there, with Lusamine not having any use for me once we got there and she caught one of those things.”

“Guzma...” Nanu straightened up as best he could, making the Meowth near him vacate. The red eyed cop didn’t like the way this was going. How Guzma seemed to be getting more lost in the memory of something that had happened, his body shaking the faintest bit.

“I didn’t think those Nihilego were anything but weird Pokémon at the time.” Guzma leaned over and grasped his hair, hands digging in and knocking the new sunglasses off his head. They clattered to the ground, but Guzma didn’t seem to notice. The punk’s voice began to waver, his breath hitching now and again. “I tried to catch one of them with my bare hands because they seemed so frail.” Guzma laughed, but it sounded wrong. “But it vanished right in front of me. And then...” The punk let out another shaky laugh. “I didn’t see it come at me until it was too late.”

Nanu didn’t like the sound of those laughs. They sounded self-deprecating. What was also concerning to Nanu was the way Guzma’s head hung down as the younger man carded his fingers through his hair in an increasingly aggravated way, pulling hard at the hair. But the shaking of Guzma’s larger frame was the most worrying sight of all, as, coupled with the erratic breathing, it confirmed Nanu’s suspicions that Guzma was losing himself to the memory after all.

Nanu rose from the chair, grimacing over the way his joints cracked, protesting the way he moved too quickly. But Nanu ignored the discomfort, and the dull throb that spiraled out from his bandaged right side. Nanu focused on Guzma instead, and took the few steps forward to bring him close to the punk. With a sigh at his body’s aches, Nanu lowered himself onto the couch next to Guzma, after shooing away some of the Meowth. Nanu carefully reached up and gently pried the punk’s large hands out of white hair.

“Guzma.” Nanu held on to the punk’s hands, feeling the way the shaking of Guzma’s body extended to them. Nanu kept hold of the punk’s hands, as he had some inkling as to what was going through
Guzma’s mind. Nanu saw and heard the way the younger man’s breath quickened, short and uneven. Nanu didn’t dare try and do anything other than hold onto Guzma’s hands, but loosened his grip, in case he needed to pull away. “Breathe.”

“C...can’t...I can’t...” Guzma let out a shuddering breath, before sucking in a sharp intake of air as his body continued to quake. “Can’t breathe...it won’t let me...won’t let me move...my body.”

“Guzma, I need you to try and breathe.” Nanu wasn’t entirely certain just how far lost Guzma was in his memory but Nanu had no doubt that what was going on was Guzma reliving the memory of the Nihilego in ultra space and what had happened while there. Nanu resumes speaking, his voice quiet in an attempt to be reassuring. “You’re safe. They’re not attacking you. Those Nihilego aren’t here. You’re in the station outside Po Town.”

“L....let...” Guzma mumbled something inaudible before his body went rigid, sucking in another sharp breath, and holding it for a very long time before it came out in a rush. “Let go of me.”

Nanu wasn’t entirely sure whether the younger man was addressing him specifically or not, but let his hands release Guzma’s own. The red eyed cop was in no mood to be upended on the floor if Guzma accidentally lashed out in panic. Nanu was understandably taken aback when Guzma suddenly closed the distance between them on the couch and wrapped his arms around him, pressing his face into the older man’s shoulder. Nanu grimaced over the way he was pressed backward into the couch, and was grateful the punk refrained from climbing onto his lap. Especially since it seemed that Guzma was intent to be close to him. But the closeness wasn’t doing Nanu’s aching body any favors.

“It won’t let go of me...won’t let go.” Guzma muttered against Nanu’s neck, as he tightened his arms around the older man’s back. “Made me move...couldn’t stop it...couldn’t.”

“Guzma.” Nanu managed to move his arm beneath the punk’s own, and brought his hand to rest on the small of Guzma’s back. “Come back. You’re all right now. It’s in the past.”

“...dammit.” Guzma let out a harsh exhalation before his breathing began to slowly even out. Moments later, Guzma’s body went from taut to relaxed, before he sagged against Nanu in a way that indicated relief. “Dammit.” Guzma repeated, sounding upset with himself.

“You back?” Nanu held still as he waited for Guzma to make some disparaging comment about how Nanu still had his hand resting against the punk’s lower back. When no words were forthcoming, Nanu freed his arms from beneath Guzma’s, not missing the fact that the younger man kept his arms around him, as if still not completely grounded from his memory of something unpleasant. Nanu reached up with his left hand, and ruffled the punk’s hair. “You should stop tugging at your hair like that or you’ll rip it out and eventually go bald.” Nanu took the half hearted laugh that tumbled out of Guzma as a good sign. It meant that the punk’s mind was turning away from the memory that had panicked him.

“If you’re all right now, could you stop holding me so tightly? My side is very tender right now, and I’d rather the stitches not get pulled out, after what happened to my arm.” Nanu winced as Guzma abruptly let go of him, as the sudden motion jostled his entire body. Nanu’s left hand went to his bandaged side with an outward grimace, and while doing so, heard a quiet ‘shit’ from the younger man. Nanu felt one of Guzma’s hands land on his left shoulder, and the reason was immediate as the touch steadied him. Nanu hadn’t realized that he had been swaying from the low burning agony.

Persian approached the couch and let out a concerned meow, its round head tilting to one side.

“I’m fine.” Nanu told his Pokémon, even as he continued to be very aware of the way Guzma’s large
hand rested and held onto his shoulder. Nanu briefly wore a crooked half smile over the way Guzma let out a huff of disbelief over his words, and the red eyed man turned his attention to Guzma and amended his statement. “I will be fine.” Nanu studied Guzma silently for a moment before speaking. “Next time you feel that coming on, keep on breathing as best you can and find something to distract yourself with. Pet your Pokémon. Focus on them or speak to someone. Just do something so you aren’t focusing on those memories. Don’t let it get to the point that it overwhelms you.”

“I…” Guzma moved his hand away from Nanu and stepped back. “It won’t happen again.”

“Well, if you ever want to talk about it, you’re looking at another person who’s run into an Ultra Beast before.” Nanu tossed out, red eyes still assessing the punk.

“I’m fine.” Guzma snapped, bristling defensively before staring down at his hands. Some of the tension and aggression vanished, leaving the younger man looking worn out. “Do…do the nightmares ever go away?” Guzma asked quietly, hesitating, as if wondering if he’d already asked something similar, before adding, in a rough tone, “Will they always be so…vivid?”

“Sometimes the details remain vivid.” Nanu replied, thinking on the rain and the painfully detailed scene that replayed itself in his own nightmares. Why he chose to live in a place that had constant rain…Nanu didn’t like to dwell on it. It was like he were punishing himself in some way or another, so he didn’t make the same mistake twice. Nanu ran a hand over his face and sighed. “The thoughts…the memories…they don’t always fade completely. Sometimes the memory can be triggered when you least expect it.”

Guzma’s expression shuttered into something blank, like he was thinking about what had been said. The taller man leaned back in the couch, staring straight ahead in an eerie silence. Even the Meowth and MaryAnn seemed to be reluctant to get near Guzma, as if they felt they would be intruding on something.

Nanu was almost relieved when Looker rushed into the police station with a slam of the front door, speaking rapidly in an unfamiliar language.

The Meowth near the door hissed and arched their backs over the suddenness of the man’s entrance.

“Speak in your usual language, Looker, I don’t speak that one very well.” Nanu raised his voice to say, before he glanced over to Guzma. And smirked faintly over the way punk’s gaze had zeroed in on Looker, a scowl on his face.

“Ahh, my apologies.” Looker let out a breath, as if calming himself, before he continued to speak. “I wanted to let you know that I got into contact with the people we spoke of before. The Ultra Recon Squad, they are called. They are wary to extend their help or speak to a lot of people, but they have agreed to meeting us. With myself, Anabel and you.” Looker dug our his notebook and flipped it open. “Anabel is speaking with them right now. They will be expecting us soon. That is, if you are feeling up to a meeting today.” Looker’s voice reflected concern over Nanu’s wellbeing, considering the bandages with worried gray eyes. It was only when Looker glanced at Guzma that he seemed to realize just how much the punk was glowering at him.

“If they’re willing to talk, may as well get it over with.” Nanu rose from the couch with a low groan as his joints protested the movement. It really sucked being wounded because his body was even worse shape than usual. Nanu paused alongside Looker, his voice dropping into a whisper. “I need a word with Guzma before joining you.”

“I’ll wait for you outside.” Looker said, glancing over Nanu’s shoulder before beating a hasty retreat to the door.
Nanu felt a puff of air against the back of his neck, clueing Nanu into the fact that Looker had retreated because Guzma had gotten up. Nanu half turned and found the younger man standing close to his back, narrowed eyes glaring at the door that Looker had left through.

“Are you actually gonna go?”

“If I’m going to be getting involved, more information would be best.” Nanu offered a half-hearted shrug, quiet as he watched Guzma make his way toward the door. Nanu wondered what the younger punk was up to but figured it out quick enough, and managed to get to the door first in order to block it. The gesture was pretty damn useless, because Nanu and Guzma both knew that the cop couldn’t stop Guzma from leaving if he really wanted to. “You are not going with me. You’re not involved in this.”

“Like hell I’m not involved. Those damn Nihilego attacked me.” Guzma snapped, crossing his arms and glaring at Nanu.

“That’s why I don’t want you to be involved in this. There would be a high chance that you to would be attacked again.” Nanu may have pressed his back against the door over the way the punk’s fists clenched at his sides. “I haven’t told Looker that you are a Faller, because I know he wouldn’t hesitate to ask for your assistance, provided you show that you can handle yourself in a Pokémon battle.” Nanu held up a hand to stop Guzma’s retort as he fixed him with a hard stare. “With the way you froze up around those Nihilego...and the way you reacted not a few minutes ago...” Nanu gave his head a shake. “You can’t afford to freeze up or lose yourself like that around there creatures. Hesitation can mean you leave yourself open to an attack that your Pokémon may not be able to protect you from. You don’t have to be involved in this and no one would look down on you if you stay away from those Ultra Beasts.”

“Don’t fucking tell me what I can and can’t do, old man, I-”

“You have three options while I go with Looker to meet with these people.” Nanu spoke over Guzma, getting a nasty look for it. “You can go home, go to Po Town and stay with your former teammates or you can stay here at the station with your Pokémon, the Meowth and the cover the rain provides.”

“All of those options suck. In each one, I ain’t doin’ a damn thing but sitting around.” Guzma took a step toward Nanu, bringing him close so that he could loom in front of the cop and stare down at him. “And you should fuckin’ know that I’d rather sleep in a damn ditch in the rain than ever go back home. Or didn’t you catch that memo that I ran away from there?”

“Then go to Po Town or stay here. There isn’t much known about these beasts, or how many of them are here.” Nanu told Guzma calmly, still pressed against the door but not believing for a second that Guzma was going to use his fists. It was more likely that he was thinking about unpleasant memories Nanu had stupidly brought on through tossing out the idea of the punk hunkering down at his parent’s home. “I would rather learn more information before you wander off on your own on routes between towns.” Nanu closed his eyes. “I don’t want to come across what I’ve seen in the past.” Bodies from where he’d been in his first few years with Interpol. The body of a person screaming and dying, bleeding as they were dragged off on his last mission. All the missions that could have gone wrong, and the ones that had. The dark times that had followed...

“Old man?”

Nanu reluctantly opened his eyes and lifted his head to meet Guzma’s gaze, and was a little confused to see the serious expression on the younger man, his hands unclenched and hanging by his side.
“I’ll stay here, so long as you tell me what you tell me what’s goin’ on when you come back.”

Nanu studied the still serious expression on Guzma’s face before he inclined his head in a faint nod. What he chose to tell Guzma would depend on the information he learned from the meeting. Nanu watched Guzma step back and head toward the kitchen. Ignoring the way Guzma made noise, perhaps making a mess over having to stay behind, Nanu called out for Persian. As soon as his Pokémon joined him, Nanu made as if to leave.

“Oy, you forgot something.” Guzma was suddenly back by the door and holding out a small bag. Guzma avoided eye contact as he held it out and grumbled aloud. “Take some damn antidotes with you. In case you’re gone longer than you think. Don’t wanna be done in by Nihilego’s poison, so you?”

Nanu blinked. It hadn’t even occurred to him to take any antidotes, having just assumed that Looker or Anabel would have more if he needed it.

“You gonna go out like that?” Guzma asked, holding up one of Nanu’s jackets in his other hand and shaking it with a faint grin.

Nanu glanced down at his exposed, bandaged torso and sighed. He wasn’t exactly put together after the rude awakening he’d received but he couldn’t exactly fault Guzma. No doubt he still had some fear of the Nihilego, so it stood to reason that he would react badly over the idea of someone going after more of them. Nanu took the offered jacket and carefully put it on. The clothing brushed over his bandages and right then and there Nanu decided to not bother closing the jacket, as he didn’t want to put pressure on his wounded right side more than was necessary. Nanu took the bag Guzma dangled within reach and left the station with Persian by his side, before Guzma could remark on the injury bothering him.

“Let’s go get this over with.” Nanu said as he joined Looker in the rain.

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Nanu was displeased over just how winded he was by the time he and Looker reached their destination. The trailer on route 16 near the Pokémon Center. The owner had offered it so that the Ultra Recon Squad could have some privacy from the prying eyes of curious trainers from the center nearby. Just outside the trailer, Nanu let out a low groan, arm going to wrap around his torso, his balance unsteady. And he was sweating, which meant he was likely due for another antidote. Which he immediately drank once he stopped feeling like he might fall over.

“000?” Looker had just reached out for the door but stopped and looked back, concern lacing his words. He focused on the empty antidote bottle, and his concern appeared to grow. “Nanu? Are you sure that you’re going to be well enough for this?”

“I am. I just...need to sit down. It seems...I’m not entirely well enough for traveling even short distances.” Nanu watched Looker open the door, say something to someone inside, before walking back over to him. The two shared an exchanged look. Nothing was said but it was clear that Looker didn’t like what he was seeing. Meaning that the red eyed cop looked worse than usual. Not just tired and apathetic but actually hurt and quietly in pain. Nanu let out a heavy sigh and gave a jerk of his head in acknowledgement of the unspoken words. Nanu allowed Looker to help him into the trailer and over to a chair, that Nanu was grateful to sit down on. He was left alone as Looker walked off to presumably locate Anabel. Nanu closed his eyes wearily but tensed up when a young female voice spoke close to him.

“Look, Dulse! He wasn’t lying about the Nihilego.”
Nanu opened his eyes and found himself looking into wide, white-colored eyes of an orange haired girl wearing an odd-looking suit. Nanu glanced to the girl’s right and found a man wearing a similar suit, with lighter colored eyes as well, his red hair poking out from beneath a helmet. The two made a strange, boxed shape motion with their hands. It took Nanu a moment to recognize they were greeting him the way a native Alolan would.

“Is Zossie correct?” The man, Dulse, asked in a calm, even cadence as he inspected Nanu’s bandaged torso.

“Most Pokémon poison isn’t so potent.” Nanu rested his hand lightly over the bandages beneath his jacket as he offered a wry smile. “Pokémon aren’t as likely to inject as much as the Nihilego did. I think I may have spooked it, and caused the beast to lash out defensively. Otherwise, they seemed fairly harmless, floating around. Until it gets too close and attempts to get onto your head.” Nanu inwardly believed that this was what had happened to Guzma and was honestly surprised that more damage hadn’t been done, apart from the nightmares and freezing up when faced with the beasts again. Nanu had seen and heard about Lusamine and what happened when there was too much neurotoxin in a human body. When a person was possessed, for lack of a better term. What was in Nanu was the poisonous variety, and it wouldn’t be affecting him once he got it out of his system, unlike the neurotoxin Lusamine would be fighting off for some time.

“Attacking defensively is something that has been documented in the Ultra Beasts.” Dulse mused aloud. “And Nihilego are otherwise harmless, as you said, until it finds a host.”

“Are there other Ultra Beasts that have appeared?” Nanu questioned. “Looker made it sound as if that was the case.”

“Lusamine opened many portal around Alola, allowing the beasts to appear.” Dulse said with a frown. “We’ve gotten many reports already.”

“So they’ve been here for a few weeks, if not longer.” Nanu felt cold wash over him. The strange dragon-like creature he had driven off from the ruins Tapu Bulu lived in...had that...had that been an Ultra Beast? It had appeared out of nowhere. “I drove an odd creature away from Tapu Bulu’s ruins. I thought it was an isolated incident and that it had been some unknown dragon-type Pokémon.”

“What did it look like?” Zossie asked, legs swinging back and forth from where she had gone to perch on a counter. She listened to Nanu’s description and perked up after a moment of careful consideration. “That sounds like it might have been a Guzzlord. Real tall, larger than a lot of the biggest Pokémon in Alola? Looks like it could eat a lot with all those teeth in its big mouth?”

“Looks like it...teeth...” Flashes of the past hit Nanu hard and he was grateful in that moment to be sitting. The sheets of rain and the dark all but obscuring the creature they had been tracking down all those years ago. The flashes of lightning revealing the teeth. All of those teeth and the claws. The glowing of what appeared to be eyes. Blood. So much blood. The gigantic maw snapping closed...the screams...

“N...Nanu, do you think that that’s what...” Looker couldn’t even finish his question and instead spoke to Nanu’s other statement, as if not wanting to dwell on the past right now. “It wasn’t an isolated incident. There were similar reposts of unfamiliar creatures appearing before other ruins, from the kahunas of other islands. It’s uncertain how many of these creatures were able to return home or if they are still trapped here.”

“What’s been reported?” Nanu tried to focus on that. He didn’t want to think about the possible of coming across the same creature that had taken MaryAnn away from Looker and himself.
This is what we have so far, based on our information gathering with our comrades and some Alolans.” Dulse handed Nanu a piece of paper, which the red-eyed cop looked over:

**Nihilego**. UB 01. Symbiont. Multiple sightings across Alola, most recent sightings on Ula’Ula Island.

**Buzzwole**. UB 02. Absorption. 2 sighted on Ula’Ula Island.

**Xurkitree**. UB 03. Lighting. 3 reports. Waiting in details as of this report.

**Kartana**. UB 04. Blade. 4 of the UBs spotted. As of this report, 2 have been successfully captured.

**Guzzlord**. UB 05. Glutton. Only 1 sighting thus far. No specific details as of yet.

**Blacephalon**. UB Burst. Only 1 of these beasts. Nothing else known at present. Only a single sighting. More information needed.

There was complete silence in the room as Nanu read. He didn’t like the sound of this at all. It was far worse than he previously thought it was going to be. And the kicker that shit was about to hit the fan was at the very bottom of the page:

Multiple reports of a creature believed to be Necrozma from all islands of Alola.

This could be dangerous, as, according to the remaining lines on the page, if Necrozma absorbed too much light, it could go badly for all of Alola. This new piece of information meant that Nanu would have to find a way to warn Sun and Moon after all. To make sure they kept their Sogeleo from engaging with Necrozma. In the notes, Nanu read that Necrozma could go berserk from too much light absorption, after being deprived of it for so long.

“Reading about Necrozma?” Zossie piped up. When Nanu looked up, the girl continued to speak. “It seems to be in hiding right now but we’re still going to be careful. We’re making certain that our Lunala stays away from the places Necrozma’s been spotted.”

“Then Sun and Moon will have to be warned to do the same with their Sogeleo.” Nanu said. “I’m sure Lillie would appreciate that, since it had travelled with her for so long before going with Sun and Moon.”

“Already done, 000. I made sure to send a message with Croagunk.” Looker said from where he was leaned up against a wall.

“And that’s all you said to them?” Nanu asked, the paper crumpling a little as he clenched his hand.

“With what your reaction would be otherwise...of course that was all.” Looker said with a sigh. “Though they really could help us out...” Looker raised his hands in a placating gesture when Nanu’s red eyes fixed on him in an unfriendly way. “Anyway...one problem at a time, yes?”

“Looker’s right. We need to focus on what we know right now.” Anabel said from a chair she was seated on. “Sightings of these UBs has been most reported in residential areas around Alola. I find that very concerning for the safety of the people and Pokémon that live in those places. These cases should take precedence.”

“Agreed. We must make certain that humans and Pokémon in high population areas are searched first.” Dulse intoned. “We have discussed possibilities of how to handle these beasts and have come to the decision to capture them in beast balls, similar to the poké balls you use here. The less aggressive of the UBs would be taken to the Aether Foundation.”
“And the others would be released back into their home worlds, right?” Zossie questioned.

Dulse gave a nod of agreement.

“With this plan, however, we need a way to draw the beasts out into the open. We can’t wait for them to attack someone.” Looker pointed out. “And that means that we have to take all possibilities into account.”

Nanu wordlessly nodded his head in agreement to this, despite knowing that Looker may press the Fallor option. Nanu couldn’t help but relive how he had come across Guzma and the Nihilego. As the discussion began in earnest, all Nanu could think about throughout it all was keeping Guzma out of this mess. There was most certainly no way everyone involved was going to come out unscathed. And the Fallers were the ones in the most danger from the Ultra Beasts.

But keeping Guzma away from this was likely easier said than done, as the punk wouldn’t like the idea of having to stay out of the possible danger.

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Guzma was bored.

He was also completely covered in purring Meowth, which had led to said boredom because he was unable to get up to do anything. Guzma had attempted to leave the station but Golisopod and the Meowth had made that impossible.

So there he was, big bad Guzma, laid out on the floor covered in purring felines that he easily could have avoided away. Guzma could have sworn he had heard Golisopod let out a whirling sort of laugh at his predicament.

The punk thought about the turn his life had taken. One moment, he was a kid struggling with the island challenge because he refused to use any other type of Pokémon apart from bugs. The next moment, he was running away from home, determined to not go back ever again, despite the fact he’d failed the island challenge. Then came the low point in his life, when he’d made horrible decisions and nearly made a fatal one before Golisopod saved him.

“Mrow?” MaryAnn mewed as it used its paws to kneed Guzma’s shoulder. It squeezed its eyes shut happily over the way Guzma gave it a gentle pat on the head before a few Meowth grabbed back onto his arm, insisting on his attention.

Guzma sighed over the neediness of the felines, mind still mulling things over. He had gotten himself back together after that terrible time, and had thrown himself into training with his Pokémon with renewed determination. Becoming the leader of Team Skull had given him a boost of confidence that he had needed. Guzma managed to put his past more or less behind him, and focused on making Team Skull better than before.

Now, they were disbanded, and Guzma was without a purpose apart from training his Pokémon. And apparently hanging around Nanu once again, for some reason or another.

Golisopod was stretched out on the floor alongside Guzma and whirled in concern as it pressed its face close to Guzma to bite his hair in an affectionate way.

“I’m just thinkin’, bud.” Guzma said as he freed his arm from the Meowth again so he could pat the armored shoulder of his Pokémon. His mouth set in a grim line at the sight of the broken and torn into plates in his Pokémon’s body. The attacks it had sustained from the Nihilego had healed for the most part, but it had left behind visible scars. “You’re a tough guy, huh? Not gonna let creepy ass
jellyfish take you down, yeah?” Guzma pat Golisopod’s head when the bug Pokémon chittered and clicked as it carefully rested its head on Guzma’s chest. A few Meowth clambered onto Golisopod’s back, all looking very pleased with themselves.

While Guzma was a little annoyed about being kept from leaving the station, he was grateful for the distraction his Pokémon and the Meowth provided. He didn’t want to dwell in his own head for very long. Not when he thought about the past, and of Lusamine, of all the times he’d met with her. The lies she had given him, despite the fact that it had made Guzma feel pleased that someone admired his strength as a trainer. As a person. But to be abandoned after all he had done for Lusamine...it was...

Golisopod nudged Guzma gently with a short click, again breaking into the punk’s unpleasant thoughts. The Meowth decided to join in. Soon, Guzma was getting so much attention from the Pokémon around him that he couldn’t help but laugh and try to fend off all of the purring felines pawing at him. Guzma eventually gave it up as a lost cause because the Meowth were so insistent on remaining on Guzma and Golisopod.

Guzma let out a yawn and closed his eyes as he began to doze off alongside Golisopod. As sleep threatened to take over, Guzma vaguely found his mind drifting to Nanu. About whether or not he should keep pressing the other man. Guzma decided that he would, because Nanu didn’t actually seem to mind the attention. Maybe he would try and bring the topic up, if he could work up the nerve to do so.

Nanu’s bitter sarcastic ass was a bit hard to deal with, but beneath all that apathy and disinterest, Guzma knew that there was something there. He just had to figure out what it was and what exactly how Nanu felt about him suddenly hanging around again.

-x-x-x-

Nanu was exhausted by the time he returned to the police station on route 17 later in the evening. He was far more worn out than he expected that he would have been, after the meeting he had had with Interpol and the Ultra Recon Squad.

Excited meows greeted Nanu when he entered the station, a few Meowth running forward to grab his legs.

“Yeah, I’m back. Did he not feed you lot, or are you trying to get extra helpings?” Innocent eyes met Nanu’s question, some Meowth wearing rather sad faces. A crooked smile surfaced. “That’s what I thought. Come on, I’m sure there are some treats in here somewhere.”

The Meowth nearest him raced to the kitchen and leapt onto the counter, whiskers twitching as they fixed expectant eyes on Nanu.

Nanu shook his head and carefully made his way over to the counter, though he paused on his way over the sight he saw on the floor. Nanu wore a small, genuine smile at the way Guzma sprawled on his back, covered in Meowth, with Golisopod lying alongside him. At least Guzma could get some rest, despite having been confronted by several Ultra Beasts that had hurt him before, which could have caused some unpleasant nightmares.

Nanu fed treats to the excited Meowth on the counter, before he went over and pulled the bed down from where it was hidden in the wall. Nanu carefully lie down on the bed, fully dressed, his body aching and fighting off the poison with the antidotes he continued to take. Nanu rested an arm over his eyes and sighed. He didn’t think he could be as optimistic as the others had been. There was no way everyone would come out of this situation unscathed, as he had thought before. There were far
too many things that could do wrong, even if they took precautions. The Ultra Beasts were unpredictable and that translated to dangerous situations that they may or may not be fully prepared to face.

Nanu felt that he must have dozed off, because he suddenly jerked awake from some nameless dream, heart racing and breathing hard. He was still on the bed, and the only thing that had changed was that Guzma was sprawled out alongside him and it appeared as though the Meowth had all followed him.

Guzma was awake, as the younger man had sat up, looking startled and wild-eyed, as if they were being attacked.

Nanu realized he must have called out or, more worryingly, may have screamed, when he’d woken up, because Guzma was staring at him as if checking to see if he was all right. It was...an odd feeling, to have someone check him over like this.

“What the hell, old man?” Guzma griped, running a hand through his hair as he let out a long sigh. “I was havin’ a real good dream about finding a new bug Pokémon. Then you go and wake up like something’s attackin’ you. Didn’t know you could...scream like that...”

It had been some time since a dream had woken him up screaming.

“...it was just a dream. Can’t remember it, but I’m sure it was an echo of the nightmare I have.” He actually couldn’t remember the dream and for that, he was grateful. Nanu yawned, thinking to get out of bed, but Guzma’s hand lightly grasped his upper arm.

“What’d you guys talk about?” Guzma questioned, for once being tactful and not bringing up the scream again. “That trench coat asshole was here and I chased him off. Told him to stay away until you aren’t gonna keel over from that injury.”

“I was going to be taking it easy either way. I need to recover, and while I do, I’m supposed to wrack my brain over where those Ultra Beasts could have holed themselves up.” Nanu found it amusing that Guzma could have driven Looker off so easily. Had the other man wanted to, he could have laid Guzma out on his ass and walked over him to speak with Nanu. It was likely not important, then, since Looker hadn’t pressed the point. He’d likely show up later.

“How the hell are you supposed to do that?” Guzma seemed to pale over the idea of multiples of the beasts but pretended to not be as affected as he sat up straight on the bed, after letting go of Nanu’s arm.

“I’ve been in Alola longer than Looker, so I have more contacts and a better idea of areas that these creatures might go to.” Nanu yawned again as he ran a hand over his face. “And if anything goes wrong while tracking the UBs down? Well...no one would really miss someone like me.” Nanu stared up at the ceiling, not noticing that Guzma had gone very still. “I suppose Acerola and the kahunas would.”

“You...”

Nanu grimaced in pain when Guzma was suddenly straddling his lap, and shoved him backward against some pillows. Nanu didn’t sense anything in the gesture other than to keep him from rising and getting out of bed. Nanu met Guzma’s furious glare with a bored red eyed stare of his own, waiting.

“You are such a fucking dour asshole. You’re worse on yourself than I am.” Guzma commented, his
voice tight and angry.

Nanu blinked, wondering what the younger man meant.

“Don’t act like you don’t know what I’m talkin’ about. Calling yourself a wretch. Pretending not to care. Letting things pass you by and ignoring what’s going on around you until you can be bothered to do something about it.”

“You should worry about yourself.” Nanu held perfectly still, before his body relaxed against the bed beneath him. Any surprise that he might have shown was now gone and he felt more resigned than anything. “You shouldn’t worry about someone like me. “ Nanu was not at all prepared for Guzma to lean over to roughly kiss him, his hands dragging through Nanu’s hair. The older man recovered from the suddenness of Guzma’s actions, but tried his best not to respond. This wasn’t a good idea. He couldn’t encourage this.

“Don’t you dare decide who would and wouldn’t miss you if you were gone.” Guzma snapped at Nanu irritably, after he had broken away for air.

“Why bother with me?” It was something Nanu wanted to know, as before. There wasn’t one thing he could think of that would cause Guzma to be drawn to him like this.

“You’re one of the few people who actually give a damn what happens to me.” Guzma said in an almost-mutter. He leaned back over and kissed Nanu again, making an insistent noise against Nanu’s lips. “C’mon, old man. You ain’t dead, so you can kiss just fine.”

Nanu sighed into the kiss, his left arm looping around Guzma’s back as he hesitantly returned the kiss. He still thought he shouldn’t be doing this but if Guzma wasn’t yanking his chain and the interest was genuine...

“That it?” Guzma broke away from the kiss after a few moments more, before he seemed to realize that he was straddling Nanu. With some self-conscious sounding grumble, Guzma moved to one side, so that he was alongside Nanu. With a grin, Guzma made himself comfortable by half resting over Nanu’s chest, though the punk was careful of the bandages. “You suck at kissing.” Guzma teased, though there was no force or insult behind his words.

“It’s hard to do much of anything when you’re injured and recovering from poison.” Nanu pointed out dryly.

“Sleep it off.” Guzma muttered back.

“If only that were an option.” Nanu murmured in return, eyes closing as he began to drift back off.

“Sleep, geezer, before your body breaks down some more.” Guzma said crossly before his voice dropped low, almost too faint for Nanu to hear. ‘Bein’ alone again would suck, so don’t let that poison do ya in.”

Nanu didn’t have time to properly address those words, as it seemed to mean that Guzma didn’t think that he had anyone in his life other than his Pokémon, and apparently Nanu himself.

It wasn’t true.

Nanu knew with upmost certainty that the former Team Skull members and Plumeria would be there for Guzma, but the punk just didn’t yet seem to realize that fact.

“Not alone.” Nanu mumbled sleepily, as MaryAnn curled up by his head. Nanu was out before he
could see the flicker of emotion that crossed the punk’s face in response to his words. But Nanu certainly was aware of the way that Guzma was holding him snugly when he finally woke up some hours later.

Chapter End Notes

I only have about 4 chapters of another fic left to do, and then I have plans to focus on this fic for a time.

This chapter was a bit tricky for me to edit because of the info dump and more characters being introduced/a few other things. But I believe this is the only chapter that has this, so I think I got past the roadblock/mental block I’ve had for this fic (apart from the obsession I’ve had with another fandom).

End Notes

I need to get this out of my system so I can focus on WIPs from another fandom. Expect the next chapter (in which there is a fight, because Guzma momentarily forgets he could do a Pokemon battle) sometime this week, or at the latest, next Saturday. Rating may go up in later chapters.

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