Foul Play

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Foul Play

by Bay

Summary

When Unova's Elite Four Grimsley gets bored with battling as one of the top trainers, he takes a vacation in Alola. While there, he meets with Ula'ula Island's Kahuna Nanu, also a Dark-type specialist, and wants to know more of that man's past along with both Team Skull and Aether Foundation's role in the Alola region.

Notes

Main reason is I want to write some Grimsley and Nanu interactions (and Grimsley interacting with other characters), so yeah we'll be getting some Dark type trainers bonding going on. This won't be too long, maybe around seven or eight chapters for main story and perhaps a couple extra backstory chapters stuff if I'm motivated enough.

With warnings, I think it'll mostly be the general non-gruesome violence in Pokémon battles and some references to lighthearted gambling, since it's Grimsley we're talking about... Occasional language too. Also some instances of depression and PTSD to be on the safe side.

There's a lot more I want to say, but I'll save those after each chapter. Thanks to bobandbill
for betaing the first chapter!

**Edit October 22, 2017**- Did some minor changes to the first chapter, added description in some places and fixed the prose a bit.

**Edit: January 18, 2018**- Some changes in the tags and chapter titles! With the tags, after some thinking on how deep I want to go more towards Nanu's backstory, added some warnings of PTSD and references to depression. This story will also have references to Ultra Sun/Ultra Moon later down the line. I also decided to name the chapters after Dark-type moves, so right now Chapter One is "Knock Off", Chapter Two is "Brutal Swing", and Chapter Three is "Flatter." When I get Chapter Four posted, I'll make this announcement again.

**March 7, 2018**- For those that read this on other sites, I made a couple changes from the original version. I took out the conversation Grimsley had with his mother and added a new scene with meeting some of his fans before leaving Unova. For those interested, I have the original Chapter One posted on Dreamwidth for comparisons sake.
In which Grimsley decides to take a vacation in Alola, and Nanu's Perisan kicks butt.

Another battle, another loss for Grimsley.

He looked on as his opponent, a female trainer named Kelly, picked up her Whimsicott. Kelly twirled around with her Pokémon as she told the dual grass and fairy type how proud she was of him. Despite having scratches all over his body, the Whimsicott waved his arms and cheered. Grimsley’s stare then lingered at his fallen Liepard, her body sprawled on the green carpet floor. The platform itself hung from the walls by golden chains, the entire battle area suspended from the ground. Grimsley didn't mind the drop below. His fingers twitched as he muttered, “Good work, Raz, you deserve a nice rest,” and returned the feline. Grimsley clipped the pokeball on his belt, and then he approached his opponent.

“You and your Pokémon shined brilliantly out there while I’m nothing more than the one that lost his light,” he said, trying to sound positive for her, and that caused Kelly to stop and beam at him. She still held Whimsicott in her arms.

“I really enjoyed our battle there, Mr. Grimsley!” she said, and the two shook hands. “You’ve been the toughest Elite Four member I have gone against.”

“I was, huh? That means you have defeated every member of the Elite Four, astonishing.” The small smile on Grimsley’s lips faded. He shifted his face and sighed, his shoulders lowered. “There is one more opponent against whom you must prove your strength.”

He told the trainer to check the statue at the plaza, and he watched as Kelly returned her Pokémon, thanked him once more, and waved goodbye to him. After she used the teleporter to exit his room, Grimsley walked back to his sofa and sunk down. He plopped his elbow on his seat’s arm, and he stared up at the chandelier that hung from the ceiling.

There are bad ways to win and good ways to lose. That was what he always told himself. After losing the last several battles, that distinction grew hazier for him.

About half an hour later, Grimsley left his room and stepped into the plaza. Four doorways, each one leading to the corresponding Elite Four’s rooms, pulsed in blue light. There was also the large statue at the center of the plaza, glowing in the same color. He stepped into the ring that was around the statue, the warm light bathing his skin, and waited a few seconds before he was lowered to the courtyard. It was another several minutes of hiking up to the Champion’s room that resided in the temple at the summit, but once Grimsley reached there he stepped inside and passed through the pillars that towered over him. He made it up to the stairs, and stopped when he saw the Champion, Iris, gazing at the starry sky backdrop behind the throne, the four emblems and the large crest floating around like balloons. When Iris noticed someone had stepped inside, she spun around and grinned at Grimsley.
“Oh, hi Grimsley! If you’re wondering, Kelly has beaten me and is already inducted into the Hall of Fame. Boy, she sure is a force to be reckoned with.” She then furrowed her brow at him and gripped her hands at her sides. “Hey, are you feeling okay?”

Grimsley flinched. He released a deep breath, running his fingers through his hair. “You know how I’m the type of gentlemen to take his losses and victories with stride? Well, lately the past several battles I feel there’s a certain… spark missing.”

“Spark?” Iris tilted her head, her eyes blinking. She crossed her arms. “You mean there’s no more excitement in you whenever you battle?”

“I guess you could say that.” Grimsley’s gaze fell on the floor, and he tugged at his scarf. “Because of my predicament, I’ve been pondering over my next battle. One where I’m not carrying the title of Elite Four.”

Iris pursed her lips and rubbed her chin. When she thought of something, she snapped her fingers and beamed. “Perhaps you need a nice long vacation!”

“Vacation? Like how Caitlin and Shauntal visit Undella Town on occasion?”

“Yes,” Iris said and nodded. “You take the least vacations compared to the other Elite Four members here. Some time off should do you good.”

Releasing his grip on his scarf, Grimsley said, “It would be nice to be out for a while. Although, what if I decided to be away longer than expected?”

“No problem!” Iris’s grin widened. “I’m sure Alder would be more than happy to take your place. And I think I know where your destination should be.”

“Oh? Where, then?” Grimsley raised an eyebrow with great curiosity.

“Have you heard of the Alola region? Very tropical climate and several islands you can drop by at. One of the most unique things about Alola is it doesn’t have a Pokémon League like Unova.”

“It doesn’t?” Grimsley asked skeptically, and Iris shook her head.

“There are no gyms in that region, but the place still has a similar system where you battle strong trainers on each island, or something like that.” A smile tugged onto Iris’s lips. “You said you want your next battle where you’re not an Elite Four, so I figured Alola might be just what you wanted.”

As Grimsley pondered over Iris’s suggestion, his gaze locked at the background. He looked back at her and pulled out a coin from his jacket’s pocket.

“Tell you what, I’ll flip a coin. If it lands heads, then I’ll visit Alola. If tails, then I’m not taking that vacation.”

Iris glared at him, her hands on her hips. “Oh, really?” She sighed, then said, “Fine, do your coin flip thing.”

“Thank you.” Grimsley rubbed the coin with two fingers, tossed it in the air, then caught it with both palms of his hands. He lifted his left palm to show that the coin landed heads. “Well, guess I’ll go to Alola after all.”

“Great!” Iris clapped her hands and her feet bounced. “We should let Caitlin, Shauntal, and Marshal know that you’ll be away for a while and I’ll ask Alder to take your place temporary.”
“That would be appreciated,” Grimsley said, smiling in anticipation. While he had no knowledge of that region, Alola did sound interesting and he liked taking chances. Perhaps this gamble might be worth it.

xxx

Grimsley wasn’t sure how his other colleagues would react to him taking a temporary leave from the Elite Four. He worried that Caitlin, Shauntal, and Marshal would mock him for not taking his role seriously and not giving it his all. Then again, even an Elite Four needed some time off to recharge. So when he announced the news to everyone in the lounge the next morning, they reacted favorably.

“Oh, so a long journey to a new region?” Shauntal said, tapping her pen on her chin. Her notebook was set aside on the coffee table, the pages spilled open. “A change in scenery could do wonders for inspiration. It worked for me whenever I wanted new ideas for my stories.”

“I’ve never been to Alola myself, but I’ve heard it’s beautiful,” Caitlin said. She sipped some of her tea, then set her cup on the table. “I might consider going there for my next vacation.”

“I too think you should go for it,” Marshal said. “Before I became part of the Elite Four I traveled to several regions to develop my strength. I’m sure that’ll be the same for you, too!”

“That is one of my intentions, yes.” Grimsley then said, “It’s good to know that all of you are fine with me being away for a while.”

“When you get back, we can do a Pokémon battle to test out what you’ve learned from your Alola trip!” Marshal flashed him a huge grin.

Smirking, Grimsley said, “If we were to do that then we must agree on a wager. The loser has to groom and clean the other’s Pokémon for a week.”

“Clean and groom the other’s Pokémon for a week? Ha, I’m game!” Marshal said. He and Grimsley shook hands.

“The both of you can be immature sometimes,” Iris said, shrugging and shaking her head. Beside her, Caitlin covered her lips and yawned, as if agreeing with her.

“Don’t forget to bring all of us souvenirs!” Shauntal said. “I bet Alola has all kinds of stuff you can take home with you.”

“I’ll make sure to do that,” Grimsley said with a small smile. His mind was more at ease now that he got the announcement out of the way. Well, now to get started with planning for his trip.

xxx

Grimsley prepared for his trip by first looking up some basic information on Alola online. Their set up was indeed different from Unova’s—they had a system called the Island Challenge that fit Iris’s island hopping and battle description. That sounded interesting to him, and made him wonder how it looked in action. Grimsley also briefly looked up some of the hotels for his stay there, his mother’s voice nagging in his head each time he checked the prices of the rooms. For now he had reserved a room at a hotel in Hau’oli City and would worry about trying to find other accommodation during his journey. Once he was satisfied with his travel plans, he booked a flight to Alola and packed his clothing and other essentials.

He first used the Pokémon League’s helicopter to have a pilot take him to Castelia City’s Airport.
When he arrived there, many people were scrambling in and out of taxis and buses with their suitcases. He went inside the entrance to Terminal 2, where his plane would be at. It was another hour or so until he had to leave, so he went to one of the coffee shops to grab something for lunch. The smell of coffee sneaked into his nose and acoustic music strumming in the background. He approached to one of the baristas at the counter after she handed the coffee to one of the customers.

“Welcome to the coffee house, how may I—” She stopped and gasped. “Oh my gosh, aren’t you Grimsley from the Elite Four?”

“The one and only,” Grimsley said with a tired smile. Even though he had mixed feelings being in the Elite Four now, it still felt nice to be recognized now and then.

“I’m Emmy! I’ve always enjoy watching your matches on television. Before I get your order, you think you can give me your autograph?”

Grimsley responded that he would love to, and the barista pulled out a small notepad from her pant’s pocket. He signed “To Emmy my most charming fan, Grimsley,” and handed his autograph back to her.

“Thank you so much!” Emmy squealed. She put the notepad away and scratched the back of her neck sheepishly. “Anyways, what can I get for you today?”

“Just a medium sized hot coffee and sandwich, please.”

It was a few minutes until Emmy came back with his order. He stole a sip of his coffee, bitter and hot against his lips and tongue. He was about to take a seat to eat his sandwich, but stopped when a male voice screamed “I can’t believe it’s you!” at him. He turned around to see three people, two teenage boys and a girl, locked their gazes at him.

“Oh my, even more fans are here to see me off,” Grimsley said, his smile widening.

“We’re also big fans of yours!” the girl said. “I’m Kitty, and these are my friends Charlie and Jack!”

“Nice to meet you Kitty, Charlie, and Jack.” Grimsley noticed each one having pokéballs on their belts. “Are all of you trainers?”

“We are!” Jack said. “Right now we’re going on a plane to Driftveil City and participate in the Pokémon World Tournament.”

“Is that so?” Grimsley mused how after the Pokémon World Tournament was opened a few years ago, Driftveil City’s tourism boomed. He could see why many trainers like to go there. “I wish you all three good luck. I’ve heard competition there is fierce, especially if you go against a gym leader.”

“Thanks!” Charlie said, grinning. “Each of us have a few badges already, so we should be fine. Perhaps someday we’ll get to the League and battle you!”

Grimsley’s heart sunk and his smile wavered. They didn’t need to know what had been on his mind. “Then I look forward to that when the time comes.”

“Hey, do you think we can take a few pictures with you?” Kitty asked.

After some consideration, Grimsley said, “Sure, I got some time.”
The three trainers cheered with each other and pulled out their phones. Grimsley took several shots with them, and each one his face bore bagged eyes. His fans didn’t mind, being content with having their pictures taken with an Elite Four. They thanked him for taking the time to talk with them, and when they left he sighed and shook his head. He took a seat to eat his meal and waited until it was time for him to catch his plane.

XXX

His flight from Unova to Alola took several hours and the plane landed at Hau’oli City Airport. He got off, put his luggage in his room at the hotel he was staying, then took a ride on a carriage pulled by a Tauros. The breeze that picked up was warm but crisp, tickling his skin. He glanced around, drinking in the sights and sounds around him. Grimsley’s ride passed through the beachfront where several people sunbathed, strolled near the edge of the shore, or swam in the ocean. In the shopping district, customers came in and out from the shops and more people lined up at the fruit and vegetable stands. Grimsley spotted many trainers and Pokémon together with smiling faces, looking like they enjoyed themselves here. One of the buildings with the sign Alola Tourist Bureau caught Grimsley’s interest and he told the driver to stop his Tauros.

Stepping inside, Grimsley first fixed his gaze on the colorful posters highlighting the region’s cities and famous tourist sights. He moved a little further and stopped at an area that displayed various souvenirs like cups, postcards, and Pokémon plushies. Grimsley picked one of the toys up, a black bird with blue eyelids and a large shiny beak, his fingers rubbing at the soft fabric. After he put the souvenir down, he headed to the right where the brochure stand was. He glimpsed at the television screen on the wall that showcased videos of Alola’s outdoors and people chanting “Alola, alola,” and then he picked up a few brochures from the stand. Grimsley first looked at the ones that had facts on Melemele Island and Akala Island, and while some of the sights featured looked fun they didn’t grab his attention. He checked out Ula’ula Island’s brochure and this time he smirked. He liked the aesthetic of Malie City from the pictures, and the island also had two mountains and an area that used to be a village called Tapu Village. Grimsley shoved the other two brochures back in the rack, and approached at the receptionist area where one of the ladies at the desk greeted him with a smile.

“Alola, welcome to the Alola Tourist Bureau. What can I help you with?” the female receptionist asked.

Grimsley cleared his throat. “Yes, well, I’ve got my eye on Ula’ula Island and I was wondering if you could tell me your own opinions on it,” he said, and handed the brochure to the receptionist. She gave it a quick look, and her smile widened.

“Sure! As you can see from the brochure, Ula’ula Island is home to two of the tallest mountains. I went to Mount Hokulani some months ago and it’s gorgeous. Malie City is also a great city to check out.” Grimsley then asked about Tapu Village and Mount Lanakila, and the receptionist added, “While I didn’t get to climb Mount Lanakila due to it being reserved for trainers taking part in the Island Challenge, I did check out Tapu Village. You should check that place out!”

“Hm, I see,” Grimsley said as he scratched his chin. “How about this ‘Ruin of Abundance’? Apparently it’s home to one of your tapu guardians?” When he was looking through the brochures, he caught on fast that Alola has Pokémon that acted as its guardians for each island. It didn’t sound too much different from Unova’s own legendary dragons and the musketeers.

“Oh, you mean Tapu Bulu? Yes, the people of that island worship it, though in order to visit the temple you need to pass through the desert. If you want to know more about Tapu Bulu or any of the other guardians, Malie City’s library should have more information on them.”
“The brochure did mention something about that library…” Grimsley grunted in consideration.
“Very well, then, that shall be my next destination after I do some sightseeing here.”

“The Marina has a ferry that can take you to Ula’ula Island. You can go over to the terminal and check the schedule.”

“I’ll make sure to do that. Your input there has been very valuable.”

“Not a problem! Have fun at Ula’ula Island!” The receptionist flashed him another smile. Grimsley responded back with a nod of acknowledgement before he left the building.

Grimsley headed to the Marina next. When he reached there, he passed by a guard and a few people gazing at the crashing ocean waves and stepped inside the terminal. More people were sitting on the seats, either waiting for their ride or waiting to pick up someone that was on their way back. He gazed up at the large screen that showed the schedule for all the ferry rides. Grimsley bought the ticket for the morning ferry for Ula’ula Island that would leave in three days. He then left the Marina and strolled around the shopping district a little more.

The next few hours Grimsley passed the time by visiting a few shops and walking along the beach. When night fell, Grimsley made his way back to the hotel, passing the receptionist still helping guests in the lobby on his way up to his room. He turned on the light. He put his bag of clothes on the chair that was in front of the desk, lied down on his bed, then grabbed the remote to turn on the television. On screen, a female reporter was speaking.

“Over at Akala Island, an incident occurred in Diglett’s Cave, a short distance from Heahea City. Several Team Skull grunts were harassing the Aether Foundation employees and Pokémon in that cave, but then Kahuna Olivia and two other trainers, Hau and Moon, managed to defeat them.” As the reporter was speaking, a picture of two young men wearing dark baggy clothing and chains with a silver S around their necks was shown. Their headwear resembled a skull. The screen then changed to a young woman in pink clothing and nice jewelry being interviewed. “When I heard that the Diglett had been growing restless for sometime, I thought I should go see what the commotion is about,” the lady, that Grimsley assumed to be Olivia, said. “Turns out some Team Skull grunts have been up to no good there. Fortunately Hau and Moon have helped me in getting rid of them, and now the Pokémon inside the cave have settled down.” After the interview with Olivia finished, the screen turned back to the news reporter.

Grimsley pressed his lips and tapped his chin at the mention of “Team Skull” and “gang”. He recalled several years ago when Unova was invaded by Team Plasma twice. The group had taken over the Pokémon League upon their first incarnation; a rather unpleasant experience. If Team Skull were acting the same way in this region, then he would keep an eye on them. His eyes getting heavy, Grimsley yawned and pulled out from his bed to change into his nightclothes, and then he went to the bathroom to wash his face and brush his teeth before going to sleep.

xxx

Heavy rain cascaded down Route 17. Dark clouds covered the sky like smoke from a forest fire. As Nanu patrolled the area with his gray furred Persian by his side, many Pokémon took shelter next to the trees. There were a few exceptions that still rumbled through the wet grass, such as the Goomy and Pancham. For today’s patrol, he had on a raincoat over his regular clothes and rain boots that splashed the puddles left on the cobbled path. After Nanu stared at the fortified wall that fenced all of Po-Town, he turned his head to see Persian growled in dissatisfaction and shook her fur.
“Never a fan of water, huh buddy?” he asked, and Persian mewled. Nanu dropped on his knees and stroked the blue gem on his Pokémon’s forehead, causing her to purr. “Hmph. Me neither.”

Suddenly an explosion shook the earth, and a shockwave knocked back Nanu’s raincoat. Smoke rose and stained the rain black. He stood back up to see smoke coming from the cliff, his ears ringing and heart pounding. His mind raced with concern that Pokémon and people were in danger, and he gritted his teeth as he reminded himself that he needed to do his damned job and get there as soon as possible.

They trudged through the dry grass and steep climbs, the mud getting stuck on Nanu’s boots and Persian’s paws. Eventually they made it to the top and stopped at the end of the cliff to see three people there. A female trainer cradled his injured Golduck in her arms while the other two with their Pokémon, a Haunter and Raticate ready to pounce, stood in front of her.

“We won fair and square, so hand over your Pokémon,” one of the trainer’s harassers told her. He and his female partner both wore the Team Skull clothing Nanu had been familiar with for a long while now. Nanu groaned and his shoulders slumped.

“Not surprised you clowns are at it again,” Nanu said.

“Yo, Dennis, it’s that police officer one of our homeboys warned us about,” the female grunt said.

“Yeah, I think it’s him, Felicia,” the other grunt said, glaring at him. “Nothing to see here, old man. This nice girl here is about to hand over her Pokémon to us like she promised before leaving.”

“I didn’t promise anything! You guys forced me to,” the trainer sobbed, hugging her Golduck closer against her chest.

“I’ll have to agree from the way that Golduck got beaten up there,” Nanu said. “Why don’t you guys mind your own business and scram back to your playground?”

The grunts exchanged disgusted looks, then Felicia pulled out her knife from the pocket of her pants and pointed it at the trainer. The trainer gasped and her face grew pale.

“Leave, or the kid and her Pokémon are done for,” she warned, her fingers curled around at the knife’s handle.

Before Nanu could react, he heard Persian growl deeply. He looked down and saw her claws had dug on the soggy dirt. He stared back at Team Skull to see their Haunter and Raticate had also assumed battle stances. A crooked smirk pulled onto the corners of Nanu’s mouth.

“I think you two should have listened to your homeboys, then,” he said. He pressed his fingers close to his lips and whistled.

The grunts swung their heads in confusion when a bird’s cry and flapping wings were heard. Coming from the air, Nanu’s Honchkrow dove at the female grunt and grabbed the knife from her hands with his claws. He approached Nanu, dropping the weapon onto his hand.

“That’s some dirty trick you did there,” Felicia seethed through gritted teeth. Besides her, her partner wore a similar expression.

“You kids shouldn’t play with knives, anyways,” Nanu said as he put the knife back in his raincoat’s pocket.

“Oh that does it!” Dennis said and thrust his arm forward. “Haunter, get back at that Honchkrow
“Move at ten o’clock and then Nightslash,” Nanu said calmly compared to the grunts.

The ghost Pokémon chuckled in glee and electricity burst out from his body. Honchkrow was able to dodge and his feet glowed with a purple aura. When he got in contact with Haunter, his claws slashed his opponent and left three deep scratch marks on his face, causing the ghost type to scream in pain.

“Raticate, go ahead and Hyper Fang that bird!”

Felicia’s Raticate opened his mouth wide open, his teeth flashing, and rushed towards the Honchkrow. Nanu commanded Persian to hit the Raticate with Swift. The gem on Persian’s forehead glowed and an array of stars shot at Raticate. The rat Pokémon screeched each time he got barraged with those, and when that was finished his already fluffy cheeks puffed up like a balloon and his tail thumped on the ground.

Both grunts clenched their fist and gritted their teeth. Dennis ordered Haunter to use Poison Jab at Persian whereas Felicia had Raticate use Ice Beam at Honchkrow. Nanu countered by having Honchkrow use Steel Wing and Persian Play Rough. Haunter’s arms turned pink and punched Persian’s cheek. The cat Pokémon growled and a bruise appeared on her face, but then she pounced at her opponent. Thick white smoke surrounded with stars puffed up, leaving Nanu unable to see clearly, but from the shadows’ movements and Haunter’s screeches he could tell the ghost Pokémon wasn’t enjoying any of that. When the smoke faded, more scratches and bruises were shown on Haunter’s body and he panted as Persian lifted her head and smirked. While that was going on, Raticate inhaled cold air and let out a beam of ice from his mouth, which shot straight at Honchkrow’s chest and made him screech. Honchkrow shook his wet feathers, and then his wings changed into a metallic color just as he flapped those rapidly. He dived at Raticate, smacking his back with his wings and that caused his face to smash onto the mud. Raticate bounced back after a few seconds, spitting the dirt out.

“You know, I’m getting bored already,” Nanu said, then he yawned. He pulled out the black shard from his necklace, held out his arm that had his Z-ring bracelet, and slip the shard inside there. “Let’s finish this with our Z-move, Persian.”

His Persian growled in agreement, and Nanu got ready his stance. In one fluid motion, he moved his arms around, bent his back, and stretched his arms wide after he got himself back up. A warm aura surrounded both his and Persian’s body as he watched as Persian’s gem glow. A black ball was shot up in the sky and within seconds it turned into an eclipse that began sucking the mud, grass, and leaves in its reach. As the black hole grew stronger, the grunts and their Pokémon tried to withstand its force, Raticate digging his feet and hands onto the dirt and Haunter floating away from as far as possible, but that proved to be futile when Raticate and Haunter too got sucked in. Seconds later, the eclipse faded and Raticate and Haunter dropped on the ground hard and collapsed instantly. The grunts reacted unfavorably, Felicia taking her hat off and stomping on it while her partner dragged his hands on his face.

“Hey, you can’t do that! That’s foul play!” Dennis complained. He and Felicia then returned their defeat Pokémon. Nanu snorted, and behind him his Persian shook off her wet fur.

“Funny you should say that as I used that move to make that Z-move. Now would be a good time to hurry your ass off or my Pokémon won’t hesitate to hurt you.” On cue, his Persian growled and Honchkrow let out a sharp chirp at the grunts.

“All right, all right, we’ll leave,” Felicia said, lifting her hands in defeat. “This is way whacked,
man.” Both grunts hurried out, not turning back.

Nanu dragged a sigh and touched his forehead, then he turned around to see the trainer, still holding her Golduck, looked at him in awe. He and his Pokémon approached her.

“Are you alright, miss?” he asked, bending his knees.

“I am, but my Golduck isn’t,” the trainer said, her voice laced with worry. Her Golduck’s chest moved very slowly and he made uneven breaths.

“I have some potions and other medicine down at the police station. I’ll take you there.” Nanu stood up and waited for the girl to return Golduck in his pokéball. He then took the girl’s hand and they headed out together.

Po Town’s police station was a fairly small building with only a handful of jail cells and rooms. The bookshelf, bulletin board, and his clothes were settled on one corner of the room. One of the couches had bags of chips, cans of various food, and Pokémon food dumped there. Various stray Meowth walked around inside, a couple of them sleeping on the beds Nanu had put on the desks. After Nanu grabbed some potions and sprayed them on his Pokémon, Persian went to play with a few of the Meowth while Honchcrows ignored them. As soon as the trainer let Golduck out, she and Nanu laid him down on another couch that was across Nanu’s workspace, a computer and monitor on a table. Nanu touched Golduck’s forehead, which was very warm against his palm. He sprayed the rest of the potions all over Golduck’s body. It was a few minutes until a portion of the Pokémon’s cuts and bruises began to disappear. Nanu then let Golduck slowly chew some berries from his palm.

“Your Golduck is starting to have a fever and will still have some scars on him, but he should be good after he gets some rest,” he said just as the girl puffed up a pillow for Golduck and tucked him in under a blanket. She faced Nanu, smiling at him in gratitude.

“Thank you so much for saving me and Golduck out there. I was trying to find the kahuna of this island, but then I bumped into Team Skull and they harassed me to giving my Pokémon to them.”

Nanu didn’t flinch, but he did raise an eyebrow and glanced at the colorful amulet attached to her bag. “Oh, so you’re one of those kids that’s taking part in the island challenge, er…”

“Rachel,” the girl Rachel said. “And yes, I am. I already challenged both Sophocles and Acerola’s trials and defeated their totem Pokémon, so I’m wondering if you know where I can find Kahuna Nanu.”

“You did, huh? Well, you’re looking at him right now.”

Rachel’s eyes grew wide. “Wait, you’re Kahuna Nanu?” she asked, and Nanu nodded. She grinned. “Oh, can we have a battle right now?”

“Woah, hold up,” Nanu didn’t hesitate to say. “How about your Golduck there? He’s still in bad shape.”

“I have other Pokémon I can use, so it shouldn’t be a problem.”

“There isn’t a working Pokémon Center nearby and I don’t think I have enough potions for the rest of your friends. Besides, the next island, Poni Island, doesn’t even have a kahuna yet last I heard.”

“Oh, I see.” Rachel hung her head down with a frown, her gaze at the sleeping Golduck.
Nanu stared at Rachel, regarding her in silence. He still thought it was dumb of her to ask a battle like that, but he was hasty in denying her request. With a sigh, Nanu pinched his nose.

“Tell you what, why don’t you stay here for a night or two and then we can have our battle. I ordered some more potions earlier that should be sufficient, but I won’t go easy on you.”

This time, Rachel’s face lit up. “Oh thank you, thank you thank you,” she said then threw her arms around Nanu’s waist. He froze, taken aback by her reaction. At length he rolled his eyes and forced her to let go.

“All righty, that’s enough sappiness there.” He shifted his head, his finger pointing at the couch where the food got piled. “I’ll move that junk in the other room and then I can make us some sort of meal to eat.”

“Okay!” Rachel said and nodded. When she turned back to watch over Golduck, Nanu moved away from them and began grabbing some cans and bags from the other couch that he intended to put in another room.

He wasn’t the most welcoming person and easiest to warm up to, but this should do.

Chapter End Notes

-I admit, some of Grimsley's backstory I lifted from TikTok13's A Grim Deal(from Serebii Forums), a very cool Grimsley fic that got discontinued. ;_; Unlike that story, I decided to have Grimsley's mom be the one to teach Grimsley the gambling trade because dang it more female gamblers please. No, I don't condone gambling. Another thing is I thought of Grimsley half Johotoian because of him wearing the kimono in Sun/Moon. Granted, Grimsley could've just bought one while in Alola and liking it so much, but I thought I might try this angle since Hawaii does have a sizeable chunk of the Japanese population. (Edit 3/7:2018: I took out the conversation with Grimsley and his mother, but Chapter Two will have some references to this).

I thought of more backstory differences between their story and mine, but we'll see how much I'll put my version in since the main thing will be Grimsley traveling Alola and interacting with Nanu.

-If you guys didn't catch, yes I had Grimsley nickname his Liepard, Raz. Reason for that is there's actually a poker game called "Razz poker." I don't know how approriate to link gambling sites here, so I'll refrain from that and let you guys check it out yourselves. In fact, I'm gonna have the names of Grimsley's Pokemon based around gambling somehow.
In which Grimsley goes to the Battle Buffet, stumble upon Team Skull, and sees a flash of lightning in the skies.

Ok, Chapter Two finally ready! Before we get to that though, I made some edits to Chapter One. Most of it is changing some of the wording and expanding on the description. Biggest changes though:

> The very beginning paragraph's description
> Grimsley and his mother's conversation. I try to add some small talk in the beginning, but still not too sure if I succeeded
> The scene where Nanu notices the explosion. Changed the prose a bit and added more of Nanu's reaction and thoughts there.

With that out of the way, onto the second chapter. Thanks for bobandbill for looking this over! Next chapter we'll get the Nanu and Grimsley interaction you guys have been waiting for (which I hope to try to post before Ultra Sun/Ultra Moon's release).

Edit 3/28/2018: For those that read Chapter Two in other sites, I made a few changes. Originally I had a flashback scene with Grimsley at his father's funeral, but I took that out in this version. For those interested in the original Chapter Two, I have it at [Dreamwidth](http://dreamwidth.org) for comparisons shake.

The next day Grimsley went to the Hau'oli City Mall. It was a little smaller than the malls back in Unova, but there were still a variety of shops and restaurants to explore here. He frequently had to squeeze past people. Several movie posters popped up all over, including ones that starred Champion Diantha of the Kalos League and Brycen of Icirrus City Gym. Grimsley in particular had enjoyed the Bryceman series, so it was amusing to see that Bryceman Strikes Back Harder was being shown here. He wanted some new clothes, so Grimsley went inside in an apparel store called Gracedia.

Like the few other apparel stores he had been into, there was an assortment of colorful clothing that suited the region well. He continued to check through more of the racks, seeing different kimonos in various colors and sizes until he found one that caught his eye. It was a simple white kimono, with black patterns, and a black scarf. His stomach flipped when he checked how much this kimono was.

“Alola! I see you really like that kimono there,” someone said to him from behind. Grimsley turned around to see a man, most likely working here from the uniform he was wearing, smiling at him. He offered him a low chuckle.
“My mother came from Johto, and I would wear them on special occasions.”

“Ah, I see. Yeah, we have a lot of Johtolians living here, especially in Malie City! I think you would look good with the one you’re holding now.”

Grimsley stared down at the kimono, thinking further on whether to take this new piece of clothing. He decided to have his coin decide for him, so Grimsley pulled one out from his jacket and flipped it in the air. When he caught the coin on his palm, it landed tails. Buying the kimono, it was. After he grabbed a few more clothes, Grimsley went to the cashier and paid for all them including the kimono.

He wandered around the mall for another half hour or so. When it was mid-afternoon, Grimsley grew hungry and a restaurant called the Battle Buffet caught his interest.

Upon entering, he was greeted by the waitress who told him that trainers would battle if they wanted the same dish. Grimsley had heard of some restaurants in Kalos and Hoenn having trainers gamble for food through Pokémon battles, but none in Unova had done that. There was also a “battle damage fee” that was included with the meal cost, which had Grimsley stared blankly at the waitress for several seconds. He hoped the battles here would provide some entertainment.

After the waitress had shown Grimsley to his seat, he headed to the buffet line of a dozen people already. A few tables had been set up with an assortment of desserts and refreshments like cake, cookies, juices, and coffee, and another table that actually had food reserved for Pokémon. There were around four chefs in front of the buffet table, each one serving a different dish. Grimsley checked to see the Take Down steak, Milktank cheese pizza, Vanillite parfait, and Tamato pasta were being offered at the moment. The smell of the pizza’s cheese satisfied Grimsley’s senses the most, so he reached over and was about to grab that first until—

“Hey, that last piece is mine!” someone yelled. Grimsley looked over his shoulder to see a young boy, probably in his teens, glaring at him. He stared back.

“I was here first, so I should be the one to have it.”

“Well I think there’s only one way to settle this,” the boy said as he pulled a pokéball from his belt and tossed it in the air. “Go, Oricorio!”

The pokéball cracked open and released a small pink bird Pokémon that was dressed in a skirt. The Pokémon moved her hips and chirped a sweet melody, and Grimsley was reminded of the dances he saw videos of in the Tourist Bureau. With no other choice, he sighed in resignation and released Queen, his Bisharp. She raised her bladed arms above her head, locking her gaze at her opponent. Almost everyone that was in the buffet line stopped to look at the battle about to take place.

“Almost forgot, I’m Ricky. That’s a cool Pokémon you got there.”

“Grimsley, and thank you,” Grimsley said with a proud smile. “Queen has been my faithful companion since the beginning.”

The boy, Ricky, grunted, indifferent to how long the two had been together. He thrust his arm forward. “All right, let’s start out with Air Slash!”

Upon command, Oricorio let out an upbeat chirp and soared up in the air. She flapped her wings and a sharp gust of wind rushed at Queen, but the Bisharp didn’t flinch and only took a few steps back. She looked at Grimsley to await his command, but he shook his head and wiggled his finger to let her know to not act yet. Meanwhile, his opponent’s face and shoulders stiffened.
“Try Revelation Dance instead!”

The little bird landed on the floor, shrilled an angry chirp, and twirled around. After several spins, Oricorio started to sway her hips and her eyes glowed blue. The Bisharp’s body was surrounded by an aura with the same color, but within a few seconds, the light faded. The boy’s eyes grew wide in puzzlement.

“What just happened?”

“Queen here is part dark type,” Grimsley said as he pointed a finger up in a manner someone would when they would give a lecture. “Psychic moves won’t do anything to her.”

Ricky growled and clenched his fist. He next commanded Oricorio to use Double Slap, who obliged by slapping Queen hard three times on the face. A slap mark was left on both of Queen’s cheeks, and she glared at Oricorio. Knowing that his opponent was at a disadvantage, Grimsley let out a bored grunt and snapped his fingers.

“Psycho Cut,” he told her. Queen raised her arm, which glowed pink, and slashed at Oricorio. That caused the psychic bird to cry and shoot up in the air like a baseball after a home run. Seconds later, Oricorio crashed on one of the buffet tables and did not get back up. Some of the cakes had splattered on the tablecloth, and the bird Pokémon herself was smeared with the frosting. The other trainer grimaced and returned his Pokémon.

“You did your best, Oricorio,” he said to her pokéball, and then pulled out another one. “Graveler, you’re next!”

After his Pokémon was released, the boy’s Graveler fell on one knee and flexed his muscles. Queen crossed her arms and rolled her eyes, unimpressed by his pose. Grimsley, on the other hand, raised his brow with curiosity. Black and yellow crystals poked out from the Pokémon’s body and a uni-brow above his forehead. Grimsley also noticed this Graveler lacking defined fingers on its hands compared to the ones he had encountered.

“Impressed?” Ricky said and smirked, catching Grimsley’s expression.

“Your Graveler looks somewhat different from the ones I’ve seen.”

“Oh right, I heard the Graveler in other regions aren’t like the ones here.” Ricky’s smile widened. “But no matter, we can take you down. Spark now!”

A large stream of electricity cloaked Graveler’s body, and he rammed onto Queen. The Bisharp was shaken slightly and grunted, but she immediately went back to her battle stance. Queen retaliated by smacking Graveler on the forehead with her arm and made him drop on the floor. Graveler bounced back up and balled his fists like a boxer. The boy tensed up for a second, but he regained his composure.

Grimsley ordered Queen to use Sucker Punch while his opponent told Graveler to hit hard with Thunder Punch. Both Pokémon rushed at one another, Queen’s right fist meeting with Graveler’s that sparked with electricity. A small explosion occurred between them, and the blast sent them back a few feet. Queen flicked her hand and rubbed her wrist while Graveler shook his arms. Grimsley and the other trainer gave out their next commands at the same time.

“Rock Blast!”

“Sucker Punch, again!”
Graveler hurled several boulders at Queen, but each one she punched and shattered into several pieces that glittered on the floor. She then punched her opponent’s face that sent him flying where the tables were. A young couple had to stop eating their steak and rush out of their seat before Graveler slammed into the wall and fainted. His opponent rushed to his Pokémon’s side and cradled him in his arms. Several people from the crowd erupted with cheers and claps.

“Graveler, are you alright?” he asked. When his Pokémon groaned, the boy sighed in relief. He told him that he did a great job and returned him.

“Are you done, or do you want to continue?” Grimsley asked when he approached him. The crowd also followed and gathered around them.

“Yeah, I think that’s enough.” Ricky gazed down at his pokéball with a frown, gave Grimsley a sideways glance, and began heading out toward the exit.

Grimsley stared on in confusion. While he had experienced trainers being upset like that before, that boy’s behavior there still rubbed him the wrong way. That wasn’t the right way to lose, that was for sure. He was distracted from his thoughts when someone tapped on his shoulder, and in front of him was a middle aged man that looked at him with great interest.

“Aren’t you the same Grimsley of the Unova Elite Four?” the man asked, and Grimsley smiled a little. He didn’t think someone in this region would recognize him, so this came as a pleasant surprise.

“Looks like I have fans overseas too. Or were you a former challenger of mine?”

The man shook his head. “I never went to the Pokémon League, but my niece did.” He raised an eyebrow at him. “You looked much older than how she described you, especially with your hair.”

Upon hearing that, Grimsley tensed and he scratched on the hair on his temples. He had been aware of the white streaks for a while already but kept forgetting to change that. He should’ve done that before he left Unova. Grimsley cleared his throat.

“I’ll pretend that you didn’t say that,” he said, and the man laughed.

“I take it that you’re on vacation now?” he asked, and Grimsley said that he was. The man patted Grimsley’s shoulder and grinned. “Well, I’m Ronald. Welcome to Alola!” he said, and left him alone.

Grimsley wasn’t sure what to think of that interaction, so he just shrugged it off. He grabbed the cheese pizza, the Tamato pasta, and the Vanillite parfait, and went back to his table. The pizza grew cold due to him battling with his opponent longer than he had liked and the pasta was as dry as the matches he watched while eating, but the parfait was sweet and fluffy. Queen also grabbed some food herself, eating cupcakes and meat made specifically for the Pokémon. After half an hour, Grimsley left a tip on the table, returned Queen, and headed out of the restaurant.

By the time Grimsley reached the beach’s shores, there were a lot of people upon the sand. He spotted a few of them playing volleyball and a man playing frisbee with his Herdier. Several more people lied down to sunbathe while others just strolled around. He stopped near the ocean and Grimsley thought how one of his Pokémon would like some fresh air, so he released his Sharpedo, Blackjack.

Blackjack swam around like a jet ski but stayed near him. Grimsley stroked his snout and fed him the pokébeans he had bought from the Pokémon Center yesterday, and the shark Pokémon...
crunched on them with loud bites. While Blackjack continued to swim, Grimsley gazed onto the sparkling ocean and smiled a little. He remembered one time Caitlin and Shauntal had invited him to their resort in Undella Town and everyone there either wanted their autographs or to battle them. The day before they returned to the League, he battled against the two ladies and it wasn’t a surprise that he defeated them. Hau’oli City was a much bigger community with many more houses and shops compared to Undella Town.

Grimsley shifted his gaze, and he tensed when he spotted the boy from The Battle Buffet on the beach too. He sat down and pulled his legs in his arms, glaring at the water. The way the trainer acted there still puzzled him, so Grimsley approached him and tapped his shoulder. Ricky turned his head and stared at him with wide eyes.

“Mind if I join you?” Grimsley asked. The boy shrugged.

“Sure, whatever,” he said, and Grimsley sat down next to him.

“You were in a hurry to leave after our battle. I find it funny you would be upset over stale pizza.”

Ricky looked over his shoulder and glared at Grimsley. He hung his head down, picked up a pile of sand with his palm, and let it sprinkle into the ocean. “This is like the fourth battle that I lost this week. You’re the toughest trainer I’ve gone against so far.”

As Grimsley fixed his stare at the trainer, he thought about mentioning that he was from the Elite Four. He remembered that Alola didn’t have a Pokémon League, so the boy probably wouldn’t know that. He ran his fingers through his hair, thinking of something positive to say to him.

“I was surprised by your Graveler there. I didn’t know there are ones that can use electric attacks. And your Oricorio has a certain charm, too.”

“You really think my Pokémon are good?” Ricky asked, his grin stretching across his face. Grimsley got up and dusted the sand off from his clothes.

“You’ve got the right cards, it’s only a matter of mastering them and to stay calm.”

Ricky titled his head and looked at him with a puzzled face. “So you’re saying I should work on my Pokémon’s strengths more and keep my cool?”

Grimsley had his gaze up at the sky, and the side of his lips twitched. “You can say that.”

With a satisfied grin, Ricky got up and put his hands on his hips. “That helps a lot, thanks.”

“It’s my pleasure.” He and Ricky shook hands. When they were done, Grimsley noticed his Sharpedo latched onto a Slowpoke that was sitting on a boulder. His brow furrowed and he yelled out, “Blackjack, that Slowpoke’s tail isn’t for dinner!”

Upon hearing that, Blackjack let go of the Slowpoke’s tail and growled in disappointment. The Slowpoke moved its head with a blank stare, as if he didn’t feel any of that. The shark Pokémon soon swam back to shore, and Grimsley returned him back inside his pokéball.

“Wow, that’s your Sharpedo?” Ricky asked, looking impressed. “I thought it’s one of the Poke Ride ones.”

“Poké Rides? That’s one of your region’s services, right?” Grimsley recalled the brochures and posters back in the Tourist Bureau advertising that.
“Yup. The Pokémon help with all kinds of stuff like flying, breaking boulders, and surfing.”

“I see. I’ll take full advantage of that then while I’m here.” Grimsley glanced down at his bag of clothes and picked them up. “I need to put these bags away, so I’ll be leaving now.”

“Hey, that’s cool. I’m glad that you came to talk to me!” Ricky said and grinned at him.

“It’s my pleasure,” Grimsley said with a nod of acknowledgment, and left to go to his hotel. He reflected how his battle with Ricky didn’t fully satisfy what he was looking for but the trainer still has some potential.

xxx

Inside his room, Grimsley dressed in the kimono and black scarf he had bought earlier and looked himself in the mirror. His hairstyle was kept the same save for some white streaks; Grimsley reminded himself that he would need to find some hair dye soon. The clothing felt much looser and cooler than his suit and pants. He had only been in the region for two days, and already the tropical climate had him sweating and his skin burning. Unova had its hot days during the summer, but the air wasn’t as humid or dreary as it was here. The kimono didn’t look too bad on him, so he decided to keep it on. He later left the hotel and headed to Route 2 for a stroll.

In front of him was a large hill with a dirt road path stretched across from afar. Thick palm trees, bigger and taller than the ones in Humilau City and Undella Town, loomed over Grimsley like streetlamps. As he surveyed around his surroundings, he noticed a few people and Pokémon picking some berries from the trees and bushes. He passed by a kid running with his Growlithe and an elderly couple gazing at each other while holding hands. After Grimsley reached over the hill, he noticed the sign “Hau’oli Cemetery” pointing to the right. He headed there out of curiosity.

Grimsley stepped through the large black gate that was the cemetery’s entrance. His shoes sunk into the grass and soft ground that contained the buried. He often glanced at the names engraved on the gravestones as he passed through them, some with normal human names and others that fitted better for a Pokémon. Several people were already in front of the tombstones, some sobbing while others set aside flowers on the ground. Seeing this bleak atmosphere before him reminded Grimsley of his experience with mourning.

He remembered this about his father’s funeral. He could feel this about it. The Mistralton City Cemetery was next to the Celestial Tower where more people would visit there due to its significance as a resting place for Pokémon, but the other cemetery would have several visitors too. Many of his father’s friends and relatives had attended his wake and a good amount of them stayed for his burial, too. He and his mother had stood in front of the gravestone with their hands squeezed together, the both of them uncertain what the future holds for them.

Grimsley’s guts twisted and his throat ached now like it had back then. He shook his head and found himself back in Hau’oli Cemetery. He looked around to see most of the mourners were still around, and the ones that left had at least set aside flowers for their late loved ones. After gazing at the sunset that hung low against the orange tinted sky, he decided that it was time to head back to the hotel and left the cemetery.

On Route 2, Grimsley surveyed the area to see a few people still hanging around. He was about to head downhill until he noticed two people in dark clothing were approaching him. One of them bumped into him, and they crashed onto the ground. Grimsley sat up and grunted in annoyance as he began rubbing the bruise on his side. He only had a few seconds to have a good look at the other man in front of him.
He wore a hat that resembled a skull and a necklace with the letter “S” hung around his neck.

Team Skull. Grimsley’s brow wrinkled and his jaw set.

The man flinched, got up, and tried to catch up with his friend. When Grimsley managed to get up, another person ran passed him shouting, “Hey, get my pokéballs back!” Without hesitation, he rushed at the Team Skull grunts that were getting away.

Grimsley was able to catch up with the bypassers after sprinting for several seconds. His legs were burning and his throat started to tighten, but he was able to pull out a pokéball from the sleeve of his kimono and release Dice, his Scrafty. The lizard Pokémon pulled his shed skin as he awaited his trainer’s command. Pointing at the grunts, Grimsley ordered Dice to stop them immediately.

He watched as his Pokémon screeched and leaped up into the air like a rocket. Dice soon descended down, still gripping onto his shed skin, and kicked the nearest grunt’s back which caused him to collapse on the ground. The other grunt stopped with a confused stare on his face. Dice took that opportunity to strike him with an uppercut punch to his right cheek and he too fell down. The Scrafty held his chin up proudly.

As soon as Grimsley approached the fallen grunts, he noticed one of them holding a belt with three pokéballs on it. He grabbed the belt from the grunt’s hands. He gazed at the pokéballs for a moment until the trainer that those belonged to came up to him with deep breaths.

“Oh wow, thanks for stopping these guys for me,” he said once he was able to regain his breath.

“It’s no trouble at all. They’re from Team Skull, so I know they’re up to no good.” Grimsley handed the belt back to him, and then raised an eyebrow as he recognized him. “You’re the man from the buffet earlier. Ronald, correct?”

Ronald nodded. He chuckled and rubbed the back of his head sheepishly. “This is kinda embarrassing encountering you again like this.”

Grimsley did wonder how Ronald crossed paths with Team Skull. Before he could ask that, though, the two grunts were getting back from being unconscious and sat up. They glared at Grimsley.

“Hey man, your Pokémon didn’t have to knock us out like that,” the first grunt said. He did a pose where he stuck his arms out like a rapper in a music video.

“Ah, but I beg to differ,” Grimsley said. Beside him, Dice screeched in agreement. “You two were stealing that trainer’s Pokémon, so I think it warrants getting them back to their rightful trainer.”

“The way they did it was horrible,” Ronald said as he clipped the belt around his waist. “I was just getting out of the Pokémon Center and they approached me. They wanted me to give them my Pokémon, and when I said no, the grunts grabbed my belt and made a run for it.”

“If you just gave us your Pokémon, then we wouldn’t have had to do that,” the second grunt said, doing the same silly gesture like his friend.

“And yet you wanted to take his Pokémon anyways,” Grimsley said. His face hardened. “I’m all for playing dirty, but stealing is a low standard even for me. Now I suggest you leave before I have my Scrafty beat you up again.” On cue, Dice stepped forward and clenched his fist.

The grunts exchanged frightened looks at one another. They got up and hurried off. Grimsley stared at their backs until they ran at a far distance.
“Hmph, good riddance,” Grimsley said. He looked down at Dice, who nodded at him, and then he faced back at Ronald. “Are your Pokémon all right?”

“I…I think so,” he said with a worried look on his face. “I’ll check on them now.”

The man released his Pokémon from their pokéballs. His first two, Drowzee and Granbull, blinked at him in confusion. The third Pokémon, a Toucannon that Grimsley remembered seeing a plush toy of, narrowed its eyes and squawked.

“Hey, you guys are all right?” Ronald asked, and all of his Pokémon responded positively. Granbull barked and licked Ronald’s face, Drowzee folded its arms and nodded, and Toucannon chirped and spread its wings wide. Their trainer laughed and sighed in relief, and he returned his Pokémon back to their pokéballs.

“That’s great all of your Pokémon are all right.” Grimsley smiled for a second, but then he frowned. “Does Team Skull do this often?”

“Yeah. They often would harass other people into giving their Pokémon or something else.” Smiling, Ronald then said, “I would’ve gone to the police, but thank goodness I found you.”

“I happen to be at the right place at the right time, I suppose.” Realizing he was going back to the hotel before all of this happened, Grimsley said, “It’s about to get dark and I should be heading out now.”

“Me too. But hey, it’s great seeing you again!” Ronald flashed him a grin.

“Same here,” Grimsley said, smiling a little.

Ronald waved goodbye and began heading out. He took several steps, but then he stopped and turned back to Grimsley. “Oh, the kahuna of Ula’ula Island specializes in dark type Pokémon like you. Maybe you’ll get to meet him!”

Grimsley’s stomach dropped when he heard that. He only knew a few dark type specialists, like Karen from Johto and Sidney from Hoenn, and he wouldn’t mind meeting another one.

“I’m about to head to that island next,” he said. “Perhaps we’ll cross paths once I’m there.”

“Hope that happens, then!” Ronald chuckled, waved to Grimsley once more, and walked off.

Grimsley stood still for a minute. He sighed, a little overwhelmed by today’s events. Looking down at Dice, he said, “Come on, we should go back to the hotel.” That earned him an agreed nod from his Scrafty, and the two made their leave.

It took less than half an hour for Grimsley and Dice to reach the hotel. The instant they stepped inside the room, Dice jumped onto the bed and collapsed there. Grimsley shot him a sharp frown.

“You can stay on my bed for a little while, but then you’ll need to move to the sofa,” he said. His Scrafty responded with an indifferent grunt and flicked his wrist at him. Grimsley sighed, shaking his head.

He caught the time on the clock, almost six o’clock. Unova should be a few hours ahead from Alola if he did the math correctly, about the time his mother would be getting ready for bed. Grimsley decided he would give her a call, so he turned on the videophone on his desk and dialed his mother’s number.
Several seconds passed until the screen lit up, his mother greeting him with a grin. Minato Katsu was a woman in her mid-fifties with visible wrinkles underneath her eyes and graying wavy hair that barely passed her shoulders. While Grimsley had his black locks and angular face from her, he took his blue eyes and pale skin from his father, and why he was passed off as a Unovan on occasion.

“Oh, hi Grimsley! Did you have a safe trip on your way to Alola?”

“Yes, my plane ride to here went without any problems. I must say, the weather here is slightly warmer than Unova’s.”

“Is that so? Sounds better than the constant rain in Mistralton City.” Minato chuckled, and then her eyes grew wide. “Are you wearing a kimono now?” she asked, and Grimsley nodded.

“One of the stores I went to was selling them, so I bought this one to cool off from Alola’s tropical sun.”

His mother let out a pleased hum, and she chuckled. “I remember the first time your father wore a kimono we were visiting a summer festival in Goldenrod City. Oh, it was such a romantic night for us, I couldn’t stop looking at him!”

A sad smile curled around Grimsley’s lips. His mother and father had always been one of those parents that would show affection in front of their children and embarrass them. He didn’t like that sometimes when he was young, but he knew how much they had cared about each other.

“Today I went to the city’s cemetery, and I was reminded of his funeral,” he said, and the nostalgic look on Minato’s face faded. She shifted her head, lowering her gaze.

“Yes, I remember. I had you promise me to not fall into bad gambling habits like me.” With a proud smile, his mother said, “You did get yourself in ridiculous situations a few times, but you made a name of yourself in the end.”

Grimsley blinked in confusion. “You don’t give out praises all that often.”

“Yes, I remember. I had you promise me to not fall into bad gambling habits like me.” With a proud smile, his mother said, “You did get yourself in ridiculous situations a few times, but you made a name of yourself in the end.”

In that instant, a loud noise that resembled thunder boomed outside. Grimsley bounced off from his chair and hurried to the window. His gaze locked at the swirling wormhole that cracked open the dark sky, streaks of lightning shooting out. The thunderous noise and wormhole grew louder and louder, and then a few seconds after it disappeared. Down below, several people were shouting in confusion and a startled dog Pokémon kept barking. The bright crescent moon became visible once more.

Dice, also startled from the commotion, jumped out of bed and approached Grimsley. His Pokémon tugged on the fabric of his kimono and tilted his head, but Grimsley didn’t respond as he was just as perplexed over what had just happened.

“Grimsley? Grimsley? Is everything all right?” his mother yelled from the videophone. Grimsley immediately sat back down and looked at the screen to see his mother’s worried face. He inhaled and exhaled to calm himself.

“Sorry for being away like that. I don’t know how to explain it, but I think a wormhole just
Minato raised a skeptical eyebrow at him. “Wormhole? Aren’t those things only in movies?”

“Well, I did experience Team Plasma taking over the Pokémon League and Kyruem freezing half of Unova, so anything’s possible.” Saying that had left a bitter taste on Grimsley’s tongue.

“I suppose so. But still, be careful.” Minato’s face softened. “I need to go to bed now, so you can tell me more of your trip the next time we talk.”

“Of course. You have a good rest.”

His mother thanked him for that and wished him goodnight too. She hung up, and Grimsley stared at the blank screen. After a minute, he got out of his chair and sat on the bed with his elbows on his lap. Dice sat next to him and rested his head on Grimsley’s shoulder. He couldn’t help but smile a little, only for it to fade soon after.

Encountering a criminal organization and seeing a wormhole in action. This wasn’t what he expected on the first couple days of his trip. Now he wondered what else Alola has in store for him.
Flatter

Chapter Summary

In which Grimsley drops by Ula’ula Island and meets with Acerola, Nanu, and a Mimikyu that wants to snuggle with him forever.

Chapter Notes

Before we get to the third chapter, US/UM is just right around the corner. What I’ve been thinking is I will have some references to US/UM in latter chapters, so there will be some spoilers. But don't worry, I'll warn for those if that's the case. Thanks to bobandbill for looking over this chapter for me!

Edit 4/28/18: For those that read this chapter from other sites, I made some revisions here. Content wise all the events stayed the same, however I made some changes to the prose and dialogue. Here's the original draft of the third chapter for comparison's shake.

The morning he was supposed to leave for Ula’ula Island, Grimsley made it to the Marina twenty minutes early. He waited inside the terminal until the intercom announced the ferry to Ula’ula was about to leave. He boarded the ship and stole a seat next to the window. Once all the passengers were inside, the ferry took off. During the ride, Grimsley looked outside as the water splashed in small waves. Sometimes a water Pokémon jumped out, and flocks of Wingull and Pelipper went soaring by.

The ship made it to Ula’ula Island when it was close to sunset, stopping at Malie City’s terminal. He got off the pier and headed out, as the other passengers from the ferry passed around him. Grimsley ignored the Pokémon Center and Malie Gardens, and when he reached the city gates his jaws dropped.

The city’s architecture gave off a Johto vibe, which astonished him. He first checked in an inn to drop off his bags, and then walked around city square. His shoes slapped against the cobbled streets, and the light posts lit up as he passed them. As he continued to stroll, Grimsley glimpsed at the various shops and restaurants still open. He eventually stopped in between the Malie Community Center and the Malie Library. Grimsley remembered the receptionist at the Tourist Bureau back in Hau’oli City had talked about this place. He let out a breath and stepped inside the library.

Bright lighting washed over inside the building, like sunlight hanging over the beach. Many shelves filled with books stretched across the hall. The library clerk at the desk watched as the patrons read their books or used the computers in silence, several of the tables and couches already being occupied. Grimsley went to the male clerk to ask where he could find books about Tapu Bulu, and he told him to go to the second floor. He headed upstairs, and more bookshelves loomed over him. More tables and couches were scattered.
Grimsley found the section on Alola’s guardian deities after looking for a few minutes and flipped through some of the books. There was one book, *Tapu and the Kahunas*, that mentioned how the tapus choose someone as a kahuna, that acted like a leader of sorts, for their island and grant them with sparkling stones that were used to activate Z-Moves. He then picked up another book, *The Guardian Deities of the Islands*, that had some brief mentions of each of the deities—Tapu Koko, Tapu Fini, Tapu Bulu, and Tapu Lele. Grimsley skipped the other tapus and read Tapu Bulu’s section.

Guardian Deity of Ula’ula Island, dual grass and fairy type. Considered one of the laziest deities, but it could control plants and use its horns to do heavy damage. A drawing of Tapu Bulu depicted the Pokemon having a large shell with different marks and two large horns. Its lower body had a bell-like tail, and it strikes a huge resemblance to a bull. Grimsley absorbed that information for a moment, his finger tapping at that particular page. He was reminded of one of the legendary musketeers, Terrakion, also known for their great strength.

“I see you’re taking a great interest towards Tapu Bulu,” someone asked from behind, pulling Grimsley from his thoughts. He shifted his head to see a man dressed in a vest over a shirt and pants. His brown hair was kept neat and slicked, and his grey eyes sparkled with great interest in him. Grimsley chuckled.

“I just dropped by Alola recently, and I was very curious about this guardian deity of yours. In one of the brochures I read, Tapu Bulu resides in the desert and caused destruction on several sites.” Grimsley handed him the brochure he got back in the tourist bureau, and the other man looked through it for a few seconds before he nodded.

“Indeed, you’re right Tapu Bulu did that.” The man’s eyes then grew wide. “Oh, silly me, I haven’t introduced myself! I’m Iokua,” he said, stretching his arm.

“Grimsley. Nice to meet you, Iokua,” Grimsley said, and the two shook hands.

“Since you’ve only just visited, there’s a lot more books on Alola’s history and culture that I can recommend.” Iokua gave out an awkward chuckle and rubbed the back of his neck. “I’m the librarian here, but this library was founded by a late friend of mine. He and his daughter moved the books here, and they let the public read them at their own leisure.”

Grimsley hummed in acknowledgment. “Ah, I get it. That’s very generous of them to do that.”

Iokua grinned, then his eyes lit up. “Say, I’m heading to the Sushi High Roller for dinner now, would you like to join? That restaurant has some top class food.”

After taking a minute to consider his offer Grimsley said, “That would be lovely.” He put the book back in the shelf, and then he and Iokua left the library together.

They entered the Sushi High Roller shortly after. The smell of steam rice, fish, and other foods invaded his nose. A sushi bar was set aside on the left— where one cook was making the food in front of the people occupying there— and the regular tables spread out on the right, a small bridge in the middle of the restaurant. Most of the seats had been taken by the other customers. Iokua went to the man at the cashier stand and asked for a table for two.

The both of them ordered the z-kaiskei samurai set, and over half an hour later, the waiter brought out a tray of miso soup, tea, and other dishes in nicely patterned square plates. Taking several bites of his meal, Grimsley liked how the soup warmed his throat and the sushi and vegetables firm but easy to chew. The meal reminded him of his mother’s cooking.
“Oh wow, so you’re actually an Elite Four member from Unova?” Iokua asked during their conversation. He gulped another piece of his sashimi dish, which consisted of salmon, octopus, and tuna. “I thought I recognized you from somewhere.”

“Perhaps from the news, since I’ve been in the limelight on occasion.” After he finished sipping his soup, Grimsley lowered his head and had his lips in a grim line. “My family used to be immense in great wealth, but that all fell apart after my father died.”

A frown crossed Iokua’s face. “I’m sorry to hear that. That must be tough for you and your family.” He ate the last pieces of his sashimi, then said, “Alola demolished the monarch system generations ago and we have kahunas instead looking over the islands. Like the Elite Four of your region, they’re strong trainers respected by many.”

Having finished his main dishes, Grimsley started chewing on his cake, which was sweet and soft against his tongue. “Yes, one of your books did mention that. Who’s the kahuna of your island?”

“Right now that would be Nanu, and he’s a dark type trainer. He’s actually my father!”

Grimsley almost choked when he heard that. Back in Melemele Island, Ronald had told him this island’s kahuna specialized in dark type Pokémon. And right now he was having dinner with his son. He swallowed his tea to wash the food away inside his throat. Iokua looked at him with wide eyes and asked Grimsley if he was all right, only for him to wave it off and regain his composure.

“To be honest, I came to Alola in the first place so that I can find some interesting battles to partake. Perhaps he could be the opponent I’ve been looking for.”

“Could be.” Iokua chuckled and took some bites of his own cake. “If you’ll be sticking around Ula’ula for a while, Acerola is one of the trial captains here. She’s the daughter of the friend I mentioned earlier.” He then asked Grimsley if he knew about trial captains and the island challenge, and after he said yes Iokua continued. “She lives at the Aether House, so you should go there to see her. It’s not that far from Tapu Village.”

“Aether House?” Once more, Grimsley blinked in confusion.

“It’s a residence that belongs to Aether Foundation, an organization that protects endangered Pokémon and promotes conservation. Acerola can tell you more about them.”

“That’s fine with me,” Grimsley said. He then asked directions to Tapu Village and Aether House, which Iokua told him he could take the bus from here to Route 12, but once he reached that route he could either ride a Mudsdale to get through that area or ride a flying type to get to Tapu Village faster. After that, just a little further until he reaches Aether House from there. When Iokua had finished, Grimsley smiled in satisfaction. “I should be able to make it there with not much trouble. You have my uttermost gratitude.”

“Hey, it’s no problem at all.” Iokua’s face then softened. “Once you make it there, do say hi to Acerola and my dad for me!”

“I’ll make sure to tell them that then.” Grimsley glanced at the clock on the wall, now 9:05pm. “I think I should head out. I would like to catch an early morning bus tomorrow.”

“Oh, absolutely! I need to get back home myself. And don’t worry, I’m paying for all of this,” Iokua said and winked.

They left as soon as Iokua paid for the meal. Once outside, both men said goodbye and shook hands. Grimsley watched as some people passed by Iokua while he headed home. After a minute or
so, Grimsley started to go back to his inn, musing how Iokua was a nice gentleman. He looked forward to the next part of his trip tomorrow.

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After Rachel's Golduck had rested in the police station overnight, Nanu went to check on the Pokémon to see that he looked much better. Almost all of the cuts and bruises had been healed, his forehead wasn't as hot as yesterday, and he regained some of his color. During breakfast, Golduck was able to gulp down his food, which pleased Rachel greatly. His package of potions and other items did come in earlier than expected, but Nanu suggested to her that Golduck should relax one more day to regain his strength more, to which she agreed.

The next day after lunch, he and Rachel had their battle, a three on three battle outside in Route 17. Dark clouds formed the sky, but there was no rain yet. Nanu had used Sableye, Krookodile, and Persian while his opponent's Pokémon were Manectric, Turtonator, and Golduck. They were on their last Pokémon, both Golduck and Persian staring at one another and with cuts and bruises all over their bodies. A darted gaze swept over Rachel’s face while Nanu remained calm. They gave out their next commands.

Golduck's tail was shrouded in torrential waters, and smacked Persian on the side. Persian screeched and fell on the ground, but she picked herself up immediately, and shook the grass off her fur. Nanu's Pokémon lashed out her head and the gem on her forehead glowed, which shot out a beam of purple and black circles that laced together and scorched Golduck's chest. Golduck wobbled for a moment before he was able to regain his balance.

“Shadow Claw, now!” Rachel ordered. Nanu could tell she was desperate with the way her voice choked up and how her jaws clenched. He didn’t go easy on her since the start of the battle, and he wasn’t going to do that now.

“End this with your own Shadow Claw, Persian!”

Both opponents had their claws surrounded in a dark aura, and they rushed at each other like two swordsmen in a duel. After they raised their claws and slashed at one another, Persian and Golduck stopped at opposite directions from when they started. A breeze started to pick up, and several more seconds passed until Golduck collapsed and not getting up. Persian's legs shook, but she managed to lift her head and grinned in satisfaction.

Rachel gasped and rushed to her Pokémon’s side. She cradled him in her arms and stroked his forehead. “Are you okay?” she asked, and her Pokémon gave her a weak thumbs up. Relieved, she nuzzled her cheek against Golduck's.

“Here, he'll need these,” Nanu said when he and Persian reached her. He handed Rachel a few potions and berries, which she accepted. She sprayed one of the bottles onto Golduck's skin, and like a couple nights ago his marks and cuts started to fade. He looked to be in much better shape than when he got beaten up by Team Skull.

“You did an awesome job out there, Golduck! You deserve a long rest,” she said and recalled her Pokémon. Rachel stood up and faced Nanu, beaming at him. “That was a great battle and I learned a lot!”

“You aren't too shabby yourself there, kid. Get a little stronger, and we can do a rematch soon.”

“Of course!” Rachel said, and silence fell between them. From a near distance someone was clapping, and Nanu turned around to see Acerola beaming at them.
“That was a great battle, you two!” she said. “I couldn’t take my eyes off when I first started watching it.”

“What are you doing here?” Nanu asked, the pitch in his voice slightly high.

“I came here to visit you, Uncle Nanu, but it’s great to see Rachel here also!”

“Acerola!” Rachel’s face brightened. “You’re not going to believe what had happened to me recently!” She explained the incident to Acerola, Nanu listened in as he sprayed some potion on his Persian. His Pokémon purred and rubbed onto his leg.

“Uncle Nanu scared those Team Skull grunts and helped make Golduck feel better?” Now facing Nanu, Acerola said, “Wow, that was very generous of you to do that.”

Nanu shrugged. “Eh, it’s part of the job description.”

“Oh?” Acerola craned her head and offered him a closed lip smile. “Police officer, kahuna, or both?”

“Doesn’t matter. Depends on what needs to be done.” Nanu’s eyes darted and his shoulders hunched.

Rachel was taken aback by his response, then she said, “Well I’m happy that my Golduck is safe and sound thanks to you. I’ll be leaving now, but I can’t wait to rebattle you!” She grinned at them and made her leave. Nanu watched her go for a minute, frowning.

“Is something wrong, Uncle Nanu?” Acerola asked, tilting her head. After he released a shuddered breath, Nanu faced her.

“I don’t know. I should feel good helping that kid out and she’s a decent trainer. And yet…”

“Hm, maybe you’ve been working too hard being both this island’s kahuna and police?”

Nanu shook his head and bent down to scratch Persian’s chin. “I’m sure it’s not that. Team Skull mostly kept themselves inside Po Town, and I don’t see trial goers make it past this island as of late.”

Acerola pursed her lips and tapped her chin. “When was the last time you visited Tapu Bulu?”

That caused Nanu to flinch. He stopped petting Persian, the cat Pokémon growling in disappointment, and stood back up. Rubbing his head, he said, “Don’t know. Perhaps six or so months ago?”

Acerola pouted. “Isn’t one of your jobs as island kahuna to make sure the island tapu’s altar is looked over?”

“It is, but I don’t think there’s nothing to worry about. You know how freaking long it takes to get through Haina Desert?”

Her hands on her hips, Acerola stared at him in disbelief. “Uncle Nanu…”

Running his fingers through his hair, Nanu asked, “You want me to go to the Ruins of Abundance, huh?”

“Yup!” Acerola said, grinning. “Besides doing that as your duty as kahuna, perhaps Tapu Bulu can give you some guidance, too.”
After he pondered over Acerola’s suggestion for a moment, another long sigh left him. “Fine, you win. Tapu Bulu is probably angry at me for not visiting for so long.”

Satisfied, Acerola cheered and twirled around. “Great! You can even drop by the Aether House to see Becky and the kids!”

Nanu groaned. “Well, I’m not looking forward to those brats playing with Persian’s head like last time.” As if agreeing with him, Persian hissed and her fur bristled.

“I’m sure the kids will be well behaved,” Acerola said with a chuckle. Her grin grew bigger. “Oh yeah, before I forget, Uncle Iokua told me that Aunt Cora and the baby are doing fine!”

Upon hearing that, Nanu’s stomach sunk. Iokua and his wife were expecting their first child within a few months, but Nanu hadn’t talked to his son much about that. He pulled in a deep breath and glanced over his shoulder at the police station. “You wait here, let me get some stuff before we leave.”

When he was chosen to be this island’s kahuna several years ago, Nanu knew he wasn’t allowed to turn it down. And now it was time for him to pay back his due once more.

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The next morning, Grimsley took the 8 am bus from Malie City to Route 12. Only a handful of people occupied the seats. A couple conversed in low voices while everyone else was quiet. During the forty minute bus ride through Route 11, he looked through the window, seeing several trainers and Pokémon already up training outside with the tall grasses and palm trees towering over them. He also spotted some wild Pokémon flocking around; some he recognized, like Ledian and Paras, while others he didn’t, like the one that looked like a mongoose and another that resembled a koala. Grimsley overheard from the people behind him that those were Yungoos and Komala.

When the bus made it to Route 12 and stop, Grimsley got off his ride. Compared to Route 11’s lush grass and trees, Route 12 looked more barren with rolling hills and rugged boulders up ahead. Dust and sand swirled in the air, causing Grimsley to cough. To his right, he spotted a stable with a fenced large field, a variety of Pokémon staying around. Some like Ponyta and Tauros ran around in abandon while other Pokémon slept through the afternoon. Flying types like Pelipper and Flygon flew up high, making sure to not stray from the area. Several people were getting on large horses that Grimsley assumed would be the Mudsdale Iokua had mentioned to him last night. He approached to a woman in riding gear looking over a Flygon and a Skarmory.

“Excuse me, Miss, but would this happen to be where I can borrow a Pokémon to take me to Tapu Village?”

“Yup, you have come to the right place!” the lady said as she faced Grimsley, flashing him a wide grin. “Route 12 has steep hills and Route 13’s climate is just as rough, so you’ll need flying Pokémon like Flygon and Skarmory to help you.” She patted the Flygon’s forehead, the dragon nuzzling against her cheek. Behind her, the Skarmory squawked and flapped her wings.

“Well, that’s a relief. I’m Grimsley.”

“Hanna,” the woman Hanna introduced herself. She and Grimsley shook hands. “So you wanted to go to Tapu Village? I’m more than happy to take you there!” she said, then Grimsley told her that would be appreciated.

Hanna helped him hop onto the Skarmory, and then she took one of Grimsley’s bags and jumped
onto her Flygon. With everyone ready, Hanna whistled and both her and Grimsley’s Pokémon began flapping their wings and took off, Grimsley holding on the reins tightly.

While they were riding their Pokémon, Grimsley’s body shook uneasily and his stomach flipped whenever the warm breeze picked up. Sweat rolled down on Grimsley’s forehead and back of his neck. He often glimpsed down below, seeing some trainers and Pokémon gathered around the dry grass. Grimsley could see Blush Mountain and what looked like to be a power plant on top from a far distance. An hour into their ride, he heaved out a long sigh.

“I must admit, this route is very bare for my taste. There isn’t much to see here save for Blush Mountain?” Grimsley asked, and Hanna shook her head.

“There’s a secluded beach here also, but nothing special compared to Hau’oli’s beachfront. Most people come here to train and catch Pokémon.” Hanna jerked her head away for a second, then she asked, “Curious, any reason you’re going to Tapu Village?”

“To be honest, Tapu Village is a short detour before I head to my true destination, the Aether House. I want to meet with this lady named Acerola.”

“Oh, so you want to see Acerola?” Hanna titled her head and pressed her lips. “You look too old to be participating in the island challenge.”

Grimsley grimaced for a second, and then he chuckled and rubbed the back of his head. “Oh no, I’ve never even heard of that until I came here. I just want to talk with her some things about this island.”

“Oh, I see. But yes, she’s usually at the Aether House or that abandoned supermarket. Acerola’s a very sweet girl, I’m sure she’ll be happy to talk with you.”

Grimsley made an indifferent grunt, and then went back looking at his surroundings. He made sure to straddle onto his Skarmory tightly.

Eventually Grimsley and Hanna passed through Route 12 and onto Route 13. Route 13’s terrain looked just as dry as the last route, but there was still some vegetation on the ground and trees growing. There was a small oasis where several folks gathered, and up ahead was Haina Desert, which he and Hanna ignored for now. He and Hanna also passed by an area where several trailers parked. A short time later they finally reached their destination. As soon as their Pokémon landed on the ground, they hopped off.

Most of Tapu Village looked empty saved for several houses and small shops, some large totems, and the ruins of a stone wall or building. There was more green life here than the last two routes with grass and palm trees growing in several spots. Despite not much to see, Grimsley could see several people here basking in the scenery. He took several steps, and then halted a moment to see several guys in hard hats and uniform blocking the path to Mount Lanakila. Grimsley assumed some kind of construction was going on, so he and Hanna ignored that and moved further along.

They passed by the Pokémon Center. He looked at his left to see a large patch of grass where some Pokémon hid themselves in. He spotted two Pokémon that caught his interest. There was one that looked like a Sandshrew but was light blue instead of the yellow ones he was used to seeing and his body structure similar to an igloo. He sat down on the grass chewing a berry. The other Pokémon, a blue furred Vulpix, kept trying to catch a Snorunt. Like the Sandshrew, Grimsley never saw this particular type of Vulpix before.

“Say, Hanna, are those Vulpix and Sandshrew?” he asked her, pointing at those Pokémon for her to
see. She turned her head in his direction and nodded.

“Ah huh. Alola has some Pokémon like Geodude, Vulpix, and Meowth that may look different from the ones you’ve encountered, so they’re often called Alola forms.”

“Alola forms? Similar to like Sinnoh’s Shellos and Gastrodon and Unova’s Deerling and Sawsbuck?”

“Kinda. The majority of the Alola form Pokémon have typings vastly different from the regular Pokémon. Take Meowth for instance. Usually they would be normal type, but here ours are dark type.”

“A dark type Meowth, huh? Then that means there are more dark-type Pokémon than I anticipated.” Grimsley smirked. “Come to think of it, I battled against a trainer with an Alolan Graveler a few days ago.”

“Oh, you did?” Hanna grinned. “But yeah, there’s plenty more Alolan Pokémon you have yet to see!”

Grimsley only nodded, believing that would be the case. He and Hanna began heading back to where Flygon and Skarmory had been waiting for them. He gazed around his surroundings, and then he sighed and shook his head. “There isn’t much going on in Tapu Village. Such a miserable state.”

Hanna chuckled, unoffended by Grimsley’s statement. “Maybe so, but this site still attracts tourists due to a story how Tapu Bulu destroyed that village. Because of that, most of the people here are mindful of keeping this region clean.”

“I read about that not that long ago. Also, apparently Tapu Bulu resides in Haina Desert, am I right?” Grimsley asked, and Hanna shot him an impressed smile.

“Yes, that would be so.” Hanna placed her hands on her sides. “I’ve never been to the ruins, but I’m sure Kahuna Nanu can show you if you happen to find him.”

Grimsley swallowed and his mouth twitched. Forcing a smile, he said, “I’ll be sure to talk to him about that, but first I need to see Acerola.”

“Right,” Hanna said with an acknowledging nod. “Anyways, you’ll need a Mudsaddle to help you get through that desert’s tough boulders and nasty sandstorms. There’s a stable close to there that you can borrow that Pokémon from. Just ask for either Carlos or Yvonne.”

“Carlos or Yvonne, got it,” Grimsley said, then a short silence fell between them. While he pondered over about Tapu Bulu and Alolan Pokémon, Grimsley started tossing his coin up in the air. After several tosses, Skarmory screamed and caught the coin with her beak. He glared, and pointed his finger at her. “Hey, that’s my coin you slimy bird!”

“This Skarmory likes shiny objects, so be careful showing anything like that to her.” As Hanna faced Skarmory, she said to the bird, “All right, Skarmory, give the gentleman his coin back.”

The Skarmory flapped her wings and let out a disappointed squawk, but nonetheless she obliged by spitting the coin out onto Grimsley’s palm. His mouth twitching in disgust, Grimsley wiped the spit out with his sleeve. He put the coin away.

“The Aether House isn’t too far, only less than half an hour bus ride from here. There should be one stopping here soon.”
With an appreciated smile, Grimsley said, “You’ve been wonderful guiding me through parts of this island.”

“Not a problem!” Hanna’s grin widened, her teeth showing. “Oh, before I go, you should have this.” She pulled out a small device from her pocket and handed it to Grimsley. “It’s a ride pager where you can call out Pokémon to help you out in all kinds of areas you won’t be able to get through yourself. For instance, some Pokémon like Mudsdale can get through places like Route 12, but you might want a water Pokémon to help you get through Alola’s seas.”

“A ride pager, huh? Well I’m sure this will come very handy,” Grimsely said, putting the ride pager away.

“It should!” Hanna said as she hopped onto Flygon. She then offered him best wishes on the rest of his journey and took off with both Flygon and Skarmory. Grimsley gazed up at the sky for a while until he couldn’t see her and the two flying Pokémon anymore, then he decided to get something to eat from the Pokémon Center first before waiting for the bus.

After Grimsley finished his meal, he caught a bus ride that was traveling through Route 15. There were only a few people taking seats, so this ride too has been a quiet one for him. This route wasn’t that much different from Route 11 in which there were some tropical greenery and Pokémon running around. When the bus driver announced that they stopped at Aether House, Grimsley jumped off of the bus.

He could see a lone white building, with a star symbol on top, situated on a hill. The “Aether House” sign was pinned from several feet across of him. He trekked through the path upwards, his shoes slapping onto the soft ground. Grimsley reached the building and faced the doors, which slid open automatically for him, and stepped inside.

“Hello, is anyone here?” Grimsley asked as he looked around. Some couches and tables had been spread out, white lights shrouding everything inside the hall. Several doors stood in front of him, and in the middle of the hall there was a reception area where a woman in a white uniform and a large ape-like Pokémon covered in white and purple fur overlooking the computers. When he approached them, the lady offered him a warm smile while the Pokémon stared at him in great curiosity and grunted.

“Alola, welcome to the Aether House! I’m Becky, one of the employees from the Aether Foundation. What brings you here to our shelter?”

Grimsley’s eyes shifted, his palm resting on the back of his neck. “Yes, well, I heard that Acerola lives here, and I wonder if I may have a word with her.”

“Oh, Acerola? She’s away at the moment, but should be here very soon. You want some water while you wait, Mister…?”

“Grimsley. And if that isn’t much trouble, that would be appreciated.” Grimsley took one of the seats, his elbow plopping on the table’s surface. Becky handed him a glass of water a minute later and he gulped it down, the liquid cooling his slightly dry throat. Becky’s Pokémon was behind her.

“Has Acerola returned yet?” someone with a child voice suddenly asked, and Grimsley looked over his shoulder to see two children approaching him and Becky. Three Pokémon trailed behind them, Grimsley recognized one of them as Elekid and the other Yungoos. The last one he never saw before, the Pokémon covering itself in a white cloth, as if pretending to be a Pikachu.

“Not yet, Hunter,” Becky told him. “This gentleman, Mister Grimsley here is waiting for her, too.”
“Oh, okay! I’m Hunter, and this is my friend Gracie!” the boy Hunter said, pointing at the girl next to her. Gracie greeted Grimsley with a cheery “Hi!” and both children beamed at him. He smiled a little back at them, but then he blinked when he felt his black scarf being tugged. Grimsley looked down to see the Yungoos chewing on the fabric.

“No no no, my clothes aren’t for you to eat,” Grimsley said, glaring at the moongose. He pulled the scarf away from him, and Yungoos cried in disappointment. That was when the other Pokémon disguised as Pikachu used her shadowy claw to yank at his hair, causing him to scream. “Stop this strange creature from grabbing my hair!”

Becky gasped and immediately picked the Pokémon up, then set it down on the floor. Before Grimsley had a chance to relax, he grimaced when Hunter and Gracie grabbed his long scarf and began to wrap it around his face like a mummy. He and Becky cried out for them to stop, but they didn’t listen and went ahead with their prank. His face now covered with his own scarf, Grimsley grumbled over how he couldn’t breathe and waited for Becky to finish with unwrapping it. Once she was done, he gasped for air and glared at the two children. Hunter and Gracie giggled while Becky heaved out a deep sigh.

“Sorry about that,” Becky said. “Mimikyu and the kids just wanted to play.”

“Ah, so the Pikachu look alike is a Mimikyu.” He glimpsed back at the Mimikyu, who skidded on the floor while making some scratchy voices. Grimsley then fixed his gaze at the large ape Pokémon in front of him. “And what species is that Pokémon?” he asked, pointing at the beast.

“That’s an Oranguru.” A proud smile pulled on the corners of Becky’s lips and she patted his shoulder. “He can tell the difference between an experienced trainer and an inexperienced one.”

“Is that so?” Grimsley lifted his head and stroked his chin. “They can tell by the way a trainer behaves, I assume?”

Becky nodded. “Usually, yeah, though I heard Oranguru will already know the minute a trainer comes to them.” She looked over her shoulder at Oranguru, who just grunted.

Grimsley gulped more of his water, then said, “A friend had mentioned to me that one of the Aether Foundation’s goals is to protect the Pokémon from any harm. I take it this is the purpose of this shelter?”

“Oh huh.” This time it was Gracie who responded. “Acerola and Becky have been super nice to me and the Pokémon here!” Next to her, Hunter grinned and Becky nodded in agreement.

“They’ve been sweethearts in return and I love watching over them. I wouldn’t trade this job for the world.”

Upon hearing their praises, Grimsley frowned and his fingers tapped on the table. Memories of Team Plasma resurfaced as he was reminded how several members preached over Pokémon’s freedom and safety above all else. Then again, Team Plasma’s agenda was a ruse thanks to their leader, and the people within Aether Foundation probably do want to save Pokémon out of the goodness of their hearts. It was still too early to judge at this point.

“Heeeeey guys, we’re home!” another voice said, distracting Grimsley’s thoughts. He rose out of his seat and turned around to see two people entering the building. One was a teenage girl dressed in a tattered dress and a golden bracelet on her arm, her unruly purple hair barely above her shoulders. The other person she brought with her looked to be several years older than Grimsley from his grey hair and sunken face. He was dressed like a police officer with a badge attached on the sleeve of
his shirt, and a small stone hung around his neck that sparkled with the lighting in the hall. For some reason, he couldn’t stop staring at the man and his presence made his skin tingle in electrical spurts.

“Acerola!” both Gracie and Hunter cheered. They rushed over to hug her, Acerola embracing them back. Yungoos and Mimikyu joined them also, the Pokémon tugging at Acerola’s dress.

Grimsley soon approached them, and when Acerola noticed him she grinned and place one hand on her hip.

“Oh, a visitor? Alola, I’m Acerola, and this guy here is Uncle Nanu!”

Grimsley’s mouth fell open and his shoulders stiffened. He didn’t expect to see the kahuna himself this soon. Nonetheless, he smirked at them.

“It’s a pleasure to meet the both of you. I’m Grimsley.” He shook both Acerola and Nanu’s hands. “Iokua from the Malie Library told me a little bit about you two,” he told Acerola when facing back at her.

“Oh, so you’ve met Uncle Iokua!” Acerola said, her smile widening. “Did you get to check out my father’s books back there?”

“I did, and his book collection is marvelous. I’m glad I had dropped by there.”

Nanu snorted, his hands in his pockets. “Huh, I don’t think we’ve ever met before. Are you from this region?”

Grimsley shook his head. “I’m just merely a tourist wanting to know more about Alolan culture and maybe find a good battle or two.”

“Wait, so you’re a trainer? And those pokéballs are yours?” Gracie asked, pointing at the pokéballs attached on the knot tied around Grimsley’s waist.

“Oh, oh, can we have a battle?” Hunter asked, bouncing up and down.

Giving him a sad smile, Grimsley said, “Unfortunately, I’ll have to kindly decline your offer there, Hunter.” He folded his hands on his lap. “I’m actually a very strong trainer and I don’t seek battles that will net me an easy win.”

“I don’t care!” Hunter pouted, clenching both of his fists. “My Elekid and I are always seeking out battling so we can get stronger.” Beside him, his Elekid jumped up and down in anticipation, tiny sparks coursing out from his body.

Becky approached Hunter, squeezing his shoulders. With an awkward laugh, she said, “I think the kids and I should leave you three alone. Let’s go!”

Both Hunter and Gracie let out upset noises. Becky gathered the children and Pokémon, taking them back inside one of the rooms. Nanu dragged in a sigh and shook his head.

“Kids, I tell you, always eager to battle,” he said as he sunk himself on one of the couches. “I’ve had my fair share of Pokémon battles where trainers think they’re all hot stuff but ended up embarrassing themselves.”

“But you still enjoy doing those, don’t you Uncle Nanu?” Acerola flashed him a grin. “Battles are one way a Pokémon and trainer bond together!”
Nanu responded with a side glance at Acerola and a “hmph” under his breath. Grimsley stared at him for a minute, his fingers jerking. He was then reminded of his conversations with Iokua and Hanna, and said, “Say, Kahuna Nanu—”

“Just Nanu is fine,” he interrupted him, a bored expression on his face. “I’m not all that wild on formalities.”

Grimsley made a fake cough, then said, “Right, Nanu. Anyways, I had met someone who told me about Tapu Bulu’s residence over at Haina Desert, and that you’re the perfect person to ask. Perhaps you could bring me there and show me around?”

Acerola gasped in shock, her eyes wide, while Nanu grimaced. The kahuna rose out of his seat and approached Grimsley, glaring at him.

“You think I’m gonna just take some random trainer to one of Alola’s most sacred places? I recall you saying you’re ‘merely a tourist’ only a few minutes ago.”

Smirking, Grimsley wiggled his finger and said, “Ah, but I’m no ordinary trainer. Have you heard of Grimsley Thomas of the Unova Elite Four? You’re looking at him right now.”

Both Acerola and Nanu narrowed their eyes at him, as if not believing him at first. After Acerola gave a closer look at Grimsley, she beamed.

“Silly me, I didn’t recognize you at first because of your white streaks and you looked several years older now. So you’re really Grimsley of the Elite Four!”

Grimsley let out an appalled gasp, crossed his arms, and said, “Oh come now, I don’t look that old!” This was the third time he had been called that, so of course his pride got hurt a little.

Unlike Acerola, Nanu didn’t look impressed, his lips pressed flat. “Even if you’re a king of some faraway kingdom, I’m still suspicious. The Tapus aren’t Pokémon to be taken lightly.”

Having calmed down from Acerola’s comment about him looking older, Grimsley said, “While meeting your island’s guardian would be a treat, that is not what I desire. I just want to see how the Ruins of Abundance looks, nothing more, nothing less.” When Nanu didn’t respond and still stared at him, Grimsley said, “Still not convinced, huh? How about we let chance decide for us, then.”

“Huh?” Acerola blinked, tilting her head in confusion. Nanu raised his eyebrow.

Grinning in amusement, Grimsley pulled out a coin from the sleeve of his kimono. “Heads or tails. The one you choose will be us not going to the Ruins of Abundance while the other option will be us going there.”

“Oh, a coin toss? Sounds fun!” Acerola said.

Nanu stared at him funny, as if he was insane. He then said, “You know what, I’ll play your little charade. Tails.”

In that instant, Grimsley tossed his coin up and grabbed it in the air. He opened his palms to reveal the coin landed on heads and chuckled. “Looks like I win! That means you have to take me to the Ruins of Abundance.”

Nanu folded his arms against his chest, his brow furrowed. “Haina Desert can be confusing to get through, so I think it’s best if we wait until tomorrow to head out.”
“Are you staying anywhere?” Acerola asked. Grimsley told her that he might be staying at the Pokémon Center over at Tapu Village. Her face lit up. “Since it’s getting late, why don’t you stay here for the night? That way, we can leave together in the morning and I can even show you my island trial site.”

After pondering over Acerola’s offer for a minute, Grimsley said, “That sounds like a shining idea. Sure, I’ll sleep here for the night.”

“Great!” Acerola clapped her hands and her feet bounced. “You can take the room at the far right, and there should be some fresh pajamas in the drawers. We can just order some pizza for dinner.”

“I appreciate it, thank you very much the both of you,” Grimsley said with a small smile and bowed his head. Today he did travel for a while and was already overwhelmed upon his visit in the Aether House, so some rest would be good.
Night Daze

Chapter Summary

In which the group meet up with Colress and the Ultra Recon Squad, and then go through the desert. **This is the start of US/UM spoilers!**

Chapter Notes

Alola, all! So I apologize for the long wait for the next update. After I posted Chapter 3, I got distracted by holiday stuff, writing *The Scent of Roses*, and US/UM. Then on January/February I was working on revising Chapter 4. I actually got the chapter's first draft done... months ago, then I added new stuff and well I got carried away. I already thought how I want some scenes to go, but thanks to US/UM and feedback on earlier chapters I got some new ideas I wan to try. Before we get to Chapter Four, some big announcements and other notes!

- **This chapter is where we get to US/UM territory, so there will be some spoilers if you haven't played those games yet.** Also I played Ultra Sun, so for now Dulse and Zossie will be making appearances.

- Some changes in the tags and chapter titles! With the tags, after some thinking on how deep I want to go more towards Nanu's backstory, added some warnings of PTSD and references to depression. I also decided to name the chapters after Dark-type moves, so right now Chapter One is "Knock Off", Chapter Two is "Brutal Swing", and Chapter Three is "Flatter." This chapter is "Night Daze".

- In one scene there's a reference to Gabite and Sableye's Pokedex entries! Rotom, you're crazy.

- So, I did an art request for my friend to do a Grimsley and Nanu art, and he delivered! Go to his art blog [mythirlwarheads](http://mythirlwarheads) and check out more of his art!

- In addition to posting Chapter Four, I also went ahead and revised Chapter One... er, again! More info as to what changes I did over there. I'm planning to polishing up Chapters 2 and 3 also fairly soon.

- Thanks to bobandbill for his edits as always!

- **Edit 3/28/2018:** So, thanks to Ambyssin and Cutlerine's suggestions (from Serebii forums) concerning the Colress reveal and Grimsley and Nanu's conversation, I went and rewrote those two scenes there which I think I'm satisfied with.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The morning sunlight streamed through the windows and curtains, stirring Grimsley from his sleep. With a groan, he sat up and rubbed his eyes. He glanced around and noted his room was
fairly simple with desks and drawers colored in blue, green, and red. Various toys like trucks, figurines, and Pokémon plushies littered the floor. He wore the pajamas Acerola had given him last night, the fabric soft and warm against his skin. Grimsley bounced off of his bed and went to the restroom to shower and get dressed.

By the time he made it to the dining room half an hour later, Nanu, Acerola, Hunter, and Gracie had already gathered around the table eating bacon and eggs while Yungoos, Mimikyu, Oranguru, and Elekid sat on the floor munching their own food. When Acerola noticed Grimsley, she beamed at him.

“Oh, good morning! Care for some breakfast and milk?”

“Some food would be nice, please,” Grimsley said as he joined everyone at the table. Acerola got out of her seat to bring him a plate of bacon and scrambled eggs along with a glass of milk. He picked up his fork and chewed a piece of bacon. The grease slicked against his tongue but was otherwise soft and with a hint of sweetness. He tried the eggs next, and Grimsley could taste the pepper and salt dashed on it.

“Did you have a good sleep?” Gracie asked after she finished chewing one piece of her bacon.

“I did, thanks for asking,” Grimsley said. He gulped some of his milk. “I’m looking forward to today’s trip.”

“Me too!” Acerola said. She explained how Becky had called the Poké Ride stable over at Route 13 to have them reserve a few Mudsdale for everyone.

Hunter swallowed some of his eggs and asked, “Acerola, can we have pizza again for dinner tonight?” At that moment, his Elekid rushed to his side and pumped his arms up and down.

“Elekid thinks so, too.”

Acerola put her fork down after she finished chewing her food and wiggled her finger. “Now, now, Hunter, too much pizza can give you stomach aches. It’s better to not eat them back to back,” she said, and both Hunter and Elekid pouted.

Grimsley hummed in agreement, drank more milk from his glass, and went back eating his breakfast. He had had an enjoyable conversation with everyone during pizza last night. Becky, Hunter, and Gracie had mentioned how they met and chatted about some of the Pokémon they took care of in the Aether House. The Aether employee had also mentioned Aether Paradise, a much larger habitat for endangered Pokémon that doubled as a research facility. Acerola meanwhile had talked about what it was like being a trial captain, which piqued his interest. Nanu didn’t say much, only offering a few comments on occasion as he preferred to reply with grunts and nods.

While everyone ate the rest of their food in silence, Grimsley looked at Nanu who was chewing on his last piece of bacon slowly. He recalled how he had learned about the tapu deities choosing their island’s guardian. There was something about the kahuna that pulled Grimsley towards him already. When the door slid open and someone stepped inside, Grimsley shifted his gaze to see Becky approaching them.

“Good morning, everyone!” she said, waving at them. Everyone said good morning to her except Nanu, who instead mumbled under his breath. “I called the stable and one of the guides, Carlos, reserved the Mudsdale for you guys. Also, you guys should have these.” Becky pulled out three goggles from the bag she was carrying and handed them to Acerola.

“That’s great, thanks a million, Becky!” Acerola’s face lit up and she said, “Oh Uncle Nanu, since
“we’re here why don’t we give Iokua a call?”

Nanu almost choked on the milk he was drinking. Grimsley stared at him, thinking it was odd for him to react like that. After calming down, Nanu shrugged.

“Eh, it’s been a while since I last talked with him, so sure.”

“I wouldn’t mind talking with him, too. I think he would like to know that I made it safely to the Aether House,” Grimsley said.

“Sure!” After bouncing out of her seat, Acerola closed her eyes and grinned. “Let’s start putting the plates in the sink. I can make that phone call.”

Smiling, Becky said, “I’ll have my tablet ready while you guys do that.”

It took a few minutes for Grimsley and the others to put the dishes in the sink and clean the tables. Once that was done, they moved to the front hall as the Pokémon followed them. Becky went to the reception desk and pulled out a tablet from there. She punched some buttons on the screen, and handed it to Acerola. Gracie and Hunter played with the Pokémon while Grimsley, Nanu, and Becky gathered around Acerola. They waited a minute until the screen lit up and Iokua’s face was shown.

“Acerola!” Iokua said with a grin. He sat in front of a desk with a pile of papers next to him. Behind him was the window and two bookshelves.

“Hi, Iokua!” Acerola said. “I’m calling to see how you’re doing.”

“I’m doing great, thanks. You’re as chipper as ever, still having fun as trial captain?” When Acerola responded that she was, Iokua grinned. “That’s wonderful. Ah, I noticed Grimsley has reached the Aether House. I take it you didn’t have much trouble getting your way here?”

“It went smoothly for the most part,” Grimsley said, leaning his head closer to the screen. “I passed by Tapu Village, and while it left much to be desired it was still a treat to see.”

“I’m glad to hear on both counts,” Iokua said, sounding satisfied. When he noticed Nanu, his grin grew larger. “And how are you doing, Dad?”

“Hey, Iokua,” Nanu said, his hands in the pocket of his pants. “Not much, really. Same ol’ same ol’.”

“So the usual patrolling Po Town and Grand Trials, huh? It’s great you’re still making a difference in this island.”

“Maybe,” Nanu said with a flat face. With an arched eyebrow, Grimsley stared at him.

“Patrolling Po Town? Is that where you’re living?” he asked.

Facing Grimsley, Nanu said, “Ah huh. I’m the only officer there since no one else wants to get close to Team Skull.”

“Team Skull?” Grimsley’s eyes grew wide. “I stumbled upon them once before. So that group has been causing trouble in this region for a while now?”

“They have,” Iokua said, who had been listening in on their conversation. “Po Town got overrun by them several years ago and the police there got overwhelmed.”
“At one point some of them used their Pokémon to hurt our own men,” Nanu added. “When I agreed to be transferred here, I asked for back up but got nothing. Eventually I just let those guys do their own thing as long as they stay in their turf.” A grunt left his throat and he shrugged. “It’s best to not get involved with them if you value even an ounce of your life.”

While locking his eyes with Nanu’s, Grimsley considered his warning. He wanted to remind him that he was from the Unova Elite Four and could handle himself, but decided against it since Nanu wouldn’t care anyways.

“If you’re having trouble getting reinforcements, why don’t you ask the Aether Foundation for help?” Becky asked. “I’m sure we’re more than happy to assist you.”

At that instant, Nanu shot her a glare and crossed his arms. “I appreciate the gesture, but I don’t think they’ll do much good.”

Grimsley looked over his shoulder to see Becky frowned in disappointment. He was baffled by Nanu’s refusal there. On screen, Iokua had a similar expression as Becky’s.

“Nanu and I are actually about to take Grimsley to the Ruins of Abundance right now!” Acerola said.

“Is that so?” Iokua let out a pleased smile. “Well, you three have fun out there, and I’m sure you’ll like what you see, Grimsley.”

“I have no doubt I will,” Grimsley said. Shortly after, Iokua said that he needed to get back to work and everyone said goodbye to him before the application on the tablet turned dark. As soon as Grimsley and the others finished talking with Iokua, the two children and the Pokémon approached them.

“You sure we can’t come with you to Haina Desert?” Gracie asked, and Acerola shook her head. “Sorry, but the desert is too dangerous for you kids. Maybe when you guys are a little older.”

Together, Gracie and Hunter let out disappointed voices and hung their heads down. Becky chuckled as she walked up to them and dropped on her knees to touch their shoulders.

“Acerola’s right, that desert tends to get sandstorms and you can get lost easily if you’re not careful. You guys will get your chance someday.”

Both children still didn’t look convinced. Gracie pouted and crossed her arms against her chest. “Fine, we’ll stay,” she mumbled.

“If those two are done complaining, I think that’s our cue for us to leave,” Nanu said, facing Grimsley and Acerola. They nodded in agreement.

“I can take you guys to Acerola’s trial site and to Route 13 where the Mudsdale are. The jeep’s outside.” Becky turned towards Oranguru. “You watch the kids for a little while until I come back!”

With a nod, Oranguru grunted and punched his chest like a drum. Becky chuckled and patted his shoulder.

The two children wished the three a fun and safe trip through Haina Desert. The Pokémon joined in on sending them off too, with Yungoos and Mimikyu making high pitched growls while Oranguru and Elekid waved their arms. Grimsley and Acerola said their goodbyes while Nanu just flicked his
wrist at them. They stepped out of the Aether House and the sliding doors closed behind them.

A tan jeep with the Aether Foundation star symbol was parked outside. Grimsley and Acerola took the back seat while Nanu and Becky sat in the front. As Grimsley made himself comfortable against the leather seat, he waited a minute until Becky started the engine and the car took off.

It was a fairly short drive from Route 15 to Tapu Village, and when they reached there only a few people gathered outside. The construction towards the path to Mount Lanalika was still off limits, so Grimsley was sure he wasn’t going to do some sightseeing there anytime soon. Once they reached the arrow signs that either led to Haina Desert or Route 14, Becky drove into the downward path.

“Huh, looks like the construction for the Pokémon League is almost finished!” Acerola said, pointing at the construction site.

“Pokémon League?” Grimsley raised an eyebrow. “I thought Alola doesn’t have one.”

“It was just recently decided that Alola should have one,” Becky said, her eyes still on the road. “Looks like we’ll have our own Elite Four and Champion soon.”

Acerola hummed in agreement, and she looked up at Grimsley. “You’re a dark type expert in the Unova League, right?”

“Yes. I love the mysterious and crafty nature of dark types. Being an Elite Four has its perks.”

Grinning, Acerola said, “I train ghost Pokémon and I feel the same way! Plus they’re fun to work with!”

Grimsley couldn’t help but smirk. “You know a lady named Shauntal? She’s the ghost type expert in the same Pokemon League as me. You and her would get along splendidly.”

Acerola’s face lit up. “I heard of her, yes! I even have one of her books with me!”

After rummaging through her bag, she pulled out a thick blue book and handed it to Grimsley. He looked at the cover with a picture of a trainer and an Articuno. The title “Snowstorm in Johto” was engraved in silver letters.

“Ah, I remember Shauntal bothering me brainstorming ideas for that story because I have family from Johto,” Grimsley said as he flipped through several pages. Once he was finished, he handed the book back to Acerola. “Glad she did as it’s a good read.”

“I know, right? She’s great with characters and atmosphere!”

Grimsley nodded in agreement, and shifted his gaze at Nanu’s direction. “How about you, Nanu? What’s your reason for training dark types?”

“What?” Nanu moved his head slightly without looking at the back. After several seconds, he said, “I somehow just ended up with them. What can I say, misery loves company.”

“Is that so...” Grimsley let out a puzzled grunt and scratched his chin. He decided to not ask further and leave it at that.

Route 14 was a small coastal route with dried black sand and broken roads. Large waves crashed onto the shore. Grimsley spotted a few people already there to fish or have a Pokémon battle. When he glimpsed at the ocean through the window, remnants of destroyed buildings underwater flashed
before his eyes. There was a large cracked road up ahead.

By the time they reached the top several minutes later, they got out of the jeep. Grimsley stared at the abandoned building in front of him. Pieces of brick from the foundation had fallen apart and graffiti filled with less than appropriate words was sprayed across there. The windows were dirty and clouded with dust, tinted in darkness. Overgrown weed popped up in front of the store and around the fences with some trash that littered the ground. He heaved a deep sigh, facing everyone.

“So this is the site of your trial?” he asked with a raised eyebrow. Acerola nodded, a proud smile reaching her lips.

“Ah huh. I thought it would be cool to have a spooky theme trial be held in an abandoned location like this one! I let the trainers take pictures of the ghost Pokémon roaming around, and then they battle a Mimikyu that’s larger than usual.”

Nanu snorted, one hand on his hip. “Half of the trainers that came to me mentioned how the totem Mimikyu scared them and their Pokémon half to death. I don’t blame them.”

“Well, what’s the use of a ghost type trial if it doesn’t frighten anyone?” Acerola countered, lifting her chin up.

Becky chuckled while Grimsley hummed in agreement. That statement reminded him when he talked with Shauntal over her Pokémon League room’s aesthetic design. He cleared his throat.

“From what I understand, this region has trial captains and kahunas that work differently from the usual gym leaders and Elite Four from other regions. Iokua had explained the basics to me.”

“He did, huh? Did he also tell you how kahunas chose their captains?” Acerola asked, and Grimsley nodded. She continued with, “However, I was the only other trial captain Nanu chose.”

“She’s not lying,” Nanu said. He stared over his shoulder at the abandoned market. “We got one other trial captain here, but I let his cousin do it. There were some unusual circumstances in Ula’ula Island for a while, and Poni Island isn’t doing well either as they still lack a kahuna.”

“An island without a kahuna, huh? I can see how that poses a problem,” Grimsley said. He recalled what he had read on the tapus and how they chose their kahuna. That meant that island’s tapu hadn’t chosen a successor yet.

“You also look over the trials at Poni Island because of that, right Kahuna Nanu?” Becky pointed out.

“Yeah, but not too many trial goers made it past frilly Mina’s trial.”

“Oh, I remember trying her trial a few years ago!” Acerola said, her hands on her hips. “That Ribombee of hers is no pushover!”

“So you’re actually overseeing two islands,” Grimsley said to Nanu. “It must be not easy in addition to being a police officer.”

The kahuna gave a slight nod, but with a tight expression that said he wasn’t pleased with it. “I had no choice. I was chosen as this island’s kahuna, and Poni Island needed someone to watch over the trials there until another kahuna is ready.”

Unsure how to respond to that, Grimsley folded his arms and pursed his lips up. He only met Nanu less than a day, but he thought him being a dark type trainer fitted him well.
“Excuse me, but did I hear that there’s a trial captain and kahuna here?”

Grimsley flinched upon hearing that familiar voice. He turned around and his heart jumped inside his throat. The visitor was dressed in a gray overcoat that looked to be too uncomfortable for him to wear in this weather. There was no mistake it was him with his glasses and strange hairstyle.

“Yes you did!” Acrola greeted him with a grin. Becky smiled while Nanu had an indifferent expression on his face. “I’m Trial Captain Acerola, and Uncle Nanu here is this island’s kahuna!”

“Hi there,” Nanu said with a lazy hand wave.

“I’m Becky!” Becky said.

“Wonderful!” He clapped his hand, and said, “My name is Colress, and I’m a scientist conducting my research here.” He stopped and his eyes turned wide when he noticed Grimsley. “Well well, what a pleasant surprise, Unova’s Elite Four Grimsley!”

“Nice to see you too, Colress,” Grimsley said, giving him a sharp look.

“Wait, you two knew each other?” Becky asked.

“We’ve met a few times before.” Furrowing his brow, Grimsley said, “He forgot to mention that he was once part of a secret organization called Team Plasma.”

“Wait, is that true?” Acerola asked, her eyes wide. Becky had the same shocked expression on her face.

“He’s right,” Colress said, frowning. “However, Team Plasma has long since dissolved.”

Nanu titled his head and narrowed his eyes. “I think I’ve heard of them before. Didn’t those guys cause havoc in Unova twice?”

“Indeed they did,” Grimsley said, and he faced Colress. “Speaking of which, how are you able to run around and not get arrested?”

“I’ve struck a deal with the International Police that I do research for them in exchange for my freedom,” Colress said without flinching.

“What your research’s about, if you don’t mind me asking?” Acerola asked

Colress smirked, and he began tapping the buttons on the sleeve of his overcoat. “Ah, yes. The theme of my research is: bringing out the power of Pokémon! And I believe it has to do with you and your kahuna’s Z-rings!”

“Oh, you mean this?” Nanu held out the bracelet on his wrist, and Colress nodded. Grimsley noticed a slot in the center, and he glanced at the shard around his neck that could fit in it. He wondered if that shard was the Z-crystal he had read about.

“Yes! While conducting my research here, I met a couple strangers who informed me the most fascinating facts about those bracelets.” Colress glanced over his shoulder and grinned. “Ah, here they are now!”

Everyone turned around to see two more newcomers. They wore spacesuits that made Grimsley think of them to be astronauts and looked to be very pale. He gazed at the purple-haired man and red-haired girl approaching them.
“Hey, there you are, Mr. Scientist Man!” the girl said, waving at Colress. Her grin widened. “And oh, looks like you have company!”

“I was just talking about you two to them,” Colress said. “Everyone, let me introduce to you Zossie and Dulse of the Ultra Recon Squad.”

“Alola, all!” Zossie said. She and Dulse attempted to greet them the Alola rainbow sign, but instead they made a more rectangular sign.

“Alola to you, too!” Acerola greeted them with the proper Alola rainbow sign with her arms. She introduced herself and Nanu to them.

“And I’m Grimsley,” Grimsley said with a small smile out of proper respect.

“Wait, the Ultra Recon Squad?” Becky said as she stared at their suits. “I’ve heard of you guys! You’re working with the Aether Foundation on some research projects.”

“You’re correct in that assumption,” Dulse said, sounding pleased. “I take it that you’re an employee of theirs?” he asked, and Becky nodded.

“I work at the Aether House and watch over the orphans and Pokémon there.”

“Dulse and I met with several other Aether employees like you!” Zossie said in excitement. “It’s amazing how you guys work hard in keeping the Pokémon safe.”

Grimsley glanced over his shoulder at Nanu. The man had that same sour expression like this morning when Becky had praised the Aether Foundation. It seemed there were many things the kahuna didn’t like.

“Your scientist friend here said that you guys know a thing or two about Z-Rings,” Nanu said as he leant forward and placed his hands on his sides.

“Ah, yes we do.” Dulse gave Nanu a blank stare and cleared his throat. “You see, we came from another world that is filled with darkness caused by the beast called Necrozma. Our ancestors were greedy for its light, causing it to run wild and constantly hunger for light.”

Grimsley’s head flinched back and his breath caught in his throat. Both Becky and Acerola’s mouths fell while Nanu gave them skeptical looks. A knowing grin crossed Colress’s face.

“Another world? So does this mean you guys aren’t from around here?” Grimsley asked.

“Yeah, I’m wondering the same thing,” Nanu said, scratching his chin.

“We found Alola by passing through an Ultra Wormhole. Necrozma is able to open wormholes at will, and we need to find a way to stop it before it steals Alola’s light.”

“Really? Must be cool traveling around space,” Acerola said, now grinning.

“We recently visited Tapu Village where Necrozma fought against the tapu,” Zossie added. “We believed its light that it lost is what causes your guys’ Z-crystals and Z-moves to happen!”

“Oh, I think I heard of that confrontation from one of my dad’s books. The tapus got exhausted after battling a powerful Pokémon that caused Alola to be dark. But thanks to getting help from Z-crystals, the tapus fought back and drove that Pokémon away!”

As he let the Ultra Recon Squad and Acerola’s stories sink in, Grimsley’s eyes flew open. “I
believed one Ultra Wormhole just popped up a few days ago while I was in Melemele Island. You think that could be Necrozma’s doing? And how could it be stopped?”

“Most likely!” Zossie said. “Dulse and I keep track of any Ultra Wormholes that appear, and we did pick up one from that location in our readings.”

“They’ve asked for my help in creating a machine for them that would restrain Necrozma, and I accepted their request,” Colress said. “It still needs some tinkering, but I’m confident that it’ll produce marvelous results!”

Grimsley’s scowl at Colress deepened. He told Zossie and Dulse, “I wouldn’t trust him if I were you. He could be using it for his own means.”

Colress chuckled, sneaking in a grin. “Don’t worry, I have no intention of deceiving them.”

“Colress proves to be knowledgeable in the ways of Pokémon, so his help will be greatly appreciated,” Dulse said. “Before we go, there is one request we would like from the kahuna of this island.”

“Huh? What kind of request?” Nanu asked, raising his eyebrow.

“You see, Necrozma is too strong for us, so we’ve been looking for some Pokémon trainers to help us.”

“We heard that the island kahunas here are super strong!” Zossie said. “And we would like to have a Pokémon battle to see how good you are!”

Nanu didn’t look pleased hearing that. “I usually only accept battles from trainers taking the island challenge.”

“Is that so?” Dulse frowned, but he pulled out what looked like to be a blue pokéball with golden accents on it. It wasn’t like any pokéball Grimsley had seen. “Perhaps this will change your mind. Poipole, show yourself!”

Dulse tossed the pokéball up, and a purple creature burst out from it. Three spikes stuck out from its large head, each one having a gray nozzle that could spray any liquid out. It gazed everyone with its glowing blue eyes and chuckled. Grimsley’s lips were slightly parted and his breath hitched as he stared at the creature.

“Is that Adhesive?” Nanu asked, his voice on edge. Glancing over his shoulder, Grimsley noticed the kahuna’s chin raised and his eyes narrowed. Acerola and Becky gave him concerned looks.

“Ah, so you’ve met this Ultra Beast before?” Dulse asked with a pleased smile.

Nanu flinched and his face sunk. As he looked away from him he said, “Let’s just say it was a long time ago.”

Taken aback by that response, Grimsley blinked. He was curious what was Nanu’s experience with this “Adhesive”, but withhold from asking for now.

“Excuse me, but what’s an Ultra Beast?” Grimsley asked instead.

“Ultra Beasts are what we called the creatures in our own world,” Zossie said, and the purple creature floated toward her. “We call this little guy Poipole because it likes to spray purple poison.”
“What, poison?” Becky asked in shock, and Zossie giggled.

“Don’t worry, as long as it doesn’t spray on your face you should be fine!”

As if agreeing, Poipole nodded. It began flying around the group, and when it reached to Acerola she grinned and patted its forehead.

“It is cute!” Acerola said, and that made Poipole cheer. The alien-like Pokémon soon approached Grimsley and already he backed up.

“No, you may not spray on my kimono,” he said, holding his hand up.

Poipole titled its head at first, but once it got the message the creature frowned. When Poipole hoovered at Nanu next, it giggled and twirled around. He gave it a hard stare and sighed.

“Sorry, but I’ll still pass,” Nanu said as he faced back at Dulse and Zossie, the both of them frowning. “Funny you want a dark type trainer to go save ‘Alola’s light’. I have no interest in playing hero for a couple of strangers I’ve just met.”

“Fair enough if you don’t want to take this momentous task. Alola has a lot of other trainers we can look into.” After Dulse finished saying that, he clapped his hands. “Poipole, back inside.”

That caught Poipole’s attention and led the little Ultra Beast to fly back to him. Dulse pulled out the special pokéball and returned it inside its container.

“So Acerola, what will you and your group be doing next?” Colress asked.

“We’ll be going to Haina Desert to the Ruins of Abundance and pay our respects to Tapu Bulu!” Acerola said.

“Oh, cool!” Zossie said. “Dulse, and I went to the desert a few days ago. It was too hot for us!”

“We visited the altars of your other island guardians, but this one was the hardest for us to get through due to the sandstorms,” Dulse said. “We would like to investigate Poni Island’s ruins next when given the chance.”

“You best wait until a new island kahuna has been chosen there unless you want to cross paths with Tapu Fini’s wrath,” Nanu said, one hand on his side. “Then again, I don’t care if you listen to me.”

“We will keep that in mind, then.” Dulse nodded, and he faced everyone. “Well, Zossie and I still have a lot of work ahead of us so we must make our leave now.”

“I should be going myself, too,” Colress said. “I need to continue work on the machine for you two.”

“It was great meeting with you all!” Acerola said, grinning.

“Same here!” Becky said, expressing the same enthusiasm in her voice.

Zossie and Dulse gave everyone a nod and did their version of the Alola goodbye sign with their arms. After they headed out, Colress waved goodbye at everyone and began leaving himself. He took several steps, but stopped and spun around.

“Oh, before I leave, we’re overdue for a long needed conversation, Grimsley. I’ll be in this island for a while longer if you want to talk,” Colress said in a firm tone, and he finally made his leave.
“What’s that all about?” Becky asked.

Grimsley knew exactly what he wanted to talk to him about. After all, he had stormed out before Colress could finish explaining his involvement with Team Plasma. With a sharp frown, he said, “Nothing that concerns you.”

Nanu raised an eyebrow at him, and he shrugged. Grimsley was glad at least that the kahuna didn’t care to bother him about it. He was even more relieved when Acerola told everyone that they should get going to get their Mudsaddle at Route 13, so everyone jumped onto the jeep and headed their way out of Route 14.

xxx

The drive from Route 14 to Route 13 lasted several minutes. Many of the trailers that Grimsley had seen were still there, which he assumed belonged to the people that plan to go to Haina Desert, too. Becky pointed out that they’re getting close to the PokéRide ranch, so they made a pitstop once they reached there. Like the one in Route 12, it housed several Pokémon to help travelers get through the island.

The ranch was situated in between the oasis and Haina Desert with a few food stands and shops in between. They stopped when they were in front of an open field surrounded by a fence. Grimsley glanced around to see several Pokémon roaming outside and enjoying the fresh air. A man and a woman, who were feeding a Pelipper and Mudbray, noticed the group were here and went up to them, offering their guests warm smiles.

“Oh, hello there Becky!” the woman said. “Carols and I reserved a few Mudsaddle for your group here. We’ll get them right now.”

“Awesome,” Becky said, smiling. “Thanks for letting us borrow them, by the way!”

The woman returned with her own grin before she left with the man to get the Pokémon. They brought with them three Mudsaddle, each one carrying a bag of supplies on their backs. Grimsley approached his Mudsaddle, who greeted him with a cheerful neigh. He looked over his shoulder to see Nanu and Acerola hopping onto their own rides. Beaming, Acerola gazed down at her Mudsaddle and rubbed his cheek.

“Cotton here is a cutie!” she said, looked at Grimsley. “Yours is Walnut, I think?”

Grimsley looked at the name tag on his Mudsaddle, and indeed caught the name “Walnut” on it. “Walnut, huh? Sounds fine for a horse Pokémon,” he said as he hopped onto his ride.

“I got Spindle, but he should be fine I guess,” Nanu said, staring at the sky. Some clouds drifted by, but otherwise it was sunny.

Becky faced Grimsley and said, “Oh, Grimsley, these two are Yvonne and Carlos. They and a few others take care of the Pokémon here and make sure they get sent off to travelers smoothly.”

“Oh, so you’re Yvonne and Carlos? Hanna told me that you two oversee the Mudsaddle that help the people through the desert.”

The man, Carlos, grinned at him. “You must’ve met with her back in Route 12. But yes, Yvonne and I let other travelers borrow Mudsaddle if they want to go through the desert. We also have more Pokémon for those that want to use them for a different purpose.”

“I take it Hanna gave you a ride pager and told how it works, correct?” Yvonne asked, and
Grimsley said that she did. “Well, both Hanna’s ranch and ours will get contacted the second you ring it, and depending on availability and location either one of our places will send out a Pokémon for you. Nifty, huh?”

“I see. I’ll keep that in mind.” Grimsley gave a curt nod while Walnut snorted and shook her head.

“We’ll be heading to the desert now, but thanks again for giving them to us!” Acerola closed her eyes and smiled.

“I’ll be heading back to the Aether House now,” Becky said. “All of you have a fun and safe trip there!”

Everyone waved to Becky, Carlos, and Yvonne goodbye, and their Mudsdale headed out on a full gallop. As everyone was leaving the stable, Grimsley glanced over his shoulder to see Yvonne and Carlos getting back to work while Becky was already inside the car. He faced back forward to see the afternoon sun in the horizon.

xxx

A light sandstorm was already brewing once Grimsley, Acerola, and Nanu reached Haina Desert. They immediately put on their goggles so that no sand could get into their eyes, but some still got stuck on Grimsley’s hair and left a bitter aftertaste in his mouth. The Mudsdale’s hooves sunk into the heavy but soft sand, slightly slowing their movements. There were some rolling hills and rugged boulders like in Route 12 that he encountered, but Walnut was able to get through them with ease. On occasion a Sandile, Trapinch, or Dugtrio—the Alolan form ones in which luxurious golden hair grew out of their heads—would pop up and startled the group for a second. Grimsley was overwhelmed by the vastness of his surroundings and the sun burning his back.

“I noticed there were several boulders stacked up together next to the exit we took. Is there any significance to that?” Grimsley asked, sweat rolling down on his forehead and kimono. His throat grew dry.

“Haina Desert is very big, so there are boulders to let us know which path to take to the Abundance Ruins,” Acerola said. “2-1-4-3, that’s what my dad had told me.”

Grimsley hummed in understanding. “This desert reminds me a little bit of the Desert Resort back in Unova. We also have Sandile and Trapinch running around, and our own ancient ruins in the middle of the desert.”

“Really? Have you been there?”

“When I was around your age. It’s an old castle built by one of the twin brothers that founded Unova over two thousand years ago. The ruins now had been buried in sand and an abundance of Pokémon taking residence there.” It was also where Team Plasma had tried to find one of the legendary dragons’ stones, but he didn’t mention that.

“An ancient castle sounds amazing! My family used to be royalty, but we don’t have buildings like that here. Instead we have old property.”

Grimsley’s eyebrow quirked with great interest. He recalled Iokua telling him how Alola didn’t have a monarchy anymore, but he didn’t expect Acerola to be one. “So your family has fallen from grace too? Iokua mentioned that your father had passed away.”

“He got really sick when I was young, and that’s how I ended up in the Aether’s House. My family
haven’t been in real power for generations, but they’re still well known in this island.” Acerola’s frown changed to a bright smile. “Anyways, I think you’ll like the Ruins of Abundance!”

Grimsley returned a small smile of his own, admiring the girl’s spirit. He turned his gaze at Nanu. “How often do you visit there, Nanu?”

“Less than I should have.” Nanu stared over his shoulder at them. “I should thank you guys for getting me off my butt doing this.”

“He just hates the desert,” Acerola whispered. She giggled behind her hand, and Grimsley responded with a shrug.

Everyone went silent the next few minutes. Grimsley looked around to see a few Pokémon running around and the sandstorm growing stronger. After he popped open his canister and drank some water, a Pokémon’s screech was heard that caused him to freeze and almost drop his drink. That also startled Acerola and Nanu.

“What was that?” Grimsley asked.

“Sounds like a Pokémon’s hurting,” Acerola said. She pointed to the right. “Look!”

Grimsley turned around to see a short distance from them a Gabite biting a Sableye’s chest. The Sableye screeched and tried to pull away from the Gabite’s grip to no avail. Grimsley’s palm already touched a pokéball, but Nanu raised a hand at him.

“Let me handle this,” the kahuna told him. He threw his own pokéball, and his own Sableye came out. Grimsley could tell this one was female as the gem on her chest was bigger than the male ones and her eyes were a darker blue. Nanu ordered her to help the other Sableye out, and she sprung into action.

His Sableye’s arm was shrouded in dark smoke and she rushed at the Gabite. She slashed at the dragon’s belly, which caused him to open his jaw and release the Sableye he was eating. The Gabite turned his attention to Nanu’s Sableye and attempted to ram onto her. She jumped out of the way, and while in the air her eyes glowed and she fired a Power Gem that scorched her opponent’s back. The Gabite roared in pain and slashed at Nanu’s Pokémon with his fiery claws. Sableye hissed and glared at him, a large cut left on her face. She retaliated by forming cold mist around her arms and punched Gabite’s chin. Part of the Gabite’s jaw froze, and he collapsed on the ground.

Grimsley couldn’t take his gaze off throughout the whole battle. He looked at Nanu, who sighed and stared at the fallen Pokémon.

“Kid, vampire boy, go check on that Sableye there while I fix this Gabite up.”

Grimsley blinked upon being called that, but he hopped off Walnut and grabbed a potion from his bag. He and Acerola approached the other Sableye, who had been hiding behind a boulder after being saved. The Pokémon backed away and stared at them.

“Hi there!” Acerola said, stretching her arm at him. “We’re here to help you feel better.”

When Acerola looked at Grimsley and nodded at him, Grimsley handed her the potion he was holding. The Sableye continued to glare at them, but he eventually walked up to them and Acerola sprayed the potion on him. Most of the scratches and bite marks on his chest and legs faded, and he gave a sound in satisfaction.
“There you go!” Acerola flashed the Pokémon a wide grin and offered him a few berries.

Grimsley couldn’t help but smile a little. He looked over his shoulder to see Nanu giving the Gabite several sprays and the ice on his jaw melted. The Gabite stood up and growled.

“Now you don’t cause anymore trouble, all right?” Nanu said. The Gabite glared at him for a few seconds, and he headed out.

“Thanks for helping this Sableye out!” Acerola said as Nanu and his Sableye walked up to her and Grimsley.

“That was more troublesome than anything.” Nanu scratched the back of his head and said, “Gabite likes to take down Sableye because both of them want Carbink. First I’ve seen this happen in action.”

“What’s a Sableye doing alone in a desert?” Grimsley asked.

“Probably a stray looking for crystals or something. Odd for sure, but eh.”

“Sounds plausible.” He shifted his gaze to see Nanu’s Sableye talking to the other one. It seemed like she tried to comfort him as the Pokémon would nod at her on occasion. After a few more exchanges, the wild Sableye grinned and shook her hand. He waved goodbye at everyone, and began leaving.

“Looks like that Sableye is feeling better now!” Acerola said. “Shall we keep going?”

Nanu grunted in agreement and returned his Sableye inside her pokéball. “Come on, we should find a spot to rest before it gets dark.”

After everyone jumped back onto their Mudsdale, Grimsley stared at Nanu’s tired face. He didn’t blame him for being annoyed over needing to break that fight up. The three continued on their way through the desert.

xxx

When the sandstorm died down by sunset, the group decided to set up camp for the night. Their Mudsdale stayed close to them, drinking at a nearby spring. They gathered around a fire and ate malasada that they had brought with them from the Aether House. There were some passing conversations in which Acerola explained more of Alola’s sites, and in turn Grimsley described Unova’s own cities and attractions to her and Nanu. Acerola often squealed whereas Nanu would respond flatly, “Sounds nice”. Shortly after they finished their meal they called it a night and tried to get some sleep.

For over an hour, Grimsley stared at the night sky with his arms behind his head. He thought over how much he had learned about Alolan culture in the short time he traveled through here and how everyone he met so far had welcomed him with open arms. Well, save for Nanu, his distance already bothering him a little. As he sat up, Grimsley looked around to see the fire crackling and Acerola sounding asleep. Spindle, Cotton, and Walnut rested too, all three Mudsdale curled up together for warmth. Nanu’s sleeping bag, though, was empty; he instead leaned his back against a palm tree and he stared down at something he was holding in his hand. Grimsley pulled out from his own sleeping bag and stood up, dusting some of the sand off of his clothes. He approached Nanu slowly from behind, and when he was closer to him he saw that the other man carried with him a police badge that had his photo identification and a second picture with him and two other people. Grimsley’s stomach dropped.
“That’s an international police badge,” Grimsley said and that caused Nanu to flinch and glare at him.

“Aren’t you supposed to be sleeping?”

“I could say the same for you. So does that mean you once were an Interpol officer? And you with those other people, are they officers, too?”

A deadpan expression crossed Nanu’s face. When he remained silent, Grimsley continued badgering him.

“When did that picture took place? Must’ve been several years ago from the looks of it. And did you three get along well?”

“Can you stop asking so many questions? You’re giving me a headache,” Nanu snapped, rubbing his forehead.

“You were outside with that badge there, so I can’t help but be curious.”

“Have you heard the saying, curiosity kills the cat? You’re heading towards that path now.”

With a smirk, Grimsley folded his arms against his chest. “You need to do better than that to scare me.”

Nanu shifted his glare away from Grimsley and said, “The other guy in the picture, that’s his badge not mine.”

Grimsley rolled his eyes, not buying it. “Oh please, you two don’t look remotely alike! Clearly you’re avoiding this topic.”

“Well congratulations on that great deduction, Sherlock.”

Grimsley cocked his head, and then shook it. “I can see why you’re known for your warm personality.”

He gazed back at the picture. Nanu stared at the camera while one of his friends, a man in the tan jacket, beamed and the other, a woman in a dark suit, made a peace sign with her fingers. There was one person in the picture he was familiar with.

“The man in the tan jacket, I recognized him.”

Nanu stared at him with a shocked face. “You met him before?”

“Oh, now who’s the curious cat here?” A grin stretched across Grimsley’s face as he realized that he could use Nanu’s reaction to his advantage. “Well, how about a trade? I’ll tell if you do.” He waited until Nanu sighed and dragged his hand across his face.

“Urgh, fine you win. So how you two met?”

“He and a few of his colleagues had to interview me after Team Plasma had barged in the Pokémon League. I didn’t come in contact with him after that.”

Thinking about that incident left a sour taste on Grimsley’s mouth. He remembered the officer asking him, in a thick accent, several questions over what happened while N and Team Plasma took over the league. After the interview was over, the man offered him his card and to contact him if he had any new leads but Grimsley didn’t bother to, even after he found out about Colress being a
member of the new version of Team Plasma. Iris, Alder, and Cheren were the ones to inform the officer of Team Plasma’s resurrection two years after.

“You did mention Team Plasma earlier when we met with that scientist guy and his friends there,” Nanu said, and he scratched his chin. “Come to think of it, you were upset when he said he wanted to talk with you. Did something went on between you two?”

Grimsley’s stomach twisted and an odd noise left his throat. Before responding, he bit his lip and tugged at his scarf.

“Colress and I didn’t just meet a few times. We were in a relationship for a while, but that’s something I don’t want to discuss at this time.”

Nanu’s face fell. “Oh, I didn’t see that coming. I won’t push the subject further, then.” He stopped and cackled. “Really, Interpol’s letting that man with the weird hair work with them? Boy, they suck.”

“Not funny,” Grimsley said, scowling. He wasn’t in the mood for him poking fun at his former partner. “Now it’s your turn to trade.”

“Fine, fine,” Nanu said, giving him a dismissive hand wave. “I had been in the international police for a little while, a pretty sweet gig. However, there was one mission where me and two of my colleagues were involved in but one of them, the woman in the picture, ended up gone.”

Grimsley’s frown deepened. “I’m sorry to hear that.”

“You have nothing to be sorry about. She and I didn’t get along all that well, but I was very upset when that happened.” Nanu put both the police badge and photo back inside the pockets of his short sleeved jacket. “Not long after that, I retired from that gig, becoming a regular cop and ending up being this island’s kahuna.”

Stroking his chin, Grimsley said, “That reminds me, you said earlier that you had no choice as this island’s kahuna. Do you mind telling me how you were picked?”

Nanu’s eyes grew wide. He shifted his head and shoved his hands onto his pants’ pockets. “I’ll tell you that story when we reach the Ruins of Abundance.”

“Oh, leaving it as a cliffhanger, are we?” A smirk pulled onto Grimsley’s lips. When Nanu didn’t respond, he told him that he would be going back to sleep and slipped back inside his sleeping bag. Before closing his eyes, he glanced at Nanu to see him deep in thought with his eyes shut and arms crossed. Grimsley eventually drifted off to sleep.

xxx

The next morning, the group packed up their stuff and headed out. There was no sandstorm today, so they could see more clearly where they were going and follow the directions from the rock’s formations better. They trudged through more of the desert for another few hours until Nanu informed them the temple was just up ahead. Grimsley and Acerola followed Nanu and his Mudsdale a little further, and they stopped when the group reached in front of the ruins’ entrance. Everyone dismounted of their Mudsdale.

They stepped inside a cavern with a large cobbled path that was above piles of sand. Grimsley’s shoes echoed through the walls as he followed Nanu and Acerola from behind. The air inside wasn’t as hot as outside, but sweat still spilled onto his eyebrows. He spotted two Sandile resting with their mother Krokorok. The larger crocodile Pokémon stared at them before going back to
They entered the next room and stopped in the middle of the wooden floorboard, Grimsley lifting his gaze to see the altar loomed over them. Two wooden stairs branched out, and on top stood a totem with a menacing face painted on it. Piles of stone on the bottom stood as its foundation. Thick vines trailed along the walls like a river.

“I promised that I would tell you how I ended up being chosen as the kahuna,” Nanu said, and that made Grimsley tear his gaze off the altar. The other man shuffled his feet as he looked up.

“Around a few years before I returned back to Alola, the last kahuna did something bad and was stripped of his title. Turns out, the big guy himself had some other plans for me. One night he appeared and gave me both this Z-crystal and Z-ring. I thought it was a dream, but turns out it wasn’t. Wanting some answers, I went to the Ruins of Abundance and met Tapu Bulu here. It wanted me to battle him, and I was like why not even though I didn’t stand a chance.” He stopped to chuckle. “I did get my butt kicked, but before it could finish off my last Pokémon, Tapu Bulu healed them and chose me as the kahuna. I guess it sensed I was a mess and gave me some sense of purpose.”

While listening to Nanu’s story, Grimsley’s fingers rubbed against his coin. “I must say, that is a fascinating tale there.”

“It is!” Acerola said. “I was very young back, but I remember being excited over the island having a new kahuna.” She faced Nanu, her smile stretching across her face. “Aren’t you going to pay respect to our island guardian liked you said you would?”

“Huh?” Nanu’s eyes blinked. “Oh, right. Let’s go up the altar right now.”

After Grimsley put his coin away, he took the stairs, the wooden foundation creaking beneath his feet, and joined Nanu and Acerola up the altar. He and Acerola were behind Nanu, who stared at the large totem.

“So, it’s been a while, Tapu Bulu,” Nanu said, scratching the back of his neck. “I’ve been busy with cop duties and watching over another island, you know? Anyways, looks like everything is in shape. I brought in a couple visitors and we came here to pay our respects. I’m not all into the ‘I give my blessings’ fluff, but… yeah.”

When he finished, Nanu put his hand on the totem, which glowed a light green color. Grimsley gasped in awe while watching the spectacle before him. Soon the light faded and Nanu stepped aside for Acerola to be in front. She squeezed her eyes shut and touched the totem, but unlike Nanu there was no glow. Yet she still looked calm. After Acerola finished, she told Grimsley in a chipper voice that it was his turn.

He swallowed, took two steps, and his palm rested on the totem. No light bathed all over his skin, the same way that had happened to Acerola, but the totem’s surface grew warm against his fingers. He tried to think of something to say to Tapu Bulu in his head, only to settle with he wished the rest of his trip in Alola was a safe one and that he would find what he was looking for.

“I noticed that the totem glowed when you touched it, but not when Acerola and I touched it,” he said when facing back at the two.

“That’s because I’m the kahuna and I tend the ruins if needed,” Nanu said. “Tapu Bulu doesn’t just show itself at random.”

Acerola nodded. “Yep, Uncle Nanu is right on that. The tapus tend to not let their presence be known or felt by anyone else unless they deemed you worthy.”
Grimsley hummed in understanding. “Do you think I might get to meet Tapu Bulu?”

Nanu said, “Who knows, maybe you’ll get lucky.”

“Lucky, huh? Hopefully luck will smile upon me.” Grimsley shot one last glance at the altar and smirked. Shortly after, everyone headed back down and left the room, leaving the ruins.

xxx

When everyone was back outside, the hot air and harsh sunlight returned to blast Grimsley’s face. He wasn’t looking forward to going back to the sandstorm, but trekking out of the desert shouldn’t be too hard thanks to Acerola and Nanu knowing where they were going.

“Would you like to head back to the Aether House with us, or you’re going back to sleep somewhere else?” Acerola asked as they were getting ready to hop back onto their Mudsdale.

“I think it’s reasonable for me to return with you. Perhaps I’ll drop by Blush and Hounlanki Mountain before I leave the island.”

“You definitely should! Both have great science observatories you can check out!” Acerola beamed at him.

“Glad to hear,” Grimsley said, smiling back. He looked at Nanu, who went back to his flat expression. Grimsley thought back to their interactions and what he had told him of his past. Despite his less than friendly demeanor, he was the most interesting person he had met.

And Nanu could be what he was looking for in this trip.

“Hey, Nanu.”

That caused Nanu to stop Spindle and shift his stare at Grimsley. “Yeah?”

Grimsley flinched, hesitant to say it at first. He cleared his throat. “I felt lost while being in the Elite Four, so I gambled by visiting here. Before I return to Unova, do you think we can have a Pokémon battle?” He glimpsed at Acerola, a stunned expression on her face. With a smirk, Grimsley approached Nanu. “Come on, take a chance.”

Already Nanu furrowed his brow at him and grunted. “What makes you think I’ll battle you? You were with me when I declined that astronaut man’s request.”

“Grimsley’s from the Elite Four, though! A kahuna versus an Elite Four would make a great battle!” Acerola said in excitement, clenching her fists.

“Honestly, I never cared for the Elite Four and their glamorous lifestyle. Right now, I’m not interested.”

“I understand, it was foolish of me to request that on a whim.” Grimsley sighed in disappointment. He gazed up at the sky and got up on his Mudsdale.

As he and the others were heading off, he glanced over his shoulder to see the Ruins of Abundance growing farther from him. Grimsley drew another heavy sigh, turned his head back, and looked forward the rest of the way.

Chapter End Notes
Haha, I dropped the bomb on Grimsley and Colress, huh? I admit I haven't considered that pairing until I made some changes to this chapter. The Gen 7 games has them visiting Alola. And um, my mind suddenly went Colress and Grimsley interacted and probably dated too oops.

The two will meet again, so their past relationship will get resolved (story will still mainly focus on Grimsley and Nanu being tired dark uncle grumps together).
Snatch

Chapter Summary

In which Nanu gets a nightmare, Grimsley gets something important of his stolen and battles a totem Mimikyu named Mimikins, and Professor Kukui drops by for a visit in the Aether House.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys, so this story isn't dead! Sorry for the long delay, a few reasons for that:

-During March and April I've been revising Chapters One to Four. I added/rearranged/took out a few scenes and fixed some prose too. I made udpates on what changes I did in the corresponding chapters notes if you guys are interested.

-Speaking of revising, I did like several versions of this chapter and I think the version I'm posting I'll settle for now. Maybe. Also this grew bigger than I anticipated, oops.

-Been busy working on some Tumblr fanzines! Funny story about that, I was writing one idea for it, but after it went over 4K words I scrapped it for various reasons and did another idea last minute. Shortly after that, I got accepted into another fanzine and was focusing on that too.

-Been distracted with watching playthroughs of Detroit Become Human. Also, I may or may not want to do an androids au story that features Nanu and Looker (the latter as an android)...

-Loads of real life sheinigians and other fandom commitments.

Considering how slow I've been updating lately and I'm considering some changes to stuff from the original outline, I don't know when the next one will be. I hope to not it too long a wait, though! Thanks to bobandbill for the great betaing!

Quick trivia before we begin the chapter: I have Acerola nickname the totem Mimikyu "Mimikins" as that's the name of the ghost Mimikyu in the dub version of the anime!

Nanu was relieved to be out of the desert. He felt like a Magikarp being cooked in a frying pan, and the sand on his clothes and sandals irritated him. He could tell Grimsley didn’t look comfortable out there too, especially with him carrying that black scarf around.

The orange sunset sky faded as stars slowly popped up, and a cool breeze kicked in. He, Grimsley, and Acerola returned the Mudsdale to Carlos and Yvonne, the two glad the Pokémon were a great help and more than happy to lend them again whenever they want. After that, they waited until Becky came to pick them up. Everyone took their seats from before.
“So how was the trip through Haina Desert?” Becky asked as she was driving them back to the Aether House.

“It was great!” Acerola said. “Before going to the ruins, Nanu saved a Sableye from being eaten by a Gabite. Grimsley and I helped healed it!”

“Really? Sounds like an adventure.”

“Going through the desert was icky, but we managed to make it to the Ruins of Abundance and pay our respects to Tapu Bulu.”

“Did you guys get to see Tapu Bulu, then?”

“Nah, the big guy didn’t show itself up, but it did communicate with me when I touched its totem,” Nanu said. When he had touched Tapu Bulu back in the ruins, bright light shrouded his whole body like a silky robe and his skin tingled. The island deity’s voice reached him, appreciating that he came to visit him even if had been a while. The tending the ruins part of his kahuna duties was at least done and over with.

“That’s still pretty great though!” Becky said, beaming. “How about you, Grimsley? Did you enjoy the trip?”

“I did, yes,” Grimsley said. “I told Acerola and Nanu how much the desert reminds me of the one I went to in Unova, and the Ruins of Abundance was lovely. When we get back to the Aether House, I’ll take a nice hot shower.”

“I think we all will.” Nanu glanced over his shoulder to see Grimsley staring outside with tired eyes and his arms folded against his chest. Acerola meanwhile hummed blissfully, her feet kicking up in the air.

Becky chuckled. “Well, you two looked exhausted, so I’ll whip you guys up something for dinner in the meantime.”

As Nanu leaned back against his seat with his arms behind his head, he gazed at the starry night sky in front of him. Shower and dinner did sound nice after that trip through the desert. The rest of the car ride went on in silence.

Xxx

He found himself in Poni Meadows again. The streaming waterfall and Oricoro’s cries rushed through his ears, and the sweet nectar from the purple flowers hanging from the trees clung to his nose. Cold mist began to form, almost obscuring his vision. Next to him, his Persian rubbed her head affectionately against his leg.

“I’m ready when you are, Triple Zero.”

He recognized that voice like one would with a former lover. Nanu turned around to see Resolution Cave, and outside its entrance stood a woman in a dark suit.

“She, what are you doing here?” he asked with a slight croak in his voice.

“Did you forget already? We need to get to Glutton.” She pressed her lips and folded her arms against her chest. “And you’re supposed to be my superior.”

Sana, always with the sharp tongue. Nanu pinched the bridge of his nose and shook his head.
“We can throw insults at each other later. Right now, I need you to get away!”

“Huh, why?”

A sharp pain pushed through Nanu’s chest. He frowned.

“I shouldn’t be saying this, but you’re being used. Interpol is sending you to your funeral.” He took a couple steps forward, his hands gripping on her shoulders. “Please, run while you still can.”

Sana’s eyes shot wide open with horror. After a long stare, she dropped to her knees and a bitter laugh left her throat.

“So you knew all along that I was a Faller. Even if you had warned me beforehand—”

The sounds of the waterfall and Oricorio were replaced by wind and static. The sky darkened and mist thickened to smoke. Persian moved her gaze all over and let out a worried meow.

Just then, a large crab-like beast burst out from the cave. It opened its jaw, which was stuck in the middle of its torso, and screeched. Both the bigger eyes on Glutton’s face and the tinier ones on its much smaller head glowed the same blue color like its insides. Two tendrils with large pincers sprouted out, one of them grabbing Sana’s waist. Nanu urgently called out her name despite his voice being drowned out by Glutton’s roar.

(By now Sana would’ve screamed for help and he and 100KR had their Pokémon fight off that creature. After the fight was over and Sana was long gone, he would see his partner pale and shake so it was up to him to snap him back to reality. Where was 100KR now?)

As she was hung upside down like a lynched victim, she cracked a wicked smile. More static, Sana’s voice distorting.

“—it’s already too late.”

Glutton threw Sana into its mouth like a berry, and snapped its jaws straight through her midsection. Blood dripped onto Sana’s mouth and on the ground. It crunched on her several more times before swallowing her up.

Nanu stood in frozen horror. His arms shook and he gritted his teeth. He snapped his head to his Persian and ordered her to attack with Power Gem. Persian hissed and the gem on her forehead lit up. She released a bright beam straight at Glutton’s mouth, only for it to swallow the assault and scratched its smaller head. The beast used one of its tendrils to yank Persian and crushed her with its pincers. Persian howled in pain and got tossed to a nearby tree before collapsing to the ground. Glutton roared and stomped, shaking the earth.

After returning Persian, Nanu grabbed another pokeball from his belt, but Glutton swatted it from his hands and snatched his arm. Nanu struggled to wiggle out of the beast’s grip, and before he could scream Glutton closed its jaws shut and everything went red.

Nanu’s arm slammed onto the coffee table the instant he jolted awake. He screamed in pain and cursed as he rubbed his arm. He glanced around to see he was inside the Aether House and that he slept on the couch. His breathing grew heavier with each second. The commotion caused Oranguru to stir from his sleep and growl in confusion. Acerola, Grimsley, Becky, and the kids rushed out of their rooms.

“We heard both you and Headmaster screaming, is everything all right?” Becky asked, panic in her
“I just had a bad dream and I scared the Oranguru, that’s all.”

“That must be a really bad dream if you woke up Headmaster like that,” Gracie said, frowning. Behind her, the Oranguru growled as if in agreement.

This wasn’t the first time he had that nightmare. It would sprung up to him like a cat’s claws digging into his shoulders. Over ten years now, and it wasn’t going to stop anytime soon. He sighed, sat up straight, and rubbed his forehead.

“Do you need a glass of water? You look kinda pale there,” Acerola asked.

Nanu shook his head. “Not thirsty. I’m fine, really.”

Both Becky and Acerola exchanged worried looks at one another.

“We all should go back to sleep,” Becky said. “Let’s go.”

Acerola and the kids followed Becky back to their rooms while Oranguru went back to the reception area. Grimsley, who had been raising his eyebrow at him the whole time, stayed behind.

“Is there something that you needed?” Nanu asked, giving him a vacant stare.

“Oh, I was just wondering something.” A hesitant look crossed Grimsley’s face. He shifted his gaze away from him and scratched his neck. “That nightmare you had, would it happen to be about that late colleague of yours?”

Hearing that made Nanu grimace. He jerked his head and glared at him.

“What I told you back at the desert was all you needed to know.”

Grimsley shot him a funny look, and he sighed. “Fair enough. Well, I’ll be going to sleep now. Good night.” He waved goodbye at him and went inside his room.

When left alone, Nanu collapsed back on the couch and stared up at the ceiling. Between that and how Grimsley wanted to have a Pokémon battle with him, he wondered why that man had a great interest in someone as messed up as him. He hoped that Grimsley didn’t plan to stick around too long now.

His thoughts were interrupted when one of his pokéballs from the table burst open and Persian appeared. She approached him with an upset look on her face and growled. Nanu frowned.

“Perry...” he said in a low voice. Usually he wasn’t one for nicknames and was content calling her Persian ninety-nine percent of the time. Perry, short for the periwinkle flower and what Iokua would often call her. Perry was saved for whenever he was his most vulnerable, like right now.

Persian let out another sad growl, had her front paws on Nanu’s stomach, and nuzzled against his neck. Her silky fur was warm against his skin. Nanu couldn’t help but crack a smile and scratch her forehead.

“Just another one of those nightmares buddy, don’t worry about me.”

Nanu continued petting her a while longer until she decided to rest her head on his stomach. He smiled, fine with her company for tonight. He soon drifted off to sleep.
By morning, Grimsley woke up to see how Nanu was doing. In the living room he approached the couch the kahuna had slept on, but only a pillow and unmade blanket were left behind. He then went inside the dining room to see Acerola was eating while the kids playing were playing with their Pokemon. Becky and Nanu weren’t around.

“Do you know where Nanu and Becky are at?” he asked Acerola.

“Becky is taking care some of the Pokemon now and Nanu’s taking a walk outside. Want to join me for breakfast?”

“Sure, since I’m here.” Grimsley took a plate of pancakes and sausages from the counter and joined Acerola at the table. While eating, he thought back to Nanu having a nightmare last night. He swallowed a piece of his sausage and put his fork down. “Say Acerola, did you know about Nanu having bad dreams?”

After Acerola finished swallowing a piece of her pancake, she frowned and gazed down at her plate. “I’ve seen him been woken up by nightmares before, but he never wants to talk about it. Maybe that’s why he’s taking a walk now.”

“How about him working for the international police? You know about that too?” Grimsley asked, and Acerola nodded.

“I’ve overheard some people that knew him say that, and when I asked him he only told me he had retired. Are you worried about him, too?”

That caused Grimsley to stop drinking his milk midway through and almost choke. He set the glass down and said, “Not exactly. Moreso bothered how he reacted last night.”

“Oh, okay.” Acerola flashed him a grin. “He’s the type of person that likes to keep things to himself, so I got used to it!”

Grimsley blinked, taken aback by Acerola’s expression there. As he continued eating his meal, his mind switched to when he asked Nanu to battle with him. The kahuna declined the offer, but Grimsley still desired to have one with him. He cleared his throat.

“There’s one other thing I wonder. Do you know any way to convince Nanu to battle me?”

Acerola’s face perked up, and she hummed in deep thought. “Why don’t you take up the island challenge?”

“Are you sure? I’m a little too old for that.” Grimsley asked, and Acerola realized his point.

“It would be silly for someone from an Elite Four to do it. Still, if you have a Z-crystal, perhaps Nanu will let you battle him!”

Grimsley stared down at his plate while chewing the last few bites of his breakfast. He wondered if there were other ways to get a Z-crystal besides being in the trial challenge, but he wasn’t so sure how to go about that.

“Perhaps he’ll change his mind once we get more acquainted with one another. That’s the only approach I can think of.” After wiping his mouth with his napkin, he leaned back on his chair with his arms behind his back. “For your trial, you need to take some pictures and then battle a large
“Mimikyu, correct?”

“Yes. Mimikins’s a fierce one, but she’s also sweet and fun to play with like the one we have here!”

Grimsley gave her a puzzled look. “You gave the totem Pokémon a name?”

“Ah huh! I knew Mimikins long before I became a trial captain, and I thought it would be cute to give her one.”

Grimsley blinked, and then he glanced over his shoulder to see Gracie laughing and twirling around with Yungoos while Mimikyu tried to keep up with their pace. He now imagined that Pikachu look-a-like being several times its size, and that made him shudder.

“Can’t believe there’s a bigger version of that strange Pokémon,” Grimsley said, pointing at the Mimikyu. That earned him a giggle from Acerola.

“Oh, can we do your trial?” Gracie asked excitedly as she and Hunter approached her. Their Pokémon followed them from behind.

“Not yet as the totem Pokemon will be too strong for you guys. Also you can’t do trials until you’re eleven.”

Both Gracie and Hunter groaned in disappointment and their shoulders slumped. Behind them, Yungoos and Elekidd let out upset sounds too while Mimikyu jumped and screeched. With a grin, Acerola got out of her chair and squeezed the kids’ shoulders.

“Tell you what, later today I’ll teach the both of you my Z-move!” she said, and the kids’ faces lit up. “I can even teach you too, Grimsley!”

“Really?” Hunter asked. When Acerola reassured them that she would, both children cheered and bounced up.

Grimsley smiled a little and crossed his arms against his chest, and thought it was sweet of her to do that. “I never tried Z-moves myself, perhaps I’ll take your offer on that.”

“Hey, what’s with all that cheering?” someone asked in a stern voice. Grimsley turned his head to see Nanu stepping inside with a gray cat Pokémon beside him. The feline looked very similar to the white furred Persian he fought on occasion in the Pokémon League, but she had a much bigger head and a blue jewel on her forehead.

“Acerola’s gonna teach us her Z-move later today!” Gracie said, pumping her fist in the air.

“Huh, is that so?” Nanu looked down at the children and shrugged. “Guess it won’t hurt for them to learn those early.”

“How’s your walk this morning, Uncle Nanu?” Acerola asked.

“Eh, it was okay I guess. Persian wanted some fresh air, too.”

The Persian let out a low growl and began walking. When she reached Grimsley and rubbed her head against his hip, he scratched her chin. Her fur was soft and silky, like Raz’s fur.

“How’s your walk this morning, Uncle Nanu?” Acerola asked.

“Eh, it was okay I guess. Persian wanted some fresh air, too.”

The Persian let out a low growl and began walking. When she reached Grimsley and rubbed her head against his hip, he scratched her chin. Her fur was soft and silky, like Raz’s fur.

“An Alolan Persian, hm? She’s very lovely.”

Nanu gave him a blank stare, and then a small smile pulled on the corner of his lips. “She has been
with me since I started my island challenge.”

“I also have a cat Pokémon. My Liepard, Raz.” After Grimsley finished petting Persian, she walked back to her owner’s side. “I find it interesting we both raise dark type felines.”

Immediately Nanu’s face went back to a flat expression. “Us being dark type trainers is probably the only thing we have in common.”

“Of course, I don’t expect us to have many similar interests,” Grimsley said, frowning. So much for being acquainted with him. He looked up at the clock on the wall. While it was morning here, it would be mid to late afternoon already in Unova. “I’ll need to make a phone call now.”

Before Grimsley left, Acerola let him know he could ask Headmaster the Oranguru for the tablet at the reception desk as Becky was busy at the moment. He thanked her for letting him know and did just that.

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Grimsley went back inside his bedroom to use his tablet to call his mother. When he reached her, she was overjoyed to talk with him again. He mentioned everything that happened in his trip including meeting up with Colress, which shocked his mother. Back when they dated, she was very supportive of their relationship and even teased that they would get married someday. Thinking about that now left him drained.

“Will you talk to him before you leave?” she asked. That made Grimsley clench his fist. Colress’s words before he left with the Ultra Recon Squad echoed back in his mind. He told her that he didn’t want to think about him right now; that left his mother confused, but she respected his wishes and didn’t pursue further. After that, he continued talking about his adventure through the desert with Nanu and Acerola and what happened in the Ruins of Abundance.

“It’s not surprising that Kahuna Nanu rejected your request. You only just met him!”

“I’m well aware of that. I’ll trying to get to know him better, but it might prove to be difficult.”

His mother hummed in understanding. “From what you told me of him, he’s not very social. Give it time, and he might warm up to you.”

“And if he doesn’t want to battle with me?”

“Then don’t force him to. You already had him take you to the desert with a coin toss.”

Grimsley tensed. She was right that he did force Nanu to take him to the Abundance of Ruins. Doing that same trick to get him to battle him wouldn’t work.

“Don’t worry, that won’t happen.”

“I hope so. Wouldn’t want you to get kicked out of the island for that!” She paused, then asked, “So, any plans you have for today?”

“I might explore Ula’ula Island a bit more. I heard there’s a power plant and observatory here that might be interesting. And you?”

“Well, I plan to go see your father soon since today is our anniversary.”

“Really? I was so busy in Alola I totally forgot.”
“Thought so. You have his ring with you at least, right?”

Grimsley’s eyes widened. His father had given him his wedding ring before he died as a token to remember him by. Every year on the anniversary of his parents’ wedding, his mother would visit his grave and he would wear his ring. He believed he didn’t forget to bring it with him on this trip, so he told her to wait a moment and checked his bag. After almost a minute, Grimsley found the ring and slipped it on his finger.

“See, I have it with me!” he said with a grin, showing the ring on his finger to her.

Minato’s face lit up and she clapped her hands. “Wonderful! Now keep it close with you at all times.”

Grimsley rolled his eyes and sigh. “I haven’t lost it yet, so I think I’ll be fine.”

“If you say so. I need to head out now, but it was great talking with you again!”

Smiling a little, he gave a single nod. “Enjoy your upcoming visit with Dad. I’ll give you another call soon.”

He hung up on her and gazed at his ring that gleamed with the morning sunlight. His father would be just as excited how he was doing on his trip if he were here today. Grimsley rose out of his seat and left the bedroom.

xxx

After Grimsley went back to the lobby and returned the tablet to the Oranguru, he went outside without letting anyone else know. There was a beach just down the slope, so he headed toward the shore. As he got closer he spotted Becky there with a Gorebyss and another pastel colored fish he never saw before. When the Aether employee noticed Grimsley, she beamed and waved at him.

“Hey, Grimsley! Taking a walk too?”

“You can say that. Just a lot on my mind now.” He shifted his head for a second. “I’m curious, how well do you know Kahuna Nanu?”

Becky looked to be taken back by that question. “Er, I know he has a family and is both a policeman and kahuna here, but otherwise not much really.”

“I see. Acerola told me he’s someone that keep things to himself.”

“Yeah, I get that vibe from him, too. When he was outside earlier, he didn’t want to talk about his dream last night.” She shrugged, but then her face brightened back up. “Do you want to help me feed the water Pokémon?”

Grimsley responded that he would be delighted. Becky handed him a bag of shrimp and he approached the Pokemon. Both the Gorebyss and the other fish Pokémon swam up to him and raised their heads, waiting for their meal. He fed them the shrimp and watched as the Pokemon chew on their food in satisfaction. A large wave crashed onto the shore, almost reaching up to Grimsley’s shoes.

“This is another interesting looking Pokémon here,” Grimsley said when the pastel colored fish rubbed its rough skin against his hand. He spotted several cuts on its body that looked to be healed.

“That’s a Bruxish, and she has strong psychic powers and an even stronger jaw! I found her and
Gorebyss injured, so me and a few scientists here helped them recover.”

Grimsley let out a low hum, already figured Becky would do that. After he finished feeding them, he picked himself back up. The two fish Pokémon began to swim, not straying too far from the shore. He faced back at Becky.

“You seemed very passionate with your work. How did you end up in the Aether Foundation?”

“I always wanted to do something like this, so a friend of mine referred me to one of the higher ups. I first worked in one of their stations in Akala Island, but then I transferred here.”

“I bet it isn’t easy protecting all the Pokemon from harm,” Grimsley said, and Becky shook her head.

“No it’s not, and there are occasions where we were too late saving them.” As soon as she finished saying that, the Bruxish and Gorbyss reached to her and she patted them. “We saved more Pokémon than losing them, however, so it all works out!”

“I see. Well, that’s good to hear.”

After swimming near the shore a while longer, the fish Pokémon finally moved further into the ocean and dived down. Grimsley gazed at Becky to see her wave at them goodbye. The late morning sunlight bathed her face like a spotlight on stage.

“Alola, Bruxish and Gorebyss! Come back anytime!”

Grimsley stared at the ocean a brief moment before a cawing noise caught his attention. He glanced around to see three Murkrow on top of a palm tree squawking and flapping their wings. They stopped and gave him keen stares. A cold sensation crawled through the back of his neck.

“That’s a nice ring you have there,” Becky asked, and that caused Grimsley to whirl his head at her. He gazed down at the ring on his finger and gave a sad smile.

“It’s my late father’s, and I wear it on special occasions. Today was supposed to be my parents’ anniversary.”

Becky’s eyes grew wide, and her gaze fell on the sand. “Sounds like you got along with your parents. I haven’t spoken to mine after…”

“After what?” Grimsley asked, quirking an eyebrow.

“Let’s just say they weren’t happy that I only wanted to date women.”

So Becky was unfortunate to have close-minded parents, Grimsley mused. Frowning slightly, he felt sorry for her.

“I told Nanu this already, but you remember the scientist Colress from a few days ago? We actually dated for sometime, but went through an unpleasant breakup.” It felt weird saying that to her after his conversation with his mother, but he felt it would comfort her that he too prefer someone of the same gender.

Realization hit Becky’s face, and she nodded. “I totally get that, must be tense meeting with your ex.” She rubbed the back of her head and let out a sheepish laugh. “I’m sorry, didn’t mean to let out my sad story like that.”
“Seems you did well on your own in the end, you should be proud. Also, if you ever want to talk about relationships and such, let me know.”

A shocked gasp left Becky’s throat. She relaxed and said, “Thanks, that means a lot.”

Grimsley smiled back, touched by her response. He remembered how he comforted the boy he had battled in the Battle Buffet back in Melemele Island, and he did the same to Becky. Sometimes he would say kind words to trainers that went through the Pokémon League, but he couldn’t recall the last time he did that in a genuine manner.

In that instant, the Murkrow’s caws grew louder and Grimsley’s expression changed. Becky screamed for him to watch out, but the birds were already pecking at him. Gritting his teeth, he pulled out two pokéballs from the knot around his waist and released them. Raz and Roulette, his Liepard and Absol respectively, gave out determined glares and readied themselves.

“The both of you, get these pesky birds out of the way!”

The two dark types sprang into action. Raz jumped up as her tail shined into a white light, and she used it to hit one of the Murkrow on the face. Roulette meanwhile waited until the scythe on her forehead glowed purple and slashed the other two Murkrow. All three birds cried in pain and flew away. Grimsley sighed in relief, Raz and Roulette approaching by his side.

“Are you all right?” Becky asked with a worried face. Grimsley noticed the ring on his finger was missing and his throat went dry.

“I’m fine, but the birds got my father’s ring.” He looked down to see his Liepard and Absol giving him sad gazes, as if they recognized what had happened.

“Maybe Kahuna Nanu and Acerola would know where the Murkrow went. Let’s go talk to them now.”

Grimsley grunted in agreement and nodded. He returned his Pokémon back in their pokéballs, then he and Becky rushed back to the Aether House.

Once they made it there, both Acerola and Nanu were in the lobby. Acerola was teaching the children some sort of dance move while Nanu sat on the couch and watched with his Persian curled up on the floor sleeping. Grimsley assumed it must be the Z-moves he and the girl talked about before.

“There you two are!” Acerola said cheerfully when she saw them. “I was teaching the kids my Z-move!”

“You wanna see?” Gracie asked. She and Hunter kneeled down, moved their bodies like a floating ghost, and had their arms forward as if they were about to grab them. Grimsley blinked in confusion while Becky beamed and chuckled.

“Woah, you guys scared me there!” she said, and both children grinned in satisfaction.

“Thanks!” Hunter said. “We still gotta practice more, though.”

“You kids are still very young, so there’s no rush to get it perfect,” Nanu said. “It took me some days until I was able to get my own Z-move right.”

“Oh, can you teach us your Z-move, too?” Hunter asked. Both he and Gracie gave hopeful expressions, but already Nanu shook his head and raised his arm.
“Black Hole Eclipse is too advanced for you kids! I would wait at least another year or so before attempting it.”

“Uncle Nanu’s right,” Acerola said when Hunter and Gracie pouted at his response. “I tried that Z-move during my island challenge and I almost got caught in that black hole! Don’t worry, it won’t be long until you guys can use it!”

Grimsley’s face perked at the mention of Black Hole Eclipse. He was very interested in learning that Z-move, but knew Nanu wouldn’t let him if he didn’t want to battle him. He pushed that thought off for now and cleared his throat.

“Do any of you happen to have lost something to the Murkrow here?”

Nanu quirked an eyebrow at him. “Not really, but I have a Honchrow that sometimes bring back a shiny bottlecap or the like. Did that happen to you?”

“A few Murkrow got his ring while we were outside,” Becky said. “We’re wondering if either of you would know where they went.”

Tapping her chin, Acerola looked up at the ceiling deep in thought. “Actually, I do see Murkrow hang out at the Thrifty Megamart sometimes.”

“The same one we visited a couple days ago?” Grimsley asked, and she nodded.

“Ah huh! I often go there to do some preparations and see that Mimikins’s doing okay.”

Immediately Grimsley’s face twisted into a disgusted look. She did talk about a large Mimikyu earlier this morning and he hadn’t like the sound of that. “So there’s a chance I might run into that Pokémon.”

“Maybe, but as long as you don’t disturb her you should be good. I can come to make sure that doesn’t happen.”

An impish grin pulled on the corners of Nanu’s mouth. “You scared of some Mimikyu coming behind you?”

“No!” Grimsley said defensively. He crossed his arms and looked away for a second. “I rather not deal with it, that’s all.”

“Well in either case that’s where we should go,” Becky said. “Acerola coming with us will be a big help.”

“Does this mean the kahuna man will watch us while you’re away?” Hunter asked, and Nanu’s eyes went wide.

“Ah huh!” Acerola said with an enthusiastic nod. She looked up at Nanu. “You’ll take good care of them, right?”

An annoyed look crossed Nanu’s face, but then he sighed. “Seems I have no choice.”

“Okay, great!” Acerola cheered and clapped her hands.

Besides dealing with the Murkrow once more and the possibility of meeting an overgrown Mimikyu, Grimsley would be reminded of his meeting with Colress a few days ago. The thought of going back there made his skin crawl.
Acerola told everyone that they would be back in a few hours and he followed her and Becky outside. He hoped that they would be able to find the ring there.

Xxx

Becky took Grimsley and Acerola to the Thrifty Megamart once more. As soon as everyone got out of the jeep, he tensed upon seeing the ruined building once more. It was already in such a poor state outside, so inside would be even much worse.

This was where he talked with Colress not that long ago. To think he would cross paths with him in this very region. His hands grew clammy as he tried to push that thought away.

“I found them!” Acerola shouted, and he and Becky turned to see the three Murkrow fairly close to the entrance. When the birds spotted them, they cawed angrily at them and flew inside one of the cracked windows above.

A lump formed inside Grimsley’s throat. “Do we have to go in?”

“We do if we want to get your ring back,” Acerola said with a grin, her hands behind her back. Becky gave him a funny look.

Grimsley stared at them and sighed in irritation. “Fine, let’s get this over with.”

He, Becky, and Acerola stepped inside, and it was as bad as he imagined. Several boxes and carts, some of them with toys, were left behind. Torn flyers and shattered glass scattered all over the floor. As they slowly made their way through the store, dusty shelves sometimes would block their path and it was fairly dark to see.

“Man oh man, can’t believe you have this sad place for your trial site,” Grimsley said when they squeezed themselves through another few shelves.

“This is my first time coming in here,” Becky said as she glanced around. “When I was younger my friends and I would hear stories of real ghosts living here. I thought it was just the older folks scaring us.”

“There’s some truth to it, though,” Acerola said, cracking a smile. “Some of the ghost Pokémon are thought to be souls from humans that passed on. But don’t worry, the ones used for the trial won’t hurt you!”

Grimsley’s lips twitched as he listened in on their conversation. In Johto there was a lot of respect for the souls of the deceased and heavy warnings to not disturb their graves. The night after his father had passed away, his mother set aside his picture and incense on the corner of the living room and whispered a prayer for the legendary Ho-Oh to carry his soul to a better place. He looked down to see no ring on his finger and his frown deepened.

They continued to move a few more minutes. When a loud crash was heard, everyone stopped and saw carts and boxes being thrown in the air. Grimsley and Becky flinched while Acerola pouted.

“All right you guys, that’s enough!”

Upon being screamed at, a Shuppet and a Haunter appeared. Both Pokémon glared at one another.

“You know those two?” Grimsley asked, blinking in confusion.

“Yeah. They don’t get along all that well and I often have to stop them from fighti--ahhh!”
Before Acerola could finish, she dodged an incoming box being thrown at her direction and the ghost Pokémon resumed throwing objects like catapults.

“Um, do you want me to help you calm them down?” Becky asked.

Acerola let out a deep breath and nodded. “That would be appreciated! Grimsley, you go find the Murkrow while Becky and I deal with those ghosts.”

Grimsley made an acknowledging grunt, and left Acerola and Becky to confront the ghosts. While moving he could hear Acerola arguing with Shuppet and Haunter from behind, but he didn’t pay particular attention as to why that fight had occurred. Eventually he stopped when he saw a room and stepped inside.

He found himself to be inside what would be the store’s backroom. It was mostly bleak and empty except for the several pictures and drawings of Pikachu on the walls. Several caw sounds were made, and Grimsley whirled around to see the three Murkrow near a pile of trinkets. One of the birds held a golden ring on its beak while the other two fought over a bracelet. He needed to approach them with caution, so Grimsley took a couple steps forward and waved at them.

“Hello, there! It seems that you have stole something very important to me.”

The two Murkrow that were fighting earlier stopped and dropped the bracelet. The other Murkrow still had the ring on its beak. All three birds tilted their heads and stared blankly at him. Grimsley gave them an icy glare.

“I know you guys love shiny things, but that ring isn’t yours to keep. If you would return it back to me, that would be appreciated.”

After a few seconds had passed, the Murkrow cawed in laughter and flapped their wings. With a scowl, Grimsley stepped forward and pointed his finger at the birds.

“Now listen here you little thieves! Either you return my ring right now or I’ll have my Pokemon hurt you once more!”

While he spoke, the Murkrow glared and looked as if they weren’t going to listen to him. Shortly after, their expressions changed to panic and launched themselves in the air, flying towards the door’s exit. Grimsley blinked in confusion but noticed his ring had been left behind. He picked it up and put it on his finger.

“Looks like my threat worked,” Grimsley said with a proud grin. He felt a tap on his shoulder, and when he whirled around he froze.

In front of him was a large sized Mimikyu. It--no, “she” Grimsley remembered Acerola referring her as--made sharp hisses and wobbled like an inflated balloon. Two shadowy claws lashed out from underneath her rag, ready to strike. So it wasn’t him but the Pokemon that scared the birds away. Grimsley’s chest tightened in shock.

“You’re Mimikins, right? Acerola has told me a lot about you.”

Mimikins tilted her head and stared at Grimsley for a moment, and nodded.

“I apologize for intruding here, but a few pesky Murkrow stole my ring and I came to get it back. It won’t happen again.”

Mimikins continued to sway back and forth. When she hissed once more, Grimsley shot her a
baffled look.

“What is that? I don’t understand.”

Seemed to take offense by that response, Mimikins screeched and made several slashing movements with her claws. Grimsley blinked, but he had an idea what she requested now.

“You want me to battle you?” Already Grimsley shook his head. “I would have to decline. I’m only here to get my ring back, that’s all. Now if you’ll excuse me, I’ll be on my way.”

He took a few steps forward, only for Mimikins to skid in front of him and jeered. That made him flinch for a second. More hissing noises came out from her.

While staring at the totem Pokémon, Grimsley bit his lower lip. Mimikins seemed very insistent in wanting to fight with him. He wondered how the young trainers had fared going against this monstrosity; she could be a good challenge.

“A Pokémon like that taking a gamble on me? Fine, I’ll play along!”

Grimsley pulled out a pokéball and released his Liepard. Upon seeing Mimikins, Raz tensed and growled.

“Don’t let that Pikachu wannabe fool you, Raz! Shadow Ball, now!”

Raz shook off her anxiety, giving out a confident scream. A crimson ball was formed in front of her, and she tossed it at her opponent. The attack hit Mimikins’ chest, but she didn’t flinch and her head tilted slightly as if her neck was broken. Both Grimsley and Raz looked on in confusion.

As soon as the Mimikyu whipped out a shadowy claw towards Raz, Grimsley told her to watch out. The cat Pokémon was able to avoid a few instances of that, but Mimikins eventually grabbed her leg and slammed her at a nearby shelf. Raz growled in pain and picked herself up slowly, but otherwise she was fine.

“That Mimikyu’s stronger than I anticipated,” Grimsley said, taken aback by that Pokemon’s strength. A realization occurred to him, and he grinned. “Use that to your advantage with Foul Play!”

Raz turned her face at her trainer and nodded. Mimikins threw her claw at her once more, but she dodged and grabbed her opponent with her jaws and front legs. She flipped the Mimikyu in the air, causing her to hit the ceiling and crash on the floor. Proud of what she had done, Raz held her chin high.

A few seconds passed until Mimikins picked herself up. She let out an urgent growl, as if calling for someone. Sure enough, a Banette popped up from thin air and cackled, which caught Grimsley off guard.

Both ghost Pokémon already let loose their assaults. Mimikins lashed out her claws at Raz, scratching her several times. Banette meanwhile vanished through the floor for a moment and then became visible and punched Raz on the face. Grimsley narrowed his eyes at the opposing Pokémon.

“Well that’s a bit unfair. In that case, I’ll bring in another Pokémon, too!”

Grimsley took out Roulette’s pokéball and released her. After shaking her fur, the Absol turned around and shot Mimikins and Banette a sharp look.
He ordered for Raz to focus on Mimikins while Roulette take care of Banette. Mimikins approached Raz and about to use her wooden tail at her, but the feline was able to block the hit with her own shining tail that then caused them to back away.

While that happened, the Banette released several white flames at Roulette, only for her to wave her scythe and set up a rainbow forcefield around her. The Will-O-Wisp bounced off from Roulette’s Magic Coat and hit back at the Banette, burning it in the process. The Banette screeched as small flames began to lick all over its body.

“Great! Iron Tail once more, Raz. Roulette, Night Slash go!”

Before Raz made her move, she readied a pouncing stance and licked her mouth. Her tail glowed and she slammed Mimikins on the face. The Pikachu look-a-like hissed and retaliated by crossing her claws, which lit up a faint green color, and sliced her like a gullentione. Raz gritted her teeth and her legs shook, two deep cuts visible on her body.

Roulette’s scythe turned purple and she slashed at the Banette, leaving a large cut on its body. The marionette winced and its eyes and body glowed. It fired a series of crimson rings at Roulette, and when she got caught in that her eyes grew wide. The Absol kept shaking her head and growled aggressively, as if seeing a disturbing scene in front of her. The Banette held its belly and laughed, then stopped when it got burned once more.

“Whatsoever you’re seeing isn’t real!” Grimsley yelled out to Roulette. He knew that was Night Shade as he had seen Shuantal used it on her opponents on occasion. Not as deadly as the move Nightmare, but still a concern for him if not handled quickly. “Shake it off and fight back!”

Upon hearing her trainer’s voice, Roulette stopped thrashing around and barked. She leapt onto her opponent and sunk her jaws onto its stomach. The Banette screamed and struggled to get out from her grip. A moment later, Roulette tossed her opponent like a yarn ball and the Banette collided onto a cart. The ghost Pokémon was about to prepare a small Shadow Ball between its hands, only for the flames finally taking a toll on its body. It dived and sunk through the floor, disappeared just like that.

Roulette’s expression switched from grinning in satisfaction to horror when she turned around and noticed Raz visibly tired from her fight with Mimikins. The Absol howled, rammed onto the Mimikyu with great speed, so fast she almost became a blur, and left a large gash on her disguise. Just as Roulette approached Raz’s side, Mimikins screeched and dark vapors poured from her. She swung her tail at them and they flew in the air and crashed on the floor; the force of that attack caused her to recoil and scream in pain. While seeing all of this, Grimsley’s eyes grew wide.

Both of his Pokemon slowly picked themselves up, breathing heavily and their legs trembling. Mimikins didn’t wait for them to recover as she went and jumped in the air, and that caused Grimsley to yell at them to get out of the way. Roulette was able to leap out of the way while Raz struggled to move and got pounced by Mimikins. Thick white smoke exploded and obscured Grimsley’s vision, Raz’s growls tugging at his chest. When the smoke faded, Raz collapsed and lied on the ground.

“Raz!” Grimsley rushed to Raz’s side and let her head rest on his lap. Beside him, Roulette looked down and whined. “You deserve a good rest,” he said with a sad smile and returned her into her pokeball.

Mimikins hissed and waved her claws around, more dark mist surrounding her body. Grimsley’s face tensed and he faced Roulette.
“All right, it’s all up to you now. Think you can handle it?”

Already Roulette gave him a determined look and barked. A pleased smile touched Grimsley’s lips.

“Good, now go and grab that ragdoll like you did with that Banette!”

Mimikins stretched her claws out and tried to grab Roulette, but she was able to dodge her assaults and leaped on top of her. She sank her teeth onto the Mimikyu’s head, causing her to screech and trash around. Roulette hung onto Mimikins, like a trainer on a Rapidash, until she grabbed her with her claws and threw her away.

As soon as Roulette got herself back up, Mimikins’ claws lit up a green color and she made a large gash on her side that caused the Absol to howl in pain. She countered by having her scythe lit up and left another deep cut onto Mimikins’ rags. The Mimikyu hissed and backed away.

Roulette snarled and followed up by having one of her paws be surrounded by dark vapors and slashed Mimikins with her claws, tearing another piece of the ghost type’s clothing. Mimikins screamed and lashed her own claw onto Roulette, only for the Absol to block the attack with her own. After a short struggle with them pushing their claws at one another, Mimikins let go and smacked Roulette’s face with her tail. Roulette yelped and took deep breaths, as a large bruise appeared where she was hit. Like last time, the Mimikyu recoiled and cried in distress. Realizing the totem Pokémon was close to collapsing, Grimsley grinned and stretched out his arm dramatically.

“Finish this right now!”

His Pokémon barked and rushed at Mimikins with a high burst of speed. She slammed onto the Mimikyu, her scythe going through Mimikins’ clothing. Mimikins gave out strangled noises and crashed on the floor. When her opponent didn’t get up, Roulette winced but grinned and held her chin high. Grimsley wiped his forehead and sighed in relief.

“You and Raz are marvelous,” he told his Pokémon, scratching her chin. Roulette gave a joyful bark and rubbed her cheek against his hand.

After he finished petting her, Grimsley noticed that Mimikins wasn’t in the room anymore. He assumed she vanished like any other ghost Pokémon, so he grunted and mentioned to Roulette that he would heal her and Raz back in Aether House. He returned Roulette in her pokéball and left the room.

Still inside the abandoned supermarket, Grimsley had tried to find Becky and Acerola the last few minutes. Fortunately they caught him first near the store’s exit.

“There you are!” Acerola yelled as she and Becky rushed at him. “After dealing with the ghost Pokémon, we tried to find you.”

“Well I managed to find the Murkrow and got my ring back. After that, I stumbled upon Mimikins and she wanted me to battle her.”

Acerola’s mouth dropped and her hand close to her face. “Really? Oh dear, I could’ve prevented that from happening!”

“You’re right that she’s a tough foe, but the battle was a good experience as to how your region’s trials work. Now that I have my ring back, it’s time that we leave this wretched pl—”
Before Grimsley could finish, he screamed when Mimikins reappeared behind the ladies. Becky jumped while Acerola giggled.

“Hi, Mimikins!” Acerola greeted, waving at her. “How are you doing?”

Mimikins made clicking noises while swinging back and forth. Acerola grinned and nodded.

“Oh, you mean Grimsley? He just told me you two had a battle!”

Grimsley shot Acerola a funny look. “You can understand what she’s saying?”

Acerola nodded. “I can talk to ghost Pokemon since I was little. My father and many of my ancestors were able to also.”

“Really? Huh, sounds like the royal family is more interesting than I anticipated.”

“Acerola talks about Mimikins a lot, but this is the first time I’m seeing her myself,” Becky said.

Mimikins continued to sway back and forth. When she hissed once more, Acerola listened what she was saying and she gasped.

“Mimikins wants to give you something before you leave.”

Before he could respond, Mimikins approached him and dropped a small crystal on his palm. He and Becky shared baffled looks.

“Is this a Z-crystal?”

Acerola beamed and nodded. “A Ghostium-Z to be specific!”

With a small frown, Grimsley shook his head. “I can’t have this. I’m not taking part in the island challenge.”

Mimikins spoke again, and he waited until Acerola translated it for him.

“Mimikins says you’re a nice change from the kids she has battled, and wants to give it to you as a thanks!”

Like how gym leaders would give badges to the winning trainers taking the Pokémon League, Grimsley believed the Z-crystal should be given to the trainers participating in the island challenge. On the other hand, this was a good opportunity to try out Z-moves and perhaps have Nanu take him seriously and battle him. He would keep it for now, maybe give it to Shauntal as a souvenir like he promised her. He gave Acerola a firm nod.

“All right, I’ll accept this,” he said, and that made Acerola cheer. Grimsley slipped the crystal inside his kimono. “Since I have a Z-crystal, you think this will convince Nanu to battle me?”

“Maybe! We should go show it to him right now!” Acerola faced Mimikins and patted her. “My friends and I have to leave now, but I’ll come back to see you soon!”

Mimikins sounded upset at first, but then she nuzzled herself against Acerola, causing her to giggle.

“Congratulations on getting it!” Becky said to Grimsley, grinning. He smiled back.

The large Mimikyu waved goodbye to everyone with her shadowy claw. Everyone did the same to
her, and they left the store.

Outside the sunlight hit Grimsley’s eyes and face, but he was grateful for that after being stuck inside for a while. As they headed back to the jeep, he thought about those posters in the backroom and it bothered him once more.

“Say Acerola, do you know anything about Mimikins having posters of Pikachu?”

Both Becky and Acerola stopped and they gave him odd looks.

“Huh? What you mean?” Acerola asked.

“The ones in the backdoor. There were many posters of that Pokémon on the wall.”

“That’s not possible, because there isn’t another room on the back of the store!” Acerola beamed at Grimsley, her hands on her hips. “For a dark type trainer, you’ve to come up with something better than that!”

“Maybe one of the ghost Pokémon created that backdoor,” Becky said, though she didn’t sound too sure herself.

“I know there are Pokémon that could pull off small illusions, but a whole room sounds a bit of a stretch,” Acerola said. Right after, she shivered. “Brrr, I feel like I’m getting chicken skin. Let’s hurry up to the jeep and get back home!”

Acerola walked a few steps ahead of them with he and Becky followed suit. Grimsley gave the building one last look and winced. The sooner they leave, the better.

xxx

As he got older Nanu hated babysitting more and more. He didn’t mind watching over Acerola when she was younger, annoying as she was, but any other children and his head would explode. And this afternoon he was stuck watching over the two Aether House rascals.

“Can we play with your cat?” Gracie asked. She leaned closer toward Nanu, who was sitting on the couch.

“For the fourth time, no.” Nanu rested his elbow on the armchair, his palm pressing his cheek. Persian was curled up on the floor and glanced up for a second. “Now let me and Persian get back to our naps.”

“I’ll only just pet her a little bit!” Hunter said. Before Nanu could respond, the boy dropped on his knees and cupped Persian’s cheeks. Gracie too approached her by giving her a tight hug. The feline growled uncomfortably.

“Hey, stop that!” Nanu already got up and pulled his Pokemon away from the children. Persian glared at them. “How many times did I have to tell you? Her head is not a toy!”

“Aw, but her fur is soft and face is fluffy!” Gracie said. Behind her, Hunter nodded in agreement.

“You kids already have Pokemon you’re taking care of. You should know better than to do that to ones not your own.”

Both children hung their heads and their shoulders slumped. Hunter then said, “Fine we won’t do it again.”
“Good. Now go play somewhere else. Maybe the Oranguru there would like some company.”

“You mean Headmaster? Okay!” Gracie said, and then she and Hunter ran off to the Oranguru at the receptionist desk.

Nanu sighed and rubbed his temple. He sat back down and watched as the Oranguru drummed his chest and lifted the children up onto his shoulder, much to their delight. Someone then stepped inside, and Nanu shifted his head to see Professor Kukui approaching him.

“Hey, Nanu!” Kukui said with a grin and waved at him. When he saw Nanu with the children, his eyes went wide. “Oh, did I interrupt anything?”

“Nah you didn’t. I’m just babysitting these rascals right now,” Nanu said, scratching the back of his head.

Gracie and Hunter noticed Kukui here, so they jumped off the Oranguru’s shoulders and hurried toward the two men.

“Alola!” both Gracie and Hunter cheered. They moved their arms like a rainbow sign.

“Alola to you, too!” Kukui said and greeted the same way. “I’m Professor Kukui, a researcher from Melemele Island. And who you guys might be?”

“I’m Hunter, and she’s Gracie!” Hunter said. “We both want to become trainers and take on the island challenge when we get older!”

Kukui chuckled. “That’s a tough but awesome goal to strive for. I wish you the best of luck!” He dropped halfway to his knees to be at their level. “I take it you two live here?”

Both children nodded, then Gracie said, “Aether House is our home!”

Kukui glanced around for a second and whistled. “This is some fancy living space you got here, yeah! The Aether Foundation sure went all out.”

Nanu rolled his eyes and stared at the ceiling. “Went all out” was an understatement. This building, the employees, the headquarters, and even the Ultra Squad he encountered a few days ago. Everything about the Aether Foundation was too white, too bright, too pristine. Maybe it was the dark-type trainer side of him talking, but he didn’t like that at all.

There was a loud beastly grunt, and Nanu turned around to see the Oranguru pointing to one of the rooms. Terrified looks struck the children’s faces.

“Ah oh, looks like Headmaster wants us to clean our room now,” Hunter said. He faced back to Kukui and beamed. “Nice talking to you, though!”

“Same here, cousin!” Kukui said, grinning. “We can talk more next time if you like!”

The children cheerfully said goodbye to Kukui and rushed to their room. Kukui let out a blissful sigh and sat down on another couch across from Nanu.

“They seem like sweet children, yeah?”

Nanu snorted and shook his head. “You think so? Earlier they tried to play with Persian’s head and that made her angry.”

His Persian growled in disgust, as if responding, “Yes, that had happened.” Kukui chuckled.
“Hopefully they learned to not do that next time.”

“Same here.” Nanu then asked, “What brings you here to this miserable place?”

“Well, first, there is construction going on over in Mount Lanakila because of the new Pokémon League being formed.”

“The Pokémon League, you mean with the gym leaders and Elite Four?” Nanu asked, and Kukui nodded.

“Like that, but without the gym leaders. The island challenge will still be here, and the League will be similar to our region’s kahuna gauntlet that was usually the final test.” Kukui leaned back against the couch, his grin widening. “I’m rounding out our strongest trainers for the Elite Four, and so far Molyne and Olivia agreed to it! Our former Island Champion Kahili is coming here to help too, woo!”

“How about Hala? Did you ask him?”

“T did, but he declined also. He didn’t want to get too distracted from his kahuna duties.”

Nanu gave him a long stare. “Let me guess, you’re gonna ask me if I want to join as an Elite Four. If so, then I’ll have to reject your offer.”

“Oh, but why?” Kukui asked, his eyes blinking in confusion.

As he rose out from the couch, Nanu crossed his arms and squeezed his eyes shut. “I had no choice in the matter when I was chosen as the kahuna of this island, so I’m not gonna let you force me into more responsibilities I’m not interested in.”

Kukui regard him in silence, then he offered him a supportive smile. “Well, it’s awesome that you were honest with me there. No need to worry, yeah! However, if you can think of someone who should take your place as the Elite Four, then let me know, all right?”

“Sure, I’ll let you know if I think of someone,” Nanu said, his lips twitching. Even if he wasn’t interested in those high profile trainers, he would still choose one carefully. “Speaking of the Elite Four, not sure if you’ve heard but we have one visiting now.”

Kukui’s face lit up. “Yeah? And who might that be?”

“Grimsley from Unova’s Elite Four. I recently gave him a tour to the Ruins of Abundance, and he wants me to battle him.”

“Really?” Kukui grinned and chuckled. “He’s a dark type trainer like you, yeah? Perhaps battling him will be a good Power Trip experience!”

Nanu cringed at that move pun and grunted. “I initially declined, but something tells me he’ll keep persisting. We’ll see if I later change my mind.”

“Hey everyone, we’re baaaack!” Acerola yelled out all of a sudden. She, Becky, and Grimsley entered the lobby.

“Oh good, you guys are back,” Nanu said in a bored voice. “Professor Kukui’s here now.”

“Alola, Professor!” Becky said. “I’m Becky, one of the employees here.”

“That’s great!” Kukui said, smiling. “Well nice to meet you, cousin!”
“Professor Kukui?” Acerola looked toward where Professor Kukui was and gasped. “Oh my gosh, long time no see!”

“Indeed it has, Acerola!” Kukui flashed her a wide grin. “You’re as bright as always, like a Dazzling Gleam!”

“Why thank you! I always try to keep a positive attitude, especially with me being a trial captain.” Acerola glanced around and asked, “Huh, where are Gracie and Hunter?”

“The Oranguru wanted them to clean their room,” Nanu said and shrugged. “Guess the kids respected him enough to do just that.”

“Yes, they love Headmaster very much,” Becky said. “I’ll go and check on them now.”

As soon as Becky left, Kukui rose out from his seat and approached Grimsley. He smiled and pulled out his hand in front of him.

“And you must be Grimsley, Unova’s Elite Four! Welcome to Alola, cousin!”

“An Alola to you, too,” Grimsley said and shook Kukui’s hand. “So you’re a Pokemon Professor, hm? What’s your main study?”

Kukui’s grin grew larger. “I specialize in Pokémon moves! Nothing gets my blood pumping more than two Pokemon battling all out, woo!”

“Pokémon moves? My, that sounds fascinating,” Grimsley said, sounding interested.

After waiting for them to finish introducing themselves, Nanu asked Grimsley, “So did you managed to get your ring back?”

“Yes, I have. I didn’t have to fight against the Murkrow again for it, but the totem Mimikyu didn’t want me to leave, and so I battled her.”

“He did!” Acerola said and nodded. “After the battle, Mimikins gave him a Ghostium-Z as thanks!”

Nanu raised his brow, his face pulling in a shocked expression. “Hold up, that Mimikyu gave you a Z-crystal?”

Grimsley seemed hesitant at first as he glanced at Acerola, who beamed and gave him a thumbs up. He showed Nanu on his palm a small dark purple crystal that gleamed like a star. The corner of Nanu’s lips twitched and he placed his hands on his sides. Kukui approached behind him and whistled.

“Well, I’ll be!” Kukui said. “It’s not often a Pokemon gives you a Z-crystal. Doesn’t the Kommo-o totem often give them out?”

“He does, but not as often as you think. Even when using a Ride Pokémon, it’s still a pain to get there.” Due to the trial in Vast Poni Canyon not having a captain, Nanu was the one to make sure the trial goers didn’t get eaten by the totem Pokémon or anything else that might go wrong. At least he didn’t have to make the trip to Poni Island all that much.

“Since Grimsley has a Z-crystal now, perhaps that’ll convince you to battle him!” Acerola said with a grin, and that made Nanu’s eyes grow wide.
“What?” he asked, an edge in his voice, and glared at Grimsley. “So all of that was a ploy to battle me?”

Both Kukui and Acerola flinched upon witnessing that reaction. Grimsley didn’t tense, but a frown did tug at his lips and forehead.

“I did admit to wondering about a way to battle you, but going to the Thrifty Megamart wasn’t my initial plan. I genuinely just wanted to get my ring back.”

Nanu continued to furrow his brow at him. A part of him wanted to yell at him to get off the island and never come back, but for some reason he didn’t have the heart to do that. He dragged out a deep sigh.

“I’m still not going to battle you, but you can keep that Z-crystal. That can be a souvenir at least.”

“Right, that is fair.” Grimsley’s voice was firm, only for him to lower his head and broke eye contact from him. Nanu already expected him to be a little disappointed there.

Acerola made a disapproved hum, but then she faced Kukui and smiled. “Oh, I wanted to ask Professor, how’s the forming of the Pokémon League going?”

“It’s going great, yeah! Right now I’m recruiting some folks to be the Elite Four, but Nanu here declined the offer.”

Acerola gasped and she turned toward Nanu. “Really? But why?”

“This was before you guys came here, but I told Kukui that I couldn’t refuse Tapu Bulu choosing me as kahuna. And I’ll be darned if I’m forced into the Elite Four in because some guy asked me to.”

A disappointed look crossed Acerola’s features. “Aw, that’s too bad. I think you would’ve been a great Elite Four!”

Nanu’s face twisted into a grimace. That girl was always over optimistic, bless the tapus.

“Wait, you’re the one establishing this region’s Pokémon League?” Grimsley asked Kukui.

“That’s right! I want to show the world Alolan trainers are just as great as trainers from other regions, and thought a Pokémon League is a perfect opportunity to do so. In fact, since you’re from the Elite Four, I was wondering if you’re up with giving me and the Elite Four a few pointers on what it’s like to be in the League.”

Grimsley pressed his lips and scratched his chin, looking to take his request seriously. Shortly after, he gave Kukui a small smile. “I see no harm in doing that. All right, I’ll do it.”

“Awesome! If you like I can show you the construction site at Mount Lanakila and introduce you to my chosen trainers.”

“I would like that, thank you,” Grimsley said with a nod.

Nanu folded his arms against his chest and watched their exchange. When they finished, he gazed down at Persian and scratched her cheek.

“Well, I think it’s about time I head back to Po Town. The Meowth there probably finished eating the food I left them and are waiting for me.”
Both Kukui and Acerola reacted normally while Grimsley gave Nanu a blank stare. His reaction there also didn’t surprise him.

“Oh, okay!” Acerola said, beaming. “Thanks for taking me and Grimsley to the Ruins of Abundance! I’ll come visit you again soon!”

“Indeed I appreciate you showing me that sacred place,” Grimsley said with a genuine smile. “Hopefully we can meet again soon.”

“You have a safe trip, yeah!” Kukui said.

Nanu turned around and did a lazy goodbye wave without facing anyone. After he and Persian stepped outside, he glanced at the building and grunted.

He felt this wouldn’t be the last time he saw Grimsley.
Malicious Moonsault

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, Grimsley gets a lesson on Z-moves, and Aether House makes another phone call to Nanu's son, Iokua.

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone! Okay, during the months of October and November I wrote enough new material that can be broken down into three chapters! Originally I was going to have separate Grimsley and Nanu's scenes for Ch 6, but Nanu's scene got a bit long and so decided to put that for Ch 7. Hence why this chapter is on the shorter side. Ch8 is another Grimsley centric chapter which will have a couple quick battles and a fun Pokéani reference, how exciting!

So yeah, expect Chapters 7 and 8 fairly soon too. After that, I have ideas for some scenes and I have some prewritten material I can use as Ch 9 and 10, but there is a chance I'll restructure the later half of the story and see if that's feasible first. Thanks to bobandbill for the great betaing!

Grimsley decided to stay in the Aether House for another night. After Becky healed his Pokémon with potions, Roulette and Raz curled up together and rested on the floor for an hour or so before going out to play with Gracie and Hunter’s Pokémon. Kukui had been making several phone calls over preparations for the Pokémon League and other personal matters.

In the meantime, everyone was outside near the beach and Acerola and the children were teaching him the Z-move for the Ghostium-Z, Never Ending Nightmare. Each time he did it, he felt like a small child in a ghost costume going trick and treating.

“That wasn’t scary enough!” Gracie said and pouted after Grimsley practiced the pose the fourth time already. “It gotta be like this!” Like earlier this morning, she picked herself up slowly and jumped forward.

“But I did just that!” Grimsley said, rolling his eyes. He glanced to see Roulette and Raz watching from the sidelines, giving baffled stares.

“You did the poses right, but it wouldn’t hurt to be a little more menacing,” Acerola said, and that earned her a glare from Grimsley.

“I’m sure Shauntal could pull this off better than I can,” he said.

“She might have fun with that, I think!” Acerola giggled. “We’ve been practicing the poses for a while. Why don’t I show you how it really looks like?” She pulled out a pokéball from her dress, and yelled out, “Go, Pebbles!”
After she tossed the ball, bright light burst out and a Pokémon that resembled a large sandcastle appeared. The shovel on its head began rotating like a radar machine.

“That’s a peculiar-looking Pokémon,” Grimsley said in a curious tone. Even his Pokémon tilted their heads with slight interest.

“Pebbles here is a Palossand!” Acerola said with a grin and patted Pebbles on the forehead. “Many Pokémon are scared of her because Sandygast and Palossand are known to swallow up everything, but she’s well behaved.”

As if agreeing, Pebbles hummed and stretched her body up and down like a wave. Grimsley blinked upon seeing that, but then he forced a smile.

“I’ll take your word on that. So about that Z-move?”

“Right!” Her grin widening, Acerola showed Grimsley her purple Z-Ring bracelet on her wrist. “I’ll be demonstrating my Z-move with Pebbles here. Watch closely!”

Acerola closed her eyes, took a deep breath, and struck her Z-move pose; Grimsley caught her bracelet glowing brightly like a star. Pebbles also attempted that move like her trainer did, and a golden aura surrounded them both.

The air grew colder, and purple flames burst out where Pebbles was. Grimsley and his Pokémon stirred when dark liquid oozed out on the ground and several tendrils, similar in appearance to Mimikins the totem Mimikyu’s claws, grabbed and covered a tree which burst into flames. After that performance, Pebbles collapsed like a sinkhole and dragged out a heavy breath.

“That’s awesome! I can’t wait to try Z-moves with Elekid!” Hunter beamed, and he turned to Elekid who expressed the same joy by jumping up and down.

“Yeah, me too!” Gracie said, pumping her fist in the air.

“So that’s a Z-move, huh? Not too bad,” Grimsley said with a genuine smile.

“Thought you would be impressed! Z-moves can be used depending on the Z-crystal the Pokémon’s holding and the move’s typing. Makes sense?”

“I think I understand, yes. You would need a Z-ring too, correct?”

“Yup! Usually a kahuna is the one that can make a Z-ring. For instance, Uncle Nanu made mine!” Acerola’s grin grew wider. “You’ll have no trouble learning Black Hole Eclipse, though!”

“If I could get my hands on that Z-crystal and Z-ring, that is.” Grimsley sighed and shook his head. He pressed his lips and folded his arms against his chest.

“Don’t worry, you’ll get those sooner than you think!” Acerola said with a wink. Behind her, the children giggled.

Frowning, Grimsley wasn’t convinced that would happen anytime soon. He turned his head to see Kukui approaching everyone.

“Oh, practicing some Z-moves, yeah?” the professor asked when he reached them, and Acerola nodded.

“I’ve been teaching Grimsley how to do one of the poses and also showed him the Z-move Never
Ending Nightmare!”

“Yeah, just saw that as I was getting out of the building! You come a long way since I first saw you battle.”

“Thank you, that means a lot!” Acerola said and smiled back. Pebbles let out a pleased grunt.

Grimsley couldn’t help but smile a little. He glanced at Kukui’s arm and noticed he was wearing a Z-Ring on his wrist too.

“You know how to use Z-moves, too?” he asked, pointing at Kukui’s Z-Ring.

A wide grin stretched across Kukui’s face. “Of course, cousin! Otherwise I wouldn’t call myself an expert on Pokémon moves, yeah!”

“Oh, can we see you do a Z-move too?” Hunter asked eagerly, bouncing on his feet.

“I wanna see, I wanna see!” Gracie chanted. Next to her, Yungoos, Mimikyu, and Elekid also screamed.

After considering the children’s request for a moment, Kukui grinned. “Sure, why not! Come on out, Chavo!”

Kukui pulled out a pokéball from his lab coat and threw it up in the air. A burst of light exploded and a large bipedal feline Pokémon appeared. Chavo had turfs of red and black fur, a gray torso with stripes, and a solid muscular build that could rival a bodybuilder or a wrestler. He roared and released a blast of fire from the flaming belt around his waist. Grimsley and his Pokémon couldn’t take their gazes off of him.

“You have an Incineroar?” Gracie asked, an awestruck expression on her face.

“Indeed!” Kukui said with a proud grin and patted his Pokémon’s chest. “Chavo’s my main ace and has been with me since I started my own island challenge, yeah!”

“Nice to see you again, Chavo!” Acerola said as she and Pebbles approached the Incineroar. Recognizing the two, Chavo flashed them a grin and gave a thumbs up.

“Say Acerola, I have an idea,” Kukui said. “Why don’t we do a mini battle, and then I’ll show Grimsley and the kids Chavo’s Z-move, yeah?”

“I’m fine with it if Pebbles is.” Acerola turned to her Pokémon, who bobbed her head. The girl’s grin widened. “She says yes!”

Grimsley moved to where the children and the Pokémon were. He sat between Roulette and Raz, giving them quick scratches on the chin. As Kukui and Acerola prepare their battle, they and their Pokémon stood on opposite sides.

“You can make the first move, Acerola!” Kukui said, hands on his sides.

“If you insist! Go for Earth Power, Pebbles!”

Pebbles grunted in acknowledgement and her body glowed a golden aura. She slammed her fist on the ground, causing the earth to fracture and bright light to spill out. The golden cracks traveled underneath Chavo and that led him to fly several feet and fall. Grimsley, the children, and the Pokémon stumbled as they felt the aftershock of that, too. After regaining his balance, he glanced
to see Kukui was unfazed by that.

“Great! Now Sludge Bomb!”

“Counter with Darkest Lariat!” Kukui commanded.

Chavo picked himself quickly and spun himself while being engulfed in flames. Pebbles inhaled and spit out a large amount of purple liquid at her opponent, only for him to go through it as he continued to twirl like a lasso. Both Pokémon collided; Pebbles shrieked while Chavo backed away and shook off the sand and sludge from his arms and chest.

Acerola ordered Pebbles to use Stone Edge next, so the Palossand punched the ground once more and several stone pillars shot up. One of those pillars struck Chavo on the chest and he dropped to one knee. As he picked himself back up, his legs shook and a large bruise was visible on his chest. Despite that, he roared and launched himself at Pebbles. He sunk his teeth into her, which made her cry in pain and shake Chavo off of her. After being let go, Chavo spat the sand out of his mouth.

While seeing that part of the battle, Gracie and Hunter gasped while Grimsley grunted and tapped his finger on his chin. When Kukui grinned, he knew what would happen next.

“I think the audience has waited long enough. Why don’t we end this with your Z-move, Chavo?” Kukui asked, and his Incineroar growled in response. He pumped his fist in the air. “Okay, get ready to make some noise! Malicious Moonsault, woo!”

Kukui pulled out a small red Z-crystal and put it into the slot of his Z-ring, which glowed like Acerola’s own bracelet earlier. In quick succession, he moved his arms around, leaned himself back, and stretched his arms forward after he straightened himself back up. Chavo mimicked the exact same pose, and right after flames that resembled a wrestling ring sprung up and surrounded Pebbles.

“Brace yourself!” Acerola warned. Immediately Pebbles raised her arms and her body glowed blue. Grimsley assumed that must be Iron Defense.

Chavo let out his strongest roar and his body burst in flames. He jumped in the air and when he landed on Pebbles an explosion occurred. Smoke appeared briefly that made Grimsley and the others cough, and once the field was cleared Chavo took deep breaths but stood proud. Pebbles, meanwhile, squealed and collapsed like a sinkhole. Acerola rushed to her partner and hugged her.

“You did great there, Pebbles!” she said, and that led Pebbles to return the embrace.

“That battle is awesome!” Hunter said, beaming. His Elekid cheered in agreement.

“Your Incineroar is the best!” Gracie went and held Chavo’s leg, who let out a startled growl. “Can Chavo play with us?”

Kukui chuckled and raised his chest up. “I don’t see the problem with that if Chavo’s okay with it!”

Chavo flashed Kukui another grin and gave him a thumbs up. Both Gracie and Hunter cheered, and then the children, their Pokémon, and Chavo raced to the shore.

Grimsley couldn’t help but smile at the end result of the battle and the exchanges after. He glanced at his Pokémon to see their faces perked up, looking like they were impressed too. He faced back at Kukui and his face grew serious again.
“It’s not often you see Pokémon researchers that are also competent battlers.”

Kukui laughed and rubbed the back of his head. “Nah, I’m far from a good trainer compared to you. The pose I did is actually the same one used for the Z-move Black Hole Eclipse, which Chavo can learn also.”

“Black Hole Eclipse? So that means your Incineroar is a dual fire and dark type?”

“Yeah, cousin!” Kukui approached Grimsley and showed his Z-ring for him to see. Upon closer inspection, Grimsley noticed the Z-crystal having Chavo’s face on it. “The Z-crystal is the Incinium-Z, which only an Incineroar can use.”

“Some Pokémon have Z-crystals that only themselves can learn,” Acerola said to Grimsley. “Mimikins is another Pokémon that has her own Z-crystal called the Mimikium-Z!”

Grimsley’s eyes grew wide and he frowned. “Really? That Mimikyu is still full of surprises.”

That caught Acerola off guard for a second, but then she grinned. “Speaking of surprises, professor you’re not going to believe what happened to me and Grimsley a few days ago.”

“Oh, and what that might be?” Kukui asked, raising a brow. Acerola began telling him how she, Grimsley, Nanu, and Becky met with Colress and the Ultra Recon Squad. When she mentioned that group, Kukui gave a shocked face. “Wait, the Ultra Recon Squad? I met them sometime before you guys did.”

“Did you meet them at Tapu Village?” Grimsley asked, folding his arms against his chest. He recalled them taking a great interest in that place.

“I did, yeah. After checking in with the construction workers’ progress on the Pokémon League, I was approached by those two and they seemed excited about Alola having that.”

“Did they mention about Necrozma and coming from a different world?” Acerola asked, and Kukui nodded.

“They did, yeah. Apparently Necrozma is similar to what we call ‘The Blind One’ in our folklore and how we got our Z-crystals.” Kukui paused a second to wipe his glasses. “I was a little surprised, but believed them due to Magnolia’s research on Ultra Wormholes.”

“Oh, you mean Professor Burnet!” Acerola said in a chirp-like voice.

Grimsley’s brow quirked with great interest. “Professor Burnet? You mean the same Professor Burnet that worked with Professor Fennel’s research on dreams?”

“Yeah! Take it you heard of her because she was from Unova?”

“Somewhat. I never met her in person, but I recalled her being good friends with Professor Fennel and Professor Juniper.”

“Ah, I see! Yeah, she, Fennel, and Juniper go way back. I actually first met her while visiting Unova, and then sometime later she moved to Alola to work in the Dimensional Research Lab.” A dazed gaze washed over Kukui’s face when he added, “We only got married a couple years ago, but she’s the most wonderful person I’ve ever met.”

“Aw, how sweet!” Acerola said, clasping her hands and tiptoeing like a girl daydreaming.
“You said she studies Ultra Wormholes, correct?” Grimsley asked. “I believed there was one in Melemele Island a few days ago, shortly after I first stepped in this region.”

Kukui nodded, his face set. “I was just calling her today and she mentioned an Ultra Wormhole popping up there around that time.”

“If it isn’t any trouble, I wouldn’t mind reading some of her research.” While Grimsley was already informed on Ultra Wormholes thanks to Zossie and Dulse, it wouldn’t hurt to study on them more. Perhaps Professor Burnet’s research might reveal new material.

“Sure, I can show you some of Magnolia’s research. I can also have you meet her before you leave, yeah!”

Kukui bumped his elbow onto Grimsley’s shoulder and winked at him. He stared blankly at him for a moment, then he smiled.

“Meeting her won’t be necessary, but I appreciate the gesture nonetheless.”

“I think that’s enough lesson on Z-moves for today,” Acerola said. “Why don’t we join with Chavo and the kids for a bit?”

“Sounds like a plan!” Kukui said, his grin widening.

After Kukui and Acerola headed off, Grimsley and his Pokémon followed behind. He gazed at the sky, the sun barely beginning to set. He would just watch Kukui and Acerola play with the children and Pokémon, but that was fine as he could finally relax today.

Xxx

When evening came, everyone gathered inside the dining hall to eat and talk with one another. The children told Becky how Acerola and Kukui battled each other and used Z-moves, to which the Aether employee mused how she wished she could’ve seen that instead of working. Becky then asked Grimsley how was his Z-move training, and he responded that it went fine and that he enjoyed the demonstrations.

After everyone finished dinner, Acerola suggested to Grimsley that they call Iokua and let him know how the trip went. He agreed, and over the next several minutes they did just that. Acerola grabbed the tablet and had it up and running. They caught Iokua busy reading some journals at home, but otherwise he was delighted to see them safe and sound from the trip. They talked to him about what had occurred in the desert and Ruins of Abundance, Iokua looking very pleased.

“That’s wonderful that all of you were able to see Tapu Bulu’s totem,” he said when their conversation was close to ending. “I take it you enjoyed the experience, Grimsley.”


“Oh, you mean the Relic Castle? Fascinating piece of Unovan history there.” Iokua glanced around at the screen and frowned. “Is my father here with you two now?”

“Uncle Nanu needed to leave back to Po Town and feed his hundred Meowth,” Acerola said, and that made Iokua chuckle.

“He doesn’t want to admit it, but he does care for those Meowth. Speaking of which… Grimsley, have you talked to him about wanting a battle with him?”
“I did, but he’s not interested at the moment. I even managed to get a Ghostinum-Z and he still refused.”

Iokua’s eyes grew wide. “Wait, so you took on the island challenge?”

“Not exactly. I tried to find my ring in the Thrifty Megamart, but then the totem Pokémon wanted me to battle her. She gave me the Z-crystal as thanks.”

“Also get this,” Acerola said with a pouting face. “Professor Kukui came here to ask Uncle Nanu if he would be willing to join as an Elite Four, and he refused!”

“Mhm, it doesn’t surprise me he would decline the offer,” Iokua said, nodding. He looked back at Grimsley. “Talk with him more and he’ll have a change of heart.”

Grimsley stared blankly at him, unconvinced that would happen anytime soon. And yet, he didn’t want to give up just yet. “All right, I’ll give it more time.”

“Say, Uncle Iokua,” Acerola said in a small voice that was odd for her, her eyes fluttering. “I’ve been thinking of seeing my mom and dad soon. It’s been over a few months since I last saw them.”

Frowning a little, Grimsley had an idea what she had meant. He already knew her father was gone and her mother was nowhere in sight, too. Loss was one experience they shared.

“You’re going to visit their graves,” he said, and Acerola’s gaze fell on the floor.

“Yeah. They’re resting at Memorial Hill over at Akala Island as that’s where the royal family get buried at.” She looked back up at Grimsley and beamed. “I know they’re out here making sure Uncle Nanu and I take care of each other!”

“I feel the same way,” Iokua said with a soft smile. He cleared his throat. “Anyways, I need to make sure Cora and the baby are doing all right. The both of you have a good night.”

“Bye, Uncle Iokua! I’ll make sure to give you a call before I leave to see you,” Acerola said, and then she and Iokua hung up. She faced Grimsley. “I think I’ll visit my parents the day after tomorrow.”

“I’m sure they’ll appreciate it,” Grimsley said. His smile started to fade when he realized… “Wait, Iokua and his wife are expecting. Does that mean…”

“That Nanu’s going to be a grandfather?” Professor Kukui said as he approached them, grinning. “He is, yeah!”

Grimsley imagined Nanu taking care of a baby, and that caused him to snicker. “I’m sorry, that just amuses me.”

“Uncle Nanu doesn’t act like it, but I’m sure he would make a great grandfather!” Acerola said.

Kukui grunted and nodded in agreement. He then said to Grimsley, “We can leave tomorrow morning and make a pit stop at Malie City. We’ll then take a bus to Mount Hokulani and meet with the trainers I’ve chosen for the Elite Four, Molayne and Kahili.”

“Tomorrow morning, got it,” Grimsley said and nodded.

“Awesome, can’t wait for you to meet them, yeah!” Kukui said, grinning. “I’ll be heading out now, you guys have a great evening!”
“You too, Professor Kukui!” Acerola said as she and Grimsley waved to him goodbye.

Kukui returned the gesture and left the building. As soon as he was gone, Grimsley dropped on the sofa and sighed.

“Boy, am I exhausted!” he said, stretching his arms and staring at the ceiling. Acerola giggled.

“Well you did chase the Murkrow all around the store and battle against Mimikins,” she said. When Mimikyu began tugging at her dress with her claws, she picked the Pokémon up and held her against her chest.

Grimsley glanced around to see the Pokémon playing together once more. Both Yungoos and Elekid cheerfully rode on Roulette and Raz respectively. After they finished with their race, Raz approached Roulette and licked her face, their tails intertwining. A warm smile tugged at Grimsley’s lips.

“Looks like your Pokémon are having fun here!” Acerola said, beaming.

“They’ve been enjoying this region so far, I think.” Grimsley leaned back against the sofa, his head behind his arms. “I must say, Alola has been full of surprises.”

“How about the Pokémon League? You’re excited to meet Alola’s Elite Four?”

“I’m more curious what they’re like if anything. Nonetheless, I look forward speaking with them.”

“Ah, okay!” Acerola’s grin grew wider. “I’m sure you’ll have fun meeting them!”

Grimsley let out an indifferent grunt, and stared at the ceiling once more. When Kukui had asked him to help him with the league earlier, he was taken aback by that request because he was still sorting out his views on battling and feelings as an Elite Four. However, he thought lending a hand there could be worthwhile. Tomorrow was going to be interesting.
In which we get a glimpse of the original UB Task Force's past and a reunion of old friends. After Nanu returns to Po Town, he gets visited by Looker and Anabel.

Ten years ago

“Aw Charlotte, you sure you’re okay not being in the picture?” Sana asked, her lips in a slight pout. “You’re part of the task force, too!”

“It’s all right, honey!” Charlotte told her with a reassuring grin. “I’ve already been in a few with you guys, so it’s not a loss!”

It was a bright, sunny day in Ula’ula Beach. Because of the nice weather, Sana had suggested to everyone that they take a picture together outside. Charlotte and Agent 100KR were enthusiastic about it, while Nanu rolled his eyes and followed them. He could feel the warm sand in his dress shoes and his hair fluttering against the ocean breeze.

“You two took more pictures than usual,” he said, staring at them. His arms folded against his chest. “You’re gonna run out of space on your tablets.”

“I want to create as many memories as possible. Once you become an amnesic like me, you’ll learn to appreciate every moment in the present.”

“How about that journal of yours? I haven’t seen you write anything the past week.”

“Got a bit depressing, so I stopped at least for now. Rather not being reminded how much I’ve failed helping the UBs.” Sana’s gaze fell on the ground, and she wrapped her arms around herself. “I’m still shaken by what happened to Adhesive and Stinger.”

Earlier in the week Nanu’s task force had found two Ultra Beasts deep in the caves. Stinger had poisoned and killed a non-threatening civilian, so it was deemed dangerous and had to be taken down. Adhesive, which Nanu believed to be its child, was captured and taken to the labs to be used in experiments. Thinking about that made his chest ache. He released a sharp sigh.

“It’s a horrible move on our part, I know. But what’s done is done.”

Sana glared daggers at him. “Well you don’t sound too upset. Happy being Interpol’s little Houndour, right?”

“Sana, please!” Charlotte moved in front of her. Her palm was affectionately on Sana’s shoulder. “I know you’re upset, we all are. But Triple Zero is right, we can’t undo what has already happened. We just have to move forward the best we can.”

“I for one think that’s a sweet gesture, ladies,” 100KR said as he approached in between everyone.
“A picture is worth a million words, as that saying goes.”

“It’s a thousand words, KR. Never a fan of my face being shown on pictures.”

“Because of how ugly it is?” A smug grin pulled on the corner of Sana’s lips.

“Shut up, Sana.”

“Now now, no more bickering here! Let us enjoy this relaxing moment together, shall we?”

“Thank you, KR.” Charlotte pulled out a digital camera and tiptoed on her heels, her purple curls bouncing on her shoulders. “Okay everyone, smile and say Pyukumuku!”

Sana and Looker did their poses while Nanu just stared. A bright flash from the camera, and the picture was taken.

Xxx

Present day

It took Nanu only about half an hour to arrive at Po Town’s police station. A Flygon from the Poke Ride service brought him back and he was grateful that he didn’t need to ride a Sharpedo and go through Route 15’s boulders. He was right that the Meowth finished all the food he left for them, and even destroyed the unopened bags he was saving for later. After he poured more food into their bowls, he sat on his desk and turned on his computer. Persian and Sableye were out of their pokeballs, Persian curled up next to his chair while Sableye sat on the floor chewing some pokepuffs.

His conversations with Grimsley earlier today was still on his mind, so he decided to check out the Unova Pokémon League website. As expected, it had all the information from how to register for your trainer license, upcoming tournaments, and current gym leaders and Elite Four. He interacted with a lot of Gym Leaders and Elite Four across several regions back when he was in Interpol, but never really formed meaningful connections with them.

Nanu clicked on Grimsley’s page and it showed him in a much fancier suit and less gray hair. He was posed sitting on a chair with his legs crossed, his expression mischievous and confident.

Reading through his information, he was invited to the Elite Four a year or two before Nanu had retired from Interpol. He was busy with the UB Task Force then, so it was no wonder the two hadn’t met yet.

It then crossed his mind to look up on Grimsley’s family. The Thomas family line had had a big influence in Unova for generations. Many of its members either were in politics, owned land, or ran several high profile businesses. Grimsley’s father Finn Thomas had owned a few sports teams and ran a successful hotel chain, but for some reason that didn’t pass down to his family after he had passed away. Grimsley ended up being one of the best trainers in Unova, so he turned out fine. Nanu was reminded of when he, Grimsley and Acerola were in the desert, and the girl mentioned about being royalty.

“So your family had fallen from grace, too?” Grimsley had asked her that day. Nanu snorted, amused that he also practically come from nobility. Compared to him on the computer screen, the Grimsley visiting Alola now was a different person.

A trash can dropping was heard outside, which caused some of the Meowth to wake up from their nap and Nanu to jump out of his seat. He and his Pokémon hurried outside, Persian and Sableye following him behind. His heart almost skipped a beat at the sight before him.
“Why are all these Meowth on me, Chief?” a man asked as he tried to shake off the Meowth clawing onto his coat and pants. Near them, a purple haired woman dressed in a dark suit folded her arms and pressed her lips.

“Perhaps they smelled the malasadas you had bought earlier,” she said.

“But malasadas make great housewarming gifts, don’t you think?” The man chuckled, only to then yell when one of the Meowth dug its claws onto his leg.

“KR, Anabel?” Nanu finally said. The two turned their attention to him and gave him stunned looks.

“Officer Nanu!” Anabel said in a soft voice.

“Hello, kid. Your hair grew quite a bit, looks good on you.”

“I agree, yes!” KR said with a laugh. He slung his arm around Anabel’s shoulder and pulled her close to him, making her blush. She sighed and had the decency to push him away.

“I appreciate the enthusiasm there, Mr. Looker, but that’s a bit much.” She grinned at Persian, who purred and nudged on her leg. “Hello there, Persian. Haven’t seen you in a long while.”

Looker? Right, he almost forgot that was the codename he was using now. He was used to calling him KR that it was hard for him to think of him by another name. The corner of Nanu’s mouth twitched.

Sableye approached Looker and tugged at his pants. When he gazed down, she was pointing at his bag.

“Oh, a new Pokémon of Nanu’s, huh? I know, I’ll give you a piece of this!” He pulled a small malasada out from the bag and handed it to Sableye, who grabbed and munched her snack with her mouth wide open.

Anabel smiled at that sight, then she faced Nanu. “Is it alright if we come in?”

“Yeah, it’s fine. Just be careful not to step on the Meowth or their toys.”

They followed him inside the police station. Nanu grabbed a bag from one of the seats and dusted the fur off. As soon as Anabel and Looker sat down, one of the Meowth jumped in between them and rubbed onto Anabel’s chest. She smiled and scratched her cheeks.

“Do either of you want something to eat or drink? I only have crackers, beef jerky, and cup ramen for food at the moment. Kahuna duties, you know?”

“I prepared some malasadas for us to share, so we’re okay with food!” Looker grinned and held up a bag with a Bewear as a logo.

“I’m fine with just water, thanks,” Anabel said.

Nanu grunted and went to grab some water bottles from the fridge in his office. When he returned, Looker and Anabel were already chewing on their malasadas. The Meowth that wanted Anabel’s attention earlier licked some of the crumbs on the table. He handed the water bottles to his guests and they thanked him.

“So, what brings you guys here?” Nanu asked as he went back to his desk and closed the browser
on his computer. He leaned back on his chair.

“Well technically we’re supposed to be undercover,” Looker said. “I was provided with secret information from the inside.”

“Huh? What kind of info?”

“First order of business is the Pokémon mafia running afoot here. Team Skull, is it?” He turned to Anabel, who nodded.

“There have been reports of them stealing Pokémon and other crimes. Since you live very close to them, we thought to ask you if you know anything about their whereabouts.”

Nanu quirked an eyebrow at them, then he snorted. “You think they’re a serious criminal organization? They’re just kids trying to support themselves. Some are a little more brash than others, but the majority of them are harmless. Pretty much all of Alola don’t take them seriously.”

Anabel narrowed her eyes at him, as if appalled at hearing that. “Sounds like you just don’t want to deal with them.”

“Hey, you asked if I know what they’re up to, right? Save for some incidents in other islands, they’ve mostly been keeping their business to themselves here.”

Anabel still didn’t look convinced, but Looker chuckled and grinned at her.

“If Mr. Nanu says they pose no threat, then I’ll trust his judgment.” Looker looked back at Nanu, his face now more serious. “However, there’s still the concern of one individual that associates with them. Gladion Jubert, if I recall.”

“The Aether President’s son? What about him?”

“We’ve been informed that he has a highly classified Pokémon with him,” Anabel said. “His motivations are unclear, though.”

Gladion Jubert. He first appeared in Po Town almost two years ago. He thought he had just been a misfit like the other grunts, due to his torn clothing. He soon realized he was Lusamine Jubert’s son and wondered why he was with Team Skull.

“I saw him talking with Team Skull a few times, but they don’t consider him their family. As for the Pokémon, I think I caught him with it once. It has a helmet and fish scales as legs, right?”

“That’s the description we’ve been handed, yes. Have you talked with him yet?”

Nanu glanced up at the ceiling, groaning. “A few times, I think? Reason he’s with them is so he and his Pokémon can get stronger. That’s all he’s willing to tell me.”

While Nanu and Anabel were talking, Looker wrote down some notes on his little black notebook. After that was finished, he tapped the pen on the pages and gave a satisfied grunt.

“Any information regarding him and Team Skull, no matter how big or small, are appreciated. There’s one more matter we must discuss, and then we’re done.” He offered Anabel a quick nod, which she returned.

“We’ve been reported that an Ultra Wormhole had popped up inside Aether Paradise and that an Ultra Beast appeared,” Anabel said.
Upon hearing that, Nanu sat straight up and furrowed his brow. “Are you serious?”

Looker gave a solemn nod. “Two trainers came for a tour of the site, and they ended up in the middle of it. Charlotte witnessed that phenomenon with them.”

A lump formed inside Nanu’s throat. Charlotte was one of the agents in the science division who helped with the UB Task Force team ten years ago. After he had retired from Interpol, the two kept in contact if there was anything important, but he admit they had fallen out of touch for a while now.

“Charlotte, huh? Can’t believe she’s still undercover. I mean, I’ve seen the ads and news, but…” As his voice trailed off, he recalled what happened on the day he, Grimsley, and Acerola met with Colress and the Ultra Recon Squad. “Did she let you two know about the Ultra Recon Squad?”

“You mean the strange individuals in spacesuits?” Anabel spoke. “Yes, we’re aware of them as they’ve been working with Aether Foundation for a while now. Have you met them before?”

“I did a few days ago. Me and a group were heading to Haina Desert and we met with them on our way there. They were spouting something about Necrozma and Alola’s light.”

“Necrozma?” Looker scratched his head. “You mean the beast those beings from another world worship?”

“It’s more known as ‘The Blinding One’ in some Alolan folklore, but yes. Not only that, those guys have Adhesive with them.”

A sharp frown crossed Looker’s face. “Yes, we were shown that UB on our first meeting with them. Protocol calls for those beasts to be either eliminated or sent to headquarters, but this is a special case. The Ultra Recon Squad are working with a scientist under Interpol’s watch.”

“Did that scientist used to work for Team Plasma? Grimsley from that group I mentioned used to know him,” Nanu said. Both Anabel and Looker exchanged stunned looks.

“Grimsley?” Looker asked. “Back when Team Plasma caused chaos in Unova the Elite Four were witnesses. He happens to be the same person?”

“Same one. He’s here for a holiday it seems. I was unfortunate enough to stumble upon him.”

“If so, we must speak with him if it relates to Aether and the Ultra Recon Squad,” Anabel said.

“Don’t bother. They had a fall out sometime ago, so I doubt you’ll get any new information from him.” Nanu paused. “All of this makes me wonder if Aether is planning something big.”

“If that’s the case, then we’ll keep an eye out on any suspicious activity,” Anabel said. At that moment, her phone rang and she looked at the number on it. “It’s HQ. I should take this, it’ll only be a moment.”

Anabel got up, gave the Meowth on the table another quick scratch, and went outside.

Nanu got out of his seat and walked in front of Looker. He stole a glance at the door. “Does Anabel know about her condition?”

Looker’s face turned pale. He hung his head down and his shoulders slouched. “I haven’t had the courage to tell her. Whenever I was about to, Sana’s face appeared instead of hers.”
“So you’ve still having those nightmares, too.” Nanu’s throat dried up when he said that. He stared at the ceiling. “I dreamt about Sana again last night. I woke up everyone in Aether House while sleeping there.”

A pitiful expression crossed Looker’s face. “I recall Anabel having dreams with UB Glutton that were different from ours. Her nightmares are also why I’m unable to inform her the truth.”

He gave Looker a stern look, only to then sigh and pinch his nose. “I would’ve knocked the back of your head, but I’m no better than you. Poor her, living a lie for so long.”

A long silence stretched between them. Persian growled and nudged against Looker’s leg. He smiled and stroked the gem on her forehead.

“The Chief’s reaction won’t be favorable, but I’ll tell her everything when the time comes. I shall carry the burden so you don’t have to.”

“Jean…” Nanu said in a low voice, letting Looker’s real name slip. He rarely called him that when he was an agent, only used either when he was angry or if it was more personal. Realizing that, he let out an awkward cough. “But yes, she needs to know.”

When Looker caught Nanu’s reaction there, he chuckled. “Off guard saying my given name, hm?”

“It’s not like that!” Nanu snapped and raised his arm. By then, Anabel reentered the police station.

“HQ just wanted to check up on us on our current assignment here.” She looked at both men with amusement. “Were you two talking about something?”

Nanu was about to respond, but luckily Looker beat him to it.

“Oh, some old work stories we were exchanging. Catching up and all!” Looker scratched his head and made a sheepish laugh.

“That was before you joined Interpol with us,” Nanu added.

“Ah, I see. Hope I didn’t interrupt or anything.” Anabel’s face softened, and she turned to him. “How you’ve been holding up, Officer Nanu?”

Nanu shrugged. “I’m still breathing, so not bad I guess. Being a kahuna here and watching over Poni Island gets draining, but the Team Skull kids here are keeping me awake.”

“And your son?” Looker asked as he gave the last piece of the malasada to the Meowth.

“Much better than me. He and his wife are expecting their first kid soon.”

“That’s magnifico!” Already a wide grin stretched across Looker’s face. He hugged Nanu tight, causing him to struggle to breath.

“Okay that’s enough,” Nanu said in a weak voice, and that made Looker let go. Anabel giggled.

“Congratulations on that! You and your family must be overjoyed,” she said and smiled.

Nanu’s stomach churned. The last time he talked with Iokua he didn’t even get to ask how Cora and the baby were doing. A part of him wanted to bang his head on the wall for forgetting that. He would make that up the next time he speaks with him, then.

“Yeah, they’re pretty excited the last I heard. I’m sure they’ll make great parents.” Better than me,
that’s for certain, he almost said after but kept it to himself.

“Sounds like me with Emma while I investigated in Kalos. She was the first young human I took under my wing, and my most cherished pupil.”

“When away there he couldn’t stop talking about her and often sent me pictures of them together! I still have them on my phone.”

Anabel approached Nanu and she showed him a picture on her phone. In it Looker stood next to a dark-haired girl holding an Espurr, the two grinning ear to ear. Somehow she looked familiar...

“Isn’t she the girl that caused havoc in Lumiose City?” Nanu asked, and Looker hung his head in shame.

“You’re not wrong, but it isn’t her fault! It was the schemes of an ex-member of Team Flare to blame! Thanks to another member I did a plea bargain with, I was able to track him down!”

“Oh right, I read that he got arrested and the girl was excused of her crimes. That must be some adventure you had in Kalos.”

Looker laughed out loud, hands on his stomach. “What can I say, a globe-trotting, crime-fighting elite is I! Anyhow, you’ll love Emma and Mimi for certain!”

Anabel smiled a little. “Before coming here, Mr. Looker mentioned he wants to arrange a meeting with you and Emma through the Holo Caster. Also possibly in person in the future.”

“What?” Nanu’s eyes grew wide. “I never heard of the girl until now, and already you want me to have a playdate with her!”

“Don’t worry, it’ll only take a minute or so of your time! Let me just find her number and we’re set!”

Already Looker pulled out a small device from his coat and pushed some buttons on it. After that, a blue hologram of a young girl appeared. A small Espurr jumped onto her shoulders.

“Looker, is that you?” she asked with a surprised face. “I’ve been in bed for almost an hour already, but the Holo Caster rang and I saw your number.”

“Oops, I forgot Alola and Kalos are in different time zones! I was excited for you to meet an old colleague of mine.”

“Huh, is that all? Couldn’t that wait until later?”

“I would have to agree,” Anabel said in a matter of fact tone. That led Looker to shush her.

“Shouldn’t take too long, promise!” Looker nudged Nanu’s shoulder. He furrowed his brow, then rolled his eyes and looked into the hologram.

“Hi there, Emma. I’m Nanu, Looker and I used to work in Interpol together.”

“Nice to meet you, Nanu!” Emma flashed him a grin. “Looker mentions you whenever he talks about his adventures! Says that you’re a fan of cat Pokémon!”

Nanu flinched and grunted in surprise. As if amused, Persian made several growls that sounded like a giggle.
“He’s not entirely wrong there. Since we’re here, tell me a little about yourself.”

“Well I’m an orphan that has been living on the streets almost all my life. Looker then helped me get on my feet and now I have my own detective agency!”

“Wait, seriously! Already in the big leagues, huh?”

Emma giggled and scratched Mimi’s chin, causing the feline to purr. “It’s all thanks to him Mimi and I have a place to live! I love this job as I’m able to help out the citizens of Lumiose.” Looker beamed when Emma spoke about him. Anabel had her hand on his shoulder, smiling proudly at him. “Enough about me, how about you?”

“I’m a police officer and kahuna. If you don’t know, kahunas basically watch over one of the islands in Alola.”

“That’s so cool! Must be tiring doing both, though.”

“It is, but this island is boring half the time so it isn’t all that bad. It’s getting late where you’re at, so I won’t take up any more of your time.”

“Hey, no problem at all. It’s nice talking with you Nanu! I want to say hi to Anabel before I go.”

“Sure thing, kid.” Nanu jerked his head slightly at Looker for him to go to Anabel, which he did. He listened as the two ladies started talking.

“Hello Emma, I hope you’re doing well.”

Emma crossed her arms, and both she and Mimi pouted. “Can’t believe you guys are in Alola without me!”

Anabel chuckled. “We already been through this before. Mr. Looker and I are taking care of some business and don’t want you in any harm.”

“Yeah, I get that. You have to make it up by taking me to your guys’ next trip!” Next to Emma, Mimi nodded and growled.

“All right, I’ll talk to Mr. Looker about that. You have a good night.”

“Thanks! Good luck to you two!” Emma said, beaming. She and Mimi waved goodbye, and the hologram on Looker’s Holo Caster vanished.

“Emma’s wonderful, you agree?” Looker said with a grin.

“She seems like a good kid, yeah. Her Espurr is also cute.”

Looker nodded enthusiastically. “The Chief is also fond of her. Why, she would make a great mother to her!”

Anabel spat out the water she was drinking from the bottle. Her face flushed and she shifted her gaze away for a second.

“I love Emma very much, but I don’t know about being her mother.”

“Perhaps I did get carried away there.” Looker made a sheepish laugh and rubbed the back of his neck. He sighed happily. “Us three weren’t a team all that long, but we did work well together.”
“Remember that time we went to Goldenrod City?” Anabel said. “We had to chase down the criminal through the park while a business party was held there. One of the clowns got mad at us for destroying the balloons.”

With a crooked smile, Nanu said, “Or the time we were in Castelia City and you guys pretended to get a business loan? Looker got jealous when that guy flirted with you.”

Looker flinched, and he stared at Nanu. “I only reacted that way because I didn’t want any harm done to her!”

Anabel chuckled, covering her mouth. She stopped to look at her phone and the wrinkles on her forehead knitted.

“Sorry to cut this reunion short, but Mr. Looker and I have to be on our way. There are a few contacts we have to follow up on and leave for Poni Island tomorrow.”

Nanu’s throat went dry and his fingers curled. Last thing he wanted was for her to remember being washed ashore again. He glanced at Looker, a deep frown stretching across his features.

“Will you be alright?”

Anabel gasped, as if she had already figured out what he meant by that. She smiled at him after. “I’ll be fine, don’t worry.”

By the shakiness in her voice, Nanu wasn’t convinced that was the case. However, he wasn’t going to stop her if she wanted to do this. He returned a smile of his own.

“If you guys get in any trouble, don’t hesitate to reach me. I’ve been overlooking Poni Island also until the new kahuna gets chosen.”

“Good to know if we ever need some assistance!” Looker said with a grateful grin.

As they began their goodbyes, Nanu shared a small embrace with Anabel and shook hands with Looker. The two also patted Persian on the forehead, which she enjoyed. They reached the door, and Anabel stepped out while Looker stopped and looked over his shoulder.

“Oh, one last thing. I left on the table a postcard from Charlotte. The best tours in Aether Paradise are conducted by her!” He waved and left the station too.

A deep frown settled on Nanu’s face. His Pokémon gazed up, Persian letting out a worried meow while Sableye tilted her head and clicked her tongue.

“They’ll be fine, very capable of watching themselves. Let’s see what that postcard is about.”

On the table one of the Meowth was playing with the malasada bag. Nanu noticed the postcard was covered by her bottom, so when he tried to grab it she hissed and scratched his hand. He winced and waited until she jumped off to take the postcard. On the front it was a glossy photo of two wide smiling Aether employees posing with a Sandygast and Palossand. The Aether Foundation’s logo and name was printed on the top in gold. Nanu flipped to the back, which had an environmental awareness message in neat handwriting.

_Sandygast and Palossand thrived in the sands of Alola, so sometimes they would accidentally eat plastic and other waste lying around. Thanks to the efforts of the Aether Foundation we’re able to help them from further decay. This is why it’s important to keep our beaches and oceans clean!_
Nanu couldn’t help but grin. This was the first time in a long while since she had sent him a written message in that fashion. That meant something big was about to happen, perhaps relating to what Looker and Anabel had told him.

“Hey, that’s not for you to play!” he said when one of the Meowth’s paws kept hitting the postcard. He clicked his tongue at Persian, who growled and grabbed the Meowth by the back of the neck with her mouth.

Nanu sat back on his desk and set his friend’s message aside. He pulled out the photograph of him, Looker, and Sana several years ago, the one Charlotte had taken of them. His fingers tapped at it, and he and snorted at that memory.

He and Sana acted like two Murkrow fighting over shiny jewelry, like what happened with Grimsley’s ring earlier. What they had in common was feeling helpless after taking Adhesive, Stinger, and countless other UBs to HQ. Thinking what had happened to them made his stomach churn.

Aether and the wormholes. He, Looker, and Charlotte tried to find the answers for ten years, almost to no avail. Seemed now they would get them very soon.

Chapter End Notes

If you guys haven't caught on, yes I have Wicke be a secret informant scientist going undercover. I got inspired by the fic Man In Twilight, which is a cool Nanu centric story you guys should check out (and the authors’ portrayal of Nanu is a thousand times better than mine orz). Wicke is planned to make an appearance SOONtm.

Besides that, I also did a short sidestory, Shark Bite! The part where Nanu teased Looker being jealous is from that story haha. And for the AO3 folks, I now have a Foul Play verse series! So yeah, I might do other Foul Play sidestories when the mood strikes.

I hope to have Ch 8 posted in a few weeks since I got the draft done for it already. Ch 9 is still in progress. After that I probably will go on a short hiatus to hash out a solid plan for the final chapters and take care real life stuff. And as always, credit to bobandbill for great betaing!
Chapter Summary

In which Grimsley goes to the Hokulani Observatory and meets up with Kahili, Molayne, and Sopochles. He first does a couple quick battles with Molayne and Kahili. After that, a press conference from the Aether Foundation and some Minior stargazing at Starfall Hills.

Chapter Notes

Remember when I said this would be eight chapters? Yeah, throw that out of the window. I don't have a definite chapter count since I'm trying to jammed pack less scenes/locations in one chapter haha. I'm bouncing between writing and revising Chapters 11-13 atm and I know endgame will have at least 4 or 5 chapters, so let's say 19 or 20 chapters maybe?

Speaking of which, I have Chapter 9's rough draft done. However, I'm thinking of doing April Camp Nano, and it'll depend how busy my beta will be that month. I'll still try to have it posted in mid April, but if not then May for sure.

Before we begin this chapter, want to mention Starfall Hills is from the anime. And yes, the last scene I got inspiration from the Minior episode too. Also, the nickname I gave for Kahili's Toucannon is also from the anime! This won't be the only time I'll have anime references either! Also, thanks to bobandbill for the great beta as alway!

6/6/2019 - Did some prose fixes and also added a small scene before Grimsley and Kukui landed in Malie City per suggestion from a reader from another site!

The next morning after Grimsley packed up his things he met up with Kukui outside. Acerola and Becky were also there to see them leave.

“Our pokérides should be here any moment, yeah!” Kukui said to Grimsley. “Also I let Molayne and Kahili know that we’ll be meeting up with them later.”

“Will you stick around Ula’ula Island for a few more days?” Becky asked.

“Perhaps. There are still some sites on this island I haven’t gotten around to yet.”

“There’s Lake of the Moone that’s right next to Ula’ula Meadows!” Acerola said, grinning. “It has some neat history that relates to our legendary Pokémon Lunala and Solgaleo!”

Grimsley nodded and a small smile formed on his lips. “Lake of the Moone does sound lovely. I’ll see about visiting there eventually.”

After he finished speaking, a beastly roar was heard. Grimsley looked up to see a Skarmory and a
Charizard approaching them. They soon landed on the ground and everyone gathered around them.

“Looks like our rides are here!” Kukui said. He went towards the Charizard and patted his forehead.

Already the Skarmory began pecking at his sleeve and that made Grimsley glare at her. Upon a closer look, his eyes grew wide.

“You’re the same Skarmory that wanted my coin.” A sharp frown crossed Grimsley’s face. Skarmory squawked and flapped her wings, as if responding ‘yes’.

“Seems you two are already connected!” Becky said with a chuckle.

Grimsley grunted and shook his head. He and Kukui hopped onto their ride Pokémon’s backs.

“Do drop by Aether House again soon, you two!” Acerola said.

“Of course, yeah!” Kukui said. He faced his Charizard and patted the back of his neck. “All right, off to Malie City, woo!”

Kukui whistled and that caused both his and Grimsley’s Pokémon to flap their wings and launch into the air. While gripping on the reins, Grimsley glanced down to see Acerola and Becky waving goodbye to them. He smiled, already considering visiting Aether House once more. He gazed at the sky as the sun began to rise and hung tight onto Skarmory, and they continued to follow alongside Kukui and Charizard toward Malie City.

xxx

The last time Grimsley was in the air he wasn’t at ease. The air was slightly cooler since it was morning, and his body relaxed this time. While he and Skarmory were flying, the armored bird kept pecking at Grimsley's hair. He carefully maintained his hairstyle, so he often pushed her head away from him.

"What is it with Pokémon eating my hair and clothes?” Grimsley asked as he smoothed his hair with one hand and gripped on the reins with his other.

Kukui chuckled and looked over his head. "Perhaps they’re very drawn to you!"

"I seriously doubt that." Grimsley then asked, "I'm curious, how come we're not going straight to Mount Hokulani?"

"A couple reasons, cousin! A few more people had reserved our Pokémon also, so they need to be given back soon. Another reason is that some Pokémon living there are very hazardous for us to get close to, yeah!"

Grimsley's brow was raised with surprise and interest. He imagined he meant the ones that could use Explosion and similar moves.

It took a little over half an hour for Grimsley and Kukui to make it to Malie City. After they landed and said farewell to their Pokémon, they took the Exeggutor Express, a bus shaped like an Alolan Exeggutor, that was heading to Mount Hokulani.

There were a few passengers inside. One seat was occupied by a girl with her Zorua sleeping on her lap, and two more taken by a couple going to the Hokulani Observatory together. Grimsley gazed through the window to see the tall grass and trees of Route 10 passing by like a rushing Ponyta. He
sat next to Kukui, who was looking across another pair of seats to see through the other window.

“Say Professor Kukui, can you tell me a bit more about the trainers you’ve chosen for the Elite Four?” he asked, and that caught Kukui’s attention.

“Sure! I first asked Olivia, who is the kahuna of Akala Island and specializes in rock types. You won’t meet her today, though, as she’s busy with her kahuna duties at the moment. Kahili, meanwhile, was a former island champion and trains flying Pokémon. She’s also a professional golfer, so she’s been all over the world, yeah! Then there’s Molayne, who heads the Hokulani Observatory and a very good friend of mine. He favors steel types.”

“They sound like amazing trainers.” Grimsley glanced around for a second and then said, “Nanu mentioned you asking him to join the Elite Four but he refused. I take it you’re still trying to find your fourth member?”

Kukui nodded and he leaned back against his seat. “Nanu told me if he finds someone that he would let me know.” He paused when a chuckle left him. “He’s not wrong that being an Elite Four has its responsibilities.”

Grimsley hummed in agreement, and he went back looking through the window. The scenery in front of him changed from the lush grass and trees to more barren land similar to Route 12. There was a steep drop below, and he realized that they were now driving up to the summit. He caught sight of a few Pokémon that looked like stars floating around. They were in different colors: purple, pink, and orange.

“Do you know what those Pokémon are?” Grimsley asked, pointing at the Pokémon. When Kukui noticed them, he grinned.

“Those are Minior! They often fall from the sky like shooting stars and hang out around Starfall Hills. Molayne does extensive research on those Pokémon, he can tell you more about them if you like.”

“I think I would like that,” Grimsley said with a small smile. He continued gazing out of the window.

When the bus reached the top of Mount Hokulani, it stopped in front of the observatory and everyone jumped off. Hokulani Observatory was a large facility with stainless glass and geometric architecture. A satellite dish settled on the left side of the roof and a round telescope was on the right. The other passengers had already went inside.

Grimsley stayed where he was while Kukui talked with a man in a polo shirt. A cold breeze drifted by and made him shudder. He rubbed his arms slightly. Small patches of snow were scattered on the ground.

“One of Molayne’s colleagues says he and Kahili will be with us in a moment,” Kukui said when he returned to him.

“I don’t mind waiting.” Grimsley turned around to see another mountain covered in snow a far distance from him. “Is that Mount Lanakila?”

“It is, yeah!” Kukui said, grinning. “The Pokémon League will be at the top of the summit. Before trainers would go to that mountain for their final trial and have to beat the four kahunas in a row. Now instead trainers will go against the Elite Four that best represents Alola, woo!”

Grimsley hummed out of interest and gave a single nod. “Say, Professor Kukui, you mentioned the
reason for creating the Pokémon League is to show the world how great the trainers from Alola are. Was there any incident that inspired you to go ahead with that ambitious undertaking?”

A nostalgic expression stretched across Kukui’s face. “A while back I traveled through Kanto and challenged the Indigo League. Came out a little short, but the experience left a lasting impact to this day.”

“That’s very impressive. Was it tough getting all this set up?” he asked, and Kukui responded with a laugh.

“Of course, cousin! It took me years to prepare the league plans and have the Pokémon League Association approve them.” The grin on Kukui’s face disappeared and he sighed. “Had to convince the big wigs to let me keep the island challenge format.”

Grimsley knew what Kukui was talking about. In order for the region to form a league there had to be a gym bracket system or something similar in place, and enough trainers to be interested in participating. Most regions settled for the eight gym badges system, but there were some like the Orange Islands where you would only need four. Grimsley imagined how much of a headache it must be for him to handle all this. He offered him an empathetic smile.

“At least you’re close to having it up and running now.”

Kukui beamed and raised his fist in the air. “Indeed and I’m pumped for it, woo!”

His smile widening, Grimsley admired the man’s enthusiasm there. He and Kukui gazed at Mount Lanakila for another minute or so until someone’s voice brought their attention.

“Sorry for the wait! Was in a research meeting.”

Grimsley looked over his shoulder to see a tall man with glasses approaching them. He had dirty blonde hair that was fluffy but well kept, and a soft looking face. His clothes were wrinkled and slightly oversized for him. When he greeted them with a warm smile, Grimsley’s heart almost skipped a beat.

He was very, very handsome. And he couldn’t tear his gaze off from him.

“Not a trouble at all, cousin!” Kukui’s voice pulled Grimsley away from his dazed gaze. He greeted Molayne with a tight embrace and a pat on his shoulder. After they let go, the professor pointed at Grimsley for him. “Molayne, this is Grimsley from the Unova League. He agreed to give us a few pointers on what it’s like to be in the Elite Four!”

“A pleasure to meet you.” Grimsley and Molayne shook hands. “Professor Kukui told me that you’re the head of the Hokulani Observatory and that you train steel types.”

“Indeed on both accounts. I’m very passionate about everything there is to know about space and beyond. As for me training steel types, Kukui and I did the island challenge together and then I became a trial captain not long after.”

“Molayne doesn’t want to admit it, but he’s an awesome trainer! One time we went against a totem Sandslash, and he used his Dugtrio and Metang to trap him like a Rock Tomb!” Kukui jabbed Molayne’s shoulder with his elbow, which made him chuckle and rub the back of his head.

“What I did back then isn’t anything special. I just needed to find a way for him to lose momentum! Anyways, Kahili is inside with Sophocles, let’s go.” Molayne gestured his hand for everyone to follow him inside, which they did.
Upon entering the observatory's main lobby, Grimsley glanced around with keen interest. The ceiling had stars and planets painted all over while the floors pulsed in blue light. Several television screens were attached on the walls, each one showcasing space and science trivia.

The couple from the bus earlier were talking to the man in the receptionist desk, and next to it there was a large stand with brochures about the observatory. Near the end of the corner there was a woman and a young boy with several bug-like Pokémon that shaped like batteries.

“Wow, so you take care all of these Charjabug? the woman asked, dropping to her knees to have a closer look at them.

“Ah huh! Big Mo says they can eat several pounds of food a day. They need that much to store large amounts of electricity!”

“They look to be very strong, but my flying Pokémon can handle them.” A smug look crossed her face, and the boy laughed.

“Hey! Once these Charjabug evolve into Vikavolt you’ll be sorry!” When the boy noticed Molayne and Kukui, he beamed. “Big Mo! And Alola, Professor Kukui!”

“Alola to you too, Sophocles!” Kukui said, grinning.

Molayne waved and said, “I hope I’m not disrupting anything.”

“Nah, I was just talking to Kahili about how great our Charjabug are!”

“I didn’t realize how important the Charjabug here are,” she said.

“Yes, they helped out a lot with our research and Soffy’s trial.” Molayne faced Grimsley and said, “Oh Grimsley, this is Kahili, and my cousin, Sophocles.”

“Nice to meet the both of you,” Grimsley said, a small smile tugging on his lips.

“Kukui told us that you’re from Unova,” Kahili said, hands on her sides. “I’ve been there several times for my golf tournaments. The country club in Castelia City is very nice.”

“Indeed it is. My family and I were invited there numerous occasions. I never cared all that much about that sport, but my late father enjoyed it.”

A sad smile crossed Kahili’s face. “Sorry to hear that about your father, but glad to hear someone else appreciates it.”

Grimsley grunted in gratitude and turned to Sophocles. “And you’re one of the trial captains here, correct?”

“Ah huh! I give out the Electrium-Z to trainers who pass my trial! Originally I had trainers answer a series of audio questions, but that caused the observatory to black out a few times, eh heh,” Sophocles said with a sheepish laugh.

Molayne nodded. “His new trial now has trainers solve a puzzle where they rotate the Charjabug until they form a line. Once that’s done, the totem Pokémon appears.”

“Well I’m sure your new trial will work great!” Kukui said. A Charjabug tugged at his lab coat and he looked down. “Hi there, little fella. Is there something you needed?”

Another Charjabug started chewing on Grimsley’s scarf, which caused him to yelp and pull it away
from the Pokémon. “What is it with Pokémon wanting to eat my scarves?”

“Looks like it’s time to feed them!” Sophocles chuckled as a third Charjabug chewed on his pants.

“Hey, get off my golf club!” Kahili screamed as she tried to wiggle the fourth Charjabug off her golf club. “You’re not joking when you said they eat a lot.”

“Why don’t we go outside and feed them while Grimsley talks to us more about the Pokémon League?” Molayne asked.

“Sounds good to me,” Grimsley said while straightening his scarf. Molayne, Kukui, and Sophocles gathered all the Charjabug and then they headed out.

Grimsley and the others stopped at a large hill just below the observatory, Starfall Hills. There was a big open space for the Charjabug to roam around and eat the grass. He sat down with one of the Charjabug on his lap, feeding her the pokepuffs Molayne had handed him.

“So Grimsley, I already told you how I went through the Indigo League before. How did you get your start in Unova’s Pokémon League?” Kukui asked. He, Sophocles, and Molayne were also giving food to the other Charjabug.

“It happened not long after I finished my journey through Unova. Back then my mother and I were in a dire financial situation, so I took up gambling to make ends meet. As luck would have it, Alder, our region’s former Champion, thought I had potential as an Elite Four and invited me to be one of its members.” Grimsley gave a sad smile. He gazed down at the Charjabug, who wiggled and made clicking noises. “I wasn’t sure if I could handle it at first, but I took the risk and glad I did.”

“What sort of responsibilities does an Elite Four have?” Kahili asked.

“Well there’s accepting challengers that went through the Unova League Conference. On occasion we also have a hand in important league decisions, like appointing or demoting gym leaders, and organizing a variety of competitions. We can even adjust rules for different types of battles like triple and rotation battles.”

“Fair enough.” Kahili approached Grimsley’s Charjabug and scratched her chin. The Charjabug bobbed her head, as if enjoying it. “I take it the Elite Four does a lot of training just so their battling skills doesn’t go stale? For me it’s important to train both as a golfer and a trainer, even just a little bit.”

“Of course. There are various training facilities in Unova for us to use, including the ones in the League’s headquarters.”

“Since Unova’s Elite Four are involved with who gets to be a gym leader, do they act as a mentor to them, too?” Molayne asked after he finished feeding his Charjabug and picked her up.

“I guess you can say that. Sometimes we would visit a gym and offer advice to the gym leaders on how they can improve.”

“Gyms? They’re like kahunas in which they specialize in a type, right, Big Mo?” Sophocles asked. The Charjabug he had fed continued to chew on his shoe.

Molayne nodded. “Kukui mentioned those when he told me of his travels in Kanto. You battle
them, and if you win you get what’s called a badge.”

“I never battled in a gym, but I’ve heard of gym leaders while going to golf tournaments,” Kahili said. “I’ve even met a few of them.”

“Believe me when I say the gym leaders in Kanto are tough as an Iron Tail!” Kukui said with a chuckle. Kahili groaned and rolled her eyes.

“Sounds awesome! I’ll have to look into them more later.”

“You definitely should!” Kukui paused, then said, “Because Alola will be using the island challenge instead of gyms, it’ll work out a bit differently. We already have the tapus choosing the kahunas and them choosing the trial captains. The Elite Four can make sure the trials themselves are safe, and provide the islands any resources they needed, yeah!”

“Kukui and I have been talking back and forth on how to put this all together, and I think our trainers will like what they see.”

A large grin stretched across Kukui’s face, and he faced Grimsley. “Here’s something that could be fun, Grimsley. Why don’t you do a couple quick battles with Molayne and Kahili? Assess how well they’re prepared as Elite Four!”

While Grimsley thought over Kukui’s idea, the Charjabug squealed and jumped off his lap. He looked over his shoulder to see her playing with two other Charjabug. He faced back at Kukui and said, “I see no harm in doing that.”

“Me neither,” Kahili said. “My Pokémon and I haven’t done any training yet!”

“It’ll be fun to battle against an Elite Four just to see what it’s like to be one,” Molayne said. “Soffy, can you help me gather the Charjabug first?”

“Sure, Big Mo!” Sophocles picked up the Charjabug next to him, then he and Molayne began getting the Charjabug together.

It was a few moments until the Charjabug were lined up. Each one nodded and cheered, happy to be fed. Grimsley and Molayne stood in opposite sides while Kukui, Kahili, and Sophocles moved to where the Charjabug were and watched.

“Kukui said that you’re into steel types, so I think I’ll start off with Queen!”

Grimsley grabbed his pokéball and released Queen. The Bisharp crossed her arms and closed her eyes, as if meditating. Molayne straightened his glasses and let out an impressed smile.

“A Bisharp, huh? In that case, I’ll show off mine, too. Mars, make your mark!”

Molayne pulled his pokéball out from his jacket and let out his own Bisharp. Mars stomped on his right foot and thrust his arm forward. When Queen noticed him, she jerked her head back and stared at him.

“Oh wow, two Bisharp? This will be fun,” Kahili said, raising a brow in interest.

“Grimsley’s Bisharp looks great, but Mars can defeat her easily!” Sophocles said with a confident grin and his chin raised.

Molayne chuckled and rubbed the back of his head. “Happy to hear you have that much confidence
in me. All right then, I won’t disappoint you.” He looked back at Mars, his face now more serious. “Dual Chop, let’s go!”

Mars’s arms glowed dark green and he rushed at Queen. He struck her twice and left deep cuts, one on her shoulder and another on her leg. Queen winced at the pain on her shoulder and glared at him. With a smile, Grimsley grunted.

“Starting out strong, huh?” He snapped his fingers, which caused Queen to look at him. “We’ll strike back hard ourselves then!”

Queen nodded, and her forehead lit up. She rammed onto Mars and their bodies collided. Mars fell on the ground, but he picked himself up quickly and stood up straight.

“Nice job. Do Sucker Punch next!”

“Double Team!”

Just as Queen began charging towards him, Mars made several illusions of himself. She punched at one of them, but her fist went through him and he disappeared. She tried another, only for it to be a clone, too. Eventually the real Mars went behind her and did a low kick on her legs, which made her fall down. After getting up, Queen did an uppercut onto Mars’ face and had him stumbled backwards like someone who was dizzy.

“Shake it off and then use Night Slash!” Molayne ordered, his voice stronger than Grimsley had heard of him.

Hearing Molayne’s voice led Mars to get back to his senses. His arms glowed black and he ran towards Queen. Grimsley yelled for her to stay alert, which she did by having her own arm light up in a lighter green aura and blocked her opponent’s assault. The two Bisharp exchanged blows like fencers, sparks flying whenever their blades touched. Everyone on the sidelines was mesmerized by that sight.

“Go Mars, go!” Sophocles cheered, his arms in the air. Next to him several of the Charjabug jumped and squealed in joy.

While Mars and Queen continued attacking one another, Grimsley knew their little dance wouldn’t last forever. He snapped his fingers and said, “That’s enough, Queen! Switch gears now!”

After their blades crossed one last time, Queen kicked Mars to force him to move backwards. Her arms still glowing, she charged straight at her opponent.

“Distract her and then make your move!” Molayne called out.

Just as Queen was speeding off, Mars took a deep breath and let out an ear piercing scream. That made his opponent stop and cover her ears. Grimsley and everyone on the sidelines grimaced over the noise. He noticed Mars’ arms glowed dark green, and knew the other Bisharp was going for another Dual Chop. Grimsley already figured what to do next.

“Stop him to a screeching halt!”

Before Mars could get close to her, a wave of electricity formed around Queen’s arm and she swung her arm at his direction. The blast went straight at Mars and caused him to drop on one knee and winced.

“By using Thunder Wave, this gives Queen an advantage over Mars now,” Kukui said as his finger
tapped at his chin.

“Oh no, that’s not good!” Sophocles said, frowning.

A confident grin stretched across Grimsley’s face. “We have the upper hand now, Queen. X-Scissor!”

Queen gave her trainer a nod, crossed her arms, and her blades lit up light green.

Molayne furrowed his brow. “Night Slash!”

Mars picked himself up and raised his arm, but he twitched and struggled to move further. Queen meanwhile easily slashed his back and left a deep cut there.

“Night Slash once more!” Molayne yelled urgently.

“Stop him for good!” Grimsley countered.

Mars was still grimacing from his paralysis, but his arms glowed black and he bolted off. He thrust his blade at Queen’s face, but she dodged, twirled around, and punched his stomach. Her opponent screeched and collapsed on the ground.

Queen stared down at him and she stood there heaving. Several seconds after, Mars regained consciousness and raised his hand at her. She smiled and helped him up, supporting him by having his right arm slung around her shoulders. On the sidelines, everyone clapped and all the Charjabug cheered.

“The both of you were on fire there, woo!” Kukui said with a whistle. Next to him, Kahili nodded.

“You did great Big Mo, even if you didn’t win!” Sophocles said.

Molayne offered him an appreciative smile. “Thanks. Grimsley is the far better trainer there.”

“Now don’t sell yourself short,” Grimsley said. “Tricking Queen with the Double Team and distracting her with Metal Sound are clever ideas. Mars likes to be reckless, which has its ups and downs.”

“Yeah, I recall that’s a common trait forPawniard and Bisharp due to their aggressive nature.” Molayne approached Mars and patted him on the shoulder. “I remember the first time I trained him he was very stubborn.”

“Queen was the same way. My parents were shocked when I showed her to them and asked if I can have her!” Grimsley gazed up at Queen and had his palm rested on her chest.

“Your battle with Molayne is impressive, but it’s my turn now,” Kahili said as she stepped forward to Molayne’s spot.

"Of course.” Molayne returned Mars and stepped away to join with Kukui and Sophocles on the sidelines.

"You were splendid there Queen, I'll let you get some rest." Grimsley also returned his Pokémon into her pokéball and pulled out another. This time he released Dice, who lifted his head up and pulled up his shed skin.

“First time I’ve seen a Scrafty in a while. Now it’s Katsuo’s time to shine!”
Kahili tossed her pokéball and burst of light popped out. A Toucannon flapped his wings and squawked. Grimsley immediately thought of Roland’s Toucannon he had saved from Team Skull some days ago. He grinned at her.

“I’ve met a trainer with that Pokémon when I first landed this region. It’ll be interesting how strong yours is. All right Dice, let’s hit hard with Ice Punch!”

“Brick Break!”

Dice charged at Katsuo, his fist forming a blue aura. He punch him on the face, which led Katsuo to screech in pain. Some shards of ice appeared where the Toucannon was hit, but he shook those off. He retaliated by having his beak glow white and executed a swift chop on his opponent’s forehead. That made Dice crash on the ground.

“Hurry before that Scrafty gets up!”

After chirping in response, Katsuo took off into the air and began spinning like a drill. Dice barely got up when Katsuo’s beak stabbed his chest, leaving a small wound there. As soon as Katsuo backed away, Dice picked himself up and let out deep breaths.

“Wow, Kahili’s already having a great start!” Sophocles said in awe. Next to him Kukui folded his arms and grinned, just as interested.

Molayne hummed in agreement. “There’s a reason why she’s a former island champion.”

The corner of Grimsley’s mouth twitched, but he knew this was only the start of the battle. “Go all out with a hard kick!”

“Warm up your beak while he’s in the air!”

Dice pulled up his shredded skin and jumped up high in the air. While waiting, Katsuo flapped his wings wildly and his beak glowed orange. Right after, Dice dived down and kicked Katsuo’s face and made him stumble. Dice lifted his chin and a proud grin was on his face, only for him to wince when small flames burst on his leg. At that instant, Katsuo rammed onto Dice and he fell.

Grimsley’s eyes grew wide with confusion. “What was that?”

“Beak Blast burns the opponent making contact with Katsuo,” Kahili said in a smug voice, one hand on her side. “Liked what you see?”

Grimsley glared at her and gritted his teeth. “Not a bad choice at all, to say the least.”

“I’ll take that as a compliment. Drill Peck one more time!” Kahili whistled and Katsuo flew up in the air once more.

“Move and then strike with Dragon Claw!”

Katsuo spun himself like last time, but before he landed Dice rolled out of the way. Katsuo’s beak got stuck on the ground, and he struggled to pull out. Green flames that turned into claws formed around Dice’s fist, and he slashed him. Katsuo squawked and backed away, a large cut visible on his chest. As both Pokémon stared at one another, flames licked Dice’s leg again and he dropped on one knee.

“Looks like your foe’s getting tired already, Katsuo.” She lifted her arm up, showing off her Z-bracelet on her wrist. A silver crystal was attached to the slot. “The winds are in our favor now, so
let’s finish this. Supersonic Skystrike!”

Grimsley grimaced when he heard that. Kahili started her dance, her movements fluid and graceful as a Swanna taking the skies. Her pose ended with her stretching her arms like wings, and then both her bracelet and Katsuo lit up with a golden aura. Katsuo launched himself in the air like a rocket, farther than the last few times he took flight. A blast of hot air hit Grimsley and everyone else, causing their clothes to flap.

“Counter it now!” Grimsley said in desperation.

Dice still winced from his burns, but he pulled his shedded skin up and jumped up high with his right leg stretched out. Katsuo began diving at an incredible speed, and the two crashed onto each other. An explosion occurred, the smoke obscuring them a brief moment. When the battlefield was cleared, Dice fainted on the ground while Katsuo was still in the air.

“Dice!” Grimsley rushed to his Pokémon and put his head on his lap. “Are you all right?”

With a weak groan, Dice gazed up at Grimsley and gave him a thumbs up. Grimsley sighed in relief.

“Thank goodness. You did great out there.”

He returned Dice, picked himself up, and stared at the sky with a hard frown. Right now he was nothing more than the one who lost his light... But this loss would make him shine even brighter next time. He gazed down at Dice’s pokéball that he was still holding, and he smiled a little.

“When one loses, they lose everything. The next thing I’ll look for will be victory, too!” He approached Kahili and stretched out his hand to her. “That was a good match.”

“Same here.” Kahili accepted the handshake. “Your Scrafty is very energetic there.”

“I can say the same with your Toucannon. So Supersonic Sky strike, I take it that’s the flying type z-move?”

“It is. I got the flyinium-z after going against a totem Pokémon in Poni Island.” Kahili turned to her Toucannon and scratched his chin. Katsuo relaxed by her touch. “That other Toucannon was much bigger than him, but Katsuo pulled through.”

“That’s a lovely little tale there.” Grimsley paused, his face more serious now. “You mastering that z-move alone shows you’re more than capable of being the Elite Four also.”

“What did I tell you?” I picked the best of the best, yeah!” Kukui said, beaming.

Grimsley smiled in response. He shifted his gaze to see Sophocles frowning and his head down. Molayne noticed it, too.

“Is something the matter, Soffy?” his cousin asked, dropping on one knee and touching his shoulder.

“I know that you’ll be helping Professor Kukui with the League, but what if you have to be away longer than expected?” A few tears streamed down Sophocles’ cheeks and he sniffled. Two of the Charjabug began rubbing onto his legs to comfort him. “When Grimsley talked about being in the Elite Four, it sounds like it’s much more work than I thought.”

Grimsley’s heart sank. He could tell Sophocles cared for his cousin very much and the thought of
them separating devastated the boy.

“It’s true that Molayne will be busy with the League, but he’ll still help out with the observatory!” Kukui said, a reassuring grin on his face. “When it’s time for him to go, give him one last smile, yeah!”

“He’s right,” Molayne said with a similar expression. “Researching space is still my passion that I won’t give up anytime soon. I won’t leave forever.”

Sophocles regarded the men’s words a moment, and he put on a determined expression on his face. “I’ll watch over the observatory while you’re gone. I can handle this, I’m a tough kid!”

“Now that’s what I like to hear!” Molayne chuckled, and he and Sophocles embraced.

A soft smile crossed Kahili’s face. “You were excited when you talked to me about the observatory. I’m sure you’ll do great.

While Grimsley was also touched by Molyane and Sophocles’ affection there, he felt bad for causing this in the first place. He approached Sophocles and cleared his throat.

“I’m sorry if me talking about the Elite Four upsets you.”

Sophocles looked up with a confused brow, and then he beamed. “Nah, don’t worry about it. I may be upset, but I’m really happy for Big Mo doing this!”

“Well I’m glad to hear that.” Grimsley offered him a warm smile.

“It’s a little past 1pm now,” Molayne said. “Why don’t we head to the Pokémon Center and eat while our Pokémon get healed?”

“Sounds like a plan!” Kukui said. Grimsley and Kahili also responded that they were fine with that.

“Great! Sophocles and I need to take the Charjabug inside the observatory first, so we’ll meet you guys right after.” Molayne turned to face the Pokémon. “You all ready to go?”

All the Charjabug responded by making clicking noises and bouncing. Both Molyane and Sophocles chuckled.

Everyone headed back to the observatory, taking the uphill trail there. While walking, Grimsley thought back to his battle with Kahili and the z-moves Acerola and Kukui had demonstrated. That proved to him that Alolan trainers were a force to be reckoned with. That made him wonder how Nanu’s z-move would look like in battle.

“Professor Kukui, you think Nanu will use his z-move if we ever go against each other?” he asked him, and Kukui looked over his shoulder with a raised brow.

“Hm? Why you asked?”

“Seeing you, Acerola, and Kahili’s z-moves made me want to battle him even more.”

Kukui laughed. “Feeling inspired, yeah? To answer your question, yes I believe so. He’s even more experienced with z-moves than us!”

“Then I’ll just work harder to convince him, then.” Grimsley made a sharp frown. The odds of that happening were less than him winning a cards game, but that wouldn’t stop him from attempting that.
Mount Hokulani’s Pokémon Center had some people inside already. Molayne had given Mars’ pokéball to Kukui so that he could take it to Nurse Joy while he and Sophocles took the Charjabug back in the observatory. When the professor mentioned that the pokéball was his friend’s, she grinned and happily accepted it. Grimsley and Kahili also lent their Pokémon to her and she said they would be ready very soon.

The three waited until Molayne and Sophocles arrived before beginning lunch. Everyone gathered around a small table in the food court area eating sandwiches. During their meal Grimsley got to know Kahili and Molayne better. Kahili’s father owned one of the hotel resorts in Akala Island and she often went there to train. Her passion for golf got started when she met with one of the golfers visiting the resort and she begged for her to be her mentor. Molayne not only was the head of the observatory but also the administrator of Alola’s Pokémon Storage System, which impressed Grimsley very much.

“Since you’re maintaining this region’s Pokémon Storage System, I take it you know Amanita from Unova, Professor Fennel’s sister?” Grimsley asked before taking a bite of his food.

“Yes, I have. I visited there several times for conferences and sometimes we would meet up. We still keep in touch on occasion.”

“I talked to her once or twice before, and I was surprised she was only a few years older than me!” Sophocles said while chewing his food. After swallowing, he drank his soda. “She knows a lot about computers, more than me!”

“I remember when Molayne first began this project he would call me and panic whenever the storage wasn’t working,” Kukui said in between bites. “Very happy it’s a huge success in the end, yeah!”

Grimsley took a sip of his drink, then asked, “Since you’ll be in the Elite Four soon, will it be tough balancing your league duties along with the other stuff you’re doing?”

“It’s true I’m having my plate full, but I’m certain that I can manage. The Pokémon storage itself I only needed to keep up maintenance once in a while.”

“I too will be balancing between the Pokémon League and golf, but I’m used to training a lot so it works out.” Kahili stole a glance at Kukui. “Besides, Kukui wouldn’t stop asking me unless I said yes.”

Kukui let out a large laugh. “I thought having you on board would be great! But yeah, I’m glad that both you and Molayne agreed to do this!”

After eating another piece of his sandwich, Grimsley wiped his mouth and smiled. “The league is shaping up to be marvelous right now. I wish all of you the best of luck.”

Both Molayne and Kahili gave him appreciative smiles.

“Thank you, we’ll do our very best!” Molayne said.

The next minute or so everyone was finishing up eating their meals. Grimsley looked up at the television screen on the wall, which was broadcasting the news. It showed a man reporting the weather, the next five days sunny, then he let one of the other reporters take over.

“Earlier today Aether Foundation President Lusamine Jubert held a press conference over at the
organization’s headquarters in Aether Paradise. She was joined by Vice Chief Wicke Santana and Aether Branch Chief Faba Leroy.”

The screen cuts to the press conference. One blonde lady in fashionable clothing was behind the podium. Besides her was another woman with glasses who also dressed nicely and a green haired man wearing goggles and in a lab coat. Grimsley couldn’t stop staring at the light haired woman.

“As you know, on occasion there have been sightings of Ultra Wormholes, a wormhole that connects to different worlds, in the skies,” the Aether president said as several people flashed their cameras at her. “Legends say that fearsome Pokémon, the Ultra Beasts, would come out from those wormholes. And today, I have proof of that legend to be true.”

“President Lusamine then proceeds to show security footage from the conservatory. A wormhole appears with an unknown species of Pokémon coming out from there. That led one of the trainers visiting there to battle it,” the reporter said as video footage of that event was seen.

There was a trainer and her Pokémon, a sea lion creature in frills, going against another Pokémon that resembled a light blue jellyfish and a golden aura surrounding it. Both Pokémon exchanged a series of poison and water attacks that collided with one another in brilliant sparks and explosions. While watching that footage, Grimsley raised an eyebrow at the mysterious Pokémon’s appearance and thought he had recognized that trainer before. Kukui stood up and slammed his palms on the table.

“That’s Selene!” Kukui yelled, pointing at the screen.

“Isn’t that the trainer you told me that met with Tapu Koko?” Molayne asked.

“Yeah! I let her and Hau go on a tour to Aether Paradise. I didn’t think they would encounter an Ultra Beast there.” When Kukui finished, the screen changed back to Lusamine and her co-chiefs.

“With the appearance of that Ultra Beast, I’m certain there are more of those out there from other dimensions. My organization and I will do in our every power to protect the citizens of Alola from these threats!” Lusamine said with brimming eyes and her arms stretched out, then the screen went back to the reporter.

“The Aether Foundation have advised that if you do see an Ultra Beast or Ultra Wormhole that you stay a safe distance from them as much as possible. Back to you, Kerry,” the reporter finished.

“Ultra Beasts? Does that mean Alola is in danger?” one of the trainers inside asked.

“I really like Aether, but can they really protect us?” another trainer asked.

Everyone that watched the news began talking in tense voices. Grimsley knitted his brow and stroked his chin.

"Everyone's getting worried after that news," Kahili said.

"Understandable since we're dealing with beings from other dimensions," Molayne said. A small smile pulled on his lips. "I'm sure though the Aether Foundation will make sure we're safe."

"I hope you're right, Big Mo." Sophocles hung his head down and frowned.

Kukui leaned towards Grimsley and told him in a low voice, “I promised that I would give you my wife’s research on Ultra Wormholes. I brought these with me before we left.” He pushed forward a small booklet towards him, and Grimsley quickly flipped through the pages. There were several
graphs and pictures that he didn’t look too closely at, but he had no doubt this was well researched.

“All right, I’ll read them fairly soon,” Grimsley said with a firm nod and put the booklet away. The more the Ultra Beasts were brought up, the more he couldn’t stop thinking about them.

There was a short silence from everyone. Molayne was checking through his tablet and he gasped.

“Oh I almost forgot! Tonight is the Minior shower!”

“Minior shower?” Grimsley asked, staring at him in confusion.

Sophocles beamed and said, “Every so often the Minior fall like meteor showers! They mostly drop in Starfall Hills where we can see them up close!”

“I remember seeing them the first time during my island trials,” Kahili said, a soft smile on her lips. “There were so many of them in different colors, I couldn’t stop looking at them.”

“Like candies in the sky!”

“I talked to you about Minior earlier today,” Kukui said. “Why don’t you stick around here a while longer and watch with us?”

“While we wait, I can give you the tour of the observatory,” Molayne said. “We have some of the most cutting edge technology here.”

“That does sound lovely, and a great way to take our minds off from that news broadcast. All right, I’ll stay.” This would be a great way to relax, and Grimsley was here for a vacation. Downtime it is.

Xxx

When it was sunset, everyone returned back to Starfall Hills. The skies quickly turned dark and stars began to pop up. The air grew colder than earlier in the afternoon, everyone’s breath becoming visible.

Kahili and Molayne let out Katsuo and Mars respectively, and so Grimsley released Dice and Queen. Queen and Mars did a series of friendly spars while Katsuo soared in the air. Dice played with Sophocles’ Togedemaru, Gigi, the two often rolling on the grass to see who would get to the bottom first. Grimsley lay down with his arms behind his head, the grass tickling his cheeks and hands.

“I really enjoyed the tour of the observatory, Molayne,” Grimsley told him. “Sophocles’s trial was neat, and that telescope was fascinating to look through.”

“Your totem Togedemaru is cute, but boy does she packed quite a lot of electricity,” Kahili said as she rubbed her hand. “I can still feel that shock from her.”

“Same here. Not to mention her fur is hard as steel,” Grimsley said while picking himself back up.

Earlier today Molayne had taken everyone to where Sophocles’s trial was held. Inside two scientists put some of the Charjabug into a machine and demonstrated how it worked; each time the Pokémon would line up like a bingo card. He and Kahili tried it out a few times each, the puzzles not too hard for them. Grimsley also got to see Rosie, who was much larger than Gigi. He started petting her, but flinched when her fur shocked his hand. Kahili also got to pet it, and she too got startled when her hand got shocked.
“Sorry about that,” Sophocles said with an embarrassed laugh. “Again, Rosie gets too excited when she gets petted.”

“If you think that’s bad, I had my Magnezone use its electric attacks on me a bunch of times, wooh!” Kukui said, and Grimsley’s eyes flew wide.

“What can I say, you’re very passionate towards your work,” Molayne said and chuckled. He gazed up at the sky and gasped. “Oh, the Minior are coming!”

Everyone including the Pokémon gazed up at the sky with similar expressions. Several large rocks that appeared to be the Minior dropped and littered the hill. Dice and Gigi approached one of them and poked its shell.

“The Minior gets turned to rock due to accumulating a lot of dust while coming here,” Molayne said to Grimsley. “Their shells then gets cracked, exposing their core.”

Grimsley stared at him in confusion, but then he saw that the Minior’s shell started cracking. Dice and Gigi got startled and backed away from the one they were touching. Soon all of the Minor’s shells broke and they popped up like confetti. Their bodies looked like little stars and in different colors.

“Hi there little guy, this is your first time coming here?” Sophocles asked when a purple one floated by him. The Minior nodded and rubbed against him, causing Sophocles to laugh.

The other Minior approached everyone else. Molayne, Kukui, and Kahili chuckled when one sat on Mars’s head and he tried to figure out where it was. A few of them chased Katsuo while he was flying and screeching. A blue Minior floated by in between Dice and Gigi, the two beaming and jumping with it. An orange one approached Grimsley and he smiled at it.

“I can see why this is called Starfall Hills,” he said, just as Queen walked up beside him. The Minior squealed and rubbed both Girmsley’s and Queen’s cheeks before joining with the other Minior. He looked over his shoulder to see Queen smiling a little.

Everyone watched the Minior playing with the Pokémon and each other a while longer. Eventually, they floated up towards the sky once more.

“After their core is exposed,” Molayne said, “their bodies become fragile. They eventually perish unless you use a Pokéball.”


He looked up to see several Minior already turning into dust. As more and more Minior disappeared, Dice swung his head all around and he frowned. Queen went to him and patted his shoulder for support. Gigi reacted similarly by chirping and running around in circles. Sophocles picked her up and cradled her against his chest.

“Looks like both Dice and Gigi are sad that they’re going away,” Kahili said with a small frown.

A sad smile appeared on Sophocles’ face. “On my first Minior shower I cried when they disappeared and I couldn’t do anything about it. Big Mo then told me they’re happy with the few moments they have here and I shouldn’t be sad.” After Sophocles finished, his cousin rested his palms on his shoulders.

“I couldn’t agree more,” Kukui said. “We should cherish every moment we have with our
Grimsley couldn’t help but steal a glance at Queen. He loved all his Pokémon dearly, but her loss would be the most devastating due to her being his first one and how much they went through together. As if reading his mind, Queen gripped on his shoulder and gave him a firm nod. He was taken aback by her response, but he grinned and touched her shoulder back. When Dice cried and awkwardly sandwiched between them, Grimsley chuckled and patted his forehead.

“Even though this ends on a bittersweet note, I’m glad to have witnessed this,” he said and looked back up to see more Minior perishing, glittering the sky like fireworks. He also liked to think those meteor Pokémon enjoyed their stay here while it lasted. This was the most beautiful sight he had seen in a long while.
Pursuit (Part One)

Chapter Summary

In which Nanu reflects over the Aether Foundation's recent news broadcast and tries to get a message over to Charlotte. Meanwhile, Grimsley talks to Professor Burnet, and then he and Molayne have a heartfelt conversation under the stars.

Chapter Notes

Hi, so got new chapter here! As you may noticed, I have this titled "Pursuit, Part One". Originally this was going to be one chapter and only Grimsley's POV. His first few and latter scenes don't seem to flow together, so I separated them. And that's before I decided to add a couple Nanu scenes for good measure oops.

Camp Nano was going fairly good, wrote 11K so far. Then after that, kinda ran out of gas lol. Counting Chapter 10, I probably have 5 chapters of backlog, but they're very rough so updates might be on a monthly basis still.

Besides that, at Grimsley and Molayne's scene yes I came up with game knockoffs for Mario Kart, Smash Bros, and Mortal Kombat. Funny enough, Smash Bros did their Persona 5/Joker update some days ago, and MK 11 was just released. I watched a playthrough of MK 11's story mode recently, and oh man it's wild haha.

As always, thanks to bobandbill for the great betaing! Also thanks to illustrious-rocket for giving me permission to use Antimony as Colress's surname!

Behind the observatory there was a smaller building that was Molayne’s office and living space. Everyone slept there for the night including Grimsley, and this morning he woke up early to read Professor Burnet’s extensive research on Ultra Wormholes.

Apparently the Ultra Wormholes were a very special occurrence and believed to lead to a different dimension. There were some studies from Sinnoh, Unova, and Hoenn that supported that theory. For instance, there was an incident that occurred a few years ago involving the legendary Pokémon Palkia, Dialga, and Giratina. Burnet also mentioned how in Alolan folklore there would be tales of fearsome Pokémon, the Ultra Beasts, coming from the Ultra Wormholes and fighting with the guardian deities.

While reading, Grimsley sat on the couch with coffee and toast on the table. After another bite of his toast, he scratched the back of his neck and sighed. Someone tapped on his shoulder, so he turned around and flinched upon seeing Professor Kukui grinning at him.

“What do you think of Magnolia's research so far?” he asked.

“To be honest, I don’t understand almost half of the words she used in her writing.” Grimsley rubbed his eyes, and Kukui chuckled.
“Well, she’s a scientist, yeah! You got an idea of what she’s trying to say, right?”

“I think so. When Burnet says there are different dimensions, does she mean like the world Zossie and Dulse of the Ultra Recon Squad come from?”

“Most likely, yeah. According to her, the Ultra Beasts come from worlds different to ours, hence why they’re considered different from Pokémon in our folklore.”

Grimsley made a slight bob of his head. “How about the Ultra Recon Squad? Does she know them?”

“The Dimensional Lab and Aether are collaborating together on researching Ultra Wormholes, so yes she’s already aware of them.” A wide grin stretched across Kukui’s face, and he had his hands on his sides. “The offer still stands, cousin.”

Grimsley raised a brow. “Huh? What offer?”

“Meeting my wife, of course! If you want, I can have her explain more of her research to you through videophone, yeah!”

While considering Kukui’s offer, Grimsley gulped his coffee. The brow on his forehead knitted. Originally he had told him it wasn’t necessary, but now he was reconsidering. Besides her research, there were a few other questions he had for her. He set aside his cup on the table, and looked up at Kukui with a small smile.

“Sure, why not? I’ve got nothing to lose.”

“Awesome! I’m sure she’ll be thrilled talking to you!”

“Are you two talking about Ultra Wormholes?” Kahili asked as she approached them. She held her own cup of coffee with one hand.

“Grimsley will be talking with Professor Burnet later today so that he can learn more about them from her, woo!”

Kahili sipped her coffee, a small smile tugging on her lips. “I swear, you get all lovey-dovey each time you mention her.”

“What can I say, I’m still Captivated by her!” he said with a wink. That made Kahili groan, and even Grimsley rolled his eyes at that pun.

“How about you, Kahili?” Grimsley asked her. “What are your thoughts on this?”

“I’m not sure, to be honest.” Kahili put her cup down on the coffee table, crossed her arms, and raised her chin. “I’ve heard tales of strong Pokémon not from around here. And now a possibility of them being real and a threat? I hope I’m prepared for that.”

Kukui grinned. “Are you kidding? You’re a former island champion, so you’re more than prepared!”

Grimsley blinked, also taken aback by her response. Kahili seemed like a confident person from the way she battled. Nonetheless, he hummed in agreement.

“I was impressed with your battle skills yesterday. You should be fine.”

Kahili gave them an appreciative smile. “You’re right! If it comes to that, my Pokémon are capable
“That’s the spirit, woo!” Kukui said, pumping his fist in the air.

Kahili chuckled. “I better get going now. Can’t skip out on my daily training exercises!”

She waved them goodbye before departing. As soon as she was gone, Kukui faced back at Grimsley.

“We can talk to my wife during her lunch break, which is a few hours from now.”

“That’s fine. I don’t mind waiting.” Grimsley leaned against the couch, his arms over his head. He hoped talking with Professor Burnet would make more sense of the Ultra Wormholes.

Xxx

It was late morning when Nanu woke up and took a shower. He hadn't had one in a few days, and both Persian and the Meowth cringed at his presence, so he made himself do some basic hygiene practice.

He stood still for several minutes, letting the hot water rain down on his face and skin. Steam started to build up around him. On the few occasions he forced himself to take a shower, it actually felt nice. He started thinking about what had happened yesterday.

He was at his desk, playing with his kendama as a way to destress himself. A couple of his Meowth tried to catch the ball on the string, but he told them not to do that. He left the television on, which was broadcasting the afternoon news. When the news began reporting the Aether Foundation's press conference, he stopped and watched.

The video of a young trainer with a Brionne facing against UB Symbiont was shown. His stomach sunk, shocked that a child would go against such a dangerous creature. The Ultra Beasts were supposed to be classified, so Interpol most likely had a field day with that.

Charlotte was with Faba and Lusamine, though the newscaster had said her real first name and not her middle one. Lusamine announced that the Ultra Beasts were coming, and that her organization would protect Alola from them. After that, the reporters bombarded her with questions and the photographers kept flashing pictures.

Back in the present, Nanu let out a deep sigh and his shoulders slumped. Looker and Anabel had already informed him of the Ultra Wormhole in Aether Paradise, but he was still stunned when it was on the news. He couldn't stop thinking about that press conference ever since. He turned the faucet off, dried himself with a towel, and stepped out of the shower.

After Nanu put on some clothes, he walked to the front office. Two of the Meowth were playing with his Z-ring bracelet he had left on the desk. He shooed the cats away and put the bracelet on his wrist. He sat down, turning on his computer.

He pulled up Aether Foundation's website. The main home page had several pictures of the employees with various Pokémon. On the right side was the news bulletin with the latest post being about the press conference. He clicked on the "Read More" link, and he was sent to a new page that had information on that. So far it repeated the same thing that was mentioned on the news. On the bottom was a video of the press conference, so he clicked on it and let it play.

“With the appearance of that Ultra Beast, I’m certain there are more of those out there from other dimensions. My organization and I will do in our every power to protect the citizens of Alola from
Nanu watched the video on repeat several times. When he was tired of it, he leaned back on his chair and stared at the ceiling for a while. Protect the citizens of Alola from these threats. Nanu couldn't help but snort. Not even the International Police had done that right and look what had happened now.

His gaze fell at the postcard from Charlotte. He sat back straight and picked it up. Nanu reread Charlotte's warning, and then stared at the computer screen. In the video Charlotte stood there calm and smiling, but her fidgeting fingers and shifty glances said otherwise.

"Could this be what she's warning me about?" he muttered to himself and furrowed his brow. He stared down at the phone on his desk. "Maybe I should give her a call."

He was about to pick the receiver up, but stop his hand midway through. There could be a chance Aether had their phones recorded, and he didn't want to blow her cover. With a frustrated sigh, he slammed his hand on the desk.

He still wanted to at least let her know he got her message, but how? Anabel and Looker were on their way to Poni Island right now. Nanu recalled Dimensional Labs working with Aether. If there was someone from there that could contact Charlotte...

Nanu's eyes grew wide with realization. There was one person there who probably talked often with her. He picked the phone up and dialed the number. It was a few rings until someone answered.

"Professor Kukui speaking, yeah!"

"Hi, Kukui. You sound excited as ever."

"Nanu? Oh, did you have a suggestion on who should be on the Elite Four?"

Nanu forced himself to not roll his eyes. "No, not yet. Actually, I wonder if you can do me a favor."

"Sure, cousin! What kind of favor?"

"Your wife talk with the Aether folks often, yes?"

"Dimensional Labs and Aether Foundation often collaborate together on research, yeah! Why you asked?"

"There's a message I want to give to someone there. The Assistant Branch Chief Char--" Nanu stopped there, realizing he almost slipped up. He cleared his throat. "Wicke Santana."

"Is that all? Couldn't you just call or send her an email?"

Nanu's throat turned dry. "It's complicated. Let's just say we go way back and it's a personal matter."

"Oh. All right, I won't force you to tell me anymore than that. What did you want to tell her?"

Before Nanu responded, he gazed back at Charlotte's message once more. A small smile formed on his lips.

"Tell her Kahuna Nanu thanks her for the postcard she sent me, and I'll be more Earth friendly
from now on. Also that Poni Island's weather is good right now."

"Is that all?" Kukui said in confusion. He chuckled right after. "No problem then, yeah! I'm about to have Grimsley talk with Magnolia later today, so I can let her know then."

That made Nanu immediately jump out of his seat. "Wait, Grimsley's with you?"

"Yeah! We're at the Hokulani Observatory right now. He wanted to know more about other dimensions, so I suggested he talk with her."

"He does now, huh?" Nanu said flatly as he sat back down. A part of him wondered if he had saw that news conference too. "Hopes he gets something out of it."

"I'm sure he will, yeah! I better get back inside the observatory now. You take care, cousin!"

"Thanks, Kukui. And same to you."

Nanu hung up and gave out a deep sigh. He hoped that Burnet would give Charlotte that message as soon as possible. He shifted his head to see the two Meowth that had played with his bracelet earlier glaring at him.

"What you guys want?" he asked, his lips twitching in annoyance. One of the Meowth lifted an empty bowl with her paws and she cried again. Nanu narrowed his eyes. "Okay I'll get the food. Give me a minute."

Nanu got up and headed to the cabinet where he stored the Meowth's food in, the two Meowth following him behind. The several other Meowth he passed by were either sleeping, playing, or scratching furniture.

When he had left Interpol, he didn't think he would end up the island kahuna living in the police station with a bunch of stray Meowth. And now, it seemed he wasn’t done with Interpol just yet.

Xxx

By early afternoon, Kukui asked Molayne if he and Grimsley could use his videophone to call his wife. Molayne chuckled and also joked how he missed talking to her already, which made Kukui laugh.

After Molayne left them alone, Kukui dialed Burnet’s number and they waited a few rings until the screen lit up with her face. She had dark skin like her husband, and her white hair was held with a large headband. Instead of a lab coat or formal clothing, she dressed like as if she was about to go to the gym or for a run. Behind her, there was a bookshelf and a poster board with various charts, pictures, and announcements on there.

“Hm? Molayne, is that you?” When she recognized Kukui’s face, she grinned. “Oh, hi honey! I thought Molyane’s calling because his number showed on my screen. So you’re in his office now?"

“Yeah! I asked him if I can talk to you for a moment and he’s cool with it.”

“Ah, all right.” Burnet now noticed Grimsley, and her face lit up. “And the man next to you, is that who I think he is?”

“If you’re thinking Grimsley from the Unova Elite Four, then yeah! He’s interested in talking about Ultra Wormholes with you!” Kukui jabbed Grimsley on the shoulder with his elbow and
stepped away. Grimsley gave him a blank stare, and then he sat down and faced the screen.

“Alola, Professor Burnet,” Grimsley said, waving at her.

Burnet’s grin grew even wider and she squealed. “Oh my gosh, I can’t believe it’s you! Back in Unova, I would watch you and the other Elite Four on TV. Those battles are fun to watch!”

Grimsley raised a curious brow. “Oh? Which one is your favorite?”

“Probably the one with you and Alder! Your guys’ Pokémon are such powerhouses!”

A small smile tugged on Grimsley’s lips. That was one of the exhibition battles for a tournament he and Alder had participated in. Alder’s Pokémon were indeed strong, including his ace, Vix the Volcarona. He lost that match as expected, but he also learned a lot during that battle.

“Glad that my colleagues and I were able to entertain you.”

“And how!” Burnet giggled, and then asked, “So, what’s a hotshot trainer like you doing here in Alola?”

“Well, I’m here for a little vacation. I met up with your husband, and he told me how you’re an expert in other dimensions. I recall that you used to be a researcher in Unova.”

Burnet nodded and let out a low hum. “Before my main research was on dreams, but then I was offered work here in Alola and I couldn’t resist coming here.”

“Right. Anyways, I read some of your research, and I have a few questions I want to ask.”

“Sure, I can spare a few minutes with you. What you want to know?”

Grimsley considered what he wanted to ask first. “You mentioned in your research that Ultra Beasts have appeared according to Alolan folklore. Are those stories true?”

“Can’t say. There are several accounts of the Ultra Beasts and our guardian deities going against each other. Like all legends, hard to know how much is true.”

“Perhaps your legends are more accurate than you think,” Grimsley said in a low voice. He stroked his chin. “I saw one of those Ultra Wormholes in Melemele Island several days ago.”

Burnet’s face slipped into a more serious expression. “Yes, Melemele Island was where one of the several dimension disturbances that happened recently took place. Akala Island had one a few days ago, and another one in Aether Paradise. The Aether president did a press conference on that yesterday.”

Right, that news report that aired yesterday and caused everyone unease in the Pokémon Center, and where the fair-looking woman who proclaimed that her organization would protect Alola from the Ultra Beasts. Grimsley pressed his lips flat and furrowed his brow.

“That reminds me, Kukui told me that Aether and the Dimensional Research Lab are working together. You happen to talk with Ms. Lusamine over what was revealed in that press conference?”

Burnet nodded. “I sent her the results of that specific dimensional disturbance, and we discussed that over the phone. Her guests, the Ultra Recon Squad, have been tracking the Ultra Wormholes also, and their readings are the same.”

Grimsley flinched, and he cleared his throat. “I’ve encountered them before. They claimed to be
from another world. Do you believe them?”

“I do, and they even showed me one of their Ultra Beasts. My field of study is in dimensions, after all!”

Grimsley grunted, and he looked over his shoulder to see Kukui leaning against the wall and folding his arms against his chest. They exchanged blank stares with one another, and then Grimsley returned to the screen.

“So what happens now?”

“I’ll still look out for more wormholes and update Aether and the Ultra Recon Squad on them.” Burnet’s face softened. “Thanks to these recent developments, I think I’m much closer to solving the mystery of Ultra Wormholes!”

The way Burnet sounded excited made Grimsley’s skin crawl for some reason. He smiled back out of respect.

“You seemed very passionate towards your work. I’m sure you’ll reach that goal sooner than later.”

“Thanks, that means a lot!” At that instant, someone yelled to Burnet that they finished with their latest analysis and she turned to their direction. “All right, I’ll check them out in a little bit!” she called to them. She looked back at Grimsley and said, “I have to get back to work very soon. Maybe we can chat again, sometime!”

“That would be lovely. It’s been a pleasure talking with you.”

“Same here! I hope you enjoy your stay in Alola!”

Kukui stepped forward and flashed a grin at his wife. “Before you go, I had a call from Kahuna Nanu. He wants you to give a personal message to Assistant Branch Chief Wicke.”

“Hm? What kind of message?” she asked.

“He wanted to thank her for the postcard she had sent him. He’ll also be more Earth friendly from now on, and that Poni Island’s weather is great now, yeah!”

A confused look spread across Burnet’s face, and then she smiled. “Sure, I can let Wicke know the next time I speak with her.”

“Awesome! I’ll give you another call later tonight, Maggie pie! You take care!”

“I can’t wait. Talk to you again soon, sweetie!” She blew him a kiss on screen and hung up.

Grimsley raised a curious brow. That was an odd request from the kahuna there.

“Kahuna Nanu called you earlier?” Grimsley asked. Earlier Kukui went outside on the balcony, so he assumed Nanu had talked to him then.

“He did. Apparently he and Wicke go back.” Kukui shrugged, and then released a happy sigh. “Magnolia’s great, isn’t she yeah?”

Grimsley blinked, a little confused about what Kukui meant by that. Friends? Lovers? He decided that was not his business right now.
“Yes, she seems like a bright woman.” Grimsley frowned. “I can’t help but feel something’s going on with Aether and the Ultra Recon Squad.”

“How come?” Kukui asked, raising a brow.

“You heard what happened in the Unova League over four years ago? Everyone thought the three dragons were only from legends, but they were then came back to life.” Grimsley dragged out a sigh and stared up at the ceiling. “Seems like it would be the same case here.”

Kukui’s face fell, but then he gave him an understanding smile. “I get your concern, cousin. Like Molayne, though, I think Aether will do more good than harm.” He patted Grimsley’s shoulder. “Come on, he’s cooking some burgers that will make you your mouth melt!”

“Food does sound great now.” Grimsley rose out of his seat and followed Kukui out of the office.

By the time they arrived in the dining hall, Molayne, Kahili, and Sophocles had already gathered around the table and eating their meal. A few plates of burgers and cans of soda were set aside, so Grimsley sat down and grabbed his.

“So how did your conversation with Professor Burnet go?” Molayne asked after he swallowed his piece.

“She told me a little bit about her research and its progress.” Grimsley paused to chew on his burger. The meat was plump and juicy while the vegetables were a little crunchy but fresh. “Now I’m even more interested in her research.”

“Have you checked out the library in Malie City? I’m sure there are dozens of books on alternate dimensions there.”

“I did, actually. I was reading some of Alola’s history there, and then I met with Nanu’s son, Iokua.”

After Kahili finished gulping on her soda, she gave him a curious stare. “Really? I’ve met Iokua and his wife a few times before. They’re sweet people.”

“Isn’t he the librarian with brown hair and who always dresses nice?” Sophocles asked. “He’s been very helpful whenever I go visit there.”

“That sounds about right.” Grimsley washed his throat with his drink. “Perhaps I’ll pay the library another visit. Professor Burnet did say that the folklore is related to the ultra wormholes.”

Kukui flashed him a grin. “Great idea, cousin! You’ll get to learn more of our history and culture also, yeah!”

The library would be his next destination, Grimsley decided when he was almost done with his food and with a knitted brow. He could do more than just research on Alola and alternate dimensions there.

Xxx

When evening came, Grimsley was outside of the balcony of Molayne’s house. The sun had just set, and already the stars sparkled like diamonds.

“A beautiful evening, isn’t it?” someone asked from behind. Grimsley turned around to see Molayne approaching him.
“It is. I’m able to see the stars clearer here than in Castelia City.”

Molayne chuckled, and he joined him. “Yeah, whenever I visited Castelia there was a lot of pollution. There’s less of that in Alola.”

“I can tell.” Grimsley paused, and he frowned. “Your love for science reminds me of… someone I knew before.” He wanted to mentally slap himself for casually mentioning Colress that way, but he couldn’t help himself making that comparison.

“Oh?”

“His name was Colress, and he’s also from Unova. His research was—” He cleared his throat and said in his best Colress impersonation, “Bringing out the power of Pokémon!”

Molayne’s face brightened. “Oh, you mean Mr. Antimony!”

“You had met him?” Grimsley asked with wide eyes, and Molayne nodded.

“He came here a few days ago to research Rosie. He thinks the z-rings and z-power are what brings out a Pokémon’s power.”

“That’s what he told me when we bumped into each other recently.” Grimsley narrowed his eyes and lowered his head. “We used to be close, but after a series of mishaps we aren’t talking to each other.”

Molayne regarded him for a moment, and then he did a single nod. “I understand. I won’t ask further if you don’t want me to.”

“Thanks, I appreciate it.” Grimsley paused. He wanted to get to know Molyane better, so he asked, “What do you do in your spare time?”

“I love playing video games, especially with Soffy. He’s a menace in Torkoal Kart and Ultimate Wreck Bros!”

“Marshal and Alder likes Ultimate Wreck Bros, too. They also play this very violent one called Deadly Payback.” Grimsley often would see them play one of those games in the lounge, and sometimes they invited him to join them. He only played those games a few times; Ultimate Wreck Bro was mindless fun while Deadly Payback he rolled his eyes at the scenes whenever the fighter that lost got chopped in half and their guts spilled out.

“Oh, that one is too gory for my and Soffy’s taste. His parents would hate me if I let him play that!”

Grimsley chuckled. “Glad to see you’re looking out for him.”

“He’s mature enough to play games with violence and such, but we set some boundaries for him.”

Grimsley hummed in agreement. “I’ve only been here a couple days, but I can tell you two care for each other.”

Molayne shifted his gaze at the sky. A sad smile pulled on his lips.

“Soffy and I don’t have any siblings, so we act like brothers to each other. That’s why I trust him in watching over the observatory.”

“From what I saw, I think he’ll do great.”
Facing back, Molayne beamed. “Thanks, that means a lot.”

They gave each other a longing gaze. Molayne’s hand slipped onto Grimsley’s, squeezing his knuckles. Grimsley flinched and his heart raced. He wasn’t sure if Molayne did that on purpose or not, but he welcomed his touch nonetheless.

“Big Mo! Big Mo!” Sophocles yelled, rushing at them. That caused Grimsley and Molayne to let go of each other’s hands. “The PC storage is down again!”

Molayne frowned at Grimsley, as if apologizing to him. He faced Sophocles, smiling at him.

“All right, I’ll have a look. Shouldn’t take too long, maybe fifteen minutes at most.”

“Okay! After that, can we finish up Ultimate Wreck Bro’s new story mode?”

“I think we’ll have time for that.” Molayne looked over his shoulder at Grimsley. “Grimsley can even join us!”

After some consideration, Grimsley said, “Sure, that sounds fun.”

Sophocles jumped and cheered. “Cool! More players is always good!”

All three began to head back inside, Grimsley following behind the cousins. His right thumb rubbed on the knuckles of his other hand, Molayne’s warm touch still there. He gazed at the night sky once more, still thinking the stars were prettier here than in Castelia City.
Pursuit (Part Two)

Chapter Summary

In which Grimsley makes two phone calls and then speaks with Iokua. Meanwhile, Nanu finds Gladion and talks with him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The next morning Grimsley went to the Pokémon Center. When he arrived, several trainers were there. Most were either watching the morning news or eating breakfast. Two trainers had risen out of their chairs and exited the building, ignoring him. The nurse at the desk was helping out the few trainers waiting in line, and beside her was a Pokémon that resembled a living lei. Grimsley mused that some or most of the trainers were here visiting the observatory.

He thought that Iris would have liked to come here, too. A beat. Oh crap, he hadn’t contacted her since arriving!

He rushed to the video phone and dialed her number. It was late afternoon in Unova, so it shouldn't be too much of a disturbance for her. He waited until Iris picked up the phone. Upon seeing him, she grinned ear to ear.

"Oh my gosh, Grimsley! I thought you would call earlier!"

"Sorry about that. I was extremely busy."

"I bet!" Iris raised her chin high. "Having too much fun in Alola, hm?"

The corner of Grimsley's upper lip twitched. "Not exactly. Many things happened while I was there."

"Well then, tell me!" Iris demanded, and for the duration of their conversation Grimsley told her his adventures in Alola so far.

Iris was surprised when he told her about the wormholes and meeting beings from another world. She was even more stunned that Colress had been with the Ultra Recon Squad. Like when he had talked about him to his mother, Grimsley asked that they not talk about him for the time being and Iris respected his wishes. He then mentioned about going into the abandoned Thrifty Megamart and his battle with Mimikins.

"Oh wow, so that Mimikyu gave you her z-crystal? I thought only young trainers taking the island challenge can get them!"

"I thought so, too. Mimikins enjoyed our battle and gave me the Z-crystal as thanks."

"Heh, that's awfully nice of her! Do you have it with you?"

Grimsley nodded and pulled the Ghostinum-Z crystal out from his kimono's pocket. He raised it in front of the screen, and Iris's face lit up.
"Oh wow, first time seeing one of those! Are you practicing its Z-move now?"

"I've been practicing its dance, but I need a Z-bracelet to have the Z-move fully work."

"Huh, so kinda like Mega Evolution?"

Grimsley flinched upon hearing that. The trainer needed a Keystone and their chosen Pokémon's Mega Stone. He knew Mega Evolution firsthand thanks to Colress. Grimsley's eyes narrowed.

"I would like us to not talk about that, either," he said, his voice sharper than intended. Iris blinked in confusion at first, and then gasped when she realized what he meant.

"Sure, we don't have to mention that either." She then asked, "Did you do anything else after that?"

“I did,” Grimsley said. "Professor Kukui is forming Alola's first Pokémon League. He invited me to be a consultant to two trainers he has chosen as the Elite Four."

"Hey, that's awesome! Did you get to battle them?"

"I did, and they seemed more than qualified to be in it. One of the trainers is also head of the Hokulani Observatory. He gave me a tour of the place."

“That observatory does sound like fun! If I ever visit Alola, I’ll definitely visit that place and the other locations you mentioned.”

“I’m sure you’ll love those sites.” Grimsley’s smile faded. “How is everyone else doing?”

“We’re all doing great! Only a few trainers came, but it’s usually slow during this time.”

“I see.” Grimsley shifted his head with narrowed eyes. "I can't believe it's been over four years since Team Plasma's attack in the Pokémon League."

Iris frowned. "Yeah, me too. I remember going there with Drayden and battling several grunts. Then they reappeared shortly after I became Champion."

"You met them a couple times, correct?"

Iris hummed and nodded. "Nate and I went against those guys too, and they were more annoying than the original Team Plasma. At least they’re gone for good!"

"Indeed." Grimsley paused. “I’ll be heading to Malie City again later today to do some research on Alola's lore.”

“You're doing that while on vacation?” Iris flashed him an amused grin. "Did Shauntal ask you to look up something for her?"

"No, she didn't. Apparently the wormholes and Alola's history are connected, so I want to read up on that."

“Really? That sounds pretty crazy.”

"You don't even know the half of it."

Iris chuckled. "Maybe so! Well, I need to head out myself. Do call me and the other Elite Four again soon!"
“I will. You and the others have a good day,” Grimsley said.

Both of them hung up, the video phone’s screen turning black. Grimsley leaned back against his chair, his head behind his arms, and glimpsed at the lobby. Only a few trainers remained inside, probably waiting for their Pokémon to get healed.

His mind drifted back to the press conference and his conversation with Professor Burnet. She would update her research to Aether, and was excited to learn more about them.

“Close to solving the mysteries of the wormholes. Such a risk there …” Grimsley’s voice trailed off, then he stroked his chin. He wondered how Becky was doing, and her thoughts on all of this. He dialed the number to the Aether House and waited almost a minute until Becky picked it up.

“Aether House, how may I… Oh, hi Grimsley!” Becky greeted him with a warm smile. “Is there something that you need?”

“I do. Say Becky, have you ever met this president of yours?”

"You mean President Lusamine? A few times, yes. Sometimes she visit the Aether House to check the Pokémon here. She seems very sweet and caring towards them. Why you ask?"

"She did a press conference a few days ago about the Ultra Beasts. Did you watch it?"

“Yes, I did. I actually got informed from Aether’s headquarters to keep an eye on any Ultra Beast that appears.”

Grimsley looked over his shoulder once more. One trainer picked up their Scrafty and waved goodbye to the nurse. Two more still were sat down on one of the couches and talking. Inside seemed a little quieter now. He faced back at Becky.

"The Ultra Recon Squad showed us one of the Ultra Beasts, Poipole,” he said in a low voice. “From your reaction, you weren't aware that Aether has an interest in them?"

Becky gasped, and then she scratched her forehead. "Not really. I know Aether and the Ultra Recon Squad collaborated together over some research projects, but nothing more than that."

"Yes, I remember you saying that when we met them. How do you feel about all this going on?"

"Somewhat mixed. The Ultra Beasts sound scary." Her expression then changed to her grinning. "I'm sure though that Aether will protect us from them!"

“Oh, I see.” Grimsley had his lips flat. “So you have that much faith in them, hm?"

"Well I've been with Aether for a while now, so of course I trust them." She then asked, “How was your visit to the Hokulani Observatory?"

This time, Grimsley smiled a little. "It was great. Molayne gave me a tour of it. I also got to battle him and Kahili to see how prepared they are for the Elite Four."

"That's so cool! Man, I should've been there to see that!"

“See what?” someone else asked, revealed to be Gracie. She and Yungoos joined Becky onscreen, and when the girl noticed Grimsley she beamed. “Oh, Alola Uncle Grimsley!” she cheered.

“Uncle Grimsley?” he asked with wide eyes, taken aback by that nickname.
Becky gave a sheepish laugh and rubbed the back of her neck. “Gracie and Hunter already took a liking to you, so they’ve been calling you Uncle Grimsley.”

“Yea! You and your Pokémon are super nice! Unlike Kahuna Nanu, who wouldn’t even let us touch his big kitty!” After that, Gracie’s Yungoos wiggled around her arms and squealed. “Yungoos seems to agree, too!”

Grimsley couldn’t help but chuckle. “Glad to hear I’m the good guy compare to him.”

“Um, if Yungoos ever gets in trouble, you’ll help him? Right?” Upon asking that, Gracie pushed Yungoos closer to the screen and the Pokémon made a face.

Grimsley stared at Yungoos for several seconds. “An odd question to ask. But yes, I would help him if possible,” he responded, and that earned him another cheer from Gracie.

On screen, Becky offered Gracie a soft smile. “Why don’t you and Yungoos continue to play with Hunter and Headmaster right now?”

“Okay! Talk to you later, Uncle Grimsley!” Gracie waved to him goodbye, and then ran off to Hunter and the other Pokémon.

“Sorry about that,” Becky said, now alone once more. “I guess she was excited seeing me talking to you there.”

“It’s fine,” Grimsley said. "Well, I should be going now, but thank you for answering some of my questions there.”

“Not a problem!” Becky grinned at him. “You have a good day!”

Grimsley wished the same for her, and they both hung up. Rising from his seat, he yawned and stretched his arms. As he left the Pokémon Center and went to pack his things, he mused the sooner he got to the library the better.

Xxx

After Grimsley had packed his things, he went to the bus stop to leave to Malie City. Everyone went outside the Hokulani Observatory to see him off.

"I've enjoyed my time here in the observatory," Grimsley said, and Molayne gave him an appreciative smile.

"Glad to hear! You've given all of us some great insight on what it's like to be in the Elite Four."

"Gigi and I would love for you to visit here again!" Sophocles grinned. On his back, Gigi chirped and nodded.

"Perhaps if time allows." Grimsley faced both Kukui and Kahili. "You two will be sticking around here longer?"

"I will stay here until tomorrow," Kahili said. "Going to meet my dad in Akala Island and train there for a while."

"Molayne and I need to take care of some Pokémon League stuff, then I'll be going to Malie City myself, yeah!" Kukui raised his head and pointed ahead. "Looks like the bus is about to leave soon!"
Grimsley looked over his shoulder to see a few people boarding one of the Exeggutor Express buses already. He hummed and faced back at everyone.

"I better get going, then. All of you take care."

He went to each one individually. He scratched Gigi's chin and did the Alola rainbow sign to Sophocles, who did the same. When he approached Kukui, the professor offered him a big embrace. Grimsley was taken aback by that, but once Kukui let go he shook his hand also. After that, he and Kahili grinned at each other and shook hands. He went to Molayne last, who pulled out a business card from his jacket and smiled.

"Here’s my business card," he said. A slight blush formed on his cheeks, and he sheepishly rubbed the back of his neck. "Sometimes my work phone gets busy, so it’s better if you contact me through my other number."

While gazing at the card on his palm, Grimsley’s heart jumped. He put it away and smiled.

"I’ll keep that in mind. Thank you."

They embraced, Molayne’s body warm against his. After letting go, Grimsley and Molayne exchanged soft grins at one another.

Grimsley grabbed his bags and walked to the bus. Before stepping in, he glanced to see Molayne and Kahili smile fondly at him while Kukui and Sophocles wave at him goodbye. He waved back and boarded the bus.

xxx

As usual, Nanu was doing his patrol outside. No rain today, but white clouds still covered most of the sky. He stared around to see the Ariados, Scraggy, and other Pokémon running around in the grass. There were no Team Skull grunts here; either they overslept or didn't feel like going out yet.

A Honchkrow's cry was heard, and Nanu gazed up to see his Pokémon flying above him. Eventually Honchkrow dived down towards him, so he spread his right arm wide and let him perch there.

"Find anything suspicious?" he asked, scratching Honchkrow's chest. The bird's white ruff was soft and fluffy. Honchkrow squawked and bobbed his head a few times. Nanu frowned. "All right, show me the way."

Honchkrow cawed and flew off, Nanu following him. They pushed forward at the corner of Po Town's wall. When they reached there, Nanu stopped and stared at the sight before him.

A blonde boy stood in the middle of a field. His dark clothing was ripped in several places, most notably on his sleeves and pants. A Golbat and another Pokémon, a canine-like creature with fish scales on their legs and a wooden helmet covering their head, battled each other.

"Jester, Shadow Ball! Null, move away and hit hard with Iron Head!"

The bat Pokémon opened his mouth and spat out a crimson-colored ball at Null. Null jumped out of the way just in time, and then they howled and their helmet shined a bright light. They collided with Jester and rammed onto the Golbat's mouth. That caused Jester to almost choke and back away. After that, Jester's body glowed violet and changed shape.

Instead of a Golbat, Jester was now a dark-furred fox with a red voluminous mane. He shook his
fur and glared at Null.

Nanu lowered his head and folded his arms against his chest. He remembered hearing about Zorua and Zoroark's ability to create illusions due to police reports of Zorua pretending to be children in schools. He glanced at Honchkrow, who was watching the battle with a keen eye.

“Jester, Night Slash! Null, counter with Crush Claw!”

Both Jester's and Null's claws glowed, and they launched at each other. Jester sliced Null's leg first, leaving a deep cut there. Null howled in pain, only for them to later slash across Jester’s face. It was Jester's turn to scream, with a large cut left on his forehead. Gladion’s face tightened in determination.

“Aerial Ace before Jester bounces back,” Gladion said, thrusting his arm forward.

Null charged at the fox like a lightning bolt and their bodies collided. Jester flew up in the air briefly, and then plummeted to the ground and collapsed. After Null approached Jester and licked his face, the Zoroark picked himself up and shook his fur. Gladion joined them, scratching Null's chin and petting Jester's mane.

"Great work, you two," Gladion complimented them, and his Pokémon responded with positive cries.

While watching that battle, Nanu paid close attention to Null and how they handled themselves. With a grunt, he walked up towards them. Honchkrow followed behind him.

"That's some training your Pokémon are having," he said. That made Gladion stop and stare at him.

"Officer Nanu..." he said in a low voice.

He already knew about Gladion's connection to Aether. The reason why he hadn't sent him back was because Gladion had asked him not to, and what he did with his life was none of his business.

Null and Jester stepped forward and sneered at Nanu, as if protecting their trainer. In intimidation, Honchkrow screeched and spread his wings wide at them. Nanu raised his right palm up.

"Easy there, you three. I'm not looking for trouble, yet."

Honchkrow and both of Gladion's Pokémon backed away from one another. Gladion narrowed his eyes at him for a second, and then went to his Zoroark.

"What do you want?" Gladion asked while he pulled out a potion bottle and sprayed it on Jester, his back facing Nanu.

That was actually a good question. Originally Nanu was here because Honchkrow took him here. He looked at Null, who sat down like an obedient puppy, and recalled his conversation with Anabel and Looker.

"That Pokémon there," Nanu said, pointing at Null. "You been with it a long while?"

After Jester was healed, Gladion scratched his chin. He looked over his shoulder at Null, and then had his attention back at Jester.

"We have. Maybe two years or so? What's it to you?"
"A couple colleagues of mine from the International Police are aware of Null."

"The International Police?" Gladion asked in shock. When he stopped scratching Jester, he whined. "Don't tell me you'll have them take Null away!"

"Relax, kid, I didn't do anything of the sort. I can't promise Interpol will show mercy on your pup, though."

Nanu put his hands in the pockets of his pants, and saw Honchkrow moving towards Null. The bird tilted his head and used his beak to peck Null's helmet, which led them to swipe him away with his fish-scale paw. Honchkrow screamed and backed away. Nanu thought he was just curious over Null's helmet, so he shrugged.

"Wait, if the International Police are aware of Null, that can only mean one of two things," Gladion said. "Either someone from Aether has informed them, or they're working together!"

Nanu's stomach dropped. The boy wasn't entirely wrong on that assumption, but he couldn't tell him about Charlotte. He cleared his throat.

"I can't tell you if you're right or not on that claim. Best to watch your back more than ever."

While Nanu and Gladion were talking, Honchkrow perched himself on a tree branch. Jester got away from Gladion's sight and turned himself into a Honchkrow. He flew up to where Honchkrow was and shook his tail in front of him. Annoyed, Honchkrow bit Jester's tail, and that caused him to scream. Gladion broke his stare on Nanu when that happened.

"Hey Jester, cut it out!" he yelled.

Once Honchkrow let go of Jester, he turned himself back into a Zoroark and landed on the ground. He hung his head in shame. Gladion shook his head, returning him back in his pokéball. Nanu blinked and his eyebrows squished together.

"Sorry about that, Jester gets bored easily."

"The Meowth in the police station are like that too, so don't worry." Nanu then said, "You mentioned you and Null need to get stronger. For what purpose?"

A sharp gasp escaped from Gladion. He sat down next to Null, pulling his knees against his chest.

"You heard of my father, Mohn Jubert, right?"

Nanu raised a brow. He had heard about Mohn through the news and his connections. Interpol didn't seriously look into the Aether Foundation until after Nanu had retired, but he did get more information on what Mohn had been working on. When Nanu had found out about his disappearance, that send off alarm bells in his head.

"Vaguely. He had been missing for several years now, right?"

"Yes. Ever since that incident, my mother hasn't been the same." Gladion ran his fingers through his hair. "Did you watch that press conference she held in Aether's headquarters?"

"Of course, it's practically big news for Alola. I take it you have some strong feelings over that."

Gladion gave a weak nod. "After that broadcast, I know what she's actually going for. I can't lose her, too."
Gladion's true motivation. That was what Looker and Anabel tried to figure out. And now, Nanu had figured it out.

"You ran away from home to prevent your father's disappearance from being repeated."

He and Gladion fixed their stares at each other. After a moment, Gladion's left hand twitched once more and he held his wrist.

"Null and I, we have to get stronger, to protect everyone." Null nuzzled their helm onto Gladion's cheeks, and he offered them a sad smile. He raised his head at Nanu's direction. "Do you know what it's like to feel hopeless when someone gets hurt?"

Pain welled up inside Nanu's throat. He felt that when he had to kill the Ultra Beasts, and when Sana had been taken away by Glutton. He wasn't going to subject him to the violent details of that mission.

"I do, actually. But that story is a little mature for you, boy."

His response caused Gladion to jump and glare at him. "Are you even taking this seriously?"

"More than you think," Nanu said in a flat voice.

Gladion narrowed his eyes at him. He sighed in frustration, jerking his head away from him. Null walked up to him, their shoulder on Gladion's hip. Gazing down at Null, he place his palm on their forehead. Honchkrow was still perched on the tree, watching everyone.

"Either way, my Pokémon still needs more training, and I need a Z-ring. You can help me with both."

Nanu furrowed his brow, already decided on his response. "Did you take the island challenge?"

"I actually did one trial here some weeks back, but I got sidetracked. Most of my and Null's time gets used up doing small jobs for Team Skull."

A crooked grin pulled on the corner of Nanu's mouth. "Two other people made that request too. I refused because they didn't take the island challenge. Gonna do the same with you."

"You just don't want to be bothered, old man," Gladion said, crossing his arms against his chest.

"Yup, that's it. Doing the second trial will do you good, though. Come back to me after you did that."

Gladion's face fell. He grunted and turned around, his back facing Nanu.

"Urgh, whatever. Let's go, Null."

Gladion flicked his hand, and he and Null moved out. Nanu watched them until they were far away from his sight. He walked to the tree where Honchkrow was perched.

"You wouldn't battle him too, right bird brain?" he asked him. Honchkrow cried out and flapped his wings, which Nanu took as a yes. Or maybe he was mad he called him bird brain. "Thought so. Come on, that's enough patrolling for the day."

He and Honchkrow began going back to the police station. While walking, he thought about how Mohn's disappearance had affected Gladion deeply. When he was in Interpol, Lokua didn't like how often he was away from his family. Nanu's situation was different, but he understood what Gladion
was going through.

Now, he was one of the island kahunas. He hoped he had the strength to protect Iokua, and everyone else on Ula'ula Island.

Xxx

Grimsley entered the Malie City Library shortly after it opened. There were several people inside already, mostly older patrons using the computers or on the couch reading a novel. He went to the second floor like last time, which only had a few more people around. Grimsley grabbed a few books from the shelves and took a seat next to one of the tables.

He first read *The Guardian Deities of the Islands* once more, hoping there would be something about the Ultra Beasts. This time he read the sections on Tapu Koko, Tapu Lele, and Tapu Fini since he had skipped them last time. Tapu Koko and Tapu Lele’s passages didn’t hold his interest too much as their entries described how they were caring deities but cunning in battles. When he got to Tapu Fini’s entry, it first talked about how they would unleash thick fog on those who wanted their special water they could create. The next part, however, caught Grimsley off guard.

“Legends also foretold that Tapu Fini has the ability to make apprations of those who are deceased. If a bypasser gets caught in the island guardian’s mist, the spirit of their loved one can be summoned.” Grimsley paused. “Spirits, huh?”

He rested his elbow on the table and had his chin on his palm. His other hand’s fingers tapped on the surface. Nanu also oversaw Poni Island, so he should know about this, too. Maybe he could ask him to take him to Tapu Fini’s temple so that he could talk to his father…

Shaking his head, Grimsley immediately dismissed that idea. Nanu was already annoyed at him as it was. He straightened himself back up and continued on his research.

*Alola's Light* was another book that caught his attention. The first chapter described a time when a hole poked through the sky and "a beast that devours the sun" appeared. The beast won a battle against the island deities, but it blessed Alola with their light. There was apparently a beast of the moon too as it mentioned that "through their union, they brought new life." Grimsley blinked in confusion upon reading that.

"Fragile heir? Did it mean a new Pokémon?" Grimsley said aloud. One person near the books stared and hushed at him. He grunted and read the final passage in a low voice. "The ancient kings sang their thanks for Solgaleo with song of flute. Two tones rang out across the altar, a perfect pair, ever after mute."

The next page had a picture of a lion made of steel and the sun as a backdrop. Several people lined up and prayed to the beast. On the right corner there was a flute with the sun carved on it. Grimsley guessed that must be Solgaleo.

He looked up the next chapter, which talked about "the beast that stole all heaven's light." Like Solgaleo, this beast too went against the island deities and the kings sang their praise to it. On one page it had a picture of a bat with stars as wings and the moon as a backdrop. A flute was also shown, but this one had the moon carved on it. That beast's name was Lunala.

Grimsley flipped the page to the next chapter, and the third picture on it caught his eye. Lunala and Solgaleo appeared on it, but in between them was a dragon-like creature shining brightly. The following passage explained how before Alola was formed there was no light. Three legendary Pokémon then appeared and showered light all over the region that lasted for days. The people
gave the Pokémon that shined the brightest the name ‘the Blinding One’, as their light was filled with a mysterious power. After the Blinding One used all of their light, they went into a deep sleep. Lunala and Solagelo soon shared their light with the people, and the Blinding One woke up and flew off to the sky. When he finished reading, Grimsley leaned back against his chair, head over his arms.

“Solagelo, Lunala, and the Blinding One. How peculiar.” He scratched the back of his neck and sighed. Someone then tapped on his shoulder, so he turned around and flinched upon seeing Iokua smiling a little.

"Can't get enough of Alola's lore, huh?" he said.

“I admit your region’s stories are fascinating to read.” Grimsley rubbed his eyes. "After hearing about the possibility of alternate dimensions a few days ago, I got curious. I began reading the books here to see if there's anything about them."

"Oh? Have you heard of Professor Burnet? She does extensive research on them."

"I read some of her stuff, and even talked to her about it yesterday." Grimsley closed the book shut. "Apparently it relates to the Ultra Beasts the Aether Foundation lady had mentioned in the news."

Iokua’s smile faded, and his eyes fluttered. “Follow me to my office,” he whispered. As Iokua started walking, Grimsley blinked in confusion. He got up and followed him.

Iokua’s office was in a hallway on the second floor. He and Iokua walked in silence until they reached his office, the librarian opening the door for them. The room looked just as when Grimsley saw it in the background when he, Nanu, Acerola, and Becky talked to Iokua through the tablet. The bright afternoon sunlight streamed through the windows.

“Would you like some coffee?” Iokua asked. “I got either hazelnut or vanilla cream.”

“Vanilla cream, if you don’t mind,” Grimsley said, taking a seat. Iokua went to the coffee maker that was in the right corner of the room.

“Did my dad talk about his past to you?” Iokua asked as he began preparing the water and coffee grains into the coffee maker.

“You mean him as a former international officer? He did, vaguely.” Grimsley plopped his arm onto the desk and his eyes narrowed. “He told me about this one mission where his group lost a member, but he didn’t expand on that.”

"He did, huh." Iokua was silent until the coffee finished brewing. He poured two cups and mixed in the sugar and cream in them. "That's all?"

"He actually showed me a picture of his group, and I recognized one of the agents. His friend interviewed me back when Unova's Pokémon League was under attack by Team Plasma."

"Right, you mentioned that to me before. That must have been a traumatizing experience."

Grimsley closed his eyes and hummed, folding his arms against his chest. "More a hindrance than anything, but I appreciate the sentiment."

Iokua sat down across from Grimsley and handed him his coffee. He inhaled its strong scent and sipped his drink, the vanilla cream sweet on his tongue and lips.
"You have an idea of what happened in that mission?" Grimsley asked, and then he took another sip. Iokua drank his own coffee before responding.

"He mentioned the mission involved a Pokémon he wasn’t allowed to talk about. I had a hunch it might be an Ultra Beast from the folklore."

Grimsley thought back to when the Ultra Recon Squad had shown him and Nanu their Pokémon. His fingers tapped on the rim of his cup.

"Speaking of Ultra Beasts, I saw one before. Nanu and I met a couple strangers who weren’t from here. They showed us a Pokémon and Nanu said the name, 'Adhesive.'"

Iokua's eyes grew wide. "Adhesive? What did it look like?"

"Hard to describe. Small and purple, has a big forehead with nozzles on it."

"Doesn't sound like any Pokémon I've heard of." Iokua shrugged. "Must be an Ultra Beast, then."

Grimsley quirked a brow at him. "You've been responding half-heartedly since we came in your office. Did something happen between you and Nanu before?"

Iokua's lips pressed together in a slight grimace. He nodded and his gaze fell on his coffee.

"When I was younger, I got mad at him for being away for work a lot. We argued quite a few times, and that put a strain on our relationship for some time."

"But you two made up eventually, right? You seemed happy with him from the couple phone calls we had together."

"We did after he became kahuna, yeah. His Interpol days still upset me a little, though."

"I'm sorry to have brought that up," Grimsley said with a sincere frown.

"It's fine. You wanted to know more about him, right?" Iokua flashed him a grin. "He does care a lot about the people and Pokémon on this island. That’s why Tapu Bulu chose him as our island’s kahuna."

Grimsley mulled over what Iokua said while he drank the rest of his coffee. He set his cup down and smiled at him.

"I appreciate you shedding some light on your father for me."

"If my dad had already told you about his past, then I’m sure he’ll open up to you more." Iokua's smile widened.

"Perhaps I’ll talk to him again. He stays at Po Town, correct?" he asked, and Iokua nodded.

"It’s pass Route 15’s waters. You would have to go through Ula’ula Meadows. Be aware of the Oricorio’s fiery dances there, though! The police station is very close after that."

With a small smile, he thanked Iokua for the coffee and rose from his seat. The two men shook hands, and he headed toward the door. Before Grimsley touched the doorknob, Iokua called out to him.

"Oh, before you go! Have you heard of Lake of the Moone?"
"Lake of the Moone? Oh, Acerola mentioned that place to me before I left the Aether House."

"That's great! If you drop by Ula'ula Meadows, do check out the Lake of the Moone there."

“I see. I'll consider doing that too, then. And thank you once more for the coffee and conversation.”

Grimsley waved goodbye and stepped out of the room. He intended to visit Nanu over at his police station to get more of his story from him, but first he had some training to do.

Chapter End Notes

Happy Mother's Day and Detective Pikachu movie weekend, everyone! Yeah, so this is the second half of the Pursuit chapter with Grimsley and Nanu finding answers to their own questions. They'll still be doing their own things a while longer before they meet again, but should be soon!

For those following this fic up to this point, I've been leaning more and more towards US/UM's storyline and characterization on certain characters. Originally I had Lusamine's S/M characterization in when I first wrote that Aether press conference scene, but I changed her lines last minute. While some of her actions will be referenced in upcoming chapters, she won't be the big focus in Foul Play.

Oh wow, I'm rambling over Lusamine during Mother's Day oops. You can think of Nanu and Gladion's conversation about her as a celebration of that.

Besides that, I went ahead and did a couple more anime references. I thought mentioning Tapu Fini's mist and the anime's version of Necrozma lore would make fun Easter Eggs. Maybe one of those references will come to play...

Last thing! I noticed in AO3 the feedback has gotten quiet. Usually I don't say this in fear of sounding too upset, but for those who have been here since the beginning and didn't say anything yet, don't be shy! Any feedback, big or small, is appreciated. Also, you guys can follow me at Tumblr and Twitter for any updates and progress on my fanworks!

I think that's all! Once again, thanks bobandbill for the great beating. See you in the summer (or winter in the southern hemisphere haha)!
Hone Claws (Rockstars and Mega Evolution)

Chapter Summary

In which Grimsley meets with Ronald once again and then Ryuki. Grimsley and Ryuki later have a battle in the Kantonian Gym.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Next to Malie City was the Malie Gardens. The grass and flowers were well kept, and many of the Pokémon that resided here were friendly and peaceful. Like Malie City, the bridges and buildings resembled Johto-designed architecture. Standing on one of the corners was a tall tower similar to the Bell Tower in Ecruteak City, and in the middle of the garden was a large lake shaped like a Gyarados.

Grimsley had been training in the gardens the past three days, and today he had been here all afternoon. He let out Raz and Blackjack, and had them battle one another. Raz stood tall in the grass while Blackjack was in the lake.

“Blackjack, Ice Fang! And Raz, counter with Shadow Ball!”

Blackjack jumped out of the lake and opened his jaws, cold mist seeping out from his mouth and his fangs glowing blue. Before he reached Raz, she spatted out a crimson ball and it exploded inside Blackjack’s throat. The shark screeched and was blown back into the lake with a big splash.

Both Grimsley and Raz rushed to the edge of the lake. He looked down to see small bubbles forming, and then several seconds later Blackjack popped up. Grimsley sighed in relief.

“Good to see you’re still in good shape.” Grimsley pressed his lips and narrowed his eyes. “Now Blackjack, Aqua Jet!”

Blackjack surrounded himself with torrential waters and shot out of the lake like a rocket. His body collided with Raz, slamming her onto the ground. Blackjack dived back into the lake just as Raz picked herself up and shook the water off her fur.

“Raz, watch for Blackjack’s movements and then strike.”

Raz gazed up at Grimsley with a low growl and nodded. She looked down at the lake, and Blackjack’s shadow could be seen swimming swiftly. Grimsley snapped his fingers.

Blackjack exploded out of the lake, his fangs glowing blue once more. Raz quickly countered by cloaking her right paw in purple vapors, that formed into a large claw, and left a deep cut on Blackjack’s face. Blackjack crashed on the land and collapsed.

Grimsley went to his Pokémon’s side and pulled out a potion from his bag. He sprayed the medicine onto Blackjack’s face, careful to not do it directly on the eyes. Blackjack winced at its stings, but already the cut on his face faded.

“You and Raz did great today,” he said in a soothing tone and returned him back in his pokéball.
Raz growled sadly, as if apologizing to her trainer. Smiling down at her, Grimsley scratched Raz’s cheek and neck.

“Oh hey, Grimsley!” a male’s voice called out to him. Grimsley flinched and turned around to see a middle-aged man approaching him.

“Ronald?” Grimsley said in a surprised voice.

Ronald flashed him a grin. “Fancy seeing you again! Doing some training right now?”

“I was. Nothing too serious, though.”

“That’s good!” Ronald said. “I saw a little bit of that battle. No surprise your Liepard and Sharpedo are very well-trained!”

Upon hearing that, Raz’s ears perked up and she cried a happy meow.

“Raz appreciates your compliment there,” he said, scratching her cheek once more. Raz responded by rubbing at his hip.

Ronald chuckled. “Say, there’s a tea shop here. Why don’t we go there and talk some more?”

Grimsley regarded Ronald a moment. “Sure, we can do that.” After Grimsley returned Raz, he followed Ronald to the tea shop.

xxx

Past the biggest bridge was the tea shop. There was a small building where the tea was served, and tables covered with colorful tablecloths outside. Besides Grimsley and Ronald, two other people occupied one table. The tea was bitter with a tinge of honey in it, hot and sweet inside Grimsley’s throat.

He first asked Ronald what he was doing in Malie City. It turned out he was here to visit his daughter and her family, and was staying with them for another two days. Grimsley then told him how he had met with several people here, including Nanu. Ronald was very interested on their encounter, as expected.

“So you’re doing some training before you meet him again?” Ronald asked after he sipped his cup.

“After my battles with Molayne and Kahili, I knew Nanu would be just as challenging. I want to battle him before I leave.”

“I see. Well, you should get to know him better! That’ll up your chances in scoring a battle with him!”

Grimsley groaned, staring up at the sky.

“Yes, I know. I’ve been told that several times already.” He paused to drink the last of his tea. “You mentioned having a niece that had battled me before. How is she?”

“Oh, you mean Berthy? Right now she’s traveling through the Galar region!”

Grimsley cracked a small smile. “The Galar region, hm? Some of my family from my father’s side were from there. I visited there a couple times before, a charming region.”

“It is! She showed me some pictures of her there!”
Ronald whipped out his phone from the pocket of his pants and handed it to Grimsley. There was one picture of a dark haired girl with her and Samurott on a bridge. In the background there was a large clock tower that Grimsley recognized as Big Ben. Grimsley checked out another photo of her and another girl with brunette hair in front of a building with old-style architecture. From the looks of it, they took this picture in a small town Grimsley couldn’t remember at the moment.

“I think I remember Berthy now. She and her Samurott worked well together.” Grimsley handed the phone back to Ronald. “Looks like she’s having fun.”

“She is! Last I talked with her, she’s going for her fourth badge there.”

Grimsley’s face softened. “When you get the chance, tell your niece I wish her luck and a safe journey in Galar.”

“I will! Berthy will be so excited!” A large grin stretched across Ronald’s face. “Speaking of training, have you tried this place called the Kantonian Gym?”

“You mean that building with the golden roof and the Pokémon League logo?” Grimsley asked with a quirked eyebrow.

“Yeah! It opened almost half a year or so. Alola never had Pokémon Gyms like other regions, so a lot of Alolan people wanted to try it.”

Grimsley hummed, folding his arms against his chest. “I thought about checking it out, but thought the battles would be similar to the ones back in the Battle Buffet.”

“I don’t blame you there.” Ronald tapped his chin with his finger. “You want a more interesting challenge, right? There’s a guy who trains Dragon Pokémon that could fit the bill.”

“Really? Does he come to the Kantonian Gym often?”

“I think so. Apparently he’s a musician also, so he does shows in there, too!”

A Dragon trainer that was also a musician? Grimsley recalled one trainer that fitted that description. The brow on his forehead shot up. No, it couldn’t be.

“Hold up, you don’t mean…”

“Hey! Is that you, Grimsley?” someone new said.

When Grimsley turned around, his face fell. In front of him was a man in tight clothing, which showed off his bare chest. His wild hair was tied in a long ponytail, the bangs partially covering his face. He was carrying a guitar case, so he was definitely a musician. Grimsley’s suspicions were true.

“It’s been a while, Ryuki,” Grimsley said as he got up, forcing himself to smile.

Ryuki flashed him a grin. “You still in the Elite Four, dude? How’s little Iris doing?”

“I am, and she’s doing fine.”

Ronald stood up and gave them confused looks. “Wait, you guys know each other?”

“In a sense,” Grimsley said. “He stayed in Unova for a while to train in the Village of Dragons.”

“Elder Margot was awesome, really knows how to dig into dragons’ hearts,” Ryuki said. “Iris and
Drayden were also stars in their own ways.”

“Not only that, he had toured with the Virbank City Gym Leader, Roxie, for a while. I also saw him play in casinos a few times.”

“That was while I tried to get my music going.” Ryuki turned to Grimsley, his grin widening. “You do know how to play your cards right.”

Grimsley snorted. “I haven’t done any high risk wagers in a long while.”

Even though he was in the Elite Four, Grimsley had gone to several world poker events to gain some extra money on the side. He had first met Ryuki in the Sinnoh region, in the Veilstone City Casino. The up-and-coming rockstar had only a dozen people in each showing, but then his popularity grew slowly. After Iris had become champion, she told Grimsley how Ryuki had been living in the Village of Dragons for some months and that surprised him. They visited there twice to meet him, but then after that Ryuki went on tour with Roxie and Grimsley hadn’t seen him since.

“Oh wow, sounds like you guys went way back!” Ronald said, grinning.

“We only talked a dozen times due to us knowing the same people,” Ryuki said as he faced back at Ronald. “Still, I have mad respect for him.”

Grimsley hummed, and then he said, “Ronald told me that you go the Kantonian Gym now.”

Ryuki nodded. “I came all the way here to spread my fame and check that Gym out. However, it isn’t a real Pokémon Gym.”

“Hm? What do you mean by that?”

“You know how the Gym in Vermillion City has trash cans and you have to find a switch?” Ryuki asked, and Grimsley nodded. “The Kantonian Gym is like that, but the trash cans don’t work.”

“Were you disappointed when you found that out?”

“I was at first, but I dig it the more I go there.”

“I also mentioned to Grimsley how you’re a strong trainer that he should go up against!”

Grimsley’s eyes grew wide, and then he frowned at Ronald. “You didn’t have to tell him that.”

“Sorry, I didn’t think you would mind,” Ronald said with a sheepish chuckle. He rubbed the back of his neck.

“You know, my babies have been bored from the last few battles we did.” Ryuki put his guitar case down and pointed his gloved finger at Grimsley. “A blazing battle with an Elite Four will wake them up again! Maybe they'll even get to see your Mega Absol on stage!”

Ronald's face fell. He turned to Grimsley and asked, "Wait, you can do Mega Evolution?"

Grimsley's heart almost skipped a beat, and his face tense. "I can, but haven't done so in a long time. I have my reasons."

Ryuki gave a disappointing look at first, and then he smiled. “I don't blame you. I'm a rocker down to my core, after all. If we battle, you don't have to use Mega Evolution.”

Grimsley pondered over Ryuki’s suggestion for a moment. From what Iris had told him, Ryuki
raised his Dragon Pokémon fairly well. Plus, he could use this opportunity as a warmup before going against Nanu. Now that offer was tempting.

“Sounds like it could be fun. I accept your invitation.”

“Oh, can I come and watch?” Ronald asked eagerly.

“Sure, the more the merrier! Let my bandmates and I set up first.” He faced Grimsley, giving him a toothy grin. "Meet me in the Kantonian Gym in an hour." He picked up his guitar case, and headed out of the gardens.

“A battle in the Kantonian Gym, huh?” Ronald had his hands on his sides and grinned. “I can’t wait to see how that plays out!”

“I wouldn’t put your expectations that high just yet.” Grimsley wasn’t as enthusiastic as Ronald over this, but was curious to see if Ryuki was what Iris made him up to be.

Xxx

After they had left Malie Gardens, Grimsley told Ronald that he had something to take care of and would meet him outside of the Kantonian Gym later. Ronald replied that he was fine with that, and they went separate ways.

When Grimsley returned to Malie City, he got himself a room in the Pokémon Center. Today quite a few trainers, both young and old, were inside. Grimsley didn't pay attention to what they were doing and instead went straight to his room.

Rooms in Pokémon Centers were as simple as they get. There was a queen sized bed with soft pillows and blankets, and a table with a computer next to it. Plain curtains hung above the windows. The hardwood floor occasionally made squeaking noises underneath Grimsley's feet.

Grimsley went to his desk, grabbing his bag. He pulled out the Keystone and Absolite and set them aside, both sparkling against the sunlight. The Keystone was on a stickpin while the Absolite was tied to a golden chain.

They were a gift from Colress a few years ago. He had found a few Mega Stones, including Roulette's, and Keystones during his trip in Kalos. After they had broken up, he hadn't done Mega Evolution in a while. There was a possibility he and Roulette might use it again.

He grimaced at that thought and tore his gaze away from the stones. Grimsley took a step back, pulled out Roulette's pokéball, and released her. She stood still, her tail wagging, and barked. Giving her a sad smile, Grimsley scratched her chin.

"Hello, Roulette. How are you feeling?" he asked, and Roulette let out another joyful bark.

A sharp frown stretched across his face. Grimsley went to the table to get the Keystone and Absolite. When he returned to Roulette, he opened his palm to show her the stones. Roulette sniffed a few times and tilted her head.

"Do you remember these? They're an Absolite and a Keystone, which are used to have you turn into Mega Absol. I agreed to a battle with someone who wanted to see you like that."

Getting it now, Roulette took a few steps back and snarled. Grimsley closed his palm and rubbed his temple.
"I know, I know, you usually don't like changing to your Mega form. I don't want to do this either, but we might have to. Not just against him, but perhaps Nanu also."

Grimsley had heard Absol generally hated changing to their Mega form. That might have some truth to it as Roulette didn't like how much it overwhelmed her after battles. She would also get angry whenever Colress wanted her to Mega Evolve, so most likely she associated him with that.

Roulette still fixed her glare at him. He sighed, and then dropped on one knee and gripped onto her horn.

"I promise, though, that I won't let you use Mega Evolution unless you want to. We got ourselves a deal?"

Making a small cry, Roulette seemed to consider Grimsley's proposal. After several seconds, she barked happily and licked his face. Grimsley chuckled, patting her cheek. He put the necklace with the Absolite around her neck, and then he got up and attached the stickpin on his scarf. He frowned once more.

He truly hoped he didn't have to resort to using Mega Evolution in today's battle.

Xxx

The Kantonian Gym was situated in the middle of Malie City. Like the city, the building was influenced by Kantonian and Johtonian architecture with yellow roofing. The Pokémon League logo was above the automatic doors, which led Grimsley to wonder if the higher ups from the international headquarters had approved this. The hours when it was open were written on the sign next to the entrance. Ronald was already here, waving and grinning at him.

"Grimsley, over here!" he called out, and they went inside.

Inside the Gym's first room the floors were yellow and several trash cans were lined up. Bright lights from the ceiling gave the whole area a sunlight hue. A dozen or so people were having Pokémon battles with one another.

"Man oh man, so this is the Kantonian Gym, huh?" Grimsley had his hands on his sides, staring at his surroundings. "Didn't Ryuki say that the trash cans don't work?"

"He did. I think they're here for aesthetic reasons. Let's go check in with the receptionist."

He and Ronald went up to the receptionist. She paused what she was doing on the computer and smiled at them.

"Welcome to the Kantonian Gym! How may I help you?" she asked.

Grimsley leaned closer to the desk. "Well, I was invited here by Ryuki Oshiri for a battle."

"I'm just here to watch the match," Ronald added.

Her smile widened. "Oh, you must be Grimsley! Leader Ryuki is in the next room. Also, the entry fee for adult males is $50."

"$50?" Grimsley asked in shock. Entry fees in Unova's Gyms were less than half of that. This was as ridiculous as the battle fee back in the Battle Buffet.

The receptionist hummed and nodded. "The prices here are different for adults and young
trainers!"

Grimsley furrowed his brow, and then he stared at Ronald who gave him a shrug. He rolled his eyes and paid the entry fee. They moved forward, passing by the trainers on the way.

Once he and Ronald stepped into the next room, the atmosphere was different than the previous one. Two trainers, one with a Machamp and another with a Cinccino, were on the battlefield giving out commands. Ryuki was up on a small stage playing his guitar, the music booming loud from the speakers and making Grimsley’s skin vibrate. Dimmed-colored lights were flashing behind the musician like lasers. Half of the seats in the benches were already occupied, the audience cheering on the battle and the music.

“Wow, looks like Ryuki has quite a few fans,” Ronald said.

“You should’ve been to Roxie’s Gym in Virbank City. She often has big crowds going to her battles and concerts.” Even though this Gym was advertised to be similar to Vermilion Gym, Grimsley mused that this was more like the Virbank Gym.

“Yeah, Berthy had mentioned the Virbank Gym was like that. I’m gonna go sit on the stands now, good luck!” He patted Grimsley's shoulder, and did just that.

Grimsley stood where he was and watched the battle in front of him. The Machamp kept throwing his four fists at the Cinccino, but the Scarf Pokémon was able to dodge his every move. She used her fluffy tail to slam Machamp’s face, which made his head turn sideways for a second.

“Retaliate with Cross Chop, Rio!” A middle-aged man in a karate robe ordered, which Grimsley assumed to be the Machamp’s trainer. The other trainer was a younger woman in a white dress and blonde hair tied in a ponytail, the Cinccino belonging to her.

“Take the hit, Cece!”

Rio crossed his arms, and then collided with Cece. The Cinccino screamed and fell on the floor, but she got herself back up. Her fur was dirty, and she was breathing hard. Rio gave her a smug look, but then his face softened and cheeks flushed.

“Great, now for a Thunder Punch!” the Machamp’s trainer ordered. Unfortunately, Rio still stood there in a lovestruck daze. The trainer gritted his teeth. “Hey, why aren’t you moving!”

The woman trainer grinned. “That Machamp’s been charmed now! Aqua Tail, let’s go!”

Cece made a chirp-like noise and jumped. Her tail shined a blue coat and covered in torrential waters. She hit Rio’s chest, knocking the air out of him.

“Finish it off with Iron Tail!”

Cece’s tail glowed a metallic coat this time, and she struck Rio’s face. The Machamp crashed on the floor, not getting up.

“And the winner of that battle is Lee!” Ryuki announced from the stands, and the crowd cheered.

“You were amazing, Cece!” Lee praised. Cece jumped into her arms, and Lee giggled.

After the other trainer returned his Pokemon, he went up to her and smiled. “You’re one tough lady there. That’s a good match.”
"You’re not so bad yourself. And I agree.” She smiled back, and the two shook hands.

"What a rock hard battle that is, ohhhh! Give it up for Lee and Bruce!"

The crowd erupted into another rowdy cheer. Bruce and Lee, still holding her Cinccino, waved to the crowd goodbye, and they left the battlefield. When Ryuki noticed Grimsley, he grinned.

"All right everyone, I have a special treat for you! Our next battle will be with yours truly and a special guest! Hailing from Unova and a member of that region’s Elite Four, give it up for Grimsley!"

The lights suddenly dimmed, and the spotlight aimed at Grimsley. He squinted and used his palm to shield himself from the brightness. Several people spoke softly amongst themselves; some recognized him as Grimsley from the Elite Four. The majority of the audience, though, cheered. Grimsley forced a smile and waved to the crowd.

"So dude, liking Alola so far?"

Grimsley grunted, closing his eyes. "Not bad, but I could always use a little more excitement."

"I hear you loud and clear," Ryuki said, and Grimsley opened his eyes to see him grinning. He held two fingers up. "Two Pokémon each. How do you want this, single or double battle?"

"How about we let chance decide?" Grimsley pulled out his coin and flipped it a few times. "Heads for single, tails for double?"

Ryuki raised a suspicious brow, but then his grin returned. “Once a gambler, always a gambler huh? Sure, I’ll play by your rules.”

Grimsley tossed the coin, caught it, and opened his palm. “It’s tails. Double battle, then.”

"Right on! Then let us get this party started!” Ryuki pulled two pokéballs from his belt and tossed them in the air, his Pokémon being released in a burst of light.

His first Pokémon had blue-green fur, a mustache, and fluffy white wings. They stretched their long neck and yawned, shaking their mop of hair. Ryuki’s second Pokémon was a Garchomp who flexed his arms, swished his tail, and roared. On his neck was a cord with a small purple stone attached to it.

A Garchompite. Grimsley swallowed hard upon that realization.

He ran through his options inside his head. Grimsley wasn't sure if the fluffy dragon had a secondary type, but that shouldn't be too much trouble. He was more worried about the Mega Garchomp. Dice should be able to handle him, especially with Garchomp's quadruple weakness to ice. Even though Queen would be good backup, she wouldn't fare well with Garchomp's ground moves. His best bet would be Roulette’s speed and power.

And her Mega form if it came to that.

Grimsley released them. As usual, Dice pulled his shedded skin up and lifted his chin. Roulette threw her head back and howled, the Absolite around her neck shaking. Ryuki beamed.

"So you’re going with your Absol, after all." Ryuki lifted his guitar higher. "All right babies, it's showtime!"
Ryuki pulled his guitar up and played like a musician in a metal rock band. Both of his Pokémon and even Dice were bobbing to the music. Roulette and Grimsley raised their brows and stared at the distracted Scrafty.

“All right, Dice, that’s enough! Roulette, Shadow Claw at the white and green dragon on the left!”

Roulette howled and rushed towards her opponent. When she reached them, purple vapors covered her right paw and formed a large claw. She swiped at the dragon…

…only for Shadow Claw to have no effect on them. The fluffy dragon yawned and shook their head. Roulette growled in frustration while Grimsley gave an impressed smile.

“I must say, that’s the first time I’ve encountered a Dragon and Normal-type Pokémon.”

“Right-o, dude! You’ve never encountered a Drampa before, so it’s an easy mistake to make. But yeah, Ghost moves are useless on my baby boy here.”

The smile on Grimsley’s lips faded, and he narrowed his eyes. All right, he needed to be careful not to use Shadow Claw on the Drampa anymore.

“Dice, hit hard at the Garchomp with Ice Punch! Roulette, go at the Drampa once more, but this time Bite him!”

Grimsley’s Pokémon sprang into action. While running, Dice’s fist glowed blue and formed a cold mist. Roulette had her jaws wide open, ready to strike.

“Belt out everything you got, Gleam!” Ryuki said, still playing his guitar. “Dirk, sneak up on the little guy coming at you!”

Gleam inhaled and let out an ear-piercing scream. That made Dice and Roulette stop in their tracks, Roulette wincing and Dice covering his ears. Grimsley gritted his teeth and also covered his ears. He glanced to see half of the audience having the same reactions, the other half cheering on.

While Dice was distracted, Dirk went behind him and crunched his arm. Dice screamed and tried to wiggle out of the Garchomp’s grip, but with little success. Dirk tossed him aside and let go, Dice hitting the floor hard. Dice got up quickly, shook his fist, and glared at him.

“Nice work, babies! Follow that up with Poison Jab, Dirk! And you Gleam, let’s fire up the crowd even more!”

“Try punching him once more, Dice! Roulette, get at Drampa hard and fast!”

Both Dirk and Dice rushed at each other and their fists glowed, purple and light blue respectively. When they collided, their fists pushing against each other. Eventually Dice pushed through and punched the fin on Dirk’s arm, freezing part of it. Dirk screamed and shook his arm, trying to get rid of the ice shards forming there. Dice pulled his shredded skin, grinning.

While that was happening, Roulette howled and jolted forward like a beam of light. Gleam inhaled once more and flames started forming around his jaws, only for Roulette to ram onto him and cause him to tumble backwards. Roulette took several steps back, carefully watching him.

“Good work you, two,” Grimsley said in satisfaction. “Roulette, focus on the Garchomp! Dice, you go for the Drampa and use Zen Headbutt!”

Grimsley’s Pokémon did as they were told. The horn on Roulette’s forehead turned purple, and she
bolted towards Dirk. As Dice rushed towards Gleam, his own forehead glowed a soft pink.

“All right Dirk, time to get your claws dirty! Gleam, let’s go for a different kind of firepower!”

Dirk crossed his arms together, and green flames formed on his two claws. As soon as Roulette reached him, he blocked her assault and pushed her some steps back. They exchanged several blows at one another, but eventually Dirk’s claw sliced at Roulette’s face and she fell down. Roulette picked herself up and glared at him, gritting her teeth.

Before Dice could reach Gleam, the dragon sucked in a deep breath and let out a dragon-shaped multicolored beam straight at him. Dice screamed, green and purple flames engulfing him for a few seconds. After the flames faded, burnt marks were shown on Dice’s wrists and knees. Still energized, Dice’s forehead shone once more and he headbutted below Gleam’s chin. Gleam stared at the ceiling for a moment, as if dazed, before shaking his head.

Ryuki pressed his lips and glared. His music went on a faster and aggressive pace.

“Spread your wings and fly, Gleam! And Dirk, let’s shake things up now, shall we?”

The audience cheered wildly upon him saying that. Grimsley had an idea what Ryuki wanted his Garchomp to do, so he yelled out his next command.

“Both of you jump and attack from the air!”

Ryuki’s Pokémon acted first, Gleam flapping his wings and taking to the air and Dirk slamming his fins on the floor. Grimsley stared up, dumbfounded; that Drampa could actually fly? He just learned another trivia of that Pokemon.

As the earth began to shake, both Dice and Roulette jumped in time while Grimsley wobbled and almost lost his footing. Dice stretched his right leg and dived down at Dirk, kicking his face and making his head moved sideways. Roulette reached Gleam and had her horn slash his neck, leaving a deep cut there.

*Roulette’s Super Luck ability*, Grimsley mused to himself with a small smile. *Makes critical hits deadlier.*

Grimsley’s Pokémon landed on the floor first, and then Gleam shortly after. Dice and Roulette stood by and watched while the Drampa grunted and thrashed his head around. Grimsley raised his brow, thinking he was just moving to Ryuki’s music.

That was, until he noticed Gleam’s eyes glowing red.

The Drampa threw his head back and roared, causing Dice and Roulette to cautiously step back. The air inside turned cold dramatically and a snowstorm blew over. Grimsley gritted his teeth and tugged at his scarf tighter while his Pokémon closed their eyes and braced themselves.

“Oh my, you just activated Gleam’s Berserk ability. You don’t want to see his bad side.” Ryuki then said, “I think that’s enough of a warm up there, Dirk. Time to really rock this joint!”

Ryuki pulled up his guitar, a small keystone attached to it that gleamed in the spotlight. He touched the keystone with his finger, and both the keystone and Dirk’s Mega Stone shined brightly with multi-colored sparks. Dirk roared and was engulfed in golden light. Everyone stopped cheering and watched with bated breath. Grimsley shield himself from the brightness, and when the light faded his throat turned dry.
Dirk’s shoulders grew bulkier and more spikes formed around his chest. His fins changed into large scythes, and his face had a more angular shape. Dirk stretched his new arms up and roared. The audience erupted into a joyous uproar. Roulette and Dice were taken aback by Dirk’s new appearance, and then they went back to their battle stances.

Ryuki lifted his chin, grinning. “Say hello to Dirk’s Mega form. Pretty metal, huh?”

Seeing the Mega Garchomp before him, Grimsley had vividly recalled the conversation he and Colress had over Mega Evolution. The secrets on using that power.

“The four secrets of Mega Evolution?”

“Yes! During my time in Kalos, I went to the Tower of Mastery in Shalour City and had a lovely discussion with the gym leader Korrina and her grandfather. They gave me some great insight on ways Mega Evolution brings out a Pokemon’s full potential!”

“Really? Well, I’m now intrigued.”

“I thought you would! Ahem, now the first secret of Mega Evolution. Both the trainer and Pokémon must have a bond. Having that bond ensures a stable mental connection between both parties.”

Back in the present, Grimsley grunted, his forehead knitting in a furrow. He had heard how awfully powerful Mega Garchomp could be. Not only that, Ryuki’s Drampa was still on the battlefield. He needed to take down Gleam first and perhaps get some physical damage on Dirk while he was at it.

“Roulette, Aerial Ace at Dirk!” Grimsley said, thrusting his arm out. He first pointed at Dirk and then Gleam. “Dice, throw a punch at Gleam!”

After giving an affirmed bark, Roulette howled and accelerated towards Dirk in lighting speed. She rammed onto him, which caused him to stumble halfway and shriek. Dirk recovered quickly though, and there was barely a scratch on him. Seeing how she didn’t succeed, Roulette glared and snarled.

Over the other half of the battle, Dice kept throwing punches at Gleam. The Drampa was able to dodge them easily due to his slender neck, but luckily Dice landed a blow below his chin. Gleam screamed and several ice shards were stuck on his beard, which he was then able to shake easily.

“Yo Gleam! Looks like the crowd wants an encore!”

Liked before, Gleam inhaled and let out an ear-piercing scream that made Grimsley and his Pokémon wince. This time, the Drampa kept thrashing his head and his eyes glowed red, which Grimsley assumed was the Berserk ability being activated again. Roulette barked continuously and shook her head while Dice dropped on the floor and rolled around; they seemed to be in much more pain than last time. That Pokémon definitely needed to go.

“You two, we need to take down Gleam now!”

Despite the various noises in the room, Roulette and Dice were able to snap out of Gleam’s Hyper Voice and rushed towards him. Once Roulette’s scythe glowed, she sliced Gleam’s side and left an even deeper cut than before. While Gleam roared in pain and bobbed his head wildly, Dice pulled up his shredded skin and leapt up. As he was diving down, Dice kicked the Drampa hard on the face and had him fall backwards. When Gleam didn’t get up, Roulette and Dice exchanged each other grins, the Scrafty giving a thumbs up.

The audience went silent for several seconds, and then gave out genuine, excited cheers. Ryuki
stopped playing the guitar and stared, but then he smirked.

Grimsley sighed in relief, but then he frowned when he realized his Pokémon still needed to deal with Dirk.

“Not surprising that you’re this good, pal.” Ryuki chuckled through the microphone and returned his Pokémon. “However, Dirk and I will keep on rocking!” He resumed playing his guitar again and screamed, “Get your claws out once more, ooooh!”

“You guys do the same!” Grimsley said.

Dirk stretched his head upwards and green flames formed on his scythes. Roulette and Dice let out their claws too, dark purple and green flames respectively. They collided with Dirk, who was able to block off their attacks but still needed to divide his attention between the two. Each time Roulette and Dice’s claws met with Dirk’s, sparks flew like when Grimsley and Molayne’s Bisharp had battled.

After a while, Dice tried to aim for Dirk’s face and missed, giving the opportunity for the Garchomp to slice his back. Dice screamed in pain and crashed onto the floor. While Dice moaned and struggled to get up, Dirk approached him and lifted his scythe above him.

When Roulette saw that, she howled and had her jaws open. She attempted to bite Dirk, but he slammed her with his arm and pushed her aside. Dice barely got up, but he winced and dropped on one knee. A grin pulled on Dirk’s face, his teeth showing, and he swiped Dice across the face. A deep claw mark was shown on his face, and Dice collapsed and didn’t get up.

Both Grimsley and Roulette’s face fell. Everyone in the stands cheered, and half the audience jumped up and applauded.

“You did wonderful Dice, you deserved a rest,” he said with a sad smile, returning him back inside his pokéball.

He turned his attention to Ryuki and Dirk, the two having their chests rising and taking deep breaths. The musician flashed him a grin and pointed a finger at him.

“And now we’re down to one Pokémon each,” Ryuki said, still panting and his voice raspy. “Can you and your Absol hold on a while longer?”

To the audience, it looked like he was running out of energy after playing hard on his guitar. Grimsley knew though that wasn’t the case. Colress’s voice echoed inside his head once more.

“The second secret of Mega Evolution! Both the trainer and Pokemon’s hearts and souls must be in sync. You give half of yourself and your Pokémon the other half.”

Rykui and Dirk had shared each other’s hearts and souls when they did their Mega Evolution. They would be exhausted after this battle was over, but Grimsley was still at a disadvantage. Unless...

Grimsley flinched when Roulette barked several times. She shook her fur, the Absolite on her neck dangling. Their gazes met, and Grimsley’s heart jumped in his throat.

“Are you sure?” he asked in a low voice. Roulette lifted her head and barked. Grimsley regarded her a moment, and then he grinned. “All right, let’s do this!”

Grimsley touched the keystone, which was attached to his scarf, and both it and the Absolite sparkled. Roulette was bathed in golden light, and her appearance changed.
The back of her fur stood out on end, as if she had wings. More fur bristled on her legs, and the spikes on her heels and elbows also grew. Her horn thickened and widened, and another smaller horn popped out as well. Roulette tossed her head and let out her loudest howl since this battle.

The audience stopped in stunned silence upon Roulette's Mega form being shown, and then they erupted into wild cheers, like they did with Dirk's Mega form. A wide grin pulled on Ryuki's face, and he gave out a throaty laugh.

"Having a change of heart, huh?"

"Roulette wants to make this bet even," Grimsley said, and Roulette barked in agreement.

"Your Absol is quite the rocker, then!" Rykui resumed playing his guitar. "Dirk, Earthquake once more!

"Jump, and then bite him!"

Dirk threw his head, roared, and slammed on the floor. The earth shook once more, Grimsley slightly losing his balance. Roulette jumped up, giving the illusion of flying, and then she dived down with her jaws open. Roulette sunk her teeth onto Dirk's arm, which he used to block her from his face. He shook her off, and Roulette landed on all fours and glared.

As Grimsley contemplated Roulette's next move, he found himself hearing Colress's voice in his head again.

"The third secret of Mega Evolution! Both the trainer and Pokémon must use it only temporarily. Using it more than necessary could cause great harm to both trainer and Pokemon."

Mega Evolution was a power used for a short period of time. If you overstayed your welcome, then there would be consequences. Both his and Ryuki's Pokémon were at risk. He needed to get this battle wrapped up soon.

"Aerial Ace, but from above!" Grimsley said, pointing to the ceiling.

Roulette jumped, or "flew" rather, once more, and in a blink of an eye crashed down on Dirk. The bulkier Garchomp screamed and fell on the ground. Several seconds passed, and Dirk rose up with a snarl.

Grimsley bit his lips and clenched his fist. That Aerial Ace hit much harder than last time, but it was still not enough.

"Don't think you'll crack Dirk's shell that easily!" Ryuki said. "Give that Absol a taste of your poison!"

"Shadow Claw, go!"

Dirk's scythe lit up purple, and dark vapors formed around Roulette's leg. They collided and exchanged rapid blows at each other. The crowd became immersed with the fierce dance between the two Mega Pokemon. Even Ryuki couldn't tear his gaze off of that spectacle.

While their battle continued, Colress's voice echoed through Grimsley's head one last time.

"Now the final secret of Mega Evolution! Most importantly, the trainer and Pokémon must put their trust in one another. If one has doubts on the other, then their bond and souls aren't strong enough yet for Mega Evolution."
Grimsley knew he and Roulette had a strong bond and he trusted her in handling herself like when she went against the Totem Pokemon, Mimikins. They still had a long way to go in dealing with Dirk, though.

After several more blows between the two, Roulette managed to scratch Dirk's chest and left three deep claw marks there. Dirk retaliated by jabbing her throat, which caused her to whine and fall down. She rose back up, but she panted hard and her legs shook.

Grimsley took deep breaths, sweat drenching on his forehead. He grew tired himself from having shared his energy with Roulette, and he wasn't sure how much longer they would last.

Ryuki grinned, showing off his teeth. "Looks like the Absol here is burned out. Time to close the show!"

"Don't let him get away with that!"

Despite being exhausted, Roulette's horn shined and she swiped Dirk's chest, leaving another scar there. Dirk screeched and crunched her wing-like fur. Roulette howled in pain, struggling to let go of Dirk’s grip, and she was tossed up in the air. After she smashed into the ceiling, Roulette crashed down hard and collapsed. She changed back to her normal self.

Dirk raised his arms and roared, celebrating his victory. The crowd rose from their seats, cheering.

Grimsley dropped on his knees and tried to regain his breath. He was drained from not doing Mega Evolution in a long while. When he noticed Roulette still lying on the ground, he rushed to her side and pulled her head to his lap. He pushed a strand of fur away from her eyes.

"Roulette, are you all right?" he asked, gazing down at her worriedly. A few seconds passed until she opened her eyes and made a sound. Grimsley gave a soft chuckle and stroked her forehead. "You did splendidly out there. Take a nice long rest."

After Grimsley returned Roulette and got up, Ryuki jumped off from the stage and approached him. His Garchomp was behind him, not in his Mega form anymore.

"That is some blazing performance you put out there. Everyone, give it up for Grimsley!"

Everyone on the stands rose up once more and did a standing ovation. Grimsley couldn’t help but feel a mixture of sadness and pride.

Another loss here. This was more disappointing than his loss with Kahili, but that was fine. Every battle had a winner and a loser, and right now this was Ryuki’s time to shine. Grimsley would have his chance again soon.

"Thank you. You know how to work the crowd yourself."

"If you’ll be in Alola a while longer, I don’t mind doing another gig with you!" Ryuki turned to the crowd and clapped his hands. "That’s it for today’s show, but I’ll come back tomorrow as always!"

As Ryuki and his Garchomp made their leave, the audience cheered one last time before getting up themselves. Ronald got down to the battlefield and reached Grimsley, grinning at him.

"The way you handled Mega Evolution was amazing!" Ronald gave him a worried look. "Are you okay? You look pretty tired."

"I’m fine, no need to worry," Grimsley said, making a dismissive hand wave.
“All right, if you say so. Will you use it when you battle Nanu, also?”

Grimsley flinched, and he stared down at the keystone on his scarf. While he did say to Roulette that was a possibility, he wasn’t comfortable having her do Mega Evolution again for some time. He didn’t need to decide now.

“I’ll worry about that once I get him to battle me.”

“Fair enough.” Ronald gave him a wide grin. “I need to head back home, but it’s great seeing you again! And good luck getting a battle with Nanu!” Ronald said, and that made Grimsley give out an amused grunt.

“I’ll need more than luck for that, but your well wishes are appreciated. It’s a pleasure talking with you also.”

He and Ronald shook hands, and then the older man waved to him goodbye and left the gym.

Grimsley still stayed where he was, rubbing his chin. Roulette needed to be taken to the Pokémon Center, and he needed some rest himself. After that--

“Think it’s finally time for me to see Nanu again,” he muttered to himself. He had been putting off visiting Nanu too long. The kahuna wouldn’t be happy to see him, and Grimsley wasn’t sure if he was ready to battle him yet, but there were still some questions he wanted to ask him.

Chapter End Notes

Hi there! So a quick announcement, I FINALLY fixed grammar edits on Chapter 7 and 8! Also for Ch 8 I went and extended Grimsley and Kukui's beginning scenes where I have the two discuss why they couldn't just fly over to the mountains. I'll get to Chapter 9 and 10's edits soon.

Originally this chapter I was going to have Grimsley meet with Ronald and another Nanu scene. Plans sorta changed though when my beta pointed out the "Grimsley wants to do some training" line at the end of Chapter 10. Andddd this is the end result!

So what you guys think of the battle and the twists? The idea of Ryuki training in Unova I kinda got the idea from the anime where his team were Unova dragons. I wasn't able to add this in the narrative, but Ryuki came from a group of Sinnoh Dragon Tamers and how he got his Garchompite.

Next chapter will be Nanu centric. It's quite short, so I should have it posted before the end of this month! Chapter 13 is then we'll get Nanu and Grimsley meet again, woo! Thanks to bobandbill for betaing as always! Comments and kudos are always welcome!
Feint Attack

Chapter Summary

In which Nanu's former colleague from Interpol Charlotte drops by in Ula'ula Island and the two have a talk. After that, Nanu gets another dream.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ula’ula Meadows was one of the few areas on this island that Nanu thought was beautiful. The red flowers that bloomed all year round swayed with the breeze. A cool mist rolled in, thin enough for him to see clearly. The Baile-style Oricorio danced and sang in the mornings, attracting the attention of anyone passing by. There were two paths ahead: one towards Po Town and Route 17; the other towards Lake of the Moone, where the mist came from.

He and Persian were patrolling the area, using the wooden boardwalk that had been built above the grass. A few Oricorio drank the nectar from the flowers. Two Team Skull kids were having a conversation. They noticed him for a second, only to then ignore him. One woman was near the pond with her Floette, the two of them practicing a dance. Persian approached one of the flowers and sniffed it.

“You like the flowers, don’t you girl?” he asked, and Persian responded with a cheerful meow.

Nanu grunted and looked back at his surroundings. His stomach dropped when he saw someone else here. A purple-haired woman with glasses stood in front of several Pokémon: two Oricorio, a Petilil, and a Ribombee. She wore a pink and white dress that showed off her curves well and high heeled boots that made him wonder how she got used to walking in them.

"Oh my, are all of you looking good today! Especially you, little one!" She picked up the Petili, who giggled and waved her arms.

To the public, she was known as Aether’s Assistant Chief Wicke Santana. To him, she was--

"Charlotte?"

"Triples!" Charlotte put the Petili down and gave him a tight hug. Nanu was taken aback by it, but nonetheless, he returned the embrace back. After they separated, Persian approached Charlotte and rubbed against her hip. She grinned and hugged around her neck. “And you, Persian! You’ve grown so big!” she cooed, nuzzling on Persian’s cheek.

"I take it Professor Burnet had given you my message?" he asked.

Charlotte let go of Persian and nodded. "I did! I’m already aware that Anabel and Looker are on Poni Island. I came here as there are a few things I want to talk to you about."

Nanu glanced around to see the Team Skull kids and the woman with her Pokémon still here. This wasn't the perfect place to talk about important manners with her.

"We can do that while going to the police station."
They began walking to the police station, with Persian following them. The Pokémon that
Charlotte checked up on earlier went their separate ways.

"So, how's becoming Kahuna going for you?"

"Tiring. I only make myself go through the desert a few times a year. Trying to avoid big crowds
as much as possible."

Charlotte gave him a concerned look. "Sounds like you're not happy with your job. Couldn't you
just retire?"

"I can't. I'm at the mercy of Tapu Bulu until either I die or do something horrendous. I'm still
working on the latter."

"You're one of the better Interpol agents. I doubt you're capable of doing that."

Nanu snorted and threw his head back. "Maybe I'll surprise you. How about you? Aether still have
you dress like you're going for Wild Lopunny Magazine: Secretary Edition?"

Charlotte jabbed her elbow onto his stomach and he winced.

"I'm still undercover, Triples. Besides that, I'm not doing great at the moment."

"Because of that Aether press conference, right?"

"Yes. When Madame Lusamine told me and Chief Faba that she was going to broadcast it, I asked
if that was a good idea. She said this is for the public's safety, and I went along with it."

"Interpol must be outraged that the Ultra Beasts have been mentioned out in the open. Are they
planning to do anything about them?"

"Probably what they've been doing for the last several years. Kill or have them used as
experiments. I'm sure they'll have Anabel come closer to them."

They stopped, and Nanu ran a finger through his hair.

"Shit. If I hadn't retired, I probably could've prevented all of that."

"I don't blame you for leaving. Unfortunately, there's not much we can do at this time."

Nanu regarded her for a moment. With narrowed eyes, he stared down on the ground. "I hated
Director Clarkson and the higher ups’ guts ever since that incident."

"As do I. They can be ungrateful devils at times." She and Nanu resumed walking. "Did Anabel
and Looker mention anything else when they visited you?"

"They told me about the Ultra Recon Squad and the scientist working with them. Interpol's also
keeping an eye on Gladion and his Pokémon."

Charlotte nodded and hummed. "The scientist, Dr. Colress Antimony, is with them under Interpol's
suggestion. As for Master Gladion, that's indeed what is going on." She shifted her gaze away for a
second. "How is he doing by the way?"

Nanu raised a brow. "Hm? Why do you ask?"

"I get along well with the president’s children, so I’m worried about the family overall."
After a beat, he said, “Not so good, I think. He’s worried about the president going down the same path as his father.”

Charlotte gasped, and she frowned. "I know what you're talking about. That caused a great deal of grief for Madame Lusamine."

"Do you plan to tell the president and her kids about your true purpose with Aether?"

With narrowed eyes, Charlotte lowered her head and clasped her hands together.

"I don’t know yet. I would be breaking my cover, and they might take things the wrong way. However, I feel bad for lying to them and they deserve the truth."

“I don’t blame you for being unsure yet.” He stared up at the sky, hands on the pocket. “I trust that you’ll make the right call.”

The two remained silent until they reached the police station and stepped inside. As expected, half of the Meowth rushed over to him and Charlotte, asking for food.

"Just give me a minute, all right?" he told them. One of the Meowth gripped his leg with his claws, but he endured the pain. Persian grabbed that Meowth’s neck with her mouth and took him away.

"Oh my! I know you're a fan of these dark-type felines, but not this much!" Charlotte picked up one of them up. The Meowth rubbed his cheek against hers, and she giggled.

"You wanna adopt one of them?" he asked while pouring food into their bowls. "You'll be doing me a huge favor."

"I appreciate the offer, but I already have my hands full in Aether Paradise. Also, you're still as disorganized as ever."

Charlotte sat down on the couch, the Meowth still inside her arms. After Nanu finished filling the Meowth’s bowls, he went to his desk. The little felines and Persian rushed to their bowls and munched on their food.

"Hey, cut me some slack. I got kahuna duties as well as being an officer here." He pulled out his kendama from the drawer and started playing with it. "Anything else you want to tell me?"

"Well, it's more of a request," Charlotte said while scratching the Meowth's chin.

"Request?"

"Aether's been keeping an eye on Team Skull due to them stealing Pokémon on occasion. However, recently their leader came to headquarters as a guest, and I pretended to be a good host."

That caused Nanu to stop playing his kendama and sit up straight. "Leader? You don't mean Guzma, do you?"

"After they were alone, I eavesdropped on their conversation through a tiny microphone I had left in the room." Charlotte had put the Meowth down and got up. She approached and stood in front of Nanu’s desk. "She apparently has been giving him money to find a Pokémon for her."

"Wait, Anabel and Looker asked me about Team Skull the night they gave me your postcard. Why they didn't tell me any of this?"

"That didn't happen until a couple of days after the wormhole incident." She had her elbow on the
desk, her palm covering her chin. "On my next scheduled visit to Ula'ula Island, I knew I have to inform you about this."

Already Nanu knew what she was asking him for. "You want me to track down any paper trails to double confirm that all of this is true."

"Right. I could do it myself, but this type of investigation isn't my specialty. That, and you're closest to Team Skull."

As they stared into each other's eyes, Nanu pondered over Charlotte's request. For a while he had his suspicions on Aether, but couldn't pinpoint exactly why. This could be an opportunity for him.

"All right, I'll see what I can do. If I find anything, I'll let Anabel and Looker know."

"Thank you so much, Triples!" She grinned and wrapped her arms around him, a little too tight for his liking.

"Hey, you're squeezing me there!" Nanu said, and that made Charlotte let go.

"Sorry, got too excited there!" Charlotte giggled, and then her gaze fell on the photo Nanu had left on the desk. "Oh! Isn't that the picture I took of you, Sana, and Looker?"

Nanu lifted a brow, and then his face softened. "Yeah, it is. Surprised that I've still kept it all this time?"

"You mentioned you didn't like to take pictures, so maybe a little!" Charlotte picked up the photo and her cheerful expression disappeared. "I still miss her very deeply."

Nanu swallowed hard. He remembered her mourning over Sana's death for a while, not speaking with anyone and staying inside her lab for days. After some convincing from him and Looker, she resolved to preserve the data Sana had kept and continue where she had left off.

"I should've stopped her. Told her that Interpol was using her as bait, and have her run away."

"What happened to her was neither your or Looker's fault." She gave him a forced but reassuring smile, and her hand squeezed Nanu’s. "She would've done it anyway, with or without Interpol asking her."

Nanu gazed down with a frown. "Of course."

Throughout Sana's time in Interpol, the higher-ups had worked her up to the bone but she still persisted. Her ultimate goal was to better understand the UBs, and he had admired her for that. That made her death even more heartbreaking.

"I need to head back to the Aether Facility near here," Charlotte said as she let go of his hand. "Before I do though, I have something to show you."

She put the picture down and pulled out a journal from her bag, handing it to him. Nanu blinked, the hardcover cold in his hands.

"Sana’s journal? How come?"

"I think you’ll benefit from reading it." Charlotte winked and gave him a playful smile. "I’m only letting you borrow it for a bit, so I’ll need it back the next time we meet!"

"Yeah, I’ll make sure to do that."
Nanu put the journal aside and got up from his seat. He and Charlotte did a quick embrace.

“I’ll be in touch!” Charlotte scratched Persian’s chin one last time, waved to Nanu goodbye, and left the police station.

As Nanu stood and stared at the door, Persian gave a sad growl and rubbed against his leg. He gazed down and patted her forehead.

“Don’t worry, I think we’ll see her again very soon.” Looking back at his desk, Nanu pressed his lips. “Let’s see what Sana had been up to.”

He sat back down on his desk and opened the first page. Sana’s handwriting was a little sloppier than Charlotte’s but was still more legible than any of his former superiors. She wrote how she couldn’t remember much after being taken in by Interpol, so she started this journal to keep track of her memories. Nanu turned the page to another entry.

June 11th

The chief wanted to do practice drills with Jackie and me again. As usual, his Persian kicked our butts and he lectured me on taking battles more seriously. I am! It’s just that I’m more of a scientist than a Pokémon trainer. I asked if those drills are necessary, and 000 said that soon I’ll be dealing with more dangerous cases than the ones we had done.

After those practice drills, Charlotte and I went out for drinks. I told her how much of a hardass 000 was, and she said that I would get used to that. She then told me about her time in Kanto and how much it helped her towards her path in becoming a Pokémon biologist.

I’ve only known her for about a month, but I’m already madly crushing on her. Like, big time. I don’t know if she has the same feelings or is just being very nice. I would be upset if it’s the latter.

An amused smile pulled on Nanu’s lips. He could tell that Sana and Charlotte fell for each other, and when the two ended up together they teamed up to annoy and tease him. Two peas in a pod.

He turned to another page and continued reading the journal throughout the afternoon. After going over several entries, his eyes grew heavy and he fell asleep on his desk.

Xxx

Nanu wasn’t sure where he was. A thick fog rolled in like black clouds before a rainstorm. The saltwater breeze mixed with smoke filled his lungs. He almost couldn’t see anything, but there were people screaming and crying in the distance.

He raced forward, following those voices. The farther he went, the more his chest burned and legs ached. The fog partially cleared, and he was at a beach. The sight before him made his stomach sink.

A large crowd was running away from the jellyfish-like creatures, Symbiont. The small Ultra Beasts kept chasing them, some grabbing and sucking on the people’s heads. Sana and Jackie, her Mightyena, fought off several of them, her Pokémon firing beams of dark energy straight at them.

“Sana! Sana!” Nanu kept calling her, but she and Jackie didn’t turn around. The people's screams grew louder, and the Symbiont got more restless.

Nanu hurried to her, but then was blocked by four Symbiont. He grunted and yelled, “Move it, or else!” That led the Ultra Beasts to screech and grab his arms with their wet and slimy tentacles.
Nanu grimaced and struggled to get out, their grip getting tighter by the second.

"Man oh man, what is going on here?" A man in a kimono walked passed the screaming crowd, grinning at him.

"Grimsley? What are you doing here?" Nanu asked, eyes growing wide.

"I've been told Alola is a great holiday destination. However, everything's been deary so far."

"Everything's deary because we're being attacked by these things! Now, you're gonna help me or what?"

Grimsley's expression changed from bored to a smirk. "I'll let my coin decide. Heads or tails?"

Nanu furrowed his brow. He glanced to see Sana and Jackie still fighting off the Symbiont, but both were shaking and breathing hard.

"We got no time for that! These people need my help!"

"Too late, I call heads!" Grimsley pulled out his coin and tossed it in the air. After catching it, he opened his palm and his grin widened. "Oh tough luck, heads. You're on your own!"

Grimsley waved goodbye to him and turned to leave. Nanu screamed for him to come back, but that was no use. When the Symbiont lifted him to the sky, he threw curses at them and his legs dangled.

The Symbiont stopped in the middle of the ocean. Nanu looked down with wide eyes and demanded them to take him back to shore. Instead, they giggled and dropped him. He screamed as he was falling, falling...

And landed hard on a chair.

Nanu whipped around his head and his eyes fluttered. He was now inside an office with dimmed lighting. Someone in a red suit was in front of the desk, their back facing him.

"Excellent work as always, Agent 000. I knew that your task force could handle Glutton."

Director Eleanor Clarkson turned around, grinning at him. She had put on bright red lipstick and always wore her blue pearl necklace. She held onto a file that Nanu assumed to be one of the Ultra Beasts ones. The scent of Poni Meadows’ purple flowers lingered in the room.

"It was at the cost of Sana's life, though. You have to accept that, at least."

Clarkson blinked and lifted the cress of her forehead, as if she was confused. She sneered.

"Oh, you mean our Faller. Yes, it's tragic that she had been taken away, but that was the plan all along."

Nanu gave an intense, fevered stare. "You're saying that Sana was meant to be bait?"

"That was the only way we can pull in the Ultra Beasts to us. Without her, who knows how many more lives we would've lost."

"That's bull!" Nanu slammed his fist on the table. "She gave her everything to you guys, and you treated her like garbage. Charlotte and KR are devastated, the latter thinking it was his fault."
"I've been aware of Agent 100KR's behavior in the past several months. He's been checking in with our therapist."

Nanu lowered his head, his stare fixing on his lap. He had gone through Interpol's therapy sessions several times also. The therapist seemed genuine and was only doing his job, but he didn't experience what it was like on the field like Nanu did.

"How about Anabel? Is she going towards the same fate as Sana?"

"Yes, she is," Clarkson said with no remorse in her voice.

"So you aren't doing anything to prevent that." That wasn't a question.

Clarkson chuckled, shaking her head. "The UB Task Force and Fallers have been working for us well so far, and there are no plans to change that anytime soon."

Nanu's nostrils flared, and he curled his hand into a fist. Ungrateful devils indeed.

"Now I know what you're thinking, and no I won't let you tell this to her. If she gets one word from you, there could be collateral damage. Understood?"

A knot formed inside his throat. This was the exact same scenario before he had retired. He went inside Clarkson's office, found out about Sana and Anabel being Fallers, and was threatened to keep him quiet. Feeling helpless.

"Yes, ma'am," Nanu said through gritted teeth.

Clarkson beamed. "Good. That is all, Agent 000. You're dismissed."

Nanu rose out of his seat and hung his head in defeat. He walked at a slow pace, his surroundings now nothing more than dark endless space.

Months after having that conversation with the Director, he would leave Interpol. He didn't regret that choice one bit. He only wished none of this had gone down.

Chapter End Notes

Quicker update than usual since it's a very short chapter! I admit Nanu and Wicke's interaction and the dream sequence are heavily inspired from *Man In Twilight*. I drew several cues from that story, but I try to have the dialog and dream sequence be their own thing and fit within *Foul Play's* context.

With this chapter posted, I got a surprise! I recently asked someone from PokeCommunity Forums to do an art request of *Sana and her partner, Jackie*! Oh my gosh it's so good! I also recommend checking her deviantart (warning for blood and other dark themes)!

Okay, so I'm hoping to have Chapter 13 sometime in July, and Chapter 14 August 8th, which is *Foul Play's* 2nd anniversary! I have drafts for them done, it's only a matter of polishing and sending to my beta. Hope you guys look forward to them! As always, thanks to bobandbill for looking these chapters over! Comments and kudos are appreciated!
Chapter Summary

In which Grimsley first visits Lake of the Moone, and then Po Town police station. He and Nanu have a long discussion, only to be interrupted by Team Skull grunts Felicia and Dennis.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The next day, Grimsley used his Page Rider to have a Pokémon be dropped for him. He rode on a Flygon, who took him from Malie City to Route 16. As they soared through the skies, he gazed down to see them passing through the grasses and palm trees of Route 11, the rocky and desert terrains of Routes 12 and 13, the ruins of Tapu Village and Route 14’s abandoned supermarket, and the waters of Route 15. Grimsley’s hair whipped through the rushing air, and the beat of Flygon’s wings vibrated against his ears.

He gazed down to see some land, a Pokémon Center, and another building with the Aether Foundation’s star symbol. There were some people and children outside. He let Flygon know this was his stop, and she swooped down.

When they finally reached Route 16, she landed close to Ula’ula Meadows and he jumped off from her back. He thanked her for dropping him here, then Grimsley watched her take off for a moment before he set foot inside Ula’ula Meadows.

Wild red flowers bloomed throughout the meadow. Grimsley's shoes creaked against the wooden bridge as he inhaled the sweet nectar that hung in the air. Red birds reminiscent of tango dancers popped out and flew frantically, which Grimsley assumed to be the Oricorio Iokua had warned him about. They looked similar to Ricky's Oricorio that Queen had battled against some days ago. He continued to move further until he saw a sign that indicated Po Town was to the left, Lake of the Moone to the right.

While pondering where he should go first, Grimsley stroked his chin. After a moment, he pulled his coin out and gazed at it on his palm.

"Heads, Po Town. Tails, Lake of the Moone."

Grimsley tossed the coin up in the air, and then caught it with one hand. He opened his palm to see it landed on tails. He grunted and headed towards Lake of the Moone.

The bell-like curved trail towards there was several minutes long. He stopped when he reached a massive shrine that looked to be generations old. It was surrounded by a lake that sparkled like the moon. In front of the bridge to the shrine was a decorative tower with compass roses in the middle. There seemed to be another tower that had fallen and broken in half. Grimsley crossed the bridge and stepped inside.

Grimsley's footsteps echoed through the ruins' empty and hollow chamber. There were cracks on the walls and floor, and some rubble was left behind. The temperature inside was colder than the
Ruins of Abundance. His nose wrinkled at the dust and spiderwebs that had formed. He wondered if this was a temple or sanctuary where people would worship Lunala.

He took the steps down, continuing forward. It was a long hall with many wooden doors. Grimsley tried to open a few of them, but they were either jammed or blocked by more rubble. Water leaked through the walls like a small cut on the skin. Grimsley could make out light from a short distance, and so he followed that path.

When Grimsley made it outside, he thought he was in a garden. There were several tall trees and bushes with white flowers. A dirt path was formed that then branched into three paths. The left path was blocked by a small cliff while the right was blocked by large boulders. Grimsley took the straight path that led him to a stone wall and some stairs. In front were two compass rose towers, like the ones just outside the ruins. Grimsley touched one of the towers, cold and rough against his palm.

Grimsley took the stairway up, but then stopped where two pedestals with the moon symbol stood. It was exactly like the flute drawing from Alola's Light. He shifted his gaze, and his eyes grew wide when a flash of white light appeared up ahead.

Right now, Colress, Dawson his Beheeyem, and the Ultra Recon Squad stood on top of the platform.

Grimsley's throat was tied in a knot. He hid behind the pedestal and eavesdropped on their conversation.

"This is where we'll meet with one of your other members?" Colress asked.

"I'm positive," Dulse said. "I already send Soliera the coordinates. She should be here any moment."

"Oh, I wonder if she's gonna ride Lunala or Solgaleo here!" Zossie said, her feet bouncing.

Grimsley quirked a curious brow. Did she mean Lunala and Solgaleo from the Alolan folklore? Dulse cleared his throat and faced Colress.

"According to our research, the Lake of the Moone brushes up against another world like Alola. A parallel universe, if you will."

Colress grinned. "I've read about those from various scientific journals. Both here and the Altar of the Sunne are fascinating places."

Grimsley pressed his lips, his forehead knitting a furrowed brow. He still wasn't sure what to feel about alternate dimensions days after he had talked to Burnet about those.

"She's coming, she's coming!" Zossie jumped up and down, pointing to the sky.

A thunder-like clap exploded in the air. Gazing up, Grimsley spotted a small wormhole opening up. A majestic bat-like creature that resembled Lunala popped out, letting out a shrill cry. Their wings sparkled like stars with each loud beat. A woman that wore the same spacesuit as Dulse and Zossie rode on their back. They eventually landed on the platform, and the woman hopped off.

"Soliera!" Zossie rushed and hugged her on the waist.

"It's great to see you too, dear," Soliera said with a warm smile, returning the embrace. After they let go, she approached Colress. "I'm Soliera, another member of the Ultra Recon Squad."
"Colress, at your service." He and Soliera shook hands.

"Dulse and Zossie told me that you'll be helping us restraining Necrozma."

"Indeed, I am. I'm almost done with the machine. I just need as much information on Necrozma as possible to fill in some data!"

"I have it all right here." Soliera pulled out what looked to be a flashdrive and handed it to Colress. He nodded.

"Thank you. This should be very useful!"

Soliera frowned and faced Dulse. She folded her arms against her chest.

"Captain Phyco wasn't happy when you made that request. Necrozma is getting more unstable by the minute. He's also weary that the International Police are watching over us."

"The International Police are indeed keeping tabs on you," Colress said. "As long as you help with my and Aether’s research, there’s nothing to worry about."

"Colress has proven to be experienced with the ways of Pokémon," Dulse said. "This shouldn't be a problem."

"Yeah, Mr. Scientist Man here is really smart!" Zossie said, grinning. Dawson approached her, the gems on his fingers flashing. She giggled and patted him. "His Pokémon are also very friendly!"

Soliera seemed to regard them for a moment. "All right, I trust you two's judgment."

Lunala cried and flapped their wings. Their body lit up in white light, brighter than the sun. Dawson squeaked and hid behind his trainer. Looking up at the legendary Pokémon, Colress grinned.

"I must say, your Lunala radiates so much light. It's astounding!"

Grimsley couldn't tear his gaze off of Lunala. He was reminded of the Alolan folklore when Lunala and Solgaleo would give their light to reawaken the Blinding One from their long sleep. Another few seconds passed until Lunala's light faded.

"Lunala had passed down some of its light to Necrozma, but it wasn't enough," Dulse said. "We were afraid it would get too greedy, so we kept Lunala far away from Necrozma as much as possible."

"Necrozma sounded so sad," Zossie said, sounding more upset than her usual joyful self. She hung her head down. "That's why Dulse and I volunteered to go to Alola and find a way to help it."

"Once I have the machine ready, Necrozma won't have to suffer anymore," Colress said.

Grimsley shifted his gaze away from the group and grimaced. An uneasy feeling settled in the pit of his stomach. He could tell the moment Colress had laid his eyes on Lunala that he wanted to use them for his own means. The same could be applied to Necrozma. The Ultra Recon Squad were foolish to have him help them.

"I should head back to Ultra Megalopolis," Soliera said. "Captain Phyco won't be able to handle things alone."

"Aw, you can't stay here longer?" Zossie pouted. "I think you'll love Alola!"
"I'm sure Alola is lovely, but I'm needed back there." Soliera dropped to one knee and touched her shoulder. "If there's anything else you three need, let me know."

"We will!" Zossie said, her face lit up. She and Soliera embraced.

"You and Lunala have a safe trip back home," Dulse said.

Soliera nodded and did the Ultra Recon Squad's version of the Alola rainbow sign. When she approached Lunala, they lowered themselves so that she could hop on their back.

"Lunala, to Ultra Megalopolis!"

Lunala bellowed with enthusiasm and the wormhole popped up. They and Soliera took off, going through that wormhole before it closed up and disappeared.

"Now that I have what I needed, shall we head back to Aether Paradise?"

"Yes, that is fine," Dulse said.

"Wonderful!" Colress said, looking at his Pokémon. Dawson nodded and his eyes glowed green. White light surrounded everyone, and they vanished.

Grimsley stared at the empty platform in stunned silence. He put his back on the pedestal, and released a deep breath. He and Colress definitely needed that talk.

xxx

After Grimsley had left Lake of the Moone, he was still digesting everything he had seen there. He reminded himself that he was initially here to talk with Nanu, so he brushed off his thoughts on Colress and the Ultra Recon Squad for now.

The red Oricorio were still dancing wildly and the nectar’s scent grew stronger. He moved further until he saw Nanu in the middle of a field of those red flowers. Smirking, Grimsley jumped off the bridge.

“I didn’t think you would be the type to admire this kind of beauty,” he said while approaching Nanu, who glared at him.

“You already want a battle against me? The answer’s no if you’re wondering.”

Grimsley frowned. “While I still wish for that to happen, that’s not why I’m here. I talked to Iokua recently about a certain past of yours.”

“You mean during my time as an Interpol officer?” Nanu asked, and Grimsley nodded. He sighed. “What did he tell you?”

“That you were pretty down after that incident. Also, that your mission might’ve been involved with a certain type of powerful Pokémon.”

That last statement made Nanu freeze, and his face tensed. Their eyes locked, and Nanu gave him a hard stare. Red petals floated in the air, swirling around them.

“Let’s go to the police station.” He dusted off some of the petals that landed on his hair and clothes and started walking. Grimsley followed behind.

As they exited Ula’ula Meadows and slipped into Route 17, Grimsley glimpsed around the several
grass fields and rolling hills. Gray skies hung over them and a cold breeze caressed his skin. He
lifted his gaze at the large wall that stood as tall as towers; Grimsley assumed that must be Po
Town.

It wasn’t long until they made it to the police station and stepped inside. Grimsley cringed upon
seeing the many clothes and piles of papers left alone, and he was astonished over the several dark-
furred Meowth that took over inside. Grimsley sat on a couch while Nanu sat next to his desk.

“Oh my, you have a horde of Meowth here.”

“Meowth are all right. They don’t care about you or anything.” Nanu leaned against his chair,
stretching his arms behind his head. “You were talking about the Ultra Beasts, huh?”

“Yes,” Grimsley said after he swallowed. “Iokua and I talked for a bit, and he thinks you know
something about them.”

Nanu nodded. “When the Ultra Recon Squad showed us Adhesive a while back, I got upset.
Aether’s president then announced another one of those things appeared in her little Pokémon utopia. From experience, I know the Ultra Beasts aren’t beings to be taken lightly.”

As Grimsley listened to Nanu’s explanation, a Meowth rubbed against his leg. His gaze fell on the
little feline, and when he scratched his chin the Meowth purred in delight.

“I recall you scoffing at Becky’s suggestion in letting the Aether Foundation help you with Team
Skull. Is that why you’re wary of them?”

“Sorta.” Another Meowth curled around Nanu’s desk and he scratched behind her ear. “We’ve
been getting word Aether have been doing their own research on the Ultra Wormholes, but there’s
no proof that the foundation was responsible for those. At least, not yet.”

“How about the Aether Foundation working with the Ultra Recon Squad? You think their
collaboration is genuine?”

“To be honest, I don’t know. Based on our interactions with the Ultra Recon Squad, they seemed
serious about that.”

“Yes, that looks to be the case.” Grimsley recalled that night when Nanu had told him about the
woman in the picture. He asked, “That late colleague of yours. Can you tell me a bit about her?”

Nanu stopped petting the Meowth, who growled sadly at him. He sat straight back up, furrowing
his brow at him. After a moment, he dragged out a deep sigh.

“Her name was Sana. As I said before, we didn’t get along but still worked well together. She
didn’t remember much of her past, except that she was from Unova and a scientist. A much more
competent battler than our other member, Agent Looker.”

“She sounds interesting. How come you two didn’t get along but still worked well together?”

“We knew one another’s strengths and weaknesses, and kept each other in line. She was one of the
better agents I’ve worked with.” Nanu stared at the ceiling, rubbing his forehead. “Now it’s your
turn.”

“Huh?” Grimsley asked, genuinely confused. “My turn for what?”

“I’ve told you a little bit of my past, so it’s only fair you do the same. Like, I know you’re from
Unova and of the Elite Four, but nothing else beyond that.”

“Oh.” Grimsley tapped on his chin while he pondered over what he was willing to reveal to Nanu. “Well, I did mention to Iokua how I came from a wealthy family. Several villas across the globe, servants, fancy parties, the works.”

“So you were a spoiled rich brat, huh?” Nanu snorted. “I can imagine that.”

“I would be lying if I didn’t say that all of that felt good.” Grimsley glanced down to see the Meowth now lying on the floor and he scratched his neck. “My mother used to be a professional gambler, but then stopped shortly after I was born. My father had owned a hotel chain and a few sports teams. One of those hotels had a casino, and that was how my parents had met.”

Nanu grunted, a crooked smile on his lips. “Somehow that fits you and your parents.”

“As you said, I was a spoiled brat. That ended though when my father had passed away and left me as the head of the house. There were heated discussions over my father’s inheritance and his side of the family wouldn’t help us.”

“How come?”

“They never approved of my father’s marriage to my mother. Thus, we were on our own. Luckily she had taught me her trade at a young age, so I was able to support us while I traveled through Unova.”

Nanu regarded him a moment, as if sinking all of Grimsley’s story in. “Huh, no wonder you’re into talking about chances and carrying that coin of yours all the time. What got you into Pokémon training, then?”

Grimsley stopped playing with the Meowth and lifted his gaze at Nanu. He smirked at him. “I learned that gambling and Pokémon battles aren’t so different. Both require some thought on what moves you want to make, and both have a winner and a loser. In the end, there’s always a risk and a reward.”

An amused grunt escaped from Nanu. “I must admit that is some comparison you have there, vampire boy.”

Being called that again led Grimsley to furrow his brow, but then his face relaxed and he chuckled. When he finished petting Meowth, the feline bounced off and went to play with one of the other Meowth.

“Mr. Dark and Gritty already has a nickname for me, hm?”

Already Nanu tossed him a stern look. “Don’t push it. And never call me that again.” He cleared his throat. “Anything else you want to talk about?”

Grimsley pondered over that for a moment. His mind flashed back to Colress and the Ultra Recon Squad in Lake of the Moone. He didn’t want to think about that again, but what had happened there was important for Nanu to know.

“Do you know anything about the Lake of the Moone?”
“It used to be a sanctuary where people would worship Lunala. Why you ask?”

“I was visiting there earlier today. Colress was with the Ultra Recon Squad, and another member of theirs had Lunala with them.”

“What? Seriously? The more I hear about those guys, the weirder they get.”

“Well they’re apparently from another planet, but yes that’s what I saw. One of the members delivered something for Colress’s machine.”

“If what you said is true, then I can let my former colleagues in Interpol know about that.”

Grimsley grunted and offered Nanu a solemn nod. He hoped that would lead Interpol into investigating Colress and the Ultra Recon Squad more.

Just then, a stone shattered the window and hit the wall, several pieces of glass lying on the floor. The Meowth on Nanu’s desk screeched and jumped off due to that noise. Both Grimsley and Nanu stood up and exchanged baffled looks. Someone’s cackle could be heard from outside.

“Yo, police officer! Your old pals Dennis and Felicia here want to have a little chat with you,” a male’s voice yelled out. Nanu groaned, which made Grimsley look at him over his shoulder.

“You know those two?” he asked, arching an eyebrow.

“They’re Team Skull grunts residing in Po Town. I kicked their butts some weeks ago. You wait here.”

Nanu flicked his wrist, and then he stepped outside. Curious about them, Grimsley did the same.

When Grimsley stepped out of the police station, he was greeted by two people in dark baggy clothing and doing their unusual poses. He recognized their wardrobe to be of Team Skull based on his last encounter with them. Nanu narrowed his eyes at the grunts.

“You guys should’ve stayed put in Po Town,” he said in a gruff voice.

“After the way you wrecked us bad last time, we want a rematch,” the female grunt, that Grimsley assumed would be Felicia, said.

“Yeah!” the male grunt, Dennis, said and pumped his fist. “Like our big bro, Guzma, you can’t take us down that easily!”

As Grimsley glanced over his shoulder, he caught Nanu fixing his stare at the grunts. He faced back at Dennis and Felicia, making a few steps forward.

“Man oh man, what is going on today? Two Team Skull grunts harassing a police officer, it seems?”

“Who the hell are you?” Dennis asked with wide eyes, tilting his head.

“Oh, me?” Acting surprised, Grimsley gasped and pointed a finger at himself. “Just a trainer passing through this little region.”

An unimpressed look stretched across Felicia’s face. She had her hand on her hip.

“Hold up, D. I think this is the kimono guy that crushed Jo-Jo and Mikey back in Melemele Island.”
“For real?” Dennis stared at Grimsley and grunted. “Sounds like you ain’t from around here.”

“Either way, our cop friend there got himself a new buddy to make this even.”

Glaring at him, Nanu said through gritted teeth, “I thought I told you to stay inside.”

“It wouldn’t be wise of me to leave you alone with those two in case something happens,” Grimsley said, his voice dropping slightly. An idea came to him, and he looked back at the grunts. “You two want a rematch against Nanu, correct?”

“Of course,” Dennis said with a raised brow. “So what’s it to you?”

“A Pokémon battle always has a winner and a loser. It’s pathetic to make a big deal out of losing if you aren’t prepared.” Grimsley craned his neck back, flashing his teeth. “So tell me, do you have the right cards to win this next battle?” he asked, and Dennis and Felicia shot him perplexed looks. Grimsley glanced at Nanu, his glare still locked at him.

“What are you blabbering on about?” Dennis asked with his shoulders hunched. “You tryin’ to mess with our heads, man?”

Grimsley shrugged. “I was just asking if you two are prepared. But how about we wager for real?” He pulled out the coin from his kimono, his fingers rubbing at its edge. “Heads or tails. One result will be you guys leaving Officer Nanu alone. The other result will be a Pokémon battle against us.”

Once more, the two grunts exchanged baffled expressions. When they faced back at him, Felicia said, “Fine. Heads.”

“Are you sure this is a good idea?” Nanu asked, raising a suspicious brow.

In response, Grimsley gave an amused grunt. He tossed the coin in the air, waiting a few seconds until catching it. When he opened his palm, the coin landed on heads. Nanu slapped his forehead and groaned.

“Nice going there, genius,” he said, but Grimsley ignored the sarcasm there. Both Felicia and Dennis chuckled and grinned.

“Looks like we’ll have our payback after all,” Felicia said, and she turned to Dennis. "You take that cop while I handle the other dude."

"You go it!" Dennis said, and he and Felicia threw their pokéballs up in the air. Two Pokémon were released, one Grimsley recognized as Haunter and the other a Raticate, but with darker fur and much bigger cheeks. Haunter screeched while Raticate opened his mouth wide to show off his fangs.

Nanu and Grimsley also released their own Pokémon onto the battlefield. Grimsley had sent out Queen, who dropped on one knee like a sworn knight. He jerked his head to see Nanu's Persian screech and preparing a battle stance.

"I focus on my guy, and you do the same," Nanu said.

"Of course." As Grimsley faced back at his opponent, he smirked. "I've seen my fair share of Raticate in Unova, but nothing like yours."

"Raticate and I are pretty tight, so you better watch out," Felicia said with a glare and thrust her arm forward. "Let's wreck that dude's Pokémon with Hyper Fang!"
Felicia's Raticate opened his jaws, showing off his sharp teeth, and launched at Queen. Queen's arms flashed green and she blocked Raticate's assault when they collided. Raticate sunk his teeth onto Queen's right arm, which caused her to unfurl her arms and slash him. Raticate screamed. A minor gash had been left on his face. Felicia furrowed her brow and her lips twitched.

"Go ahead and slow that Raticate down with Thunder Wave!"

"Avoid it and get back with Ice Beam!"

A charge of electricity formed around Queen's raised arms. She launched her Thunder Wave at Raticate, but he jumped at a nearby tree and used his tail to hook himself on the branch, avoiding being paralyzed altogether. While upside down, he inhaled and fired sparks of ice cold energy right at Queen's chest. Queen grunted and stumbled a little, but she shook it off.

A smug grin pulled on the corner of Felicia's lips. "Now go for Flame Charge and kick its ass!"

"Thunder Wave one more time," Grimsley commanded, his voice calm.

Raticate jumped out from the tree, cloaking himself in flames while in the air, then he landed on the ground and rushed at Queen. Queen's arm crackled in electrical flashes once more. Before Raticate rammed into her, she punched him in the face and that caused him to bounce off and back away. Queen dusted off some flames on her arm and hands, but there were still some scorch marks there.

The flames around Raticate's body vanished. He glared at Queen, flashing his fangs at her, but then he screeched and his body grew stiff. Felicia stared with wide eyes when that happened.

Grimsley grinned as this was exactly what he wanted.

He glanced over his shoulder to see Nanu's Persian still in good shape while Haunter looked tired and some of his outer skin ripped and deformed. Haunter let out large amounts of electricity at Persian, but the feline dodged in time and shot glimmering crystals straight at her opponent. Believing the man was perfectly fine there, Grimsley turned his attention back to Felicia.

"Take this chance to strike hard, Queen!"

"Pull yourself together, bud!" Felicia said with a clenched fist. "Try to shake that paralysis off with Hyper Fang!"

Still struggling to move, Raticate's body twitched and he hissed in frustration. That gave the perfect opportunity for Queen to slam into Raticate with her forehead and push him against a nearby tree. Raticate crashed onto the trunk, branches and leaves shaking. Raticate collapsed on the ground, and then seconds later got up and spat dirt off from his mouth. Two large bruises bloomed on Raticate's forehead and cheeks.

Felicia glared at Grimsley and her hand jerked. “Oh, why I outta… Raticate, get wild with Wild Charge!"

“Stop their assault with Sucker Punch!”

Able to shake off the paralysis, jolts of electricity shrouded all over Raticate’s body. As Raticate rushed at her, Queen’s arm was veiled in dark energy, and she punched his stomach when he got close to her. Raticate skidded backward with grass and dirt flying everywhere, but he managed to
stop himself by digging his feet and tail on the ground. Having the air knocked out of him, he wheezed and his cheeks puffed out. A confident smile tugged onto Grimsley’s lips.

“That does it, bounce back and give Flame Charge another try!” Felicia lashed out. Her Raticate bared his teeth and his fur burst in flames once more.

“Let’s end this with one last Iron He—”

Before Grimsley could finish his command, someone interrupted by yelling out, “Power Gem!” and Nanu’s Persian immediately stood in front of Queen. The gem on the feline’s forehead glowed and a bright beam shot at Raticate’s chest. Raticate shrieked and got launched into the air, and he dropped on the ground with a loud thump. With another shaky breath, the rat Pokémon slowly stood back up, but not for long as he collapsed back down and fainted.

Queen grunted and glared at Persian when she held her head up high, as if proud of herself. Grimsley looked on with his gaping mouth for a moment, and he jerked his head to see Nanu next to him.

"I thought we weren't supposed to interfere with one another."

“You were taking too long to finish,” Nanu said in a flat tone. He returned his Pokémon and had his hands in his pockets.

Grimsley raised a brow at him, and he turned back to see Felicia glaring at them after she had returned her Raticate. Dennis joined her and wore a similar expression.

“You just got served yourself?” Felicia asked.

“Yeah. That police officer’s Persian messed Haunter up good again,” Dennis said, his frown deepening. A ringtone, which sounded like rap music, was then heard and he pulled out a phone from his pants’ pocket to answer it. “Yo, what’s up? You guys just got out of the Aether House? Sweet. And how’s our big sis Plumeria? Nice. Yeah, Felicia and I went to battle the dude and he brought a friend with him. Okay, cool, we’ll meet you up at Po Town, then.” Dennis put the phone back in his pocket and told Felicia, “That’s Tommy. He and Mika finished what they were doing.”

Grimsley’s eyes widened and his stomach jumped when he heard Dennis said “Aether House.” He glimpsed over his shoulder to see Nanu just as stunned as he was.

“Aether House?” Nanu said with a furrowed brow. “What are you guys doing there?”

“None of your business, just something our boss wanted us to do. Let’s go and scram outta here, Felicia.”

“I’m with you on that.” Felicia nodded in agreement, and then she faced and pointed at Grimsley and Nanu. “We’ll be coming back for you two again.” She and Dennis made a run for it.

“Great, just freaking great,” Nanu grumbled as he ran his fingers through his hair. “Come on, let’s check back with Becky and the kids. Acerola is probably there, too,” he said, and then Grimsley and Queen followed him to the police station.

As soon as everyone stepped inside, Nanu went to his desk and pushed the numbers on the computer’s touchscreen while Grimsley and his Pokémon watched. It was a few moments until Becky showed up on the screen, a worried expression on her face.

“Kahuna Nanu, Mr. Grimsley, thank goodness!” Becky said. “Something terrible just happened.
Team Skull went and stole one of the kids’ Pokémon.”

“They did what?” Grimsley said in shock.

“Did you try to stop them?” Nanu asked, his eyes narrowed.

“I did with Headmaster, but one of their leaders Plumeria was too tough for us. She mentioned how she has a bone to pick with Selene.”

Grimsley swallowed upon hearing Selene’s name. He had been hearing that name several times now since he came to this region.

“Is Acerola here with you now?” Nanu asked, and Becky shook her head.

“She’s away with Hau and Selene for their trials at that abandoned store. I think they should be back soon.”

Grimsley crossed his arms and bit his lips as he pondered over the situation. During the lingering silence, he glanced to see Nanu lean back in his chair and rub his forehead. An idea then hit him.

“I’ll be coming over there very shortly. I want to meet with Acerola and the others. Perhaps we can come up with a plan to get the Pokémon back.” He glanced at Nanu, who shot him a long stare.

“I think that would be appreciated,” Becky said with a smile. “Thanks so much you guys for checking up with us! Please stay safe.”

“You do the same,” Grimsley said, and the screen on Acerola and Becky’s side blacked out. Nanu closed the program from the computer and grunted.

“Whatever Team Skull’s up to, I don’t have a good feeling about it. Here, catch.”

Nanu threw him a yellow and red spray bottle and Grimsley caught it. A burn heal potion.

“Thanks.” Grimsley looked at his Bisharp, her face tired and arm covered in burnt marks, and frowned. He used the burn heal, spraying several sips on her. “Neither do I. That’s why I want to see if I can help in any way.”

While giving him an indifferent stare, Nanu grunted. He then said, “I’ll be outside patrolling Po Town and making sure Team Skull doesn’t cause more of a ruckus. And oh, I took some sneak peeks at your battle against one of the grunts. You weren’t bluffing when you said you’re from the Elite Four.”

Grimsley stared at Nanu as he stepped outside of the police station. It sounded like he had just complimented him, which caught him off guard. He gazed back at Queen, who responded with a shrug. The majority of the burns on her arm had faded, and she looked a little more upbeat now. Grimsley patted her shoulder and sighed, exhausted from all that happened today and afraid what he would find upon his return to the Aether House.

Chapter End Notes

And the Dark Uncle Squad is back! Expect more of that in future chapters.
As I mentioned before, August 8 is Foul Play's 2nd anniversary. I'm going to try my best to have Chapter 14 be posted on that day. If not, then a few days after at least. Thanks bobandbill for the beta as always! See you all in August!
After returning Queen and leaving the police station, Grimsley checked his Ride Pager to see that all of the Pokémon were unavailable at the moment. He instead went to Route 16's shores and took off with Blackjack to Aether House. As he rode on his Pokémon, his mind kept racing over what had occurred there. Team Skull stealing one of the Pokémon reminded him how Team Plasma had done that on several occasions—the thought of that made him bite his lips.

A dash from the police station to the beach was an hour or so. Blackjack was faster than a jet ski, so it took less time for them to reach Route 15 and land on the shore. He hopped off from his ride, and then he stroked Blackjack's chin.

“You wait here for a little while, all right?” Grimsley said, and Blackjack responded with a growl. He moved several steps, and then stopped when he heard more noises from him. He walked back to him with a raised eyebrow. “Is there something that you want?”

Blackjack growled and opened his jaws, causing Grimsley to back away a few steps. After pondering for a moment, Grimsley smiled a little. He pulled a Poképuff bag out from the bag he was carrying, and immediately Blackjack grabbed the food from his palm.

“Hmph, thought so. That should entertain you while I’m away,” he said before heading to Aether House.

By the time Grimsley stepped in, Becky and the kids gathered around. She and another person he didn’t recognize, a blonde girl in a white dress and carrying a large bag, were trying to comfort Hunter and Gracie. Around them, a few of the tables and chairs had been overturned and damaged and papers scattered everywhere that indicated a confrontation had taken place.

“Why did they have to take Yungoos?” Gracie said through her sobs.

“Team Skull just do as they please,” Becky said as she wiped the tears on Gracie’s cheeks. She dragged in a deep sigh and her shoulders slumped. “I’m sorry I wasn’t able to save him.”

“You did all you could,” the other girl said, giving Becky a reassuring smile. “I would’ve helped, but didn’t want Plumeria to see me.”

“I agree, you at least tried to stop them,” Grimsley said as he approached closer. Everyone turned to look at him.

“Grimsley, you made it!” Becky said, as if relieved he was here.

“I did say I would come to check what’s going on.” He turned his attention to the girl with the large
“And I don’t think we’ve met before.”

That led the girl to flinch and gasp, but then she regained her composure.

“Oh, I’m Lillie. Becky and Acerola let me stay here while I travel through this island.” Lille took a closer look at Grimsley, and her eyes grew wide. “Wait, aren’t you Grimsley from the Unova Elite Four? I’ve researched a little on different Pokémon Leagues, including the one from your region.”

With a satisfied smile, Grimsley had both hands on his hips and said, “Finally, someone recognizes me immediately!”

At that moment, the front door slid open and Grimsley jerked his head to see Acerola and two other people, a boy and a girl he didn’t recognize, stepping inside. Both of them had dark skin and were a few years younger than Acerola, not in their teen years just yet.

“Grimsley, what are you doing here?” Acerola asked, shooting him a stunned expression.

“I heard about Team Skull stealing a Pokémon over at the Aether House,” Grimsley said. “Nanu and I got in contact with Becky to make sure everyone’s all right.”

“Are any of you hurt?” the boy asked, sounding worried.

“Headmaster took quite a beating and needed some rest, but otherwise we’re all fine.”

“Well, that’s no good.” Acerola said in dissatisfaction, frowning. She looked at Grimsley. “I’m glad that you’re here because we do have a big problem in our hands.”

“Acerola, you know this guy?” the girl asked.

With a big smile, Acerola said, “Yes, I do.” As she continued to speak, she pointed at the two kids. “Grimsley, this is Hau and Selene. They recently finished one of my trials. Oh, have you been introduced to Lillie yet?”

“Mr. Grimsley and I have been already acquainted,” Lillie said with a small nod.

Upon hearing Hau and Selene’s names, Grimsley’s brow furrowed. “Wait, you two are Hau and Selene? I’ve heard you guys had crossed paths with Team Skull several times before.”

Selene flashed him a proud grin. “That’s us! Hau and I kept running into them as we were doing the island challenge, but we end up kicking their butts each time.” Beside her, Hau had his head over his arms and laughed.

“They’re more of a distraction than anything.” The smile on Hau’s face slipped away. “But like Acerola said, we’re in big trouble.”

“How so?” Grimsley raised an eyebrow. Selene let out a deep sigh and pinched the bridge of her nose.

“After I finished Acerola’s trial, Team Skull came after us again,” she said. “Their ‘sister’, Plumeria, told us that if we want to get that Pokémon back, their leader wants me to come to Po Town alone.”

“And with no backup! Outrageous, right?” Hau raised his arms up high, and then he hung his head down and his shoulders slumped. “Because I couldn’t stop them, Selene is in this mess.”

“Hey don’t be hard on yourself,” Becky said as she approached Hau, squeezed his shoulder, and
gave him a sad smile. “I wasn’t able to stop them myself. They were lucky that Plumeria came with them.”

“Becky’s right, it’s no one’s fault here,” Lillie said. Her gaze shifted away from the group for a second. “It’s awful how Team Skull would do such a thing.”

There was a short moment of silence before a determined look crossed Selene’s face. “A town of grunts doesn’t scare me. I took down Guzma once with no sweat; I can take him down again.”

As Grimsley surveyed the room, everyone seemed to be taken aback by Selene’s response. Amused more than anything, he chuckled.

“Getting very confident, are we?” he said. “Just because you defeated a few grunts on occasion, you think you can take on the world.”

Selene glared at him. “Guzma seems to see me as a threat if he doesn’t want me to come with backup.”

“Maybe so, but have you considered as to why they wanted you alone? This might be a distraction to keep you away for a while.”

“So you’re saying this is a trap,” Selene said in a low voice.

“We can’t let Team Skull get away with kidnapping Yungoos, though,” Becky said. “The Aether Foundation’s goal is to protect Pokémon from harm. I would get in serious trouble if the higher-ups find out about this.”

“Grimsley, you’re an Elite Four trainer, right?” Lillie said as she gazed up at him. “Perhaps you can go with Selene to Po Town.”

While he pondered over Lillie’s suggestion, Grimsley started scratching his chin. “I actually visited near Po Town recently and had to face a couple of those grunts that wanted payback at Nanu. He wasn’t happy when I got myself involved, so I don’t want to get on his bad side again.”

“Hold up, this guy here is one of those strong trainers from another region?” Hau said in a stunned voice, pointing at Grimsley. Both Acerola and Lillie nodded.

“Ah-huh!” Acerola said, smiling. “Grimsley is from the Unova region, and one of the best trainers there.”

“Oh wow! Not long ago I asked Selene who would be stronger, our kahunas or the Elite Four.” Hau chuckled and grinned at him. “To think, one of you guys is here right now!”

The corner of Grimsley’s mouth twitched. He had asked Nanu to consider battling with him before he departs Alola, but it looked like the kahuna wouldn’t accept his challenge anytime soon.

“Didn’t you promise you would save Yungoos if he ever gets in danger?” Gracie asked, pulling Grimsley’s scarf.

Grimsley’s heart sank and he frowned. He did promise her that during his video phone conversation with Becky a while back. If this was in any other circumstances he would do it in a heartbeat.

“If possible, yes. However, this is likely a trap. I don’t have a good feeling about this.”
“Oh,” Gracie said in disappointment. She let go of Grimsley’s scarf and lowered her head.

"Wait, so you're an Elite Four member and you're backing down?" Selene took a step forward and clenched her fist. “You don't care that Team Skull had stolen a Pokémon?"

With a stern face, Grimsley said, “I may like a good game of cards now and then, but even I know when to back down.”

Selene fixed her stare at him, as if disregarding his warning. After a moment, she grunted and crossed her arms.

“You know what, it’s all right. I don’t need your help, anyway. Even if this is some kind of distraction, it just doesn’t feel right neglecting that Pokémon.”

“You’ll need a ride Pokémon if you want to cross Route 15’s waters and get to Po Town,” Becky said. “I can call one for you.”

“That would be great,” Selene said with an appreciative smile. Becky gave her a single nod and went to the reception desk to do that call. Gracie reached Selene and pulled her shirt.

“Will you be able to save Yungoos?” the little girl asked and sniffled. Her eyes were red and puffy.

“I should be once Becky gets me a ride Pokémon,” Selene said with a reassuring smile. She squeezed Gracie’s shoulder. “We’ll get him back, don’t you worry.”

Gracie wiped a tear on her cheek and gave her a weak smile. “Okay.”

“While she does that, we should start cleaning up this mess,” Acerola said, and everyone agreed. Selene, Hau, and Acerola started putting the furniture back together while Grimsley, Lillie, and the kids picked up the papers and anything else on the floor.

“So Lillie, you’re participating in the island challenge also?” Grimsley asked after he picked up a pile of papers and set them aside on a coffee table.

Lillie stopped to face Grimsley, shaking her head. “I’m Professor Kukui’s assistant, but I decided to travel around to study the tapus’ ruins here.” A small smile formed on her lips. “A nice trainer named Hapu took me to the Ruins of Abundance a few days ago. Without her, I wouldn’t be able to get through the desert alone.”

“I visited that place not long ago myself. I agree with the desert being treacherous, but the ruins itself has its charm.” Grimsley found himself thinking about Nanu again. He had looked almost peaceful, relaxed as he prayed to Tapu Bulu. He wouldn’t mind seeing more of that side of him.

While Selene was helping Hau overturned one of the pieces of furniture, she asked Lillie, “Did you and Nebby find what you wanted?”

“Not really,” Lillie said in a disappointed tone. “Nebby seems to sense Tapu Bulu’s presence, but it didn’t appear before us.”

“Nebby? A Pokémon of yours?” Grimsley asked with a raised brow. Lillie flinched, a hesitant look on her face, and then she gazed down on the floor.

“You can say that…” In that instant, Lillie’s bag moved and she gasped. She held her bag tighter as whatever it was inside got more aggressive, and Lillie was unsuccessful when it got free and squealed in delight.
A small creature that resembled a nebula floated around the room. Everyone—except for Becky who was still talking on the phone—stopped what they were doing to look at it. Acerola and the kids gazed at it in awe while Hau, Selene, and Lillie were more stunned that it had gotten out. Grimsley couldn’t take his eyes off from it, having never seen it before and immersed by its appearance.

“Aw, I think Nebby here wants to play,” Acerola said and giggled.

“You guys have seen it before?” Grimsley asked everyone.

“Ahhuh,” Hunter said, a huge grin on his friend. “Gracie and I were following it around, but then Lillie told us to stop.”

“Nebby, you can’t be out here after what happened yesterday!” Lillie held her bag up high and said, “Back in the bag you go now.”

The Pokémon, Nebby, frowned and let out a sad “pew.” It then reluctantly returned back inside and Lillie zipped the bag up. She sighed heavily and faced Grimsley.

“I’m sorry you have to see that. Nebby isn’t supposed to be seen like that.”

“It’s all right, it’s no trouble at all,” Grimsley said. “Though I must ask, why is that Pokémon isn’t allowed out?”

“There are some people that want it, so Lillie tries to keep it hidden,” Selene said. She chuckled. “However, Lillie needs to be better at keeping an eye on it.”

Lillie pouted with her hands on her hips. “I’ve been keeping an eye on it! Nebby just gets out too quickly sometimes.” She turned back towards Grimsley. “Please don’t tell anyone else about Nebby.”

“Don’t worry, your secret is safe with me,” Grimsley said. He thought about asking Lillie why some people wanted Nebby so much but held himself back from doing that. Just then Becky approached everyone, looking dissatisfied.

“Bad news. I called a couple of different ride Pokémon services, and all the Sharpedo and flying Pokémon have been taken right now. Yvonne at least told me she would call me back when she has something available.”

“Really?” Selene said and groaned. “So there’s a chance this might take a while?”

Acerola gave Selene a sad smile. “I understand you want to do this now, but it looks like there’s nothing you can do but wait.”

“Did I hear you mention Sharpedo?” Grimsley asked. The mention of that Pokémon piqued his interest.

“Yeah I did,” Becky said. “There are some boulders off the coast and a Sharpedo is able to break through them.”

When swimming over Route 15 with Blackjack, Grimsley did notice the boulders that looked to be hard to pass through and the rough waves. With the Pokémon that were able to get through that route unavailable at the moment, there was an alternative solution. He looked at Selene, grinning as if he had won the biggest jackpot in a casino.
“Maybe you need my help, after all,” he said, and that made her give him a confused stare. Everyone else had the same reaction. “I do happen to have a Sharpedo with me.”

“Hold up. So you’re willing to lend your Sharpedo to me, even though we just met?” Selene asked.

Grimsley’s grin grew wider. “I didn’t say I would give it to you for free. If you’re as good as you say, then battle me to earn it.”

Everyone turned their attention at Selene. Her lips slightly parted and her head tilted to the side. She looked to be taking his offer seriously. After a moment, she said, “All right, I’ll accept.”

“Are you sure you’re ready for that?” Lillie asked, her eyes wide. Next to her, Hau too looked just as surprised.

“After Professor Kukui told me about building a Pokémon League, I’m curious what it’s like to go against an Elite Four.” Selene flashed everyone a fearless grin. “I’m not going to pass that opportunity up!”

“Oh, a battle!” Hunter said, his feet bouncing. “I wanna see, I wanna see!”

“So do I!” Gracie said enthusiastically. She seemed to feel a little better than a few moments ago.

“Selene against an Elite Four,” Hau said. Beaming, he flung his arms over his head. “I’m excited to see this, too!”

“I guess I don’t mind seeing it myself.” Lillie wasn’t as optimistic as the others, but she still smiled.

“Looks like your guys’ battle will have an audience,” Acerola said in a chipper voice.

Grimsley responded with a pleased hum on his lips. “Good. We can have our match at the beach down the slope.”

“You guys go ahead,” Becky said. “I’ll stay here in case Team Skull comes again.”

“Aw, it sucks that you’ll miss it.” A slight frown reached Acerola’s lips, and then she smiled once more. “But yeah, probably a good idea if one of us watch over.”

“Well, what are we waiting for? Let’s hit the beach now!” Without waiting, Selene rushed out of the building, much to everyone’s bafflement. Acerola and Hau laughed.

“You have to love her spirit,” Hau said, grinning. “We should head out before she waits too long for us.”

Everyone but Becky exited out of the Aether House. The beach was just down the slope, so it didn’t take them that long to catch up to Selene. A large wave crashed onto the shore, almost reaching up to Grimsley’s shoes. He glimpsed around to see a few other people around, some fishing while others were picking up the seashells that just washed up. Acerola, Hau, Lillie, and the kids gathered around Selene and Grimsley.

“Man oh man, what is going on today?” Grimsley said with an unimpressed frown. “Somebody bothered to come to this sad place.”

“Hey, you’re the one that suggested we battle here,” Selene said in a smug voice. She held her chin up, her hands on her sides. “So, how do you want to do this battle?”
Selene nodded. “I’m cool with that.” She grabbed a pokéball from her bag, and said, “All right, Meli, let’s do this!”

The ball got tossed up in the air and cracked open. Bright light poured out from the capsule and a few seconds passed before a wolf-like Pokémon with orange fur appeared. She shook off her large mane, sharp rocks sticking out from there, and howled. This was another Pokémon that Grimsley hadn’t seen before.

“Oh, is that a Lycanroc?” Hunter asked. His face lit up in excitement. “Kinda looks like its Midday Form, but its fur is darker and fluffier.”

“She is, but this is her Dusk Form,” Selene said with a proud smile. She approached Meli and rubbed her fur affectionately. “Meli’s a sweet girl, but she also has a fighting spirit of her Midnight Form counterpart.”

“I think Professor Kukui said how Lycanroc of that form are very rare, right Lillie?” Hau asked Lillie, and she nodded.

“There have been only a few written records of Lycanroc’s dusk form if I recall,” Lillie said. “But yes, Lycanroc’s Dusk Form aren’t seen all that often.”

Grimsley continued to stare at the Lycanroc with great interest. Midday, Midnight, Dusk. So this Pokémon had at least three forms, possibly more. And he was still getting used to the Alolan form Pokémon.

“I know which Pokémon I’ll choose already.” Grimsley looked to see a fin moving around, and whistled. Blackjack popped up from the waters and grunted.

“Woah, so that’s your Sharpedo,” Hau said, taken aback by his presence.

“Oh, looks very strong!” Acerola said, grinning.

Both Gracie and Hunter gasped in amazement while Lillie gripped her bag tighter but held her gaze at the shark Pokémon. Selene’s Lycanroc snarled, as if threatened.

Grimsley tightened his lips in a hard frown. At that moment loud squawks were heard, and he gazed up to see two wild Skarmory flying above. He thought back to the Skarmory that wanted his coin, and an idea came to him. He turned to Selene and her Pokémon.

“Your Lycanroc looks like a fine Pokémon there and I’m eager to see how she fares in combat. Before we do that, though…” He pulled his coin out and tossed it a few times. “Uncle Grimsley is going to flip a coin to determine who goes first. Will it be heads or tails?”

Grimsley and everyone else waited for Selene’s reply. Her eyes squinted at the coin on Grimsley’s palm and her forehead puckered. She gave a sideways glance at both Skarmory, and her lips curled into a smug smile.

“Neither. I know you’re about to have one of the Skarmory take that coin from you,” she said, pointing to the sky.

Grimsley’s mouth grew slack. He peered over his shoulder to see everyone else just taken aback as he was. When Grimsley faced back at Selene, he smirked at her.
“Astonishing. I had indeed been planning to have either of them snatch it out of the air as it spins in the sky. Since you figured out my scheme, you make the first move.”

With a large grin, Selene raised her chin. “If you insist! All right girl, let’s start out with Rock Throw!”

Meli howled and jumped up high. Several rocks swirled around her, and when she moved her tail the rocks were thrown straight at Blackjack.

“Crunch them!” Grimsley said. Blackjack opened his jaws and crunched them like hard candy, turning the rocks into dust. “Good! Now strike hard with Aqua Jet!”

“Not so fast!” Selene made a sweeping gesture with her arm. “Meli, Accelrock!”

A veil of water covered Blackjack and he took off like a jet ski. Meli also rushed in, becoming nothing but a blur. An explosion occurred when they collided, and both Pokémon were pushed back. There were some scrapes on Blackjack while Melie was soaked and had deep cuts in her fur. Realizing Meli’s cuts were from Blackjack’s Rough Skin ability, Grimsley hummed in satisfaction.

“Accelerock again!”

“Take the hit, and then jab her!”

Once more, Meli went full speed at Blackjack and launched onto him. She landed on a nearby boulder, only to wobble and winced thanks to Blackjack’s Rough Skin again. Blackjack cried at being hit, and then he shook it off. His fin glowed purple and he rushed at Meli, stabbing her on the side. Meli roared in pain and crashed onto the sand. The wolf Pokémon picked herself up, sweating and her face a slight shade of violet.

“Oh no, looks like Meli is badly poisoned!” Hau said worryingly, and Selene’s eyes flew wide.

“Are you okay, girl?” she asked. Meli turned to her and grimaced, but let out a determined bark.

Grimsley grunted and folded his arms against his chest. “Your Lycanroc being poisoned and hurt by my Blackjack’s Rough Skin will drain her soon.”

Selene gasped, one hand near her face. She narrowed her eyes and slightly pursed her lips.

“We’re gonna avoid physical contact for now! Stone Edge, go!”

Meli howled and slammed her paws on the ground. Several boulder pillars popped up, even underneath the sea. Blackjack screamed when one of those boulders stabbed underneath his stomach, leaving a small wound there.

“Crunch her leg!” Grimsley ordered.

Blackjack swam towards Meli and crunched her leg. The Lycanroc gave a series of painful barks and struggled to remove her opponent’s jaws off from her.

“Shake it off and Rock Throw!”

After a few more attempts, Meli broke free from Blackjack’s grip and leaped up. Several small boulders swirled around her, and she threw them at Blackjack’s face. Meli landed on the ground and panted hard, her legs shaking. The violet shade on her face grew darker.
“Selene’s doggie looks very tired now!” Hunter said with a worried face. Selene glanced over her shoulder at the group and bit her lip.

“Meli, we need to end this now. Time to unleash our Z-Move!” Selene raised her arm up, showing off her Z-Ring. Meli looked over her shoulder and barked in approval.

“Z-Move?” Grimsley muttered to himself, arching a brow.

“What Z-Move will Selene use?” Lillie asked, and Hau beamed at her.

“I think I know which one! You’ll love it!”

Selene pulled out a small tan-colored stone and slipped it into her Z-Ring’s slot. Once her Z-Ring lit up, she began her pose which had her flexing her muscles and stretching her right leg forward. A golden aura also surrounded Meli.

“Our hearts harder than stone, Splintered Stormshards!”

Meli lifted her head and released her strongest roar yet. After she slammed on the ground, several large shards of rocks flew in the air. When the shards stopped and pointed at Blackjack, she jumped on them.

After she finished her Z-Pose, Selene heaved deep breaths and her arms shook.

“Protect!” Grimsley ordered urgently, and a green forcefield surrounded Blackjack. Both Meli and the shards shot straight towards him, Blackjack enduring the impact.

Another explosion occurred, this time causing a big splash of water to burst out. Meli and Blackjack glared at each other, both breathing hard and barely able to keep their eyes open. Eventually, Meli collapsed onto the ground, and Selene rushed at her side. Everyone at the sidelines gasped.

“Meli, are you all right?” Selene asked as she pulled her Pokémon against her chest. A few seconds passed until Meli whined and licked her face, which made Selene giggle. “Thank goodness!”

“Selene, here’s a pecha berry Meli can eat,” Lillie said as she approached Selene. She handed her a peach-colored berry, and Selene nodded at her.

“Here girl, take this.” Selene held the berry in front of Meli’s face. She gave it a few sniffs before chewing on it slowly.

Grimsley swallowed hard, his face tensed. Usually when he had that kind of advantage that pleased him, but this time he felt remorse causing Meli that much pain.

“If you want, you can always forfeit. There’s no shame in that.”

Selene gasped and gazed up at him, as if considering his suggestion. She gave Grimsley a hard stare.

“No, I’m sticking through this until the end.” She turned to Lillie. “Can you watch over Meli for me?”

“Of course,” Lillie said with a single nod. She gently pulled Meli on her lap and stroked her cheeks. Meli rubbed against her palm.

“Wow, my grandpa is right! The Elite Four are super strong!” Hau said in an awed voice.
Acerola beamed. “Yep! No wonder Mimikins is very fond of Grimsley!”

Grimsley furrowed his brow and looked over his shoulder at Blackjack. “You’re still hanging in there?” he asked, and Blackjack nodded. He faced back at Selene and shrugged. “If you insist.”

“Your Sharpedo is very strong but looks very exhausted now. Franziska, it’s your turn!”

Selene pulled out another pokéball and released a pink bug-like Pokémon that resembled a praying mantis. Her upper body gave an appearance of them wearing a dress while her legs looked like striped pants. The wing-like appendages on her back flared up, and she crossed her arms similar to Queen with her blades.

“Oh wow, a Lurnatis!” Gracie said in excitement, pointing at her. “She’s very pretty!”

“I agree, she looks marvelous. However…” Grimsley snapped his fingers. “Blackjack, Ice Fang!”

Blackjack jumped out of the water and opened his jaws wide, his teeth glowing blue and cold mist coming out from his mouth. Selene commanded Franziska to counter with Leaf Blade, which she did by having her right arm glowed dark green and blocking Blackjack’s assault. When Blackjack sunk his teeth deep into Franziska’s arm like raw meat, she pushed him away and caused him to drop back into the sea. Small shards of ice were left on her arm, but she shook those off.

“That’s all right! Now Franz, Sunny Day and start charging!”

Franziska gave a quick nod and raised her arms high. A white beam appeared between her hands, which shot up towards the sky and caused the sun to shine brighter. Sweat dripped on Grimsley’s forehead and he loosened the scarf around his neck, the air around him warmer and humid. He assumed Selene was having her Pokémon use Solar Beam so she could charge up the move faster.

“Hurry and use Poison Jab!”

Blackjack’s fin glowed purple, and he rushed towards Franziska while she began charging her supposed Solar Beam. A large yellow ball formed above her, absorbing the harsh sunlight into herself. What Selene said next caught Grimsley off guard.

“Solar Blade, now!”

Franziska raised her arm, and the yellow ball turned into a giant bright blade. Before Blackjack could reach her, she slammed the blade down onto him and another big splash of water exploded. Blackjack floated and collapsed in the waters, several burnt marks all over him.

“Selene took down one of his Pokémon, yeah!” Hau said with his fist up in the air. Besides him, Gracie and Hunter cheered also.

Grimsley winced at that sight. He grunted and returned Blackjack inside his pokéball.

“You did well my friend, time for some rest,” he said in a low voice to the pokéball.

Selene grinned at him. “Solar Blade is Franz’s signature move. Impressed?”

Grimsley was reminded the same thing happened when he battled against Kahili’s Toucannon. He frowned.

“Not the first time this has happened. Still, we’re not done yet.”

He pulled out another pokéball and released Roulette. She crouched on all fours and growled, as if
trying to intimidate Franziska. She was refreshed and ready to go after that battle with Ryuki’s Pokémon. Franziska flinched for a moment, and then she regained her composure.

“Go and grab Franziska by the arm!” Grimsley ordered.

Roulette jolted right at the Lurnatis. She jumped and sank her teeth onto Franziska’s arm, similar to how Blackjack did earlier. Franziska screamed in pain and eventually shook her off; there were large bite marks on her arm.

“Now time for Night Slash!”

“X-Scissor!”

Roulette howled and the horn on her forehead glowed purple. Meanwhile, Franziska’s arms glowed light green and she crossed them against her chest. Roulette’s horn clashed against Franziska’s arm, and they kept pushing at each other. Eventually, Roulette had the upper hand as she whipped her head and slashed Franziska’s chest, which caused her to back away. Franziska glared at her, touching where Roulette had left that deep cut on her.

Selene narrowed her eyes. “The sun’s still up, Franz! Go for Solar Blade this time!”

Grimsley’s eyes grew wide, already aware of his opponent’s plan. “Block it with Shadow Claw!”

Roulette gave Grimsley an agreed bark and a dark aura covered her paw that then turned into a large claw. At the same time, Franziska absorbed the sunlight and the large blade appeared once more. Both of their attacks collided like swords, sparks flying between them, and once more they pushed at each other. This time Franziska’s Solar Blade won over, and she swiped Roulette like a baseball bat. Roulette flew up in the air for a few seconds before dropping down.

A cloud of dust popped up, obscuring Grimsley’s vision for a moment. As soon as that faded out, Roulette picked herself up and shook the sand off her fur. She glared at Franziska, her breathing growing louder. A confident grin pulled on Selene’s lips.

“Solar Blade again!”

As Franziska started charging up once more, Grimsley’s brow furrowed. He needed to have Roulette strike first before she took even more damage. An idea came to him, and he smirked.

“Push her down with Aerial Ace!”

Roulette howled and rushed at the Lurnatis with a high burst of speed, becoming a blur. Franziska just finished charging up her Solar Blade, but before she could strike Roulette rammed into her like a freight truck. That caused Franziska to fall backward and drop her blade, which slammed into the sand and left scorch marks around it.

“That’s so cool!” Hau said with both fists clenched. “I wasn’t able to avoid Franz’s Solar Blade like that!”

“I agree!” Acerola said, beaming. She gazed up and gasped. “Oh, looks like the effects of Sunny Day’s almost gone!”

Grimsley blinked and he looked up at the sky. Indeed the sunlight became less harsh, and the air wasn’t horribly humid anymore.

Selene’s eyes grew wide, and then she glared. “We’re not done yet! Leaf Blade!”
“Night Slash!”

Roulette’s glowing horn clashed against Franziska’s green arm, and they attacked one another like fencers. To Grimsley, their movements were similar to how Roulette and Ryuki’s Garchomp had fought. After several more attempts, Roulette’s horn swiped at Franziska’s arm and made her scream. Franziska backed away and she winced, her chest heaving rapidly. Roulette also panted hard and barely kept one eye open, but looked to be in much better shape.

Everyone in the sidelines looked on with anticipation.

“Now, end this with Aerial Ace!” Grimsley ordered, stretching his arm out in a dramatic gesture.

With the last ounce of her strength, Roulette bolted at Franziska with lightning speed and launched into her. Franziska screeched and fell backwards, crashing onto the sand. After the cloud of dust faded, Franziska collapsed and didn’t get up.

"The winner of this match goes to Grimsley!" Acerola announced, raising her arm up.

“Franz!” Selene rushed at her Pokémon’s side and helped pick her up. Franziska struggled to stand up straight, but she gave her a weak smile. Selene giggled and they embraced. “You did great out there!”

Grimsley couldn’t help but smile at that. Roulette approached him, nudging at his hip. He looked down and scratched her cheek.

“Excellent work there,” he said in a soft voice. Roulette barked and licked his cheek.

“You guys are awesome!” Hau said, grinning. “Even though Selene lost, that was still fun to watch!”

“Couldn’t agree with you more!” Acerola said in her usual cheerful voice.

“Aw, wish the battle was longer!” Hunter said. Both Acerola and Lillie chuckled.

“If it was, we probably would be here all day!” Lillie said. Next to her, Malie barked in agreement.

“What about Yungoos?” Gracie said, her voice cracking. She walked up to Selene, and they held hands. “Does this mean Selene can’t save him now?”

Everyone’s face fell, including Grimsley’s. He stared up at the sky, a knot forming inside his throat. He had won this match, but it wasn’t satisfying. A deep sigh escaped from him.

“If somebody wins, then the person who fought against them will lose,” he said as he walked up to Selene and Gracie, both staring at him. “However, there are good ways to lose and bad ways to win.”

“Huh? What are you saying?” Selene arched a confused brow at him.

“The results of that battle weren’t what I wanted. Because of that, I’m breaking our agreement.”

A surprised look crossed Selene’s face, and she squeezed Gracie’s hand harder. “Wait, does that mean...?”

Before Grimsley responded, he gazed down at Roulette and she gave him a single nod. He looked back at the girls, smiling.
“That I’ll help you get that Yungoos after all? Then yes.”

Gracie and Hunter reacted favorably at that announcement. They cheered and hugged around Grimsley’s waist, which took him aback. Acerola giggled, her palm close to her mouth.

“Looks like the children are very happy!”

“Ah-huh! Also now Selene doesn’t have to do this alone!” Hau flashed Grimsley a large grin. Next to him, Lillie smiled and nodded in agreement.

Grimsley glanced at Roulette, Meli, and Franziska. Everyone looked tired and had minor injuries all over. Not only that, Roulette and Meli’s fur were dirty. Blackjack also needed some medical attention.

“Our Pokémon need some rest first,” he said to Selene. “We can leave tomorrow morning.”

“That’s fine by me!” Selene said, closing her eyes and grinning.

Grimsley gave Selene a small smile. When he stared at the ocean and what awaited beyond there, his smile faded. He had faced Team Skull a few times before, but he had a feeling this upcoming encounter wouldn’t be as easy.

Chapter End Notes

Happy 2 years, Foul Play! 14 chapters and over 80K isn't a lot, but this is my second longest work yet and there are several moments I'm proud of. I haven't seen anyone else write a Nanu and Grimsley fic so it's up to me to make that content.

So I decided to go with Selene instead of Moon from now on. If I were to describe her, she's like the female version of DPPt rival Barry. She's going places.

Last thing! If you guys have been enjoying this story and know anyone else that are interested in Nanu, Grimsley, sorta rewrite of SM/USUM, or all above, spread the word! Now is a great time to do so.

Thanks to bobandbill for the great betaing! Next chapter is the start of the Po Town mini arc. I got some cool ideas for that and hope you guys look forward to it.
Grimsley and Selene took their Pokémon to the Aether House for them to rest. It was already sunset, so they agreed to wait until morning to leave.

Hunter and Hau excitedly recapped the battle to Becky, and Selene followed up by bragging about how good her Pokémon's moves were. Becky gave good-hearted chuckles while Grimsley hummed in amusement; Selene was brash but full of potential. Gracie sometimes chimed in, so she started to sound happy once more. To Grimsley, that was a good sign.

Later in the evening, Grimsley was in the lounge talking with Hau, Selene, and Lillie. He got to know Hau and Selene better. Hau was the grandson of Hala, the Kahuna of Melemele Island. Both he and Selene did his Grand Trial and won, but it was rough. Selene actually came from Kanto and had been in Alola for over seven months now. She moved to this region with her mother, and so far they both loved it here. Grimsley asked why she was starting her Pokémon journey here instead of Kanto, and she beamed.

"Yeah, so my mom's returning to school and studying over at Hau'oli City University. I already graduated from the trainer school back in Kanto, but I still needed to get approved for a trainer's license for Alola and take classes in between my journey. Ms. Emily was tougher than I thought!"

"And how!" Hau said with a chuckle. "Her Rowlet almost got my Litten real good despite me having the type advantage."

Grimsley smiled a little, thinking about how Aspertia City gym leader Cheren was like that. "That reminds me of someone I know. He's also a school teacher, and his students complained how tough he was."

"What kind of Pokémon that teacher has?" Lillie asked.

"He trains mainly Normal-types because he's also a gym leader. Before that, he used a variety of Pokémon when he battled in the Unova League."

"Nice! He must be super strong if he made it to the Pokémon League and is a gym leader!" Hau said in amazement.

Grimsley hummed, and the smile on his lips faded. He faced Lillie.

"So Lillie, you mentioned being Professor Kukui's assistant earlier. How did you meet him?"

Lillie flinched, and then she looked down with her hands clasped. "Oh, well I left home to learn more about Nebby and talk to Professor Burnet. She got her husband, Professor Kukui, to let me
stay in his home and help investigate Nebby's origins, too."

"Lillie got lost trying to find Professor Burnet and collapsed on the shore," Selene said, giving Lillie a soft smile. "I can't imagine myself doing that, so I admire her for that."

Lillie's cheeks turned soft pink. She gave Selene a grateful smile. "Thank you, Selene."

Grimsley regarded the two girls with a small smile. He only met them today, but they seemed like close friends already.

"Perhaps we should talk about how Selene and Grimsley will get through Team Skull," Hau said, breaking the silence.

"I agree." Grimsley turned to Selene. "Do you have a plan on how to deal with Team Skull?"

“Oh, um… I thought I would just barge in and punch their leader Guzma right on the face!” Selene said with a sheepish laugh.

“Terrible idea.” Grimsley forced himself to not roll his eyes. “Perhaps we can talk with Kahuna Nanu since he lives next door to them.”

"I agree,” Lillie said and nodded. "The Ula'ula Kahuna should know what to do."

“Kahuna Nanu?” Selene asked in a surprised voice. “Acerola mentioned him once or twice before. Do you know him?”

Grimsley’s face tensed, and he frowned. “Not personally. Like me, he trains Dark-types. He’s not easy to talk with, but that may be due to his mysterious past.”

“Yeah, Acerola and Hau said something similar. Still, I’m considering challenging him for his Grand Trial after this.”

“Huh, is that so.” Grimsley briefly wondered what that battle would be like. If it was like his battle with Selene, then she should be fine.

"How about you, Hau?” Selene asked him. "You thinking of challenging Nanu?”

"Me?” Hau's face contorted to an unsure expression. "Maybe. I want to train my Noibat a bit more first, though. I saw him battle with my grandfather a few times, and he seems tough!"

"You guys are talking about Uncle Nanu?” Acerola asked. She was with Gracie and Hunter earlier and was now approaching the group.

"Grimsley and Selene are going to see Kahuna Nanu about helping them with Team Skull," Lillie said.

Acerola beamed. "Ah, okay! I can call him tomorrow and let him know you guys are coming!”

"Lillie and I will stay here in case Team Skull come back,” Hau said. He turned to Lillie, who nodded in agreement.

"That would be great!” Acerola clapped her hands. "Becky and I could use all the help we can get."

"Don't worry about us, we got this!” Selene flashed everyone a confident grin and looked over her shoulder at Grimsley. He returned with a small smile of his own.
"Yes, I'm sure we'll handle them just fine." Tomorrow he and Selene would head out to Po Town to see Nanu and go from there. It would be a slight hindrance, but that was fine.

xxx

The sun was already bright the next morning. A warm breeze picked up, the waves rolling in gently. Before Grimsley and Selene departed, everyone wished them luck and to stay safe.

They rode on Blackjack’s back, Grimsley holding onto his fin and Selene wrapping her arms around his waist. The rest of Route 15 was a small water route with tough boulders that Blackjack was able to break. They passed by several Water-type Pokémon, swimmers, and small islands. Due to how fast they were going, their hair and Grimsley’s scarf whipped wildly like a flag on a windy day. Droplets of water splashed on their faces.

“Wahooo!” Selene screamed as she raised one arm up. “Riding on a Sharpedo is so much fun!”

Grimsley gave her a firm look and shook his head. "It is. You just have to take some precautions."

"Yeah, yeah, I know. Must be tough training a Sharpedo, though."

A knowing smile curled on Grimsley's lips. "They're called the Brutal Pokémon for a reason. Blackjack was tricky to raise at first, but then we grew closer as time passed." He quickly patted Blackjack's forehead, and he responded with an agreeable growl.

"That's cool! I hope to have a great bond with my Pokémon like yours."

"From our battle, I could see you care for your Pokémon very much. I think you're on the right track."

“Really? Wow, can’t believe an Elite Four told me I got potential!” Selene shifted her head, and then she said, “Hey, is your Mental Pattern towards Dark-type Pokémon?”

“My mental what?”

“Mental Pattern. A way to know how well you connect with certain types of Pokémon.”

“Oh, that. I remember that being a study Professors Oak and Juniper had conducted.”

Professor Oak and Professor Juniper had published their study on Mental Patterns shortly after Grimsley joined the Unova League. It was a special image with brain mapping thrown in, and it was used on both trainers and Pokémon. Pokémon with the same type had similar Mental Patterns, making it easier for trainers to connect with them. Many research facilities would use a scanner to conduct their studies.

“Yeah! So like my friends and I went to the Dimensional Lab, and Professor Brunet used a scanner to determine our Mental Patterns. I got Water-type, Hau had Psychic-type, and Lillie the Fairy-type! I might ask Lana to help me train more since she favors Water-types.”

“That might not be a bad idea. And the Water-type suits you.” He paused. “I believe Nanu might have a bias towards Dark-type Pokémon also.”

“Probably! I heard Dark-type Pokémon are just as tough to raise as Psychic and Dragon Pokémon, so having that bias helps.” Selene then asked, “If you had a Pokémon battle with him, who would
Grimsley’s shoulders jumped as he didn’t expect her to ask that. “I’ve actually asked him for a battle, but he keeps refusing.”

“That must’ve sucked. It’s still cool that you and Nanu have the same Mental Pattern.”

“I guess.” He found it ironic that he and Nanu had the same Mental Pattern, and yet he didn’t want to battle him. The next chance he had to speak with Burnet he would like to discuss Mental Patterns with her.

He looked around his surroundings, seeing some land a short distance from them. They were getting closer to their destination now.

xxx

In the morning Nanu did his usual routine: patrol Route 16 and 17 with his Pokémon; feed and play with the Meowth until they get tired, which more often than not lasted a while; go on his computer to do his daily reports and check on the news; play with his kendama if he got bored. As he was doing just that, the phone rang and he picked it up.

"Po Town Police Station," he said in a monotone voice.

"Hi, Uncle Nanu!"

It was Acerola. Nanu's heart jumped and he sat straight up.

"Acerola?" He sighed in relief. "Thank the tapu you're all right."

Not long after Grimsley had left the police station, he couldn't stop thinking about Acerola and the children. Sure, Gracie and Hunter were a handful, but he knew how much Acerola loved them. She would be upset if anything were to happen to them.

"Of course I am!" Acerola said, her voice bringing Nanu back to reality. "I guess you knew about how Team Skull came inside Aether House and stole a Pokémon?"

"Yeah, Becky told me. Grimsley heard too, and he went there to check up on the place."

"He did come! I actually called to tell you that he and another trainer, Selene, are coming to Po Town to rescue that Pokémon!"

"What?" Nanu yelled. "I hope they're prepared for what's coming."

"I'm sure they are!" Acerola then said, "You know Uncle Nanu, I just realized something. Why don't you try to go and get Yungoos yourself?"

Nanu grimaced, pulling his head back. His fingers tapped on the desk.

"If I do, that would cause more harm than good. I would rather have Team Skull cause trouble here and not anywhere else."

"Really? Well, if you say so. Will you at least keep an eye on Yungoos until Grimsley and Selene get there?"

Nanu pondered that for a second. His hand almost slipped from the receiver.
"Yeah kiddo, I'll do that."

"Wonderful! If you do see them, say hi!"

"Yeah, yeah, I will." Nanu stopped and asked, "Before I go, how was your visit to your parents’ graves?"

"It was great, thanks for asking! I was telling them about our trip to Hania Desert and how fun Grimsley was to be with! All of my Pokémon were with me, too!"

Nanu’s face softened. "That’s great to hear. I’ll keep you updated if anything happens in Po Town."

"Okay! Talk to you later!"

"Sure, same here."

Nanu hung up on the phone. Grimsley and Selene should be here at any moment. They might talk to him about how to deal with Team Skull. He might help them if they asked, but to what capacity…

Nanu opened the top drawer of his desk. He had several Z-Rings there saved for any trial-goers starting out in Ula’ula Island. He pulled out two of them. One was red and another purple. Grimsley and Gladion weren’t able to perform their Z-Moves yet, so he would give them their Z-Rings when the time was right.

He put the Z-Rings in his shirt’s pockets, grabbed his kendama, and leaned back in his chair. One Meowth sat on his desk and tried to grab the red ball with his paw. He raised a brow at him.

"Still not tired, hm? I don't want you to pull the ball from its string."

The Meowth whined and he jumped off from his desk. Nanu grunted, returning to playing with his kendama. He waited.

xxx

Several minutes passed until Grimsley and Selene made it to shore. After they hopped off Blackjack’s back, Grimsley patted Sharpedo’s forehead and offered him a poképuff.

“Thank you for bringing us here,” Grimsley said while Blackjack chewed on the poképuff on his palm. When finished, he licked the crumbs on his mouth and Grimsley returned him.

“All right, Po Town here we come!” Selene pumped her fist in the air and rushed forward, Grimsley following behind.

They entered Ula’ula Meadows and crossed the wooden bridge. As before, red petals swirled around and the scent of sweet nectar overwhelmed Grimsley’s nose. At the grasses, several red-feathered Oricorio danced with each other.

“Oh, those must be the Baile-style Oricorio Hau and Lillie talked to me about!” Selene said excitedly, pointing them out.

“Baile-style?” Grimsley asked, more out of curiosity than confusion.

“Ah-huh! There’s supposed to be four types of Oricorio, and Ula’ula Island has the red ones.”
“I battled a young trainer with a pink feathered Oricorio. That one has a skirt and can use Psychic attacks.”

“You’re talking about the Pa’u-style ones. You can find those in Akala—” Selene stopped there, her eyes growing wide. “Get behind that tree!”

Grimsley let out a baffled grunt, and Selene grabbed his hand. They hid behind a tree.

“What’s going on?” he asked with a raised brow.

“There’s this guy I met a few times named Gladion,” Selene said, leaning back against the tree. She had her arms over her head. “Total idiot.”

Grimsley blinked, taken aback by her language there. “How so?”

“He calls Hau a brat and claims he doesn’t take battling seriously. Also, he keeps saying how you can’t protect anything when you’re weak.”

Grimsley didn’t respond at first and instead took a peek from behind the tree. There was a blonde-haired boy in dark clothing, staring at his surroundings. His bangs and face seemed awfully familiar...

“Does the person you’re talking about have blonde hair and dark clothing?” he asked, facing back to Selene.

“Yeah, that’s him!” Selene pouted and crossed her arms against her chest. “I’m not sure what his problem is.”

Grimsley chuckled. “Maybe there’s someone he dearly wants to protect.”

A stunned look spread across Selene’s face. She shifted her gaze away from him, furrowing her brow.

“Probably. Still, it won’t hurt him to be nice for once.” After a brief moment, Selene’s face brightened up. “I have an idea!”

Selene grabbed Grimsley’s hand once more, and they came out from hiding. Grimsley winced when she had her hands in front of her face and screamed, “Hey, Edgelord!”

That caught Gladion’s attention of course. He turned and glared at them.

“Selene?”

Selene narrowed her eyes at Gladion, her hands on her hips. “I take it you’re here for some Team Skull business?”

“Sort of. This is their home and all.” He then noticed Grimsley and pointed at him. “Who is that old dude with you?”

Grimsley flinched and the corner of his lips twitched. “I’m Grimsley from the Unova Elite Four. And I’m thirty years young, thank you very much.”

“Wait, for real?” Gladion asked in shock, and Selene beamed.

“Yep! I even battled him yesterday and he’s super good!”
“We indeed had a Pokémon battle,” Grimsley said. “She’s not half bad herself.”

Gladion regarded them for a moment and grunted. “What are you guys doing here, then?”

“We’re on a rescue mission to save a Pokémon that Team Skull had stolen! However, we might need your help.”

“How so?” Gladion stepped forward, giving Selene a skeptical look.

“Well, big bad Guzma wants me to come to Po Town alone. Grimsley’s gonna help me, and I need a way for him to get inside. You can talk to them, right?”

“Even if I do that, they won’t listen. We don’t get along at all.”

“Oh.” Selene pursed her lips, and then her eyes lit up. “Then how about you distract them with your Pokémon?”

Gladion’s eyes grew wide, and he squeezed his shaking wrist. He lowered his head, closing his eyes.

“I’m sorry, but there’s no reason for me to help save a random trainer’s Pokémon. I wish you guys luck.” He flicked his hand and headed off.

Grimsley stared at him for a few seconds. He looked over his shoulder at Selene and asked, “What now?”

The Oricorio continued to sing as their red petals got stuck in everyone’s hair. A pinched expression appeared on Selene’s face. She glanced around uneasily, bringing her hand to her neck. Selene closed her eyes and clenched her fists.

“I’m sorry, Lillie,” she muttered. When he heard that, Grimsley blinked. She took a deep breath, holding it in. “I know where Cosmog is.”

That caused Gladion to stop and twist around. “You do? Where is it?”

“My friend Lillie has been taking care of Nebby. They’re safe in Aether House.”

“Lillie, and Nebby…” Gladion’s lips quivered, and then his face turned back to serious. “Did Team Skull try to hurt them?”

“They did, but I managed to take them down!” Selene said and slammed her fist on her palm.

Gladion gave a shocked look and sighed in relief. “Well, that’s good to hear.”

Grimsley furrowed his brow and rubbed his chin. Lillie did have that Nebby, apparently a Cosmog now, and Selene had mentioned several people wanted it. He lowered himself to Selene’s height.

“Do the people looking for Cosmog you told me about happen to be Team Skull?” he whispered behind her ear.

“Ah huh,” Selene said and nodded. “Gladion warned me about them the last time we met. I didn’t trust him at first.”

“I don’t blame you for that.” Grimsley glanced at Gladion, who folded his arms against his chest and closed his eyes. He had an idea of what Selene was trying to do. “Let me finish this.”
Grimsley stood back up and cleared his throat. “You want to find out why Team Skull wants Cosmog, am I correct?”

A strangled gasp escaped from Gladion. “How do you know?”

“I met with Lillie and Nebby in Aether House yesterday. I can confirm that they’re doing just fine.”

A part of him felt bad that he broke his promise to Lillie, but he and Selene had no choice. He forgot to ask Selene why Team Skull was after Nebby, so he wanted to know.

With a raised suspicious brow, Gladion asked, “What you’re getting at, old man?”

“Again, I’m not that old!” Grimsley sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. “Anyways, if you help us, then you’ll be able to find what you’re looking for.”

Gladion’s lips pressed together in a slight grimace. He turned away from him and Selene for a moment, pulling his shaking wrist close to his chest once more. Grimsley wondered if he had an injury or condition whenever he did that.

“All right, I’ll help,” Gladion said, turning back to them. “Will the three of us be enough, though?” He looked up at Grimsley. “No offense, but even with you by our side we’re still outnumbered.”

“None taken,” Grimsley said in a flat tone. “I wasn’t going to be here at first, but I had a change of heart.”

“Grimsley and I are about to ask Kahuna Nanu to help, too!” Selene said.

“Good idea. He should know what to do.”

“Great! C’mon, we better hurry!”

Without waiting, Selene dashed forward. Grimsley and Gladion followed shortly after, catching up to her.

Finding Gladion was a surprise, which Grimsley was glad had happened. Now to talk to Nanu and see what he had to say.

Xxx

As before, the Po Town police station was nestled within Route 17. The breeze today was as cold as yesterday's, gray clouds covering most of the sunlight. The tall walls covering Po Town was still there, but seeing them this time filled Grimsley with dread inside his stomach.

He, Selene, and Gladion stopped in front of the police station. Grimsley knocked on the door, and he waited a second until a response came.

"The door's open," Nanu said from inside.

Grimsley glanced over his shoulder at Selene and Gladion, the two staring at him blankly. He shrugged, and everyone stepped inside.

The front lobby was a mess and overtaken by the Meowth. Nanu sat on his desk, playing with what looked to be a kendama. He stopped and stared when he noticed Grimsley, Selene, and Gladion coming in.

"Woah, so many Meowth!" Selene squealed. She went over to two Meowth that sat on a pile of
files on the couch and scratched their cheeks. The Meowth rubbed against her palm and fingers. "Hey there, little kitties."

"That was my same reaction when I first came in," Grimsley said with a chuckle. At the corner of the wall, Nanu's Persian curled up and was taking a nap. A Honchcrow, which also seemed to be Nanu's, was perched on her back and snoozing himself.

"Nice Meowth cafe you have going on here," Gladion said. One of the Meowth came up to him and dug her claws into his legs, causing him to scream.

"Think of it more like a bona fide Meowth sanctuary." Nanu had his stare locked on Grimsley. "I sort of expected you to return."

Grimsley smirked. "Oh, didn't realize you missed me already."

Nanu glared daggers at him. "One more wise crack out of you, and it's jail time."

Grimsley gulped, tugging at his scarf. He cleared his throat, moving his gaze away from him briefly.

"Nice to meet you, Kahuna Nanu! I'm Selene!" Selene said as she went up to Nanu's desk. She held out her hand to him.

"Same here kiddo, I guess," Nanu said in a less enthusiastic tone, and they shook hands. "You guys can just move those papers and have a seat on that couch."

Both Grimsley and Selene grabbed the papers and set them aside on the bookshelf nearby. After everyone sat down on the couch, one of the Meowth grabbed onto Grimsley's scarf and kept rolling on the floor. Grimsley petted her for a little bit, and then his smile wavered when he looked at Nanu.

"We want to talk with you on how to deal with Team Skull."

"Is that so?" Nanu had his elbow on his desk, his chin resting on his palm. "First tell me what happened in Aether House."

"Team Skull barged in and stole a Pokémon while I was doing Acerola's trial," Selene said. The Meowth that Grimsley had petted before jumped on the couch, and Selene scratched behind her ear. "Their big sis Plumeria told me that Guzma wants me alone."

"I met with Selene, and then after a wager, I decided to help her out," Grimsley said.

"Wager?" Gladion asked with a blank face. Nanu had a similar expression.

"We did a battle to see if I'm good enough to go to Po Town. Selenegrinned. "I lost, but Grimsley decided to come with me anyhow!"

"Huh. I shouldn't be surprised, but I am." Nanu picked up his kendama and began twirling it. "And why are you helping?"

"I've dealt with Team Skull before, so I'm not afraid of them. Also, I've promised Gracie that I would rescue her Pokémon."

Nanu stopped, the red ball dangling like a loose thread on clothing. He grunted.

"So you promised a little girl that you would do it. Didn't think of you to be the knight in shining
armor type."

Grimsley chuckled. He pulled out his coin, flipping it a few times as he spoke.

"I'm not. I just don't want to see her get upset."

Nanu raised a brow, as if not convinced. He shrugged and turned to Gladion, who had his back against the wall with his eyes closed.

"How about you, boy? Are you gonna help them too?"

Gladion moved his head slightly at Nanu's direction. "There are a few questions I want to ask, especially to Guzma. About a Pokémon they're after."

Nanu narrowed his eyes. He relaxed in his seat and played his kendama once more.

"Must be some Pokémon if you want to talk to the big man himself."

Gladion's forehead twitched. He turned his head and said in a sharp tone, "The specific details are none of your business."

Grimsley blinked, taken aback by Gladion's voice. Selene frowned and did a fake cough. The Meowth she was petting growled and jumped off from the couch. Both Persian and Honchcrow woke up from their nap and raised their heads at the noise.

After giving Gladion a hard stare, Nanu snorted. "And I thought we were becoming friends after our last talk. Did you guys have a plan yet?"

"Not yet except using Gladion's Pokémon to our advantage," Selene said. "Grimsley says you may be able to help since you live next door to them."

Nanu rose from his seat, regarding them a moment. He sighed and rubbed his forehead.

"I don't like the sound of any of this. However, perhaps I can lend a hand."

"Really? That would be awesome!" Selene jumped off of the couch and pumped her fist up.

"Woah, easy there little miss," Nanu said, his hands up in a slow down gesture. "We need to come up with a plan first."

"Selene can get in easy since Team Skull wants her," Gladion said. "My Zoroark will help Grimsley and I get inside."

"Wait, you have a Zoroark?" Grimsley asked in surprise.

"He does!" Selene said enthusiastically. "I take it you've heard of them before?"

Grimsley nodded. "Zorua and Zoroark are known to create illusions and have a mischievous nature. Several of them reside in Unova." That made him remember the time he had battled against N, and one of his Pokémon was a Zoroark. He had seen Zoroark's ability firsthand.

Selene beamed. "Yeah! Jester's ability will come very useful!"

Nanu folded his arms against his chest and gave slow nods. "That's a start. All right, we'll hash out our plan a bit more, and then we'll head out to Po Town tonight."
Grimsley grunted in agreement. That gave them some time to make sure their plan would work before going forth with their rescue mission. They should be prepared as much as possible.

Chapter End Notes

So, any folks here been playing Pokemon Masters? I did Grimsley and Nanu's chapter a few nights ago and oh my gosh everything about it is perfect. DENA bringing in the soul food.

The Mental Pattern stuff Grimsley and Selene were talking about I got it from TaurusVersant's Eldritch. Took a long time for me to get through up to its Pokemon League arc (the story just only one chapter left wow), but it's worth it. Hau has Psychic bias like in that story, but I gave Selene the Water bias and Lillie the Fairy bias. There will be lots more Eldritch inspiration once we get to the Poni Island arc.

Last thing! In anticipation of the Po Town and Poni Island arcs, I'm doing a Foul Play advertising campaign. I set up a Twitter writing account and will be mentioning updates there! Spreading the word would be very appreciated:

Twitter: https://twitter.com/BayWrites/status/1170572461659713537

Thanks to bobandbill for betaing as always. Up next, Po Town. I should have the next chapter up late September or early October!
Nasty Plot (Part One)

Chapter Summary

In which the group sneaks into Po Town.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

When night fell, Grimsley and the others went outside. They gathered next to a large tree that was a short distance from the walls. Gladion had Jester, his Zoroark, by his side.

"Brad and Trek are outside the walls, but they're busy with their phones," Gladion said. "I think we're good."

"Brad and Trek?" Grimsley asked.

"Team Skull. Brad is the dark-haired one. Trek is the bigger guy with green hair."

"Okay, let's run through our plan before we begin," Nanu said.

"Jester will pretend to be you, and I go inside," Selene said. "After that, you guys come in and we take on any Team Skulls coming at us."

"Team Skull should have the Yungoos inside their mansion, the Shady House," Gladion said. "We'll provide backup while Selene rescues the Pokémon."

"And if luck is by our side, Gladion will be able to talk to Team Skull's leader," Grimsley said.

"Good, good. Are your guys' headpieces working?"

"Yup!" Selene said. She and Grimsley tapped on the bluetooths behind their ears. Nanu had provided them those, mentioning these had been lying around in the police station for a while now.

"Okay." Nanu faced Gladion. "Now boy, your Zoroark."

"Right." Gladion turned to his Pokémon and gave him a single nod. Jester closed his eyes, and sparkling purple light cascaded over his body. Seconds later, he transformed into Nanu. He chuckled and flashed a toothy grin at everyone.

Grimsley's eyes grew wide, and he pulled his head back. He looked over his shoulder to see Nanu with his usual deadpan expression. An amused smile formed on Grimsley's lips.

"Well, I can already tell who's the real Nanu and who's not," he said, and Nanu glared at him.

"Save the jokes for later. Get in position, everyone."

"Okay Jester, that's our cue!" Selene said, and Jester nodded enthusiastically. They walked off.

Grimsley and Gladion peeked out from the tree. Selene and Jester approached the two grunts who had their backs on the walls. They stopped playing with their phones and stared at them. Grimsley's
bluetooth began to pop with static, and he listened in on the conversation.

"Alola, y'all!" Selene greeted in an upbeat voice. "Ya boy Guzma wants to meet with me!"

"And you might be?" the first grunt asked. He was smaller and skinnier than the other grunt so that one must be Brad.

"Um, Selene? The trainer that defeated you guys a bunch of times, and Guzma not that long ago?"

The two grunts exchanged baffled expressions, and then Trek glared at Selene.

"Oh look, that lil' girl is finally here," he said. "And she brought that old cop with her."

"Yeah, what does he want?" Brad asked, pointing at Jester.

"Easy there guys," Jester said. His voice was exactly like Nanu's. That caught Grimsley off guard there for a second. "I'm only here to let her inside."

Both grunts gave Selene and Jester suspicious looks, and Brad shrugged.

"All right, you may come in. Don't expect to go through the rest of us easily, though."

They moved aside, and let Jester and Selene step forward. Gladion's hand covered his ear, where the bluetooth was.

"The code is 23115," he whispered through the device.

Jester punched in the code on the gate’s door. After Selene stepped inside, the door closed and Jester stepped back. He gave a quick glance over his shoulder, giving a thumbs up.

"All right, showtime for you guys," Nanu said, and immediately Grimsley and Gladion moved out from hiding.

"Now, Jester!" Gladion yelled.

At that instant, Jester's illusion faded and he returned to as a Zoroark. Both grunts' faces fell at that act, and when Gladion and Grimsley approached them they sneered.

"Yo, Brad, Trek!" Gladion faked a grin.

"What the heck is going on here?" Trek asked, and Gladion’s face turned back to serious.

"I need to talk to Guzma, it’s urgent. Is he here?"

Trek snorted. "He is, but he’s busy at the moment."

"And how about your other friend there?" Brad pointed at Grimsley, who stared at him.

"He's helping Selene get that Yungoos. Now if you'll excuse us, let us in."

Already the grunts laughed aloud, their hands on their stomach.

"You think we’ll let you in easily?" Trek asked. "You didn't do your job half the ti--"

Before he could finish, Jester had his claws in front of Trek’s face. He swallowed hard while Brad's face twitched. Even Grimsley's eyes grew wide.
"Step aside, or Jester will make mincemeat out of your faces."

“I would do as he says,” Nanu said, approaching everyone. He folded his arms against his chest. “I’ve seen how wild Zoroark can get. They can do some nasty work.”

Jester growled, his claw inching closer towards Trek’s throat. He took a step back and held his hands up in defeat.

"Okay, chill dude! We'll get out of your way!" He and Brad moved aside to let Gladion punch in the code. The door to the gate opened, and Grimsley followed Nanu, Gladion, and Jester inside.

"You didn't have to go that far," Grimsley said in a low voice.

"Grimsley's right," Nanu said. "I would've come talk to the guys myself."

"Sorry," Gladion said, though his apology didn't sound too genuine. "I'm just tired of them not taking me seriously."

Grimsley frowned. "We need to help out Selene as much as we can. Come on."

As they moved forward, Grimsley glanced around his surroundings. All the houses and stores were abandoned, and the grass in the front yards was dried up. The Pokémon Center they just passed had cracks on the windows and was closed, too. Paintings of Pokémon and were splattered all over the cobbled roads and buildings. Most of the lampposts had lit up, but some weren't working and their glass was also broken.

"Man, oh man. Po Town is even sadder than the beach next to the Aether House," Grimsley said.

"I already told you how Team Skull had taken over the town,” Nanu said. “No silly gambling antics while in here, all right?"

An annoyed grunt escaped from Grimsley.

He, Nanu, and Gladion passed a few more houses and buildings, and they stopped when they saw Selene going against a grunt. At that moment, Selene's Lycanroc jumped up and threw several rocks at a Drowzee. After being hit, the Drowzee shot a colorful psychic beam at Meli, but she dodged and rammed into him.

"There's Selene!" Gladion said, pointing at her. Right now the Drowzee picked himself up, but wobbled and took deep breaths. Meli had some scratches and was dirty, but otherwise was in much better shape.

The grunt Selene went against gritted his teeth and clenched his fist. "Zen Headbutt, Lil' D!"

"I think we're about done, Meli. Stone Edge!"

Meli howled and her paws slammed on the ground, causing the boulder pillars to pop up. Lil D's forehead glowed pink, and as he was rushing at her the boulder struck him in the stomach. He flew in the air, dropped down on the ground, and collapsed. The grunt's face fell, and he returned his Pokémon.

"There's a whole crew coming to get you, girl! Right now I'm outta here!" the grunt warned, and then he took off.

Selene stared off in the distance, and then she looked down at Meli. "We can beat the rest of them,
right girl?" Meli responded with a cheerful bark, and Selene giggled. When she noticed the group, she beamed. "Oh, hi you guys! You missed me kicking that Team Skull's butt!"

Smiling a little, Grimsley said, "Wished I could've witnessed that."

"You can brag about that later," Gladion said. "We should head to the Shady House now."

"Not so fast!" a female voice called out. Everyone turned around to see three grunts. The one that spoke was on top of a car while the other two squatted in front of it. Gladion glared at her.

"Hello, Violet." Gladion lowered his stare back to Violet’s other companions. "Jo-Jo. Mikey."

"Don't tell me you're helping this brat here," Violet said. She pursed her lips, folding her arms against her chest.

"I've heard of what you guys did to that little girl's Yungoos, and you won't get away with it."

"Yeah!" Selene said, taking one step forward. Meli barked. "I'm gonna save Yungoos, no matter what!"

All three grunts gave the group sharp looks, and then one of them pointed at Grimsley. "And who's this guy here?"

Grimsley faked a gasp, and he did a dramatic pose. "Me? I'm just a tourist that happens to get caught up in all of this."

"Yo Jo-Jo, isn't that the dude we met back in Melemele Island?" one of the grunts, Mikey, asked.

Jo-Jo blinked, and his eyes narrowed. "You're right! His Pokémon got us good!"

Grimsley’s smirk grew. “Oh right, you’re the men that stole Roland’s Pokémon and then ran with your tail between your legs.”

Both Jo-Jo and Mikey gritted their teeth and balled their fists. Jo-Jo grunted and said, “You’ll pay for what you did!”

After Violet jumped off from the car's roof, all three grunts approached them. Grimsley pressed his lips and pulled out his pokéball. Nanu narrowed his eyes, his hand near his belt where his pokéballs were. Gladion and Jester glared at them and their backs touched. Selene clenched one of her fists while Meli assumed her attack stance and growled.

"Selene, Nanu, go to the Shady House," Grimsley said. "We'll handle them from here."

“Right!” Selene and Nanu gave each other nods, and then they along with Meli dashed off.

"I'll take on Gladion while you two deal with the other guy," Violet said. She released two Pokémon, a Houndour and a Grimer that was made of green slime instead of purple--an Alolan form.

"You got it, sis!" both Mikey and Jo-Jo said. They got out their pokéballs and released their Pokémon, an Arbok and a Trubbish. The latter reminded Grimsley of several Trubbish he came across in the alleys of Castelia City.

"Two against one?" Grimsley said, smirking. "Fine, I'll play that way." He tossed his pokéball, and Dice was released. He pulled his shredded skin up above his waist and stared at the Arbok and Trubbish.
“Stay sharp, Jester,” Gladion told his Zoroark, who nodded and growled. He pulled out another pokéball. “Null, you help out too!”

A bright light flashed, and a Pokémon Grimsley had never seen before appeared. They had a body of a canine, but their head was covered in a helmet and fish scales as legs. The Pokémon Gladion named Null lifted their head and howled.

And they had Grimsley and Gladion’s clash with Team Skull in Po Town.

"All right Tubby, Sludge Bomb!” Jo-Jo commanded.

"And you go for Aqua Tail, Mack!” Mikey ordered after.

"Avoid their attacks, and then target one of them!"

Tubby acted first, hurling a large amount of brown sludge at Dice. Dice dodged to the left, causing the sludge to spray onto a lamppost. A small yellow mist formed, leaving a slight smell there. Mack slithered and loomed over him, raising his tail that was filled with torrential waters. Just as he was about to strike, Dice jumped in the air and made Mack miss. While dropping back down, he kicked Mack’s face and knocked the wind out of him.

"Go for Mud Bomb instead!” Mikey said.

"Try Rock Blast this time!” Jo-Jo said.

“Use Dragon Claw at the incoming attacks, and then at the Trubbish!”

Both Mack and Tubby inhaled, spitting out a muddy bubble and several small boulders respectively. Dice’s claws were shrouded in green flames, and he was able to slice at the incoming attacks like diced carrots. He then approached Tubby and slashed him, tearing one part of his bag. Tubby squealed, covering his face.

“Hey Violet girl, how you’re holding up?” Jo-Jo asked.

“What do you think?” Violet shouted, and Grimsley glanced over his shoulder to see her and Gladion’s double battle. Jester released dark waves of energy at Violet’s Grimer and Null swiped Houndour with their large claws. Violet ordered her Grimer to attack the Pokémon with the helmet, which she did by hurling purple sludge at them. Gladion’s Pokémon dodged, moved at a blitzing pace, and rammed into Grimer, knocking them out. Violet gasped and returned her Pokémon, and Grimsley pulled his attention back to his own battle.

"Ice Punch at the Arbok!"

"Poison Fang, Mack!"

Mack’s fangs glowed purple, and he lunged at his opponent. Dice leapt just in time, and while in the air, his fist was covered in cold mist and a blue glow. He dived towards Mack, punching him in the face. Mack whipped his head, a large bruise on his cheek.

"Sludge Bomb on his back!” Jo-Jo said, doing that rapper pose he had done the first time he and Grimsley had met.

Before Dice could turn around, Tubby spat out brown sludge onto his back. Some goo got stuck there, and Dice’s eyes squinted when he tried to wipe them off. Even Grimsley plugged his nose with his fingers and his forehead wrinkled at the smell.
"Smack that Scrafty while he’s still distracted!" Mikey did a similar pose with his arms.

Grimsley was about to call for Dice to watch out, but then an idea came to him and he grinned. "Take the hit, and then get back at your opponent!"

Mack hissed and his tail was covered with water once more. After Dice took off the remaining sludge on his back, he stood still and let Mack slam his tail onto his face. Dice's face was soaked and he fell down, but he quickly picked himself up and a ring of energy began to form around him.

Both Jo-Jo and Mikey gave each other baffled looks.

"Don't tell me that lil' dude is gonna--"

Before Bo could finish, Dice screeched and the ring blasted at Mack with great force. Mack flew backward and crashed at a nearby tree, collapsing on impact. Mikey gritted his teeth and returned Mack.

"It's all on you now, Jo-Jo!"

"I got your back!" Jo-Jo said. He glared at Grimsley, clenching his fist. "Seed Bomb, Tubby!"

"Zen Headbutt!"

Tubby inhaled and spat out several glowing green seeds straight at Dice. Dice's forehead lit up a soft pink color, and he rushed through the seeds head-on. He rammed into Tubby, causing him to go up for a second and then drop down. Tubby didn't get back up.

"Tubby, no!" Jo-Jo grunted in frustration, returning his Pokémon. "No way you're just some ordinary tourist."

“You’re right, I’m not.” Grimsley shrugged, and Dice went to his side with his chin raised. “Either way, you guys lost.”

Both grunts’ faces turned red and their hands shook.

“Man, this is wacked,” Mikey said. “We’re outta here!”

Jo-Jo nodded, and then he turned his head. “Hey Violet, we’re leaving now! Catch ya later!” He and Mikey bolted off.

Gladion was also close to finishing his battle with Violet. Violet just ordered her Houndour to use Flamethrower at Jester, but he dodged and swiped the dog with his claws. The Houndour had scratches on her skull and dirty fur. Some of Jester’s fur was burned, but he was still in much better shape.

“Huh, what gives?” Violet asked, annoyed and baffled. She was distracted by Jo-Jo and Mikey leaving, which gave Gladion the opportunity to tell Jester to use Shadow Ball. After the crimson ball struck the Houndour on the face, she fell and didn’t get up. When Violet turned back, she screamed. “Did you just hurt my Pumpkin while I wasn’t looking?”

“You should’ve paid better attention, then,” Gladion said. Next to him, Jester gave what sounded like a cackle and Null snorted.

Violet glared at Gladion, biting her lips. “Guzma’s gonna beat you down real hard when he sees you.” She ran off.
Grimsley hummed, glad that those grunts were taken care of. Gladion dragged out a deep sigh and ran his fingers through his hair. His Pokémon went to his side, the one with the helmet on their head rubbing against his cheek. Ever since they appeared, Grimsley took a great interest in them.

"I have to say, that is one tough pup you have there," Grimsley said, and Gladion stared at him.

“Null’s not a cute puppy. They've been my most loyal partner, and I’m willing to do anything for them.”

“Willing to do anything for them, huh?” Grimsley hummed in amusement. “I suppose that goes for me too if any of my Pokémon are in danger.”

Gladion regarded him for a moment, and then he said, “Me and Null... We're more alike than we might look. We're both what we're made out to be.” Gladion turned his gaze away from Grimsley, and at the Shady House. “We should move.”

Grimsley nodded in agreement. They returned their Pokémon and hurried off.

Up ahead there was a large mansion that appeared to be in ruins. More graffiti was sprayed on several spots, and the infrastructure and many of the windows were cracked. There were two floorboards on the lower roofs that led to an open window.

As they headed towards the mansion, Grimsley hoped that Nanu and Selene were all right.

Xxx

Nanu had been inside the Shady House many times before, mostly to make sure the Team Skull kids stayed where they were supposed to. Whenever he visited, the grunts would either tell him to leave or tease that he was old enough to be their grandfather. Today’s visit though they might be more hostile to him.

The walls were filled with graffiti, and some of the paint was chipping off. Several shelves and broken furniture had been left behind like a thief store. The carpet was dried and sticky against his sandals, most likely from the soda and beer that was spilled on it. Nanu’s nose wrinkled at the smell of alcohol and cigarettes that lingered.

“Hey, did you get to see that broadcast from the Aether Foundation?” Selene asked as they went up the first set of stairs, her Lycanroc following behind.

“Hm?” Nanu blinked, and then he raised a brow. “I did, yeah. What about it?”

“Well, the president showed off that video of my Brionee going against that Ultra Beast!”

“Wait, that was you?” Nanu said in surprise. They stopped before where the stairs had split into two.

“Ah-huh!” Selene said with an enthusiastic nod. “That thing is strong, but Poppers is even stronger!”

Nanu’s forehead twitched, and he felt his blood pressure rising. “Those Ultra Beasts aren’t like the usual Pokémon you battle with! They’re extremely dangerous, and need to be handled with precaution.”

Selene’s face perked up. “Have you encountered those things before?” she asked seriously.
Memories of his encounter with UB Symbiont came back to him like a static VHS recording. He, Looker, and Sana went deep inside Lush Jungle and encountered three of those jellyfish monsters. Their Pokémon sustained hard hits but managed to subdue them. One of them being experimented on by an Interpol scientist, screaming. Nanu mentally took a deep breath.

“It doesn’t matter,” he said in a gruff voice. When he didn’t follow up on that, Selene tilted her head and gave him a suspicious look. Meli seemed to have a similar expression, her tail wagging.

“Fine, you don’t have to tell me.” Selene shrugged, and then she said, “You’re the kahuna, right? Can we do the Grand Trial after this?”

Nanu regarded her for a second, and then he snorted. “Sure, if we get out of here alive.”

Selene raised her chin and had her hands on her sides, staring at him. “Wow, such a downer.”

“Eh, not the first time folks had said that to me.”

“What’s this, intruders in our crib?” another voice called out. Nanu and Selene looked down to see two female grunts approaching them. He recognized them as Deedee and Jazzy.

“What you’re doing here, old cop?” Deedee asked.

“Oh, just checking the premises as usual,” Nanu said in a flat tone.

“If so, then why you have a little girl with you?” Jazzy said, pointing at Selene.

“I’m here to get a Pokémon back! And to kick your guys’ butt!” Selene said, her foot taking a step forward. Meli barked.

Both grunts laughed, and then Jazzy said, “Aw how cute. She thinks she can take us down.”

Selene grunted and clenched her fist. Meli did an attack stance and growled. The trainer opened her mouth, but Nanu raised his hand.

“You go find Guzma. I’ll handle these clowns here.”

Selene gasped, and then she hummed in understanding. She and Meli took the left side of the stairs. When Nanu was left alone, both Deedee and Jazzy chuckled and pulled out their pokéballs.

“Felicia and Dennis told me that you had beat them twice. We’re gonna show you who’s boss, gramps!” Deedee said. She and Jazzy released their Pokémon, a Golbat and a Mareanie respectively.

Nanu made a bored grunt, went down the steps, and took out his own pokéballs. Krookodile and Sableye came out, doing their battle poses. The crocodile Pokémon roared and caused the grunts’ Pokémon to flinch and back away. Satisfied that Krookodile’s Intimidate ability was working, Nanu cracked a smile.

“All right Dolly, Spike Cannon at that Sableye!” Jazzy said, thrusting her arm forward.

Deedee did the same gesture and yelled, “Air Cutter, Goldy!”

“Deflect with Power Gem, Sableye,” Nanu said calmly. “As for you Kookie, slam that Golbat with your tail.”

Dolly squealed, her spikes jumping up like hair being rubbed by electricity. She fired several pin
missiles towards Sableye, but Nanu’s Pokémon countered by having her gem glow and release a number of bright stones. Both assaults collided in a small explosion. When the remaining gems showered onto Dolly, she whined and covered herself with her tentacles.

Meanwhile, Goldy flapped his wings furiously and razor-sharp air struck Krookodile on the chest. A few cuts were left there, but Krookodile wasn’t fazed one bit. He stomped hard on one foot and swung his tail, glowing green, into the Golbat. Goldy was sent flying into a pile of furniture, and after he screeched was immediately returned to his pokéball. Soon a Salandit popped up and took Goldy’s place on the battlefield instead.

Deedee’s face fell. “Hey! What trick did you pull, geezer?”

“Dragon Tail switches your opponent’s Pokémon.” Nanu had one hand on his side.

Deedee groaned and clenched her fist. “Gonna play it that way, huh? Come on Sal, burst out your flames at them!”

Sal hissed and swung his tail wildly. Flaming liquid flew out from the red patterns on his body, which splattered on both of Nanu’s Pokémon. Krookodile shook the liquid off and grunted in annoyance while Sableye was stunned for a second and wiped her eyes.

“Good work there, bud!” Deedee faced Jazzy and said, “So Jazzy, can we move our sushi date tomorrow from the afternoon to later?”

“Huh?” Jazzy blinked at her, and then she nodded. “Sure, no prob. Why, though?” She turned back to the battle. “Full-on Knock Out on that Krookodile!”

Were the girls talking date plans during the battle? Nanu brushed that off and focused back on the battle. “Punch that lizard, Sableye. Kookie, you use Thunder Fang on the Mareanie.”

Sableye grinned and her fist formed a blue aura with cold air swirling around. She punched Sal’s jaw, knocking him backward and making him screech. He picked himself up and hissed, some pieces of ice stuck where Sableye had hit.

Krookodile’s fangs crackled with electric sparks, and he charged at Dolly. Dolly jumped up and swung two of her tentacles at Krookodile, but he grabbed one of them with his teeth and shocked her with large amounts of electricity. After he let go, Dolly wobbled and had a dazed expression on her face. She was left with several burns all over her.

Both Deedee and Jazzy glared at him.

“Dragon Rage at that Sableye, Sal!” Deedee said. She glanced at Jazzy. “Got a call from that malasada shop, sayin’ they’re willin’ to interview me.”

“Oh my gosh, that’s great news, girl! And you Dolly, Poison Jab at Krookodile!”

Nanu sighed and rolled his eyes. “Can your guys’ conversation wait until the battle’s over? Use your tail at the Salandit, Kookie. Sableye, Shadow Sneak.”

Sal inhaled and released a blast of purple flames at Krookodile. To counter, he raised his tail and swung at the flames, causing them to disappear. Krookodile then slammed his tail at Sal, who got squashed on the floor and collapsed.

One of Dolly’s tentacles glowed purple, and she swung at Sableye. At the last second, Sableye dodged and backed away with a giggle. Her eyes turned red, and a shadow of herself appeared
behind the Mareanie. Dolly looked around in confusion, and when she finally noticed Sableye’s shadow it punched her several times without warning. When Sableye was done, she pulled her shadow back and Dolly fainted.

“What the…” Jazzy said with a dumbfounded face. She and Deedee returned their Pokémon.

Deedee had a similar expression, and then she grinned. “It’s okay, babe. I still got Goldy.” She released her Golbat, who screeched and flew around frantically. “Get back at that Krookodile!”

“Strike first with Aerial Ace!” Nanu said, raising his voice.

Goldy’s wings shined a metallic color and he dove down, only for Krookodile to charge at the Golbat in a blur and ram him into the wall. Goldy collapsed on impact. There were a few cracks in the foundation. Deedee returned her Pokémon with a fuming face.

“How can a sleazy cop like you defeat us?” Deedee asked.

“I’m also a Kahuna, so of course I’m stronger,” Nanu said. Krookodile raised his snout and snorted while Sableye cackled.

The female grunts stared at him, and then Jazzy said, “Guzma’s stronger than you, so you better watch out, yo!” They held hands and exited the mansion.

Nanu released a tired sigh and looked at his Pokémon. “What a hassle,” he said, and both Sableye and Krookodile made noises of agreement. He returned them and took the left side of the stairs.

When he made it to the hallway, that sinking feeling inside his stomach returned. As Nanu moved forward, he glanced at the paintings that were ruined by the graffiti and pinned pictures of Team Skull. He stopped when one picture caught his attention. It was a picture of a younger Guzma with several other kids around his age and an older man. His eyes grew wide.

“Kahuna Laney,” Nanu muttered to himself.

Laney was the Kahuna before him. His title was stripped away by the tapus due to a shady group he had formed. He did that because he thought Alola’s customs were outdated and the region wasn’t keeping up with the world, or so the rumors went. No surprise where Guzma got his beliefs from.

“It’s your fault that we lost! Your tank top was too tight and it distracted me!” someone yelled, and Nanu was pulled away from his thoughts. He turned to see two other female grunts storming out from one of the rooms. Nanu moved to the corner.

“My fault? Your Raticate kept messing his moves up!”

The girls passed by Nanu, not noticing him, and went down the stairs.

“Your Rattata wasn’t so hot, either! Also, when was the last time you washed your tank?”

“Zip it!”

Nanu’s forehead wrinkled. When he turned back, Selene and her Pokémon came out of the room and were in front of him. She held Poppers close to her chest while Meli was behind them.

“You know what’s going on with those two?” he asked.

“You mean with the grunts I had just beat? They wore each other’s shirts and were sore that they
lost to me.”

“Wearing each other’s shirts?” Nanu raised a brow and shrugged. “Kinda stupid to get worked up over.”

“I know, right!” Selene said. Poppers squealed and clapped his flippers. Meli barked, seemed to also in agreement.

Nanu shushed them and said in a low voice, “Not so loud. There are still some grunts here. There’s one walking right now.”

A short distance from them, a grunt paced around the hallway with his phone and headphones on. He rapped on a song he was listening to, his shoulders moving and head bobbing. Nanu recognized him as Lorenzo.

“Don’t know what ya want from me, bro. Already used up all my cash on cigars, Julio. Gonna fly high up in the sky. Come and catch me, if you wanna try!”

After he finished that verse, the grunt turned around and headed the other direction. Nanu didn’t react as he had seen more than one grunt do that. A pinched expression crossed Selene’s face.

“Their singing always hurts my ears,” she said.

“Eh, you get used to it.” Nanu shifted his gaze for a second. “Let me ask you something, girl. Do you really want to battle Guzma?”

Selene’s face fell, and her gaze fell on the floor. Poppers looked up to her and gave a sad squeaking sound.

“To be honest, not really. I just want to get the Yungoos back, but I’m not afraid of him.”

Nanu regarded her for a moment, and then he said, “Okay, good. There’s something of Guzma’s I want to check. His laptop, to be specific.”

“Oh, you’re trying to get some dirt on him? How you’re gonna do that?”

“I’ll force him out. And I know the perfect Pokémon to do so.”

Nanu pulled out a pokéball from his belt and released Honchkrow. As the bird cawed and flapped his wings, Selene and her Pokémon gazed up in awe.

“I need you to distract Guzma and his guys for a while,” Nanu said to his Pokémon. “Can you do that?”

Honchkrow nodded and screeched, which Nanu assumed to be a yes. He pointed to a large vase that was next to one of the windows.

“Break that vase over there, and then once Guzma’s out, go get his sunglasses.”

After Honchkrow glanced at the vase, he opened his beak and fired a crimson ball straight at it. The vase was shattered into several pieces.

“Huh, what’s going on?” the grunt from earlier yelled. Nanu, Selene, and her Pokémon hid behind old furniture with boxes piled on there. When Nanu peeked from the corner, Lorenzo approached Honchkrow and glared at him. “Yo Big Bird, what’cha doing here? Tryin’ to find some shiny bottle caps?”
Honchkrow screeched and pecked at his face. Lorenzo kept crying “ow, ow, ow!”, shielding Honchkrow’s attacks with his arms.

“Hey, Lorenzo, what’s all that noise?”

Nanu immediately recognized that voice to be Guzma’s. The man himself appeared with Dennis and Felicia behind him.

“This Honchkrow broke that vase, and is now pecking me!” Lorenzo said while Honchkrow kept doing that.

“Really?” Guzma asked. “Why’s that?”

With a hard stare, Felicia said, “That Honchkrow looks familiar…”

Nanu’s heart thundered against his chest. He hoped their cover wasn’t blown this early.

“Hold up, Feliz. You don’t mean…”

Before Dennis could finish, Honchkrow stopped hurting Lorenzo and turned his attention to Guzma. He grabbed Guzma’s sunglasses with his claws and flew outside towards the balcony.

“Get back my sunglasses, you brat!” Guzma screamed, shaking his fist. He and his group rushed outside.

Nanu sighed in relief. “That should buy us some time. Let’s move.”

Everyone hurried to Guzma’s room, which was on the other side of the hallway. After Selene opened the door, they stepped inside.

It had been a while since Nanu had entered Guzma’s room, but he remembered it well enough to know it hadn’t changed much. Nanu stepped on one of the many beer cans scattered across the floor. Up ahead there were some stairs and a sofa that had been torn and dirtied. A large banner with Team Skull’s logo was pinned on the wall. That spot had been referred to as Guzma’s throne; a far cry from proper royalty. The scent of alcohol and cigarettes that first lingered on the first floor stuck around here also.

“You try to find the Yungoos while I snoop around his laptop,” Nanu said. Selene nodded, put Poppers down, and then she and her Pokémon began searching the room.

He took the stairs and approached Guzma’s laptop, which was on the small stand that was next to the sofa. It was on sleep mode, so he pressed a key and the laptop lit up back to life. The login screen asked for a password. Nanu pressed his lips in annoyance.

“What kind of password Guzma would use?” he muttered. Guzma would probably have his favorite Pokémon for that. After remembering what that Pokémon was, he typed “Golisopod” and hit enter.

That password failed.

If favorite Pokémon didn’t work, then the Pokémon’s nickname. Now, what was it? He recalled Plumeria saying it was Goliath, like that character from that one story. He typed “Goliath” and hit enter.

That password was successful, and he greeted with the laptop’s wallpaper of the Team Skull logo
and splattered paint. That made finding the information he needed faster.

Nanu opened the browser and clicked on a tab, QMail. Guzma’s information was saved, so he was shown his inbox already. Many of the emails were newsletters and promotions from various companies, but there were some from the Aether President, Lusamine Jubert, that made Nanu’s stomach jump. He clicked on one of those emails.

From: yaboyguzma@qmail.com
To: lusaminejubert@aetherfoundation.org

Hey, Madame Prez. Can you run down to me again why this Cosmog is so important?

From: lusaminejubert@aetherfoundation.org
To: yaboyguzma@qmail.com

Cosmog has the ability to open Ultra Wormholes and bring beings from other dimensions. If someone were to have that Pokémon and not used its powers properly, that can spell disaster.

Here is all the information you need regarding Aether’s research on alternate dimensions. Have your men bring Cosmog and Lillie back to me, and you will be paid handsomely.

Attachments: aether_wormhole_research.pdf

From: yaboyguzma@qmail.com
To: lusaminejubert@aetherfoundation.org

Wow, that’s a lot of info to take in. I don’t understand half of the alternate dimensions mumbo jumbo, but this sounds serious. Don’t worry, my guys and I will take care of that for you.

Nanu furrowed his brow and rubbed his chin. He didn’t remember anyone mentioning a Cosmog when he was in Interpol. Could this be the Pokémon Gladion and Charlotte had mentioned that Team Skull was after? Also, why did Lusamine want her daughter back? Nanu was under the impression Kukui had hired Lillie as his assistant on the spot.

He glanced over his shoulder to see Selene and Meli checking out a chest full of z-crystals, the dog sniffing at the contents. Meanwhile, Poppers looked behind a shelf filled with alcohol bottles. Nanu clicked on another email thread and read it.

From: yaboyguzma@qmail.com
To: lusaminejubert@aetherfoundation.org

Yo, Madame Prez! Thanks so much for sending in the money. My homies and I are gonna live like kings, thanks to you!

From: lusaminejubert@aetherfoundation.org
To: yaboyguzma@qmail.com

That’s only the first half of the payment. You get the rest once Lillie and Cosmog are in Aether Paradise.

Nanu pulled his head back and made a “tch” sound. That meant Aether’s president had been pulling the strings all this time. It was no wonder he was suspicious of the organization.

“Hey, I found Yungoos hiding behind Guzma’s bottle stash!” Selene said cheerfully. She approached Nanu while holding the mongoose against her chest. Yungoos growled and flashed his
teeth, a bit shaken up. Behind them, Meli and Poppers cheered also.

“Thing must’ve been scared half to death if he’s glad to see a wretch like me.”

“Maybe. I won’t be surprised if Team Skull had harmed him beforehand.” Selene glanced at the laptop, and then asked, “Did you find anything good?”

“I did, and it’s big. Apparently Aether’s president had been Team Skull’s secret benefactor.”

“What, really?” Selene said in a shocked voice.

“Yup. She gave some money to Team Skull and wanted them to bring Lillie and Cosmog back. Lillie is Lusamine’s daughter.”

Selene sucked in a breath and frowned. Meli and Poppers looked up at her with sad faces.

“That explains why the president acted strange when Hau mentioned her. Does Gladion know about this?”

“I’m not sure, but we can ask.” Nanu closed the browser and snapped the laptop shut. “We better get back to him and Grimsley before Guzma sees--”

“Why the heck are you guys inside my throne?”

Both Nanu and Selene flinched. They slowly turned around to see Guzma, Lorenzo, Dennis, and Felicia surrounding them. The Team Skull leader had his hands on his sides, and a wicked grin spread across his face. His sunglasses were on his forehead, so he got them back.

"The hated boss who beats you down and beats you down and never lets up... Yeah. Big bad Guzma is here!"

Nanu fixed his stare at him. Selene glared, holding the Yungoos tighter. Meli assumed a stance and growled while Poppers barked angrily.

"I don't really get you, kid," Guzma continued, "but at least this is a change of pace. It's not everyday someone comes straight to me for a beating!"

"I'm not here for you, bumhead!" Selene immediately said. Yungoos in her arms hissed at him.

"No bone to pick with me, huh? Then it's for Yungoos, I guess." Guzma shrugged, and then faced Nanu. "And you brought this washed up cop with you to help."

"I knew I recognized the old dude's Honchkrow before!" Felicia said. "You were creating a distraction. aren't ya?"

"Maybe," Nanu said flatly. Honchkrow was outside the mansion, so he would have to get him later.

Guzma glanced at his laptop and narrowed his eyes. He jabbed a finger above Nanu’s chest.

“You were snooping around my laptop, too. For what purpose?”

“I know your connection with Aether, and why you have your guys get Cosmog.”

All three of his grunts shot confused looks at their leader. Guzma scrunched up his face and then relaxed.
"I gotta admit, that's bold of you guys to get Yungoos like that." He grinned, licking his lips. "However, I'm gonna teach you to stay out of other people's business!

Guzma’s grunts chuckled and took a step forward. Nanu gritted his teeth and already had his hand near a pokéball. Selene gasped and gazed down at Yungoos, who hissed and wiggled. Her Pokémon stared and held their ground.

Before anyone could make their move, Gladion and Grimsley showed up and everyone turned their attention to them.

Nanu’s face twitched. About time.

Chapter End Notes

1. Real quick, went ahead and fixed the grammar and prose in Chapters 12-15!

2. Originally Nasty Plot was going to be one chapter, but it became a bit too long and so I have it split into two chapters. The big Guzma battle will be next chapter.

3.Forgot to mention last chapter, but one of my readers ScarletMage did some fanart! It's based off the Murkrow thief back in Chapter 5 and it's cute. Please check it out and give them your support.

4. Also! Twitter user Amyliobat is doing a Grimsley & Nanu comic called En Prison. GO CHECK IT OUT.

5. I'm still doing my advertising campaign! If you guys can help spread the word that would be great!

Twitter: https://twitter.com/BayWrites/status/1170572461659713537

Yeah, I think that's it. Thanks to bobandbill for the beta as always. I might aim for Chapter 17 to come late October or early November. See you then!
Nasty Plot (Part Two)

Chapter Summary

In which the group goes against Guzma and his grunts.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Being in Shady House reminded Grimsley of his old mansion in Castelia City. His family’s mansion had marble flooring, pristine white walls, and many rooms with butlers ready to serve. The backyard was a lush garden filled with roses and small ponds. After his father had died, the mansion was sold and his mother moved to Mistralton City to live a quieter life. Grimsley frowned at seeing this mansion in such a bad state.

"Did you know who the previous owner of this mansion was?" Grimsley asked as he and Gladion took the stairs. His nose wrinkled at the lingering smell of alcohol and cigarettes.

"Not sure. I heard Team Skull took over Po Town and forced the last owner out."

Grimsley nodded in acknowledgment, and then he thought about Nebby. A large chandelier blocked the right side of the path, so they took the left side.

"You mentioned to Selene that Nebby is very important, and shouldn't be in Team Skull's hands. How come?"

"Nebby has the ability to create wormholes. They're supposed to be rare occurrences here. Recently though, the wormholes keep coming."

"So you're saying Nebby has been causing those wormholes?" Grimsley asked, raising a brow.

"I don't know. Either them or an Ultra Beast. You know what those are, right?"

"I've heard of them in passing." Grimsley then asked, "Do you have any idea why Lillie has Nebby?"

"She probably ran away with them because of our mother."

When he and Gladion made it to the second floor, they stopped. Grimsley gave him a baffled stare.

"Your mother?" He recalled Lusamine's press conference and mused how she and Gladion looked similar. Upon that realization, he said, "Then you're Lusamine Jubert's son?"

An odd noise left Gladion's throat. He shifted his gaze away from him and squeezed his right wrist.

"What makes you think the two are the same person?" he said in a growling voice.

Startled by his tone, Grimsley blinked and cleared his throat. “I mean, it isn’t hard to see the resemblance with you two.”

“There could be anyone with hair and eye color like ours!” Gladion snapped.
Grimsley lowered his head, frowning. “Geez, you don’t have to be so dramatic.”

Facing back at him, Gladion sighed and his shoulders slumped. “Let’s just drop the topic for now and focus on finding Selene and Kahuna Nanu.”

Grimsley's frown deepened. It should be expected Gladion wouldn’t reveal that immediately to him.

Before he could respond, someone's voice and footsteps caused him and Gladion to look forward. Guzma and his group had stepped back inside from the balcony. Grimsley and Gladion moved to the corner of the wall.

"That stupid bird ruined my sunglasses," Guzma said. "I blew so much money for these!"

"Don't worry, Big G!" Lorenzo said, slamming his fist on his palm. “I'll knock that Honchkrow out for you!"

"I still can't shake that feeling I've seen that Honchkrow before," Felicia asked, pursing her lips. A beat, and then Guzma's face hardened. "That's the old man's Pokémon. He's creating a distraction."

"Huh? Why's that?" Dennis asked, tilting his head.

"Probably to help that girl get that Yungoos. C'mon, guys!" Guzma gestured his arm for them to follow him, and they headed to his room.

"We should help Officer Nanu and Selene," Gladion said, and Grimsley nodded.

They moved forward to the other side of the floor. Once they almost reached Guzma's room, the door still open, they stopped when they heard a conversation going on.

"I'm not here for you, bumhead!" Selene said sharply, followed by a Yungoos's hiss.

"No bone to pick with me, huh? Then it's for Yungoos, I guess. And you brought this washed up cop with you to help."

Grimsley and Gladion exchanged worried glances. While one of the grunts yelled for recognizing Nanu's Honchkrow, they stepped closer towards the door. Gladion stayed behind Grimsley, and they continued to eavesdrop on the conversation.

“"You were snooping around my laptop, too. For what purpose?"”

“"I know your connection with Aether, and why you have your guys get Cosmog.""

Grimsley's forehead knitted into a furrowed brow. He stared over his shoulder at Gladion and asked, "Aether's working with Team Skull?"

""This is the first time I've heard any of this," Gladion said, wearing a similar expression. "Now I even have more questions for him."

Grimsley wasn't sure how to respond to that. He pointed his finger to the door.

"On the count of three." With each count, Grimsley flashed his fingers up. "One, two... three!"

He and Gladion dashed into the room. They were greeted by the sight of Guzma and his grunts
surrounding Nanu, Selene, and her Pokémon: Meli and the sea lion Pokémon Grimsley had seen on television. The girl held the Yungoos against her chest. Everyone turned their attention to them.

"Gladion! Guzma!" Selene exclaimed, both out of relief and nervousness.

Nanu reacted with a slight twitch on his face. "You guys are late to the party."

"You got some explaining to do, Guzma!" Gladion said, pointing at him.

Guzma glared, then flashed him a grin. "Hi there, Glady boy. Don't tell me you're helping that girl, too?"

"I'm helping her so that I can talk to you."

"You think going against Team Skull will grab the boss's attention?" Lorenzo asked.

Guzma pressed his lips and folded his arms against his chest. "Actually, I shouldn't be surprised. My peeps told me how much you've been slacking on your duties lately." After he finished, Guzma directed his stare at Grimsley. "And who are you, kimono wearing dude?"

Grimsley narrowed his eyes, and he tugged on his scarf. Before he could respond, Selene did it for him.

"He's Grimsley from Unova's Elite Four. His Pokémon are very strong, so you better watch out!" she said. Meli barked in agreement.

"She's right on both accounts," Grimsley said in a coy voice. "Grimsley Thomas, one of Unova's Elite Four. I'm the real deal."

"Hold up, Elite Four?" Felicia asked in shock. "Jeez, no wonder he was able to beat us so badly."

Guzma raised a suspicious brow and snorted. "So you're from one of those Pokémon Leagues? I bet you heard about the one that's about to make its debut in Alola."

"I have, yes. I even gave some tips to Professor Kukui on how to run his Pokémon League."

Guzma glared at Grimsley. "That's so noble of you to help Kukui out." He grinned, and his fist slammed on his chest. "However, Alola needs no Pokémon League because I'm the strongest trainer on these islands!"

Selene laughed. "Oh, please! You said that when we first met, and I beat you!"

Guzma's eyes twitched, and he jerked his head in Selene's direction. "Trying to be a smartass, huh? That does it, I'm gonna destroy all of you!"

He pulled two pokéballs out and released his Pokémon. One was a Masquerain, fluttering around like a butterfly. Another Pokémon was one Grimsley never seen before-- a large arthropod creature with a hunched posture and armor plating. They raised their head and made clicking noises with their mandibles.

"Run!" Gladion yelled.

Everyone made a dash out of the room. Selene held Yungoos while her Pokémon followed her behind, Poppers riding on Meli's back. Both of Guzma's Pokémon unleashed jet streams of water and sharp gusts of wind at them, often missing and hitting the walls and ceiling. Grimsley glanced over his shoulder to see Guzma and his grunts trailing behind, so he and the others picked up their
"Hey, let us help too!" Lorenzo said. He, Dennis, and Felicia released their Pokémon: Spinarak, Haunter, and Raticate respectively. Their Pokémon released a series of spiderwebs, frost-laced beams, and crimson-colored balls at the group.

“Great idea going through that man’s laptop,” Grimsley said sarcastically, and that earned a glare from Nanu.

“Not now! Just keep running!”

The four hurried down the stairs, avoiding the onslaught of attacks being thrown at them. Selene’s Pokémon fought back with high-pressured water jets and sharp rocks but had to keep up with the humans. They soon made it to the floor and kept running, almost to the front door exit.

"Goliath, Spitball, block that door!" Guzma ordered from up the stairs, pointing at the door.

Goliath jumped down and blocked the door while Spitball dived down and fluttered next to the large arthropod. There was another door, but the grunts’ Pokémon blocked that too. That made everyone stop and back away.

“Hmph, don’t think you guys will get away easily.” Guzma’s face was split into a wide grin. Behind him, his grunts wore similar expressions. “Get them!”

“Looks like we’re having ourselves a Battle Royale.” Nanu pulled out a pokéball and released his Pokémon. An Absol appeared and he tossed his head up and howled. Grimsley lifted his forehead with great interest. He wondered if there would be a chance for Roulette and Nanu’s Absol to meet. Gladion also released his Pokémon, Null.

“I’ll take on Guzma while you guys handle the rest,” Selene said, still holding the Yungoos. Her Pokémon nodded in agreement and turned to Guzma’s Pokémon with determined looks.

All three grunts gave orders to their Pokémon. Spinarak fired off glowing barbs from his mouth, Haunter glowed yellow and released a blast of lightning, and Raticate opened his jaws wide and charged.

Grimsley, Nanu, and Gladion also gave out commands, and everyone’s Pokémon clashed. Raz countered Spinarak’s Poison Sting with Shadow Ball. The orb directly hitting him directly; the Spinarak squealed in pain. Null howled when Felicia’s Raticate sunk his teeth into their leg, but then they lifted a glowing claw, swiped the big rat’s face, and left a claw mark there. Nanu’s Absol crouched down and the horn on his forehead shined a dark color. He cut through the blast of lighting, splitting it and leaving sparks of electricity in the air.

Felicia narrowed her eyes and her lips twitched. “Freeze that kid’s Pokémon!”

“Iron Head, go!” Gladion said with the swipe of his arm.

Raticate inhaled and released a beam of cold energy straight at Null. The strange creature recoiled and some pieces of ice got stuck on their skin. Null dashed and rammed Raticate into the ground.

The Haunter was drawing close to Raz, so Grimsley had her stay on guard. Dark vapors formed around Raz’s leg, and she reached and swiped at the ghost with her extended claw. Haunter grimaced and backed away. In that instant, Lorenzo had Spinarak fire tiny missiles at Raz. Raz flinched a little at the stings, but otherwise still stood strong.
Grimsley’s lips curled into a small smile. “All right Raz, now go for--”

“Psycho Cut!”

Absol rushed forward, his horn glowing a soft pink. He slashed Spinarak, sending the small bug slamming into a wall. Spinarak collapsed upon impact.

“I was just about to finish it,” Grimsley said, furrowing his brow at him. This was the second time he had done that.

Nanu shrugged. “You still need to pick up the pace.”

Grimsley forced himself to not roll his eyes. Guzma and Selene’s booming voices filled the room, and he turned to see their Pokémon making their moves. Spitball screeched an ear-piercing cry and made Poppers wince, only for the sea lion to soak him with high-pressure water. Goliath and Meli collided head-on and pushed each other. After a short struggle, Meli pinned Goliath down and climbed on top of him. The two stared at each other, and then Goliath faded into red light. Guzma glared down at the pokeball on his belt.


He pulled out another pokeball and released a Pinsir. The stag beetle Pokémon moved his pincers and made clicking noises. A small yellow and orange orb was tied onto one of the pincers.

Grimsley did a double-take. Wait, was that a MegaStone?

Before he could think further on that, Raz’s screams brought his attention back to the chaotic battle. She and Raticate bounced off dark blobs and frost-laced beams at each other. Null and Absol were busy with Haunter, the ghost shooting beams of dark energy at them while the two unleashed their ghostly and green-lit claws at him.

“Poison Jab at Helmet-Head there!” Dennis said, pointing at Null.

Haunter cackled, his hand glowing purple. He jabbed Null’s throat, causing them to fall back. Null winced and could barely open one eye now, their legs shaking. A purple bruise blossomed where Haunter had hit.

“Null!” Gladion called out urgently. Despite not looking well, his Pokémon let out a reassuring bark.

Grimsley pressed his lips and pointed at the Haunter. “Get that Haunter mid-air!”

With an excited meow, Raz jumped up and sank her teeth into Haunter’s body. Haunter cried out in pain, struggling to let go of her grip. She flipped Haunter over mid-air and threw him into the ground like a hammer. Unable to get up. Haunter groaned and stayed still. Dennis’s face fell, and he reluctantly recalled his Pokémon.

“Yo, it down to you and our boss now,” Dennis said.

“I know.” Felicia gritted her teeth and clenched her fist. “Flame Wheel at everyone!”

Grimsley’s face tensed with Gladion and Nanu having similar expressions. Raticate’s body burst into flames, and he rolled at a blazing pace. A trail of burnt marks was left on the carpet. Raz and Null jumped out of the way. Absol attempted to move too, but Raticate struck him on his side and he fell. He picked himself up, grimacing at the small burns visible on his fur. Raticate resumed
“Stop that Raticate before it gets you, Null!” Gladion said.

“You do the same, Raz!” Grimsley followed.

Just as Raticate reached Raz, she smacked the dark-furred rat with her glowing tail like a baseball. Raticate picked himself up but was unable to recover when Null rammed him straight into a pile of furniture.

Barely standing, Null’s legs shook and they let out deep pants. The purple bruise on their throat turned darker. Eventually, Null collapsed and fell on the floor.

“No!” Gladion rushed to Null’s side. He dropped to his knees and stroked their fur. Grimsley, Raz, and Absol looked on in stunned silence. Nanu’s brow furrowed.

When Raticate was knocked out, Felicia returned him and glared at Grimsley, Nanu, and Gladion. “Not only we were beaten by those old dudes again, but also with that punk!”

Nanu grunted and narrowed his eyes. “Goes to show that you shouldn’t underestimate them.”

All three grunts exchanged frustrated glances at each other.

“What’s the matter, man, we did our part.” Lorenzo whipped his head at Guzma’s direction. “Yo Guzma, we’re gonna bounce now!” He, Felicia, and Dennis dashed off in the direction of the other exit.

“Wait, what?” Guzma asked, glaring at his grunts. The second his gaze tore off from the battle, Meli fired off sharp rocks at Spitball’s wings and face. The Masquerain squealed in pain and fell down. Guzma’s eyes flew wide, and he gritted his teeth. “Son of a…”

“You should’ve paid attention!” The grin on Selene’s face disappeared when she noticed Gladion and Null. “Gladion! Null!”

Selene and her Pokémon rushed to Gladion and Null’s side. She kneeled down and pulled an antidote bottle from her bag, spraying it on them. Null made whining noises from the sting. Patting their cheek, Selene gave out shushing noises and reassuring Null that everything was going to be fine.

Guzma stared at Selene taking care of Null for a moment. He faced Grimsley and Nanu, flashing them a grin.

“While that girl is busy playing nurse, I’ll destroy you two!” He pulled out Goliath’s pokeball and the water bug was released once more. Both Goliath and Tassel gave menacing stares. “Goliath, Sucker Punch that Absol! Tassel, cut up the kitty real good!”

Both of Guzma’s Pokémon dashed forward, Goliath raising his right claw and Tassel’s pincers glowing light green. The two men grimaced, but then they called out their commands.

“You do the same, boy!”

“Dodge, and then Shadow Ball, Raz!”

When Absol and Goliath’s claws collided, they kept pushing each other. They exchanged several blows at one another, each one harder than the last. Soon they backed away, glaring at one another with long pants.
Before Tassel’s pinchers could reach Raz, she moved away and spat her crimson orb straight onto his back. That made Tassel flinch and almost lost his footing, only to then spin around and scream.

“All right big boy, Razor Shell at both of them!” Guzma said, pointing at Goliath and then Nanu and Grimsley’s Pokémon. “And you Tassel, provide backup!”

Torrential waters formed on Goliath’s claws, and he rushed at his opponents. Both Raz and Absol were able to dodge his swipes, making it harder for Goliath to divide his attention to both. After she jumped away from another swipe, Raz’s tail glowed and she smacked Goliath’s face. Goliath backed away a few steps and shook himself, but still standing.

While Absol was distracted with Goliath, Tassel grabbed Absol’s horn with his pinchers and squeezed him tight. Absol cried out in protest, struggling to get out of his grip, and the Pinsir slammed him down like a wrestler. The Disaster Pokémon picked himself quickly and a ghostly claw formed on one of his paws. He sliced Tassel’s face and left a large claw mark on them, making Tassel screech and cover his face.

Guzma’s eyes grew wide, and he grunted. “I have to admit, not too shabby you two. However, I’m done playing around. Let’s show them your true power, Tassel!”

He lifted his golden watch, a Keystone attached to it. Grimsley’s stomach jumped.

Guzma touched the Keystone and both he and Tassel were bathed in golden light. Grimsley and Nanu shielded their faces from the brightness, and when the light faded Tassel’s appearance changed.

A pair of yellow wings with orange blades sprouted out of Tassel’s back. The spikes on his pinchers grew, and his eyes were the same color as his wings. Tassel flapped his wings, lifting himself in the air. Guzma crossed his arms, a wide grin stretching across his face.

Grimsley winched, having flashbacks to his battle with Ryuki. He glanced to see he didn’t have his Keystone with him; he had put it away in his bag, along with the Absolite, before he left Malie City. A part of him wanted to slap himself for doing that.

Gladion, Null, Selene, and her Pokémon all looked up at Tassel in amazement.

Nanu stared up at the Mega Pinsir as if he already expected Guzma to have it. “Better watch out. When they fight, Mega Pinsir can get nasty.” He pointed at Tassel and told Absol to block any move Tassel makes.

Grimsley nodded and grunted in agreement. He stared at Goliath, commanding Raz to strike with her claws.

Raz’s ghostly claws clashed with Goliath’s water-covered ones. Liquid and vapor mixed together and created puffs of smoke. Their assaults bounced off each other like small explosions.

While Raz and Goliath were in conflict, Absol kept blocking Tassel’s glowing pinchers with his horn. Tassel found an opening and struck Absol’s neck. Absol cried in pain and fell on the floor. Seconds passed before he picked himself up, his legs shaking. Buzzing with excitement, Tassel flapped his wings harder and spun around like a whirlpool.

Grimsley bit his lips and his fingers twitched. Type disadvantage aside, it seemed Guzma’s Pokémon won’t be easy to take down.

After she was done with Null, Selene’s eyes grew wide, and a determined expression crossed her
face. She handed the Yungoos to Gladion, stood up, and thrust her arm at Tassel.

“Meli! Poppers! Help out!”

Both of her Pokémon barked and sprang into action. Poppers fired off a jet of high-pressure water while Meli jumped out and released several large rocks. Tassel dodged the Water Gun and some of the rocks, but then a few large ones hit his face and one shot inside his mouth. The Mega Pinsir wheezed and almost choked but managed to spit out the rock. Meli fired off more rocks at Tassel and one of them struck his wing. That caused Tassel to be unbalanced in the air and he crashed into the floor. Tassel got himself up quickly, and he and Guzma glared at Meli.

“Done watching over that boy’s freakshow, huh?” Guzma let out a sharp whistle. “Get her Pokémon, you two!”

His Pokémon obliged. Goliath rushed at Meli in a blink of an eye and swiped her with one of his claws, making her hit the floor. Tassel approached Poppers and about to use his pinchers at him, but missed when Poppers moved aside. The Mega Pinsir took this opportunity to strike Meli just as she barely got herself up. Tassel grabbed Meli’s throat and pinned her down. Once he let go, Meli stayed on the floor and unable to get up.

Knew Meli couldn’t hold on any longer, Selene sighed in defeat and returned her Pokémon.

“You did great, Meli,” she whispered to Meli’s pokéball with a sad smile. She glared at Guzma and his Pokémon.

Grimsley was taken aback by both of Guzma’s Pokémon’s strengths. Nanu’s expression from when Tassel had Mega Evolved hadn’t changed, but it was likely he had a lot on his mind.

“I’ll deal with the Golisopod while you two take care of the Mega Pinsir,” Nanu said. Grimsley and Selene nodded at each other in agreement.

After Guzma yelled out his orders, torrential waters covered Goliath’s body and Tassel’s pinchers glowed green. Absol formed a large claw, and he and Goliath went back and forth with their blows.

Raz spat out Shadow Balls at Tassel while Poppers sang and let out a beam of purple hearts. Tassel flew in rapid speed, avoiding their attacks.

Raz had battled against Mega Evolved Pokémon before. On occasion, it was against contenders who brought them to the Unova Pokémon League. Most of the time though it was during practice battles with Roulette whenever she was in that form. Raz learned to push back her strength, and she was doing the same with Tassel whenever he approached her with his pinchers.

Nanu and Selene’s Pokémon weren’t half bad either. Absol held himself well against a Pokémon with tough defenses, and Poppers while more passive than Raz still kept up the pace. Alolan trainers were truly amazing, Grimsley mused.

“Stone Edge at the Brionee and Liepard!”

Tassel screeched in excitement and slammed himself on the floor. Tall stone pillars popped up, moving toward Grimsley and Selene’s Pokémon. Raz and Poppers scrambled to get out of the way, but the stones caught up to them first. After being dropped on the ground, they slowly picked themselves up. Both had deep cuts on their bodies, Poppers more so than Raz.

“Selene! Grimsley!” Gladion yelled from the sidelines. He stood up with wide eyes, the Yungoos he was holding also frightened.
“Are your guys’ Pokémon all right?” Nanu asked, face hardened with concern.

“I think so, but Guzma’s tougher than the last time I went against him,” Selene said with narrowed eyes.

Upon paying closer attention, Grimsley noticed a part of Tassel’s wing had been clipped off and parts of his shell-skin damaged. Selene did battle with him while he and Nanu were busy with the Team Skull grunts. Tassel was indeed strong, and he was reminded of his fight with Mimikins.

“Foul Play at that Mega Pinsir!”

Guzma grimaced at that command. “Grab that cat and slam her on the floor!”

Opening his pincers wide, Pinsir swopped down towards Raz. The second he was near her, she moved aside and grabbed the edge of his right wing with her jaws, turning him around and throwing him on the floor. When Tassel didn’t get up, she meowed and lifted her head high.

Guzma took deeps, his chest rising and falling. Syncing his energy with Mega Pinsir had taken its toll. He returned Tassel back in his pokéball.

“Don’t celebrate just yet,” he said in a raspy voice and grunted. “I still have my boy Goliath here.” He pointed at Goliath, raising his claws and moving his mouth in a menacing manner. The other Pokémon were exhausted, too.

Selene gazed down at the Z-Ring on her wrist, and she pulled out a blue Z-Crystal from her bag. When she hesitated using it, Nanu held his hand up.

“Wait, your Brionne isn’t fit enough to do a Z-Move,” he said in a low voice. He faced Grimsley. “Grimsley, have you been practicing the pose for your Z-Crystal?”

Grimsley flinched and raised a confused brow. “Yes, I have. Acerola taught me it some days back.”

“Good enough for me.” Nanu pulled out another Z-Ring. It was a similar design to his, but the strap was red instead of black. “Catch!”

Nanu threw the Z-Ring, and Grimsley caught it with one hand. He wrapped it around his wrist, which was tight and cold against his skin.

“Are you ready, Raz?” Grimsley asked, pulling out the Ghostium-Z.

Raz threw her head back and meowed, which was more than satisfactory response. Grimsley put the crystal inside the Z-Ring, and the Ghostinum-Z sparkled in bright light.

Nanu also put a Z-Crystal inside his Z-Ring, which did the same. He looked over his shoulder at Selene.

“You should step aside, kid. This might get messy.”

Selene gasped in surprise, and then she picked Poppers up and moved to Gladion’s side.

Guzma snorted, folding his arms against his chest. “Yo Goliath, wait until they finish their Z-moves,” he said. Goliath made some clicking noises and stood on guard.

Nanu faced back at Grimsley. “On the count to three we’ll use Never-Ending Nightmare together, got it?”
Grimsley hummed in agreement. Nanu started the countdown: three, two, one...

He and Nanu kneeled down and swayed their bodies in a floating motion. They ended their pose with them stretching their arms forward, Grimsley feeling cold energy curling around him.

Absol and Raz dropped down in their best scary poses, and a golden aura surrounded them and their trainers. Like when Acerola had used that Z-Move, the air turned cold and purple flames burst out from both Pokémon.

During his training in Malie Gardens, Grimsley had practiced the pose for Never Ending Nightmare with Roulette and Raz. His Pokémon couldn’t do it fully due to them being on four legs, so they followed up with sharp stances. Kukui and Acerola had told him the pose and the move’s typing was only part of the equation, and that the most important rule was the strong connection between Pokémon and trainer. Grimsley was certain he had no trouble with his Pokémon’s bonds.

“Sucker Punch both of them!” Guzma yelled out.

Goliath dashed and, in a blur, was already in front of Raz. Before she could finish the Z-Move, Goliath punched her on the chin and she dropped on the floor. He did the same thing to Absol, and Nanu’s Pokémon also fell.

The light on Grimsley’s and Nanu’s Z-Crystals faded. They gave each other stunned looks. Grimsley thought it was clever Guzma had used Sucker Punch to his advantage.

At the sidelines, Selene and Gladion gasped. Grimsley spotted the girl looking down at her Z-Ring before facing back to the battle.

Raz and Absol got up, but they took deep breaths and their posture unsteady. Goliath looked just as exhausted, his shoulders and arms slacking.

Guzma burst into laughter, holding onto his stomach. “You guys think Z-Moves will work? Ha, think again! Now Goliath, finish those--”

He stopped when a burst of bright light covered the room. Selene commanded, “Hydro Vortex!” in a booming voice, and a violent whirlpool sucked Goliath in like a tornado. After being thrown into a pile of boxes, Goliath rose up and screamed with arms raised up high.

“What the?” Guzma jerked his head and glared at Selene. He snorted. “Of course you had to play a hero there.”

She let out a deep breath, her shoulders rising and falling. Her Pokémon was tired as well, and he collapsed.

“Poppers!” Selene rushed to Popper’s side and picked him up. He looked at her with weary eyes and gave a low bark. She hugged him, nuzzling his face.

Grimsley had seen Selene used a Z-Move when they battled yesterday, but seeing another one in action still made his stomach jump. He glanced at Nanu, his face having an indifferent expression.

“I’ll finish this,” Nanu told him and he looked at Absol’s direction. “We’re gonna try our Z-move again!”

Absol barked in acknowledgment and prepared his stance. Raz backed away to give him space, going to Grimsley’s side. Nanu executed the pose for the Ghostinum-Z again, and bright light bathed both of them. Purple flames covered Absol’s body, a rush of cold air passing by. Dark
liquid pooled the floor like a tarpit.

“Counter with Liquidation!”

Goliath was barely standing now, but nonetheless he obliged. A burst of massive water surrounded him, and he hurried off. The black liquid didn’t slow him down one bit. Several tendrils sprouted out and attempted to grab him, but he swiped away each one. He and Absol collided, and an explosion occurred.

Puffs of smoke rolled in, causing everyone to cough when they inhaled it. As soon as the air cleared, both Goliath and Absol lay on the floor.

Grimsley sighed in relief, glad that Pokémon was finally defeated. Raz rubbed onto his leg, and he lowered himself to scratch her chin.

“Guzma, what is wrong with you!” Guzma yelled to himself after he returned Goliath. He pulled his hair and stomped on the floor.

Nanu returned Absol, gazing down at the pokeball in his palm. “Good work there, boy.”

“Same goes for you, Raz.” Grimsley returned her also.

Gladion put the Yungoos down, who shrunk back and took a step forward. He glared at Guzma.

“Did you know anything about Cosmog? And was it you that sent your guys to get them?”

Guzma seemed to regard him a moment. A wide grin crossed his face.

“Yes on both accounts. In fact, I’m sure Plumeria and her boys made a second attempt at Aether House already.”

Gladion’s voice cracked and his right eye twitched. His palm almost reached a pokéball, but then Selene grabbed his wrist and gave him a stern look.

“Don’t. It’s not worth it.”

Gladion blinked and his lips were pressed together in a slight grimace. He groaned in defeat and let go of Selene’s grip. Grimsley found himself agreeing with Selene there.

“Anyways, that’s all you’ll get from me. My gang and I are leaving Po Town soon. If you want to know what’s the deal with Cosmog, go ask Mother Dearest.”

Guzma opened the front door and left the mansion. Grimsley fixed his suspicious stare on him until he was no more.

“You know what Guzma meant by that, Officer Nanu?” Gladion asked with a confused look on his face.

“Your mother has been paying big bucks to have him and his crew return Cosmog to her,” Nanu said, and Gladion’s eyes grew wide.

“Wait, really?” Gladion grabbed his shaking wrist, trying to steady it.

“Why were you on Guzma’s laptop in the first place?” Grimsley asked. He recalled Guzma screaming at Nanu and Selene for sneaking into his personal space before he and Gladion barged in.
“A friend of mine wanted me to look up if there were any connections between Aether and Team Skull. I didn’t like what I found.”

“We have to check to see if everyone in Aether House is all right,” Selene said.

Nanu grunted in agreement. “We can do that in the police station. Your guys’ Pokémon can be healed there too. Let’s go outside.”

Everyone stepped out of the Shady House. There were no Team Skull grunts around, so Grimsley assumed all of them had fled.

When the group reached already halfway through the town, they noticed Nanu’s Honchkrow perched on a tree. Nanu whistled, which caused the bird to fly back to him. He said thanks for distracting Guzma and returned him inside his pokeball. At that moment, a loud shriek erupted the skies and Grimsley gazed up to see Hau and Acerola riding on a pair of Xatu.

“Uncle Nanu!” Once the Xatu landed, Acerola hopped off and approached the group. The Yungoos rushed to her, giving her a happy cry. She picked him up. “Thank goodness you guys are alright.”

“Is something the matter?” Nanu asked with concern.

“Big time,” Hau said, also getting off from his Xatu. “While you guys were away, Lillie disappeared.”

Everyone didn’t react to the news well. Grimsley swallowed hard and pressed his lips. Nanu’s eyes narrowed, staring into the distance. Selene gasped in shock. Gladion’s expression tightened.

“How?” Selene asked.

A deep frown crossed Acerola’s face. “Plumeria came back not long after you and Grimsley left. Lillie turned herself in so that no one else got hurt.”

“And you let that happen?” Gladion asked, his voice on edge.

Hau lowered his head and his shoulders slumped. "I'm supposed to be a trainer! But when it came down to it, Lillie had to protect me... Lillie, who's not even a trainer to begin with!"

Gladion raised a brow, and he seemed to consider Hau’s words for a moment.

Selene rubbed a fist against her chest. She faced Grimsley.

“You were right that this was a trap. If I hadn’t left in the first place, none of this would’ve happened.”

Grimsley frowned and pressed his lips. “What’s important now is what you plan to do next. I assume it’s getting back your friend.”

“That’s how you guys are gonna make up to me. I have an idea where Team Skull’s taking her.”

“Wait, really?” Hau asked, eyes growing wide. “Where?”

“Aether Paradise. That’s where Lillie and I came from.”

A horrified look crossed Nanu’s face. “No, you kids aren’t going there! You guys don’t know what you’re in for.”
Frowning, Grimsley believed they were charging into trouble far worse than Team Skull. It was better that they stay put.

“I agree with Nanu here. You already dealt one card when facing Team Skull. If I were you I would stop there.”

“But our friend is in trouble!” Selene said. “You’re telling us we should back out?”

“I also have to agree with Uncle Nanu,” Acerola said, her tone uncharacteristically serious. “You guys are amazing trainers, but I think this is better left to the adults.”

Selene and Hau’s faces fell. Gladion grunted and narrowed his eyes at Nanu.

“Remember when you told me I should do my second trial on this island, Officer Nanu?” Gladion asked.

“Yeah I did, what about it?”

“Well, a few days ago I went and did the trial in Mount Hokulani and I now I have two Z-Crystals.”

He approached Nanu and pulled out two Z-Crystals, the Ghostium-Z and a yellow one. Grimsley mused the second one must be the Electricium-Z Sophocles and Molayne had told him about.

“Oh yeah, I gave you the Ghostium-Z some weeks ago!” Acerola said, beaming.

“Wait, you’re taking the Island Challenge too?” Hau asked.

“I am, but got distracted with being an errand boy for Team Skull.” He faced back at Nanu. “If I can get your Z-Ring and Z-Crystal, then I’m more than prepared to face Aether.”

“Hey, I want a Grand Trial with you, too!” Selene said with raised fists. “If we win, then you have to let us go!”

A smirk curled on Grimsley’s lips. “So you guys are making a bet with him. I would like to see that.”

“Same here!” Hau said. “I want to see how Kahuna Nanu battles before I do my Grand Trial with him.”

Raising a brow at Hau, Nanu asked, “And what about you, Hala’s kid? You want a Grand Trial too?”

Hau jumped, looking flustered. “Oh, I’m not ready yet. I wanna help Selene and Gladion get Lillie back, though.”

Nanu stared at the children. After a moment, he sighed and ran his fingers through his hair.

“You guys just don’t know when to quit, huh? All right, you guys can do your Grand Trials tomorrow morning. Only if you win will I not stop you going to Aether.”

“All right!” Selene said, pumping her fist in the air. Gladion folded his arms against his chest and his nostrils flared.

“I would love to stay, but I have to take Yungoos back to the Aether House now. Also, tomorrow Sophocles is coming over for our Trial Captain meeting,” Acerola said. The Yungoos she held in
her arms gave a soft growl.

“You two have a safe trip back!” Hau said.

“Thanks, we will! And good luck with your Grand Trial, Selene and Gladion!”

Acerola waved goodbye to them, and then she and Yungoos hopped onto one of the Xatu. They took off along with the other Xatu. Grimsley gazed up and let out a soft sigh.

“We should all call it a night,” he said.

“For once we agree on something,” Nanu said. “You all can stay in the police station for the night. Just be careful with stepping on the Meowth’s toys and food.”

Nanu headed toward that direction, everyone else following behind. While walking, Grimsley looked down at his Z-Ring and frowned.

He didn’t successfully execute a Z-Move because of Guzma making the first move. When Nanu did it on the second attempt and defeated Guzma in a draw, he was astonished at him more than ever before. He needed to properly do Never-Ending Nightmare to have Nanu take him seriously.

Chapter End Notes

Guzma has a Mega Pinsir when you go against him in the Battle Tree in Moon and Ultra Moon. How he gets it will be discussed next chapter.

I'm still doing the advertising campaign for Foul Play! Spreading the word would be appreciated:

Twitter: https://twitter.com/BayWrites/status/1170572461659713537

As always, thanks to bobandbill for betaing. Next chapter, Grand Trial battle with Nanu! November is gonna be busy for me, but I'll try to have Chapter 18 within a few weeks. Catch ya next time!
In which Selene and Gladion have their Grand Trial with Nanu.

The early morning sun shone through the window glass, stirring Nanu from his sleep. He yawned and stretched his arms, his bones cracking. Most of the Meowth were awake, either playing or eating. While still on the couch, Nanu glanced around to see no one else was inside.

Last night was very draining. Usually, he let Team Skull do whatever they wanted in Po Town, but after talking with his Interpol colleagues, he needed answers. He had several Z-Crystals under his disposal, and during his battle with Guzma, he used Never-Ending Nightmare because Black Hole Eclipse would be too much. It annoyed him that the children didn’t want to listen to him and he would have to do his Kahuna duties, but at least Tapu Bulu would stop pestering him.

After he, Grimsley, and the children had stepped inside the police station they called Becky. She confirmed that Team Skull had indeed came back and Lillie went with them willingly. Selene then told her that she, Hau, and Gladion planned to rescue Lillie but left out any mention of going to Aether Paradise. As expected, Becky was worried but wished them luck and the conversation ended. Nanu gave everyone potions and let them stay inside the police station for the night.

A loud cry interrupted Nanu’s thoughts, and he turned to see one of the Meowth tapping his paw on the empty plate. He grunted and rolled his eyes.

“All right, all right, just give me a moment,” Nanu said as he rose from the couch and went to grab a box of cat food on his desk.

Once Nanu was done with taking care all of the cats’ needs for the morning, he stepped outside to see everyone there. Both Hau and Selene were talking in quiet voices, their friend likely on their minds. Gladion gazed upon the sky and had his back rested on Null’s side. Grimsley was a little farther from the children, and Nanu moved closer to where he was.

Grimsley was attempting the pose for Never-Ending Nightmare with his Liepard and Absol. Nanu raised a brow at his second Pokémon, finding it amusing he also owned an Absol. When Grimsley finished his pose, dark vapors curled around both him and his Pokémon. The vapors grew bigger for a few seconds, and then they puffed away. A confused look struck Grimsley’s face, and his Liepard whined. His Absol tilted her head and made a noise.

When he and Grimsley attempted that Z-Move together, Guzma’s Golispo had struck their Pokémon first and caused them to lose concentration. Nanu now wondered if Grimsley would’ve failed to do the Z-Move if that didn’t happen.

“Practicing that Z-Move there, pretty boy?” Nanu asked, and that made Grimsley flinch. He faced him, frowning.
“For about half an hour or so. I’m wondering why my Z-Move isn’t working.”

“Maybe you did the pose wrong,” Nanu said, and Grimsley glared at him. “I’m joking. Actually, I think it’s because you and your Pokémon aren’t strong enough yet.”

Grimsley’s face fell, looking just as offended as before. “That shouldn’t be the case. Roulette and I can do Mega Evolution.”

“Wait, really?” Nanu shouldn’t be surprised; he was an Elite Four trainer, after all. He cleared his throat. “Z-Moves are more powerful than even a Mega Garchomp or Mega Salamence’s attack. I mentioned before it took me some attempts until I perfected my Z-Move. Maybe it’ll be the same for you.”

Grimsley seemed to regard him for a moment. Both of his Pokémon walked to his side and rubbed on him. Their trainer smiled and kneeled down to pet them.

“You’re being oddly nice to me,” Grimsley said. He picked himself back up, giving Nanu a suspicious brow.

“Well, you helped me with Guzma and Team Skull. I’m letting you keep that Z-Ring, but I won’t battle you until you get Never-Ending Nightmare down.”

Grimsley’s eyes grew wide, as if he was surprised to hear that.

“So wait, does that mean you’re seriously considering a battle with me?”

“Only so you will be quiet. But again, won’t happen until you do that Z-Move fully.”

Grimsley blinked, and then he chuckled.

“Perhaps your Grand Trial today might inspire me.” Grimsley turned quiet for a moment, and his smile faded. “Did you know how Guzma had his Pinsir’s Mega Stone?”

A lump caught inside Nanu’s throat. He furrowed his brow and pressed his lips.

“I heard the last kahuna got the Mega Stones from Poni Island and gave those to his daughter and Guzma. They held him in high regard.”

Grimsley’s eyes grew wide. “Poni Island? So Alola has Mega Stones too?”

“Yes, but they’re reserved as prizes over at that island’s battling facility, the Battle Tree.”

He knew the last kahuna’s daughter well. Like Guzma, she too had a Mega Stone but rarely used it. After the formation of Team Skull, she was by Guzma’s side, through thick and thin.

“The Battle Tree, hm? Perhaps I’ll check that out before I leave.” Grimsley raised a brow and asked, “Do you know anything about the last Kahuna? I recall you mentioned he did something bad.”

Nanu gave a single nod. “He formed a group that would later inspire the creation of Team Skull. Like Guzma, he wasn’t fond of Alola’s old traditions and thought Alola was behind on everything. He approved the construction of the Thrifty Megamart, but Tapu Bulu didn’t like that at all. Apparently, he got caught in the deity’s wrath while trying to calm it down, and hadn’t been heard from since.”

He watched Grimsley’s face as he let all of this sink in. Nanu had been shocked when he first heard
that story, but as the years passed he came to not underestimate Tapu Bulu’s power.

Nanu looked over his shoulder to see the children still where they were. “I think it’s time for their Grand Trial.”

He moved at a leisurely pace, Grimsley and his Pokémon following behind. When he approached the children, Selene and Hau stopped talking and Gladion picked himself up.

“Oh, we’re gonna do our Grand Trial now?” Selene asked eagerly. Gladion joined her.

“Right, kid.” He paused. “Now, after seeing you two battle yesterday, I decided on your guys’ Grand Trial. You guys are going to work together in a double battle against me.”

“Is that all?” Gladion asked, a smirk pulling on his lips. “Shouldn’t be too difficult.”

“Hold up, I’m not done yet. The catch is you guys have to knock out both of my Pokémon while your guys’ Pokémon are still standing.”

Both Selene and Gladion exchanged baffled looks. Even Hau and Grimsley had similar reactions.

“How come that’s our Grand Trial?” Selene asked.

“Yeah, that sounds harsh,” Hau said.

“Since you guys want to go to Aether, I want to see how well you two work together under adversity. This Grand Trial is the perfect opportunity for it.”

“And if we think this is unfair?” Gladion asked.

“Then there’s the exit,” Nanu said, pointing to the other side.

Selene and Gladion looked at one another.

“Can you give us a moment?” Selene asked. She grabbed Gladion’s arm, and they whispered to one another.

While waiting for their response, Nanu wondered if they would actually walk out and be sensible for once. He wouldn’t mind doing their Grand Trial under different circumstances. The two children soon finished talking and faced Nanu.

“All right, we’ll agree to your terms,” Gladion said.

Nanu’s face tensed. He shook his head and scratched the back of his neck.

“Geez, you guys don’t know when to quit, huh? Fine, get in positions, you two.”

“Oh, oh! Can I be a referee?” Hau asked, jumping up and down.

“Eh, sure,” Nanu said with a shrug. He was on the left side of the field while Gladion and Selene went on the right. Grimsley, his Pokémon, and Hau were on the sidelines.

Nanu pulled out his poké balls and released Persian and Honchkrow. Persian growled and stretched under the morning sunlight while Honchkrow threw his head up and cawed. Selene and Gladion took out their own poké balls and released their Pokémon.

“Okay Poppers, time for you to shine!”
“Let’s go, Null!”

Both Gladion and Selene’s Pokémon were out also. Poppers barked, twirling around and clapping his flippers. Null shook their head and crouched down in a battle stance.

Hau stepped forward and raised his arm. “This is the Grand Trial between Kahuna Nanu and Selene and Gladion.” He dropped his arm and shouted, “And begin!”

The two trainers said their first commands. Selene called for her Brionne to use Bubble Beam while Gladion told Null to strike first.

Poppers inhaled, firing off a series of bubbles from his nose instead of his mouth. Persian’s blue gem on her forehead glowed, and she countered Popper’s Bubble Beam with glowing rocks. The two attacks collided, creating an explosion.

Honchkrow swopped down to get closer at Null, but they acted first by rushing in a blur and slamming him hard. The bird squawked as the wind was knocked out of him, and backed away.

“What Swift at both of them,” Nanu said.

Persian held her head up high and her gem glowed. She shot multiple stars with golden sparkles at Poppers and Null, hitting them both. Poppers covered his face while Null shook and turned their head away.

Selene directed her Brionee to use Disarming Voice. Raising his arms up, Poppers sang in a sweet but high pitched voice. Several heart-shaped vapors passed through Honchkrow and Persian, and both Pokémon cringing at the noise. Hau and Grimsley also flinched upon hearing Popper’s voice.

“X-Scissor, Null!” Gladion commanded, clenching his fist.

“Steel Wing!” Nanu told Honchkrow.

Honchkrow shirked, diving down with his wings shining a metallic color. Null’s claw glowed light green and he swiped at Honchkrow’s wings. The two bounced their attacks off each other like that several times until Honchkrow managed to smack Null’s face and left a cut there. Null shook their head and snorted.

“Icy Wind at both Pokémon, go!” Selene said, thrusting her arm forward.

Poppers inhaled, blowing out a blast of chilly air at Nanu’s Pokémon. Both Honchkrow and Persian winced and moved their heads away from the shards of ice showered at them. Some of the trees nearby had its leaves stripped away, while their trunks were impaled by ice. On the sidelines, Hau’s face and teeth shook while Grimsley narrowed his eyes and tugged at his scarf.

“Using Icy Wind to slow down Nanu’s Pokémon,” Grimsley said. “Good choice in this stage of the battle.”

“Both Selene and Gladion are something, huh?” Hau said, grinning.

When Nanu overheard their conversation, he grunted and his lips twitched. No matter, one Icy Wind wouldn’t stop his Pokémon from their tracks.

“Night Slash!”

With a squawk, Honchkrow’s wings flashed purple and he struck Poppers. Poppers fell but picked
himself up and let out an annoyed bark. Selene gasped and glared at Nanu.

“Use your claws at Persian!” Gladion called out. His Pokémon’s claw shone brightly, and Null charged.

A faint smile pulled on Nanu’s lips. “Keep moving, and wait until your foe gets close.”

As soon as Null got close at Persian, she dodged at their swipe. Null made several attempts with their claws, but Persian kept jumping away and avoiding being caught by them. Another swipe, an opening, and Persian grabbed Null’s leg with her jaws. Null cried in pain, only for Persian to flip them over with all the strength she could muster. Persian panted hard while Null got up and growled.

“Null!” Gladion screamed, his voice trembling.

“Woah, what is that?” Hau asked.

“That’s Foul Play,” Grimsley answered. He looked down at Raz, who meowed. “Using a Pokémon’s strength to your advantage.”

Nanu frowned and folded his arms against his chest. So far he wasn’t impressed with their performance today. These children needed a wake-up call.

“What’s wrong, you two? Your Pokémon still tired from yesterday?” he taunted, and that caused Selene and Gladion to glare daggers at him.

“Maybe if you let us go to Aether instead of stopping us, then our Pokémon would be in better shape!” Selene countered.

“And let you guys go unprepared? You’re going to have to do better than this. Persian, Play Rough! And Honchkrow, Brave Bird!”

Both of his Pokémon made their moves. Persian pounced at Poppers and the two rolled over. A cloud of thick white smoke covered them, and while Nanu couldn’t see he could tell by their noises that the Pokémon were fighting each other. As soon as the smoke cleared, Persian and Poppers were still standing with scratches and dirt all over them.

Meanwhile, Honchkrow burst into flames and accelerated. He crashed onto Null, causing them to drop down, and flew back up. The bird cried in pain and flapped his wings slowly, hurt from using that move. Null picked themselves up, but barely as their body shook.

Back in the sidelines, Hau and Grimsley watched with keen interest.

“Strike again,” Nanu said without elaborating further. Honchkrow released a crimson-colored orb from his mouth while Persian blasted off multiple sparkling gems. Selene and Gladion called out their commands urgently.

Poppers opened his mouth wide and fired off a blast of water that passed through the Shadow Ball and hit Honchkrow right in the chest. Honchkrow was pushed back and his feathers were soaked.

Null was bombarded by Persian’s Power Gem, but they pushed through and rammed into her. Persian backed away and dug her claws into the ground.

Nanu’s brow furrowed. The children were more awake now, but this was still not enough. Time for more taunting.
“Just because you went against an Ultra Beast and beat up some Team Skull grunts, you think you’re all that, huh girl?” Nanu said, and a pensive expression crossed Selene’s face.

“Well, encountering that Ultra Beast was a big deal to me. And Team Skull has been bothering me since I started my island challenge.”

“Fair on both accounts. However, that overconfidence of yours will be your downfall.” He shifted his head towards Persian's direction. “Swift, Persian.”

Selene commanded Poppers to act quick, and he shot out several high-pressure bubbles from his nose. Persian lifted her head and her gem glowed. She blasted off multiple shining stars, which popped all of the bubbles and hit Poppers and Null. They turned their heads, backing away.

Nanu fixed his stare at Gladion. “And you, Gladion. You call that strong? Pathetic.”

Gladion’s face tensed, tightness in his eyes and face.

“Null is not pathetic! We’ve been working hard to get where we are today. X-Scissor!”

Nanu grunted and ordered Honchkrow to use Night Slash. Green claws collided with purple wings, tiny sparks flying. Honchkrow kept diving down while Null went on the offensive.

“Maybe the problem isn’t the Pokémon, but their trainer,” Nanu said, putting his hands on his sides. “Null would be better off with someone else. Same goes for the girl and your Brionne.”

“Are you saying we’re not good enough for our Pokémon?” Gladion asked, his eyes wide.

“That’s exactly what I’m saying,” Nanu said with a shrug.

“You take that back!” Selene snapped, glaring at him. Gladion gritted his teeth and clenched his fist.

Nanu’s lips curled into a smirk. Hook, line, and sinker.

“Another round of Swift, girl.”

Persian obliged, and Poppers and Null were caught in a storm of sparkling stars once more. They fell and slowly got up back, both Pokémon catching their breaths. Selene and Gladion gasped and their faces fell.

“Hey, that’s not nice at all!” Hau complained, narrowing his eyes at Nanu. Next to him, Grimsley folded his arms against his chest and pressed his lips.

“Do you think a Dark-type trainer cares about being nice?” Nanu’s smirk widened.

“Nanu is right,” Grimsley said, giving an indifferent expression. “Us Dark-type trainers don’t mind playing dirty.”

Her shoulders slumping, Selene dropped her gaze on the ground. When she looked back at Nanu, a spark of determination filled her eyes.

“You’re right that I can be overconfident at times. However, this island challenge taught me a lot in bonding with my Pokémon and trusting each other.” She turned towards Gladion, flashing him a soft smile. “Gladion can be overdramatic, but I think he’s a great trainer and cares deeply towards his Pokémon.”
“Selene…” Gladion said in a low voice, his eyes growing wide.

Nanu gave her a shocked look, and then he grinned. Grimsley and Hau also seemed to be taken aback by her response.

“Gotta admit, I respect you for defending yourself and your friend there. This is a Grand Trial, though, and we’re not done yet.” Nanu raised his arm high. “Persian, Play Rough at Null. Honchkrow, Steel Wing at Poppers.”

“Icy Wind!” Selene ordered.

As Persian and Honchkrow charged at their respective foes, Poppers blew out a blast of cold air which pushed them back. Persian meowed in irritation while Honchkrow squawked and swung his head around. Satisfied, Poppers barked and clapped with his flippers.

Gladion grinned and raised his fist. “X-Scissor at Persian!”

Null howled and jumped at Persian, swiping her face with their green claws. Persian let out a painful cry and shook her head. A deep cut was left where Null had hurt her. Nanu and Gladion yelled out their commands.

“Brave Bird, and make it count!”

“Hold Honchkrow off with Crush Claw!”

Both Pokémon launched at each other, Honchkrow in a burst of flames at high speed and Null stretching his glowing claw wide. An explosion came in between them, the smoke obscuring everyone’s vision for a moment. When the air cleared, Honchkrow laid on the ground and muddy while Null stared down at him.

Raising his arm, Hau announced that Honchkrow was unable to battle. Selene and Poppers cheered while Gladion sighed in relief. Smiling a little, Grimsley closed his eyes and lowered his head. Nanu grunted and returned his Pokémon.

“You did good work there, birdbrain,” he said in a low voice. He faced the two island challengers. “Don’t celebrate this yet. Remember, if either of your Pokémon can’t battle anymore then that’s it,” he said, and that made Selene and Gladion expressions turn back to serious.

Everyone made their commands, and the Pokémon sprung into action. Persian fired off Power Gem at her foes while Null and Poppers used X-Scissor and Disarming Voice to block off her attack. When they were near her, Persian would move away from Null’s claws and Popper’s pink vapors. Power Gem didn’t have the same wide range as Swift, so she divided her attention between the two. Selene and Gladion would often give encouraging words to their Pokémon to keep up the pace.

While not smiling, Nanu’s expression grew less stiff. This was what he wanted to see, the two at their fullest and not holding back. After Persian, Poppers, and Null bounced off several more blows, they stopped to catch their breaths. This Grand Trial was nearing its end.

“Looks like everyone is on their limit. You ready to finish this, girl?” Nanu asked, and Persian responded with an agreed meow. He grinned, tearing the Darkinium-Z crystal out from the cord around his neck. “Then let’s prepare our Z-Move.”

His warning caused Gladion and Selene’s eyes to grow wide.

“Z-Move?” Hau said, his voice cracking. “Watch out, you guys!”
Nanu slipped the black crystal into the slot of his Z-Ring, and it sparkled into a multitude of color of lights. Like when he did Never-Ending Nightmare with Absol, Persian assumed a menacing stance while he did his movements for the pose. He dropped down to touch his feet, slowly picked himself up, and stretched out his hands. Bend down to touch his feet, slowly picking himself up, and then outstretching his hands.

Gladion and Hau stared blankly at how silly the pose looked. Grimsley raised a brow and his face tensed.

“Hey, Selene, have Poppers use a Z-Move while I have Null retreat to safer ground,” Gladion suggested. Selene was caught off guard by Nanu’s Z-Move also, but she then hummed and nodded.

“Right!” she said and performed her own Z-Move. She and Poppers moved their arms like an ocean wave, and a bright light covered them both.

A black hole hung above the trainers and dark mist formed around the battlefield. Raging winds blew over with the leaves and rocks being sucked inside the black hole, causing everyone and their Pokémon to brace themselves. Null backed away several feet while Poppers spun around and unleashed a swirling torrential of water.

The two Z-Moves clashed, the Black Hole Eclipse sucking in the water from Popper’s attack like a drinking straw. Soon the black hole exploded and all of the water burst out, splashing onto Persian and soaking her fur.

Poppers was still standing but barely, and Selene took deep breaths. They were still getting used to Hydro Vortex, but Nanu thought the two already progressed pretty fast.

“Finish off with Iron Head!” Gladion screamed.

Null let out a howl and slammed onto Persian hard. She was pushed back against a tree and collapsed upon impact.

“Persian is unable to battle!” Hau declared, raising his hand. “The winners of the Grand Trial are Selene and Gladion!”

Poppers fell backward and lay down, his chest rising and falling rapidly. Selene rushed to his side, picking him up.

“We did it, Poppers! We won our third Grand Trial!” she told him. Poppers gave out a happy bark, and they touched noses.

Gladion grinned and approached Null, scratching their chin. “You also did well today, Null.”

“All right, you guys did it!” Hau cheered, pumping his fist in the air.

“Congratulations, the both of you,” Grimsley said with a small smile.

Nanu stared at them for a second, and he followed up with a chuckle and shook his head. He approached them.

“I gotta admit, your guys’ Pokémon really worked hard for you. Here, these are yours.”

He pulled out two Darkinium-Z crystals from the pocket of his pants and handed them to Selene and Gladion. Gladion nodded at him and put it away while Selene held it up to Poppers and beamed.

Facing back to Gladion, Nanu said, “I also have one other thing to give you.”

He pulled out a Z-Ring from his shirt’s pocket, giving it to Gladion. This one was different from his and Grimsley’s, the strap being purple instead of black or red. Gladion locked his gaze at the Z-Ring and then back at Nanu.

“Thank you. I’ll make sure to use it well,” Gladion said, grinning.

“I have no doubt you will, kid.” He paused. “Congratulations or whatever on finishing your Ula’ula trials. You kids got somewhere else to be, right?”

“Wait, before we go, I got a surprise!” Selene put Poppers down, and she pulled out three Z-Crystals from her bag. They were light green with an insect insignia on it. Everyone including Nanu gave her stunned looks.

“Did you steal those Buginium-Z from Guzma’s room?” Gladion asked, and Selene hummed.

“It’s not right that he gets these to himself, so I grabbed some for us!” Selene gave each one to Gladion and Hau, the latter saying thanks. She faced Grimsley, handing him one too. “This is for helping us with Guzma!”

Grimsley blinked in surprise, and then he smiled. “I’ll keep this safe.”

Gladion, Selene, and Hau offered one another determined faces.

“Team Skull has a few boats in Po Town we can use,” Gladion said. “We should be able to get to Aether Paradise by nightfall.”

“Once you guys get there, go see the Assistant Branch Chief. She should be able to help you.” Nanu believed mentioning that wouldn’t hurt, and to let the children know whom to go to if they were in any sort of trouble.

“You mean Ms. Santana?” Gladion raised a confused brow, and then he nodded. “All right, we will.”

“Let’s get moving then,” Selene said. She gave Nanu and Grimsley appreciated smiles. “It’s nice talking with you, Grimsley! And thanks for the awesome Grand Trial, Kahuna Nanu!”

“The next time I come back to Ula’ula Island, I’ll challenge you, too!” Hau said, a wide smile stretching across his face.

Selene and Gladion returned their Pokémon, and the three children headed out. Nanu stared at them for a moment, remembering his conversation with Gladion several days ago. There were some words of wisdom he wanted to give him.

“Hold up, Gladion,” he yelled out, and that made Selene, Hau, and Gladion stopped. Nanu moved several steps forward. “Tell me… If you’re really trying to get stronger as you say, then what are you depending Team Skull for?”

Gladion’s face fell. He opened his mouth, but no words came out. He turned around and left with Hau and Selene.

With a chuckle, Grimsley crossed his arms and grinned.
“I was amazed at how powerful Black Hole Eclipse was,” he said, and Nanu stared at him.

“Are you trying to lick my sandals?”

“I’m just genuinely impressed, that’s all.” Grimsley’s expression changed. “So, what now?”

“You remember the Interpol friend I told you about when we were in Haina Desert?” he asked, and Grimsley said that he did. “He and his partner are staying in Poni Island now. I need to tell them what I found on Guzma’s laptop.”

“Is it alright if I come with you? I would like to speak with the Interpol agent about Colress.” Grimsley paused. “Also, I’m interested in seeing Tapu Fini.”

“You want to see Tapu Fini?” Nanu asked in shock, raising a suspicious brow. “What for?”

“I read that Tapu Fini can create spirits of those who were deceased. I’m curious if that is true.”

Nanu gave Grimsley a pinched look. First, he wanted to go to the Ruins of Abundance, and now to see Tapu Fini. That man truly believed this was supposed to be a nice holiday. He dragged out a sigh and ran his fingers through his hair.

“You can come with me to Poni Island to see my friend. I also know someone there that can teach you the Buginium-Z’s pose. Tapu Fini is out of the question, got it?”

Grimsley frowned. That was the same disappointed face he gave before Nanu left the Aether House. His expression then changed to one of understanding.

“Fair enough.”

“Good. Let me get a few things from the police station, and then we’ll go.”

It wasn’t afternoon yet, and already today was interesting. A Grand Trial with two reckless but good-hearted trainers. He hoped the children didn’t destroy all of Aether Paradise in the process.

And now, to Poni Island.

Chapter End Notes

Quick announcement: I edited Chapters 16 and 17! Both chapters I fixed some prose and Chapter 17 I fixed the beginning scene with Grimsley and Gladion. A reader pointed out Gladion giving out personal information was too quick and so I changed to him being more hostile.

Yes, a lot of the battle was inspired by Nanu's Grand Trial in the anime. Gosh I love anime! Nanu haha.

I'm still doing the advertising campaign for Foul Play! Spreading the word would be appreciated:

Twitter: https://twitter.com/BayWrites/status/1170572461659713537
As always, thanks to bobandbill for betaing. Sorry for the delay, my beta and I got busy with some personal stuff (also I got distracted with SwSh and Fire Emblem 3 Houses lol). Next chapter we're starting the Poni Island arc! Due to wanting to get a head start on backlog for the final arc and planning another project, expect updates resuming on late January or February next year. See ya then!
Chapter Summary

In which Nanu and Grimsley head towards Poni Island and meet with Looker, Anabel, and Mina there.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It had been a while since Grimsley was on a boat. He and Nanu rented one from the boat shop next to Route 16’s shores, and were heading towards Poni Island. Through the windows, he gazed at the ocean glimmering in the late afternoon sun and the various water Pokémon jumping out. Blackjack was released into the water and swimming in pace with the boat, so Grimsley kept an eye on him.

His thoughts wandered towards Nanu’s Grand Trial earlier. He had seen Gladion and Selene battle before, so he already expected them to be great. While Nanu was far from friendly, Grimsley didn’t expect him to be capable of such harsh words to them. He wondered if the Kahuna would do the same to him once they have their battle.

Grimsley was genuinely amazed at seeing Black Hole Eclipse in action. A powerful black hole that could even suck in a raging whirlpool. Nanu and Selene’s Z-Moves clashing together was the highlight of the match.

Despite having two Z-Crystals now, he still hadn’t mastered any Z-Moves yet. Nanu claimed he knew someone in Poni Island who could help him with that, so he hoped that would be the case.

Letting out a soft sigh, he leaned back in his seat and looked at Nanu. He had been driving the boat for a few hours now with a bored expression on his face.

“So how much longer until we get to Poni Island?” he asked.

“Probably sometime after nightfall. We’ll sleep in the Pokémon Center and then in the morning we’ll find my friends.”

“You mentioned someone there can help me with Z-Moves. Can you tell me more about them?”

“Her name is Mina, and she’s a trial captain like Acerola. She trains Fairy-type Pokémon but knows several Z-Moves, including the one for the Buginium-Z. She’s also an artist, loves to draw and paint.”

Mina: Grimsley heard that name before. It was when he, Nanu, Acerola, and Becky stopped by the abandoned Thrifty Market. He glanced at the window, Blackjack still keeping up with the boat.

“She sounds fascinating. I recall Acerola saying she did her trial before.”

“Yeah, she did. Mina has her head in the clouds at times, but she’s a good kid.” Nanu’s face changed to a more serious expression. “Before we land Poni Island, some words of advice. To you, Alola is a place to sightsee and unwind. Alola is more than that, though. There are people here who are hurting and the dangers are real.”
Confused at first, Grimsley’s head flinched back slightly and his eyebrows squished together. Sure, he came to Alola for a vacation, but that didn’t mean he was ignorant of the people living here. Right? He frowned, unsure of himself.

Nanu’s words of Alola kept repeating inside his head like a broken record throughout the rest of the boat ride.

xxx

By the time they arrived at their destination, it was nightfall with a full moon and stars in view. Nanu left his boat by the port where the other boats were, and he and Grimsley headed to the Pokémon Center.

Seafolk Village was a small settlement in Poni Island where the seafolk resided. Several houseboats stylized after different Pokémon were clustered together around the dock, with floating platforms connecting the homes together. The outside vendors that sold the jewelry and vegetables were closed for the night, but when those opened the villagers and visitors often checked them out. Uphill was the Pokémon Center and the farms where the other half of the population settled.

Ever since Kahuna Sofu had passed away a few years ago, Nanu would oversee the Poni trials. Far less trainers taking the island challenge made all the way through here than the Ula’Ula trials. He couldn’t blame them, though. Poni Island had canyons, caves, and tougher Pokémon that weren’t suited for inexperienced trainers. Usually trainers from this island would begin their island challenge in either Melemele or Akala Island first. Watching over two islands took a toll on Nanu, so he hoped Tapu Fini would choose a new Kahuna soon.

He left the past buried deep in the pit of his stomach for now.

The Pokémon Center was on top of a hillcliff above Seafolk Village. The building has two floors and its architecture similar to the other Pokémon Centers. There was a large courtyard where visitors could sit on the benches and gazed below the village and ocean.

He and Grimsley found the Pokémon Center and stepped inside. As expected, the lobby was clean and organized. There were only a few people inside, two of them watching the television and another one feeding their Pokémon some food. Nanu went up to the reception desk where Nurse Joy was, who greeted him with a warm smile.

“Kahuna Nanu! It’s been a while!”

“Well I got kahuna duties back in Ula’ula, and someone needed to watch over those Team Skull kids.”

“Ah huh,” Nurse Joy said, nodding in understanding. “So you’re here to do a Grand Trial?”

“Personal business, actually.” Nanu pointed at Grimsley and he said, “I would like two rooms for us here.”

“Of course. Your trainer licenses, please.”

The men handed Nurse Joy their licenses, and she grinned at them. “Oh my, a kahuna and an Elite Four member here!” After a few minutes of putting the information into the computer, she gave their licenses back and cardkeys.

“Here you go! Your rooms are 345 and 346.”
“Thanks, appreciate it,” Nanu said. He faced Grimsley. “Our rooms are upstairs, come on.”

Nanu gestured Grimsley for him to follow, and they headed towards the stairs. Before they reached there, a woman’s voice made them stop.

“Old man Nanu, is that you?”

Mina was in front of them, giving Nanu a small smile. She carried a sketchbook with her, and her shirt and face was still splattered in paint. He offered her a weak wave.

“Hello, Mina. Still doing your art, I see.”

Mina hummed and nodded. “I’ve done sketches of the Oricorio here today. They really know how to show off their dance moves!”

“Right.” Nanu cleared his throat. “Good thing you’re here as I actually wanted to see you.”

“Oh?” Mina tilted her head. “You have some new trial goers for me?”

“Not exactly. I have someone here who could use your help on using Z-Moves.” He turned to Grimsley and had his elbow poked his shoulder. Grimsley flinched for a second and approached Mina.

“I’m Grimsley of the Unova Elite Four. It’s a pleasure to meet you, Mina.” He and Mina shook hands.

“The Elite Four?” Mina let out a whistle. “Wow, that’s impressive. We don’t have those here, but I heard Alola gonna have their own Pokémon League very soon.”

“Indeed. I already had a sneak peak of the Elite Four thanks to Professor Kukui.”

“That’s also awesome! Anyways, Nanu said you need help with Z-Moves?”

“Yes. I have two Z-Crystals and would like to use Z-Moves for both.”

Grimsley pulled out the Ghostium-Z and Buginium-Z Crystals from the sleeves of his kimono and showed them to her. Mina gazed down at them on his palm and nodded.

“A Ghostium-Z and Buginium-Z? Nice. You know the poses for either of those?”

“I know the one for the Ghostium-Z, but I’m unable to execute the Z-Move properly.”

Mina regarded him for a moment, and she hummed.

“Sure, I can help. I’m usually out at Poni Beach, so meet me there tomorrow and I’ll see what I can do.”

“Poni Beach, tomorrow. Got it.”

Nanu stayed silent while Grimsley and Mina were talking, crossing his arms against his chest. He wondered how Looker and Anabel were doing. Should he ask her? It was a long shot, but better than nothing. He faced Mina.

“There’s something else I want to ask you. Have you seen a dark-haired man in a long coat and a purple-haired woman in a black suit?”
Mina threw him a confused stare, and she shook her head. “Nope, haven’t seen either of them. Friends of yours?”

“You can say that. They’re supposed to be staying here for a while.”

“I see, I see. Well, if I do see them I’ll let you know.”

“That would be great, thank you.”

“No problem! I have to get back home now, but it’s great seeing you two!” Mina waved one goodbye hand to them and left the Pokémon Center.

“Hopefully we’ll see your Interpol friends here,” Grimsley said. “Should we head to our rooms, then?”

Nanu grunted in agreement, having the same sentiment in wanting to see Anabel and Looker soon. They headed upstairs and retired for the night.

xxx

Nanu and Grimsley woke up late the next morning. After they ate breakfast, Grimsley watched the television in the lounge while Nanu used the videophone to call Acerola at the Aether House. He first told her that he would be away in Poni Island for a few days on a personal errand, and then went over how the Grand Trial with Selene and Gladion had gone.

“So Selene and Gladion completed their Ula’ula trial? I’m so happy for them!”

“They were a little soft at first, but after giving them some words of encouragement they pulled through.”

Acerola pouted and had her hands on her sides. “Oh, really? I’ve seen your Grand Trials and you’re more blunt than Kahunas Hala or Olivia!”

Nanu flinched and a “tch” sound left his throat. He narrowed his eyes at her.

“You got me there, kid,” he said, and Acerola giggled.

“Either way, wished I was there to see it! So they’re at Aether Paradise now, then?”

“They went along with their friend, Hau. I still think the rescue should be better left to the adults, but what can you do?” Nanu then asked, “Since I’m going to be in Poni Island for a bit, can you check on the Meowth until I get back?”

“Sure!” Acerola said, beaming. “I always love playing with them and rubbing their bellies!”

With a snort, Nanu shook his head. Every time Acerola visited the police station, she would play with the Meowth. Most of them liked her back, so it was better that way than them bothering him.

“Of course you do.” He shifted his gaze away from the screen for a second. “If you need anything, you know how to reach me.”

“Okay! You and Grimsley have fun in Poni Island!” Acerola said, flashing him a grin.

Once they hung up, the screen on Acerola’s side turned black. Nanu sighed and got up to where Grimsley was. He joined with him on the couch.
“You let Acerola know we’re in Poni Island?” Grimsley asked, and Nanu nodded.

“Told her we’ll be here for a few days or so. She’ll also be watching over the Meowth while I’m gone.”

Right now the television broadcasted the news. After the reporter finished warning about high surfs in Akala Beach, the next segment was on the upcoming Alola Pokémon League.

“Alola’s first Pokémon League is right on track on making its grand debut in spring next year. Construction of the stadium on top of Mount Lanakila is continuing without much delays. While the majority of the populace are excited, there are some that worry the Pokémon League will replace the island challenge and its traditions. We talked with Professor Leilani Kukui and two of the trainers he had chosen for the Elite Four, Kahili Hano and Molayne Velvet.”

The television screen switched to Professor Kukui, Kahili, and Molayne outside the Hokulani Observatory.

“When Professor Kukui first came to me on this ambitious undertaking, this is an opportunity I couldn’t pass up,” Kahili said, smiling at the camera. Molayne wore a similar expression. “I can’t wait to serve as one of Alola’s top trainers.”

“He assured us that the island challenge will still be here,” Molayne said. “Think of the Elite Four as an extension to our trial captains and kahunas. Miss Hano and I will help the islands with resources, check up on the trials, and oversee the final trial before the trainer takes on the Pokémon League.”

“I met with Kahili and Molayne over a week ago,” Grimsley said. Nanu glanced to see a small smile on his lips. “I think they’ll make fine Elite Four trainers.”

Back to the television, Kukui’s face was shown. He flashed the camera his widest grin.

“For our grand debut it’ll work a bit differently from other Leagues. It’ll be an all out tournament with the Elite Four, Kahunas, Trial Captains, and nominated trainers from Alola!” He paused. “I’ve always valued our old traditions here in Alola, but it’s time to make a Champion for the whole world to see! That’s why we’re having our own Pokémon League and Elite Four, yeah!”

Nanu watched the segment with an indifferent expression. He had no qualms for the Pokémon League being established here, he just didn’t want to be a part of the Elite Four.

“I didn’t know why some people were against a Pokémon League being here,” Grimsley said, sounding disappointed.

“Quite a few folks in Ula’ula Island held protests near where the construction site was,” Nanu said and shrugged. “I may not care for Kukui’s pet project, but I see no harm in him setting up one here.”

“Me neither.” Grimsley leaned back on the couch with his arm over his head. “Have any idea where on this island your Interpol friends are?”

“Most of Poni Island is barren land compared to other islands. We’ll start in this village first and then work from--”

“Kahuna Nanu, there you are!” Mina called out his name, interrupting him. He looked over his shoulder to see her grinning at him. “I found them!”
“Find who?” Nanu asked, furrowing his brow.

“Your friends that you told me about last night! The dark-haired dude with a long coat and the purple-haired lady in black, right?”

Nanu’s stomach jumped when he heard that. Guess he and Grimsley didn’t need to search for them. Grimsley tipped his head to the side.

“Yes, that’s them. Where did you find them?”

“I saw them inside the village’s restaurant while taking a morning walk. They’re outside where the benches are.”

“That easy, huh? Thanks for letting me know, kid.” Nanu gave Mina an appreciative smile, and he turned to Grimsley. “Let’s go.” They got up from the couch and left the Pokémon Center.

Outside, the sun grew brighter and a gentle breeze filled with ocean salt picked up. Nanu and Grimsley headed to where the benches were, and they stopped a short distance.

Anabel and Looker sat on the benches, their hands on their laps. They greeted Nanu with warm smiles.

“Good morning, Officer Nanu,” Anabel said. “Mr. Looker and I were surprised when Mina told us you’re here.”

“This was a last minute trip, to tell the truth. Grimsley and I came here to talk to you guys.” After Nanu said that, Grimsley nodded.

Both agents looked at Grimsley with lowered heads, and then Looker flashed him a grin. They got up and approached him.

“It’s been a while, huh Mr. Grimsley Thomas? If your memory is hazy, I’m Agent Looker.” He extended his hand to him, and they shook hands.

“I actually remember you. You were the agent that spoke with me and everyone else after Team Plasma’s takeover of the Pokémon League.”

“And I’m Agent Anabel, Looker’s superior,” Anabel said, also shaking hands with him.

“Grimsley wants to know more about your guys’ scientist and the Ultra Recon Squad,” Nanu said. He crossed his arms.

“You mean Dr. Colress Antimony?” Anabel asked.

“Yes, him,” Grimsley said. His eyes narrowed. “Is it true that he struck a deal with Interpol?”

Looker’s expression changed to a frown. “He did. He has done a variety of research with our organization already.”

An odd noise left Grimsley’s throat, and he grimaced. Staring at him, Nanu already expected him to not take that news well.

“When we visited Officer Nanu over a week ago, he told us that you knew him but you two had a fall out,” Anabel said to him. Next to her, Looker pulled out a small notebook and flipped through some pages.
"We knew each other, yes. Close, even. Long story short, we broke off contact when I found out he was in Team Plasma."

With an understanding hum, Looker wrote down what Grimsley had said. "When did you find out about Colress’s connection to Team Plasma?"

"I would say over a year after Team Plasma took over the Pokémon League. I didn’t contact the authorities back then because I was too upset and wasn’t thinking straight."

After Looker finished writing more of Grimsley’s words down, he gave him a sympathetic look.

"Is there anything else concerning Dr. Antimony you want to know or share with us?" Anabel asked.

"I was at the Lake of the Moone a few nights ago. Colress was with the Ultra Recon Squad and they summoned Lunala, one of Alola’s legendary Pokémon. He’s building a machine to subdue a Pokémon from the Ultra Recon Squad’s planet."

Anabel and Looker gasped, and their mouths fell open. They turned to Nanu, who flicked his eyes at them.

"He told that story too when he came to my place. After the stuff I’ve been through in Interpol, I believe him."

His colleagues regarded him for a moment, and they looked back at Grimsley

"We shall look into Dr. Antimony’s whereabouts further," Looker said. "I believe that is all we need from you, Mr. Thomas."

Grimsley grunted and lifted his chin. "There’s one more thing I want to ask. Have either of you seen Colress recently?"

"The last time we saw him was a while ago in Tapu Village at Ula’ula Island," Anabel said.

A disappointed expression crossed Grimsley’s face. Nanu stared at him with slouched shoulders, believing this should be good enough for him.

"The three of us have other matters to discuss. You should probably go find Mina."

Grimsley’s eyes fluttered, and he pressed his lips in a fine line. After some consideration, he bobbed his head.

"All right, I’ll leave you three alone then," he said and did just that.

Nanu watched him walking away, his scarf fluttering against the breeze. He faced back to Anabel and Looker.

"Charlotte came to see me last week. She wanted me to find a connection between Team Skull and Aether." When he said that, his friends jerked their heads back.

"Found anything noteworthy?" Looker asked.

"I did. Aether’s president has been in contact with Team Skull’s boss, Guzma. She’s offering him money for him to find a Pokémon."

"She must want him to find Cosmog," Anabel said. "Charlotte had told us how it was capable of
creating wormholes. One of the president’s children ran away with it.”

“Yeah, that one. Team Skull got their hands on the girl and Cosmog and took them to Aether Paradise. Right now a bunch of kids went to save them.”

Anabel’s face fell. “Hold up, you’re telling me you just let some children go on a dangerous rescue mission?”

“I did initially stopped them, but they beat me in my Grand Trial fair and square. At least Charlotte is there in case anything goes wrong.”

Anabel gave him a suspicious glare. She sighed and shook her head.

“I still have my doubts, but you mentioning her puts my mind at ease somewhat.”

Looker chuckled and grinned. “I’ve recruited children to help out against shady organizations. It all worked out in the end!”

Nanu’s forehead and brow shot up. The corner of his lips twitched.

“Did you guys see Aether’s broadcast on the news last week?” he asked.

“We did,” Anabel said. “Headquarters ordered several agents including us to track down the Ultra Beasts more aggressively.”

Nanu’s stomach dropped. He turned to Looker, who had a deep frown on his face.

“That’s what I fear,” Nanu said as he sat down on the bench. He had his elbows on his lap and his hands on his face. “Found any leads while here?”

“The people here mention they noticed Pokémon feeling uneasy,” Looker said. “No Ultra Beast sightings, however.”

A short silence stretched between them. Anabel flinched when her bluetooth flashed.

“Oh, I’m getting a call right now.” Anabel pushed the button on her bluetooth and she spoke. “Agent Anabel speaking. Charlotte?” When Nanu heard her name, his heart raced. “Yes, we’re still in Poni Island. Yes, Nanu had mentioned that. Are the children safe at least? That’s good to hear. We can meet up at the Pokémon Center. All right, see you tomorrow.” She faced back at Nanu and Looker. “It’s Charlotte. She, Selene, and Lillie will be coming over to Poni Island tomorrow.”

“Did she mentioned anything what happened at Aether?” Nanu asked.

“She says she’ll explain everything once she gets here.”

Rubbing a brow, Nanu sighed and lowered his head. His gaze flicked over at Looker, a deep frown on his face. If Charlotte was coming over, then it couldn’t be good news. He considered if he should let Grimsley join them.

“Grimsley is half aware of the connection between Team Skull and Aether. Are you guys fine with him joining us tomorrow?”

His friends gave contemplative looks at one another. Anabel spoke first.

“Well he is an Elite Four member, and he did give us important information regarding Colress and the Ultra Recon Squad. I don’t see a problem with that.”
“Nor do I,” Looker said.

“Okay then, I’ll ask him if he would like to join us.”

xxx

Grimsley didn’t have a hard time finding Poni Beach since it was near Seafolk Village. Some of the hot sand got inside his shoes, and his nose wrinkled at the scent of salt water. The beach was almost as barren as one next to the Aether House, saved for a few exceptions.

There was a stand for surfboards, and next to it was a wooden billboard with names and scores pinned on it. Several Mantine stayed by the shore, splashing and playing with each other. A few people were surfing on the waves, but on Mantine instead of the surfboards. The surfers on them pulled off crazy spins and high jumps.

Huh, so that’s supposed to be Mantine Surfing, he mused. Perhaps he would try it out before leaving Alola.

While taking in the scenery, he spotted Mina doing a painting of one of the Mantine surfers. Both surfer and Mantine twirled in the air like a whirlpool. The different shades of blue and white used for the waves and sky were mixed well. It was almost like a perfect snapshot.

“That’s a lovely painting you have there,” Grimsley complimented. That caused Mina to stop and smile.

“Oh, thanks! Yeah, sometimes I draw the surfers and Pokémon here. I get so inspired by them, you know?” She then asked, “So how did your talk with Kahuna Nanu’s friends go?”

When Anabel and Looker confirmed that Colress was working with them, Grimsley’s stomach had churned. Mina was probably aware of them being Interpol agents, so she would understand that what they discussed was private.

“I talked to them over some personal matters and got most of my answers. That’s all I’m going to say.”

Mina hummed and bobbed her head. She seemed to follow, so that was good.

“Since you liked my painting, you wanna see more of my work?” she asked.

Grimsley responded that it was fine, and Mina handed him her sketchbook. There were drawings of landscapes, people, and Pokémon. One of the sketches was of Nanu with a bored expression, and another of a cheerful Acerola.

“I must say I’m impressed. These reminds me of an artist I knew back in Unova, Burgh Cortez.”

“Wait, did you say Burgh Cortez?” Mina grinned. “I love his stuff!”

Grimsley blinked at her. “You’re familiar with his work?”

“Ah huh! I visited his art exhibition in Castelia City and even talked with him! It’s cute how excited he gets over bug Pokémon.”

“That sounds like Burgh all right,” Grimsley said with a snort, and he handed Mina her sketchbook back. Burgh couldn’t stop talking about his Pokémon and that got repetitive after a while.

“Anyways!” Mina clapped her hands. “You’re here for some Z-Move training, right?”
“That’s what I was initially here for, yes.”

“Okay, okay. And it was the Ghost-type Z-Move you’re having trouble with?”

“Also correct.”

“Gotcha. Why don’t you bring out one of your Pokémon and try that Z-Move out?”

With a grunt, Grimsley pulled out his pokéball and released Raz. The feline stretched under the sun and dug her claws into the sand.

“Oh wow, a Liepard!” Mina said, sounding impressed. “We don’t have them here in Aola.”

Grimsley smiled a little at that compliment. He moved a few steps closer to Raz.

“We’re going to attempt the Z-Move Never Ending Nightmare again,” he said. Raz straightened herself and growled. “I know, we weren’t successful the first few times. This young lady here is going to help us, though.”

Raz turned to Mina and regarded her for a moment. She let out a soft cry and bobbed her head.

“Good. All right, let’s get ready.”

He took several steps back while Raz turned away from him and waited. Grimsley held out his arms and did the pose for the Ghostinium-Z. A golden light surrounded them both, only for it to disappear several seconds later. Raz faced him, giving him a disappointed growl.

“Did Kahuna Nanu say anything as to why the Z-Move isn’t working for you?” Mina asked.

“He said that it’s perhaps my Pokémon aren’t strong enough for Z-Moves yet.” He kneeled down and scratched Raz’s chin, who rubbed into his palm in return. “Raz and I just need a little more of a push, I guess.”

“A little more of a push, huh?” Smiling, Mina folded her arms against her chest. “Maybe a Pokémon battle might help with that!”

An amused grin pulled on Grimsley’s lips. “Are you asking a battle against an Elite Four?”

“Sure, though not an intense one or anything like that. We’ll do a few turns each, and then both of us will try out our Z-Moves.”

“So, just enough to make Raz use Never Ending Nightmare.”

“Exactly.”

While considering Mina’s suggestion, Grimsley was reminded of the quick battle Professor Kukui and Acerola did to show him and the children Chavo’s Z-Move. A battle with Mina might be the push Raz needed.

“Then I, Grimsley of the Unova Elite Four, accept your challenge,” he said, smiling a little.

Mina did a small fist bump in the air. “Right on! Let me introduce you to Sally first.”

She grabbed a pokéball from her belt. A bright light formed, and a small bee-like creature appeared. They flapped their wings rapidly and the scarf around their neck fluttered with the breeze. Grimsley recognized that Pokémon.
“I’ve seen several of those back in Ula’ula Meadows, but don’t know what they’re called.”

“Sally’s a Ribombee,” Mina said as her Pokémon landed on her finger. She rubbed their chin. “She can sense the emotions of Pokémon and humans well.”

“How so?” Grimsley asked, genuinely interested.

“Why don’t I show you?” Mina gave a single nod to her Ribombee, and she flew off.

Raz cried in surprise when Sally landed on her head and screeched. She flapped her wings, and glitter scattered in the air. Grimsley gave a blank stare while Mina smiled.

“Sally says that your Liepard hopes she’ll pull off the Z-Move this time,” she said, and Sally flew back to her side.

Grimsley’s eyes grew wide, and he smiled. “I’m impressed you’re able to understand your Pokémon that way.”

“Sally and I have been together for a long time, so it’s easy for us to understand each other. Shall we get started, then?”

Grimsley grunted in agreement, and they and their Pokémon got into position. The two trainers gave their commands.

“Let’s start things off with Pollen Puff, Sally!”

“Counter with Shadow Ball!”

A purple ball of pollen formed in between Sally’s arms, and she threw it at Raz. Raz fired off a crimson orb from her mouth, and the two attacks collided in a small explosion. They exchanged Shadow Balls and Pollen Puffs at each other several more times until Grimsley and Mina gave out new commands.

“Go for Dazzling Gleam now!”

“Strike your opponent with your claws!”

Sally surrounded herself in a rainbow colored sphere and swooped down, the light getting brighter the more she descended. Dark vapors formed on Raz’s paw, and it was shaped into a large claw. They launched at each other, and another explosion occurred. After the smoke disappeared, they backed away and stared at each other.

“I think we’re all warmed up now,” Mina said. She raised her arm up, showing Grimsley her Z-Ring. “Time to get our Z on!”

With a sharp nod, Grimsley readied his pose for Never Ending Nightmare. He made his movements similar to a floating ghost, and ended it with his arms stretched out. He and Raz were covered in a golden aura, only this time Grimsley felt it growing stronger and stronger. A rush of cold air passed by.

He didn’t pay attention to Mina’s pose due to focusing on his own, but her Z-Ring glowed brighter than the sun.

Raz let out a large cry, purple flames bursting out from where she was. Black liquid oozed out into the sands, and several tendrils popped up.
Sally spat out a thread of silk, only for the tendrils to burn them. The tendrils then grabbed the Ribombee and she was engulfed in flames. Once the flames dispersed, Sally squeaked and dropped into Mina’s hands.

“Sally!” Mina called out her name in panic. When Sally made another squeak, she sighed in relief. “Great work out there,” she said and returned her to the pokéball.

Both Grimsley and Raz dragged out deep breaths. Already he was exhausted as much as when using Mega Evolution. His Pokémon collapsed on the ground and gazed up at him, as if asking, “Did I do it?” He chuckled and patted her head.

He and his Pokémon were finally able to do a Z-Move.

“You were marvelous,” he said in a soft voice. Raz lifted her head and licked his face.

“Congrats on doing that Z-Move,” Mina said as she approached them.

“I should thank you for helping us with that.” He helped Raz picked herself up, and then shook Mina’s hand. “That Z-Move Sally did earlier, what was it?”

“That’s Savage Spin-Out. Since you also have a Buginium-Z, it made sense for me to use that. Does any of your Pokémon know a Bug-type move?”

“My Bisharp. She knows X-Scissor.”

Mina hummed in acknowledgment. “If you like, I can teach you and your Bisharp that Z-Move.”

“That would be very much appreciated,” Grimsley said without thinking. He gazed down at Raz, who growled in agreement.

He knew how to use one Z-Move now. Another Z-Move wouldn’t hurt.

Chapter End Notes

Here’s the start of the Poni Island arc! The majority of the chapters in this arc will be a bit shorter for better pacing. While Grimsley will have some spotlight, Nanu will get the bulk of character development here.

I mentioned Seafolk Village's Pokemon Center being uphill instead of within the village itself. I’m going more with the anime's version of Poni Island from here out.

I'm still doing the advertising campaign for Foul Play! Spreading the word would be appreciated:

Twitter: https://twitter.com/BayWrites/status/1170572461659713537

As always, thanks to bobandbill for betaing. I hope to have the next chapter ready either end of this month or in March. See you then!
Chapter Summary

In this chapter Wicke, Selene, and Lillie drop on by Poni Island, and then the group forms a plan on how to save Lusamine and Guzma.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Nanu, Anabel, and Looker went to eat lunch in the Pokémon Center. Besides Nurse Joy and the barista in the coffee bar, there were two other people inside: one was on a couch reading a book, and another giving their Formantis some Poképuffs.

During their meal, Anabel and Looker had been telling Nanu stories of several of their cases. He munched on his sandwich as he listened to them: the vegetables, meat, and cheese were stale. The food in the Pokémon Center was always bad, but food was food.

Right now Looker and Anabel were telling him how they went undercover inside an underground Pokémon fight club and saved many Pokémon in there. Nanu genuinely found himself immersed in that story.

"After the Chief and I defeated those bad people," Looker said, "we took the Salamence to the Pokémon Center since he needed intensive care. The operation the doctors did on him lasted for several hours."

"We visited him while he was recovering," Anabel continued. "He was scared of us at first, but then he warmed up to me the more we visited him." A proud smile pulled on her lips. "Looker suggested I take him as a partner, and after some thinking I agreed. And that's how I ended up with Pablo."

"I gotta say, you've got guts having that Pokémon. Salamence are tough to deal with, even for seasoned Interpol agents."

"It was a lot of work indeed, but Pablo and I grew to trust each other and became inseparable."

"Seeing them together many times, they're an unstoppable force to be reckoned with!" Looker said with a grin, and Anabel's cheeks flushed.

"I appreciate your enthusiasm there." Anabel shifted her gaze away for a second, and her earpiece beeped. She touched the button. "Agent Anabel speaking. Yes, just one moment." Looking back at Nanu and Looker, she said, "It's headquarters. Shouldn't take too long."

Anabel rose out of her seat and stepped outside. Once she was gone, Nanu pulled his chair closer to the table and fixed his gaze at Looker.

"Charlotte told me that Interpol's going to use Anabel as bait. Am I right?"

Looker's face grew pale. He lowered his head and his shoulders slacked.
"Yes."

"And she doesn't know yet." That wasn't a question.

Looker shook his head. Nanu dragged out a long sigh and straightened himself.

"She needs to know, but not now. Hold that off until after Charlotte gets here."

"I agree that's the best approach," Looker said with a solemn nod.

After a short silence fell between them, they turned at the sound of footsteps. Anabel came back, but Mina and Grimsley were also behind her.

"Headquarters checking on our progress as usual?" Looker asked.

"Yes. I told them we’re still on the lookout for any UB sightings here." She smiled and glanced at Mina and Grimsley. “I invited Mina and Grimsley to join us since they’re coming inside.”

“We went full Z-powered with our Pokémon earlier, so they need to be taken care of,” Mina said, smiling. “I can take Raz to Nurse Joy also.”

“That’s fine,” Grimsley said, and he handed her the pokéball. While Mina went to the reception desk, he grabbed a chair and joined with Nanu, Anabel, and Looker.

“I take it that the training went well?” Nanu asked.

Grimsley gave an upbeat hum. “Raz managed to do Never-Ending Nightmare thanks to Mina pushing her in the right direction. She’s also been teaching me Savage Spin-Out.”

“Oh, you’ve been practicing what the Alolans call Z-Moves?” Looker asked.

“Only just recently. I think I’m finally getting the hang of them.”

Nanu snorted and crossed his arms. “I know I said we would battle once you learn Never-Ending Nightmare. However, you’ll benefit from knowing Savage Spin-Out also.”

“So you’re postponing our battle?” Grimsley gave him a blank stare at first, and he grinned. “That’s fine. It shouldn’t be long now.”

As soon as Grimsley finished saying that, Mina came back and grabbed a seat herself. She joined the group.

“I had the nurse take our Pokémon,” Mina said to Grimsley. “It shouldn’t take too long.” She faced Anabel and Looker. “So you two are from the International Police, huh? You guys do, like, top-secret stuff?”

Looker’s face lit up and he swept his arm up. “We most certainly do! Whenever there is a case, we must go! Justice awaits!”

Anabel gave him a small smile and back at Mina. “Of course we can’t tell you anything about the majority of them. But yes, we travel a lot and do undercover work.”

“Ah, okay okay.” Mina raised her chin. “I think it would be cool though if I can help you guys in any way.”

Looker and Anabel exchanged raised brows at one another. After a moment, they nodded.
“Actually miss, there might be a way,” Looker said. “Did you recall a news broadcast from the Aether Foundation?”

“I have, yes,” Mina said. “The Ultra Beasts, right?”

Nanu gave a long stare, having an idea about what they were going to ask her. He glanced at Grimsley, who pressed his lips and raised a brow.

“Correct,” Anabel said. “The International Police got word on them after that broadcast.”

“Our request is to let us know any lead you have on them, no matter how or small.”

While pondering on that request, Mina hummed and tapped her chin. She then bobbed her head.

“Sure, I can do that.”

“Wonderful,” Anabel said, smiling. She handed her a card. “This is my contact information. Looker and I will be in Poni Island a while longer, so we’ll be in touch.”

“Got it.” Mina rose out of her seat and put the card in the pocket of her pants. As soon as she got up, the intercom announced that her Pokémon had been healed. “It was nice talking to you guys. Going to pick up my Pokémon and then go home. We’ll do more training tomorrow, Grimsley.”

“I look forward to that,” Grimsley said with a small smile.

Mina grinned back, and she waved everyone goodbye. She went to the reception desk to get her Pokémon and stepped out of the Pokémon Center.

When she was gone, Nanu remembered that he wanted to ask Grimsley if he would like to join him, Anabel, and Looker tomorrow. He cleared his throat and faced him.

“I had been informed that another colleague of ours is coming tomorrow. Selene and Lillie will be with her.” After he told him that, Grimsley blinked and the corner of his lips twitched.

“Officer Nanu told us that you’re already aware of the connection between Aether and Team Skull,” Anabel said. “We’re wondering if you care to join us.”

Grimsley took a moment to ponder, running a hand through his hair. With a light-hearted grunt, he threw his head back.

“I can join you three before I go see Mina.”

“It’s settled, then!” Looker said, grinning.

Nanu grunted, biting the inside of his cheek. Maybe that would make Grimsley finally realize how serious this Ultra Beast situation was. He wanted tomorrow to be here already.

xxx

Another morning sun had risen in Poni Island. Outside the Pokémon Center, Nanu and Grimsley were watching the noisy Wingull soaring in the skies and the ocean crashing onto the shores. Grimsley sat down on the stone bench while Nanu crossed his arms. A small breeze picked up.

Nanu stared at Grimsley for a moment. The kimono-clad man kept tossing his coin in the air, not worrying if he would lose it. They haven’t talked since they stepped out, so Nanu spoke.
“So, how you’re liking Poni Island so far?” he asked, and that made Grimsley stopped playing with his coin.

“Not half-bad, I guess. Mantine Surfing seems interesting, and Seafolk Village is charming.”

“Mantine Surfing?” Nanu lifted a confused brow, and his face relaxed. “Oh right, all the islands have it. I’m sure I’ll break my back doing it now.”

Grimsley chuckled and grinned. “Doesn’t look too different from riding my Sharpedo, so it shouldn’t be too hard for me.” His face grew more serious. “This other friend of yours, is she an Interpol agent too?”

“Sort of. She works in their Biology Division, but is now working undercover.”

“Was she the one that asked you to check up on Guzma?” Grimsley asked.

“Yes. She should arrive here with Selene and Lillie any minute now.”

Nanu went back to staring off in the distance while Grimsley resumed tossing his coin. Above them, the Wingull’s cries got louder with each call.

“Yoohoo, Triples!

Nanu’s head and shoulder jumped when he heard Charlotte’s singsong voice. He turned to see her with Anabel, Looker, Selene and Lillie.

“Hey Grimsley! Hey Nanu! It’s great seeing you guys again!” Selene said, grinning. Next to her, Lillie gave them a soft smile.

“Great to see you girls, too,” Grimsley said, smiling back.

“About time you showed up,” Nanu said as he made a few steps towards them. Grimsley got up and did the same. “Oh, Grimsley. This is Charlotte, the colleague I told you about.”

“Grimsley, hm? Your name sounds awfully familiar…”

“Grimsley’s from the Unova Elite Four!” Looker said, grinning. “He came to us with more information regarding recent happenings in Alola.”

Charlotte gasped and beamed. “Oh my goodness! You didn’t tell me you have a trainer from the Elite Four here, Triples!”

“I didn’t think it would matter,” Nanu said with a shrug. “But yes, I invited him to join us.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you,” Grimsley said with a smile, and they shook hands. After a closer look at her, he narrowed his eyes. “Wait, I recognize you. You’re with the Aether Foundation.”

“I’m only acting as one of their Branch Chiefs. I actually work for Interpol and have been undercover.”

“Ms. Wicke already told us her involvement with Interpol,” Lillie said. “Gladion and I were at a loss of words at first, but in the end she cared deeply about us.”

“She also says that Nanu used to be an Interpol agent too!” Selene said and faced Nanu. She clenched her fists together. “That makes you, like, ten times cooler!”
Nanu flinched, stunned Charlotte had told them his past self. After the initial shock passed, he snorted.

“Didn’t expect anyone else but Acerola to say that. But yes, I used to be an Interpol agent.”

“Acerola and Selene told me that you’re the kahuna of Ula’ula Island,” Lillie said, greeting him with a smile. “It’s nice to finally meet you.”

“Same here, kid.” Nanu raised a brow. “You’re the Aether president’s daughter, right?”

Lillie gasped and hung her head down. “Yes. I ran away from home to find help for Nebby, but right now they’re hurting.”

She opened her pink bag that she was carrying. Inside was a tiny creature shaped like a cocoon sleeping. Its face was surrounded by a blue orb with star patterns that sparkled and golden ridges. Everyone gathered around to look at it.

“Looks like sleeping beauty there.” Nanu fixed his stare at the strange creature. He was certain that was the Pokémon Team Skull wanted.

“Is that Cosmog?” Grimsley asked.

“Used to be, but now they have changed and are unable to wake up.” Lillie closed up the bag.

“Lillie, Selene, can you tell us everything that happened in Aether Paradise?” Anabel asked.

“Of course,” Lillie said with a nod. She and Selene told them everything: Selene recounting the battles with the Aether employees, Branch Chief Faba, Guzma, and the Ultra Recon Squad; the confrontation with Lusamine and how her mother used Nebby to open the wormholes; both Lusamine and Guzma disappeared in another dimension to go find Necrozma and the girls trying to find a way to save them.

Listening to all that made Nanu’s stomach jump inside his throat. Charlotte shifted her gaze downward, her fingers intertwining. Grimsley had his eyes closed and rubbed his forehead. Looker and Anabel were taking notes, but their lips were pressed together in slight grimaces.

“So all of this happened because Lusamine wanted to play hero,” Grimsley said when he opened his eyes. “Sounds very selfish if you ask me.”

“You’re not wrong thinking about her that way, Mr. Grimsley,” Lillie said, a deep frown stretching across her features. “She thinks she knows what is best for other people, but doesn’t ask if that’s what they want. And yet, I can’t just let her go through this plan of hers.”

“Have you two considered your plan of action for this endeavour?” Looker asked.

“Gladion was researching the Legendary Pokémon Lunala and Solgaleo,” Lillie said. “He found this flute downstairs.”

Lillie pulled out a brass flute from her bag she was carrying and handed it to Nanu. It was dark blue and purple with the symbol of the moon on its side, and cold against his palm and fingers.

“This is the Moon Flute,” Nanu said. “It’s supposed to be at the Lake of the Moone. How did Aether get their hands on it?”

The Sun Flute sat atop a pillar on Exeggutor Island while the Moon Flute stayed in the Lake of the
Moone. A few months ago when Nanu visited the lake, he noticed the Moon Flute was missing. He informed Hala and Olivia about this, and they told him they would look into that further.

“Perhaps Madame Lusamine went there and stole it,” Charlotte said. “Why only that flute I’m not sure.”

“The Exeggutor there can be rowdy,” Nanu said. “Good luck trying to run away from them.”

“The Ultra Recon Squad said that Lunala and Solgaleo should be able to help us find Lillie’s mother,” Selene said. “We need to go to Exeggutor Island to get the Sun Flute and summon them that way.”

Already Nanu furrowed his brow at the girls. “No way, it’s too dangerous. It’s used for Poni Island’s Grand Trial, which I’m in charge of until a permanent Kahuna gets chosen.”

“But we have to!” Lillie said in a demanding voice. She gave him a fiery stare. “We have to call Lunala and Solagelo and save my mother!”

“And what if you fail to summon them?” Nanu asked, and Lillie’s face fell. “Or let’s say you managed to summon them and go to another world, but aren’t able to come back here. What then?”

“Officer Nanu is right,” Anabel said with a stern face. “There’s no guarantee this will work.”

“I--” Lillie stopped. She clenched her fists. “If I don’t stop my mother then who will?”

“Lillie...” Charlotte said her name in a soft voice. She had her hand close to her mouth. They flinched, the two also taken aback by Lillie’s outburst. Anabel dropped her gaze on the ground.

Lillie took deep breaths and her chest kept rising and falling. With a sad look, Selene approached her and put a hand on her shoulder.

“Hey, Lillie, relax,” Selene said in a soothing tone. “You don’t have to do this all on your own. I’m here with you no matter what.”

Lillie regarded her for a moment, and she smiled. They locked their fingers together.

Scratching his chin, Nanu was tempted to say no once more. He knew though they would go find a way to that island, anyways. Children are so stubborn these days.

“We need to find this village’s chief and talk with him. He’s the one that takes folks there.”

“Oh thank you, Kahuna Nanu!” Lillie’s face brightened up. She beamed at Selene, who did the same.

“You sure we should put our faiths in these two girls?” Anabel asked.

“They wouldn’t have to do this alone,” Looker said with a confident smile. Charlotte had a similar expression and nodded. “We can help them from the sidelines when possible.”

Anabel regarded Looker’s words for a moment. She gave a sharp hum and a single nod.

“Officer Nanu and Charlotte can help take the girls to Exeggutor Island. Looker and I will remain here and continue to find any leads.”

“I’ll stay here too and train with Mina on my second Z-Move,” Grimsley said. He smiled at Selene and Lillie. “May lady luck shine upon you two.”
Lillie and Selene thanked him for the well wishes. Nanu held himself from rolling his eyes at him saying that.

Everyone went their separate ways. Nanu, Charlotte, and the girls went the downward path towards Seafolk Village. He hoped for Selene and Lillie’s sake that the chief would help them out.

xxx

Seafolk Village was more lively during the day. Several people went to the vendors and the children played with their Pokémon. Some of the boats that were here a couple of days ago had left, either staying close to the island and fishing or traveling through the seas. The sea glittered with the afternoon sun.

Chief Akoni’s boat was the SS Magikarp. As the name implied, his boat was shaped like the Pokémon. Nanu and his group scanned around the boats to find him.

“The chief usually doesn’t travel during this time, so his boat should still be here,” Nanu said.

“I read that the Seafolk people here travel a lot,” Lillie said, a small smile on her lips. “They all love to live free and unfretted.”

“Really?” Selene grinned with her arms above her head. “It must be cool living in one of those boats and going all around the world.”

“I agree,” Charlotte said, closing her eyes and smiling. “Also sounds very romantic.”

Nanu’s mouth twitched. To live free and unfretted: do Team Skull in Po Town and Pokémon in pokéballs feel that way? He kept that to himself.

“Ahoy there!” a man’s booming voice greeted them. Everyone whipped their heads to see a dark-haired man with a beard on top of a boat shaped like a Magikarp. With him was a Pelipper that squeaked and flapped her wings.

“My goodness!” Lillie jumped in surprise.

“Nice to see you too, Chief Akoni,” Nanu said. “You gonna come down from there?”

Akoni laughed and said, “Of course, of course. Give me a moment.”

It took a short while for Akoni to climb down and approach the group. He had his hands on his sides and grinned at him.

“It’s been a while, Kahuna Nanu. I see you got some company with you.”

Lillie and Selene introduced themselves, the latter more excitedly than the former.

“And I’m Wicke Santana, Assistant Chief Branch of Aether Paradise,” Charlotte introduced herself next, still keeping her Aether persona.

“I see,” Akoni said, nodding. “So, Selene and Lillie, right? Either of you taking on the Grand Trial?”

Both Lillie and Selene let out “ummm” sounds. Nanu answered for them instead.

“Not exactly. They want to go to Exeggutor Island, but not for a Grand Trial.”

Selene and Lillie exchanged hesitant looks. Lillie took a deep breath and spoke first.
“My mother has disappeared, so my friend and I are trying to get her back. We heard that Exeggutor Island has the Sun Flute, which can summon a legendary Pokémon.”

“Yeah!” Selene said. “And like, we’re gonna use the legendary Pokémon to take us to another world and save her!”

“Legendary Pokémon? Other worlds?” Akoni burst out laughing, and the girls glared at him.

“Now what’s so funny?” Selene asked, clenching her fist.

“I’m sorry girls, but all you’re doing is chasing a fantasy. I can’t take you to Exeggutor Island unless it’s for Poni Island’s Grand Trial or special permission from the kahuna, which this island doesn’t have at the moment.”

Flabbergasted expressions spread across Lillie and Selene’s faces. They hung their heads down and faced Nanu and Charlotte.

“It’s okay you two,” Charlotte said, having her hands on both of their shoulders. “We just have to be patient.”

“But we don’t have time to wait!” Lillie said. “Mother could be seriously hurt by now!”

Charlotte took a step back and frowned. Nanu lowered his eyes and shifted his face, unsure of how to react.

“Hey, Nanu.” Selene’s voice and her tugging at his shirt caused him to stare at her. “You do Poni Island’s Grand Trial, right? Can you convince the guy to make this an exception?”

Nanu gave her a blank stare. He couldn’t remember if he had ever given special permission to someone to go to Exeggutor Island. He glanced at Charlotte, and an idea came to him.

“Since I oversee this island’s Grand Trials, what if I give the girls permission to go to Exeggutor Island?” he asked, and Akoni raised a brow at him. “My friend and I can come with them and make sure they’re safe.”

Akoni crossed his arms and pressed his lips. After pondering for a moment, he said, “Well, you’re technically Poni’s standby kahuna.” He flashed everyone a large grin. “All right, you guys can hop in.”

Lillie and Selene let out happy gasps and beamed at each other. Charlotte offered Nanu a pleased smile. Everyone followed Akoni to his houseboat.

“Perks of a kahuna, hm?” she said, batting her eyelashes.

“Eh. I’m not the one to go waving ‘I’m a kahuna’ badge, but it worked this time.”

Nanu wasn’t too thrilled about this trip, but this seemed urgent. Everything should be fine as long as he and Charlotte watch over the girls.

Chapter End Notes

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appreciated:

Twitter: https://twitter.com/BayWrites/status/1170572461659713537

As always, thanks to bobandbill for betaing. I hope to have the next chapter ready sometime in March. See you then!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!