

The Pokemon Prometheus - Rian's Story

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Content warning: Macro, Destruction, Pokémon, Corruption

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Rian the Poochyena walked the dirt road covered in berry juices and dust. His red with orange sclerae eyes glared out ahead, though most Pokémon would view that as cute instead. The juices solidified onto his gray with black face, paws, and belly fur, making them clump together. It also stuck onto his brown apprentice Rescue Team's back, which made a sticking sound with every step.

Up on the mountain top stood the southwest region's Rescue Team Guild, though unofficial in the eyes of the global association. That particular Guild had always straddled between official and unofficial, depending on the Guildmaster. The current Guildmaster, a Drapion named Augusta, ran it like a bootcamp. It was a small mercy that Rian was only a mere apprentice there instead of a full-on worker. All of them were required to live there, with only four hours of sleep and a single small meal to make it through the day.

While it was against the rules, those in the Guild were encouraged to find a snack however possible.

Rian looked toward the blue sky, with the sun already passing from the middle of the sky and heading toward the horizon. He heard that, during winter, Pokémon would travel to this location to observe the aurora borealis. He had never seen them, even when he went home late at

night and was freezing. In fact, it would be unusual for any to appear in the southern part of the Mist Continent. Then again, the last recorded time when they appeared was before the anthros stepped onto this world.

Perhaps the aurora's disappearance was a divine punishment.

Or perhaps the environment changed in ways Pokémon still do not understand.

Given how fellow Pokémon treated him, Rian believed in the former.

Rian sighed and continued onward.

#

After a half-hour of walking, Rian stepped into his hometown, Bannockgaunix Town. It was on a sloped region, which caused the Pokémon from long ago to flatten parts of the land to make buildings. The dirt road remained sloped and curved and went up and down like a giant Serperior slithering around. Only in recent decades did the Pokémon expand the town beyond the lone road, which lay there longer than the town itself.

According to tales passed down, the town only began after the anthros came to this world. Before, the Pokémon found the land challenging to develop into a settlement. The

most that they managed to build were a couple of houses and an inn. After the anthros shared their knowledge, they learned how to prep the land for better farming and secure the foundations for homes, shops, inns, and more. As a result, it became a proper settlement that lasted for over a thousand years.

During that time, some Pokémon also stole the anthros' macro technology.

For a time, the budding town became a refuge for fleeing Pokémon. At first, the town was ignored by attacking giant Pokémon, but they were discovered. Just when it seemed like the refuge fell from an attack, a trio of Thievul showed up with the anthros' macro technology. They only grew to a hundred feet tall but worked well together to protect the town. They fought back, attacking giant Pokémon, until none dared to do so. When they passed away, the Pokémon built a stone statue of the three at the center of town.

Rian wondered what those three would think if they ever realized what Bannockgaunux Town become.

At the front of a food store, a Liepard with a missing ear stepped out from the store, holding apples in a black bag. The black and white Zigzagoon worker brushed the front of the store and, upon noticing the Liepard,

approached with a kind smile. When the Zigzagoon noted the apple and a lack of receipt, the Liepard splayed out his claws and slashed the Zigzagoon's face. A second later, the Krokorok shop owner stepped out and frowned upon noticing the interaction. He let the shoplifter leave with the apples before dragging the Zigzagoon inside while snarling at her.

Rian curled his paws close but said nothing.

It was better than yesterday when a Meowscarada blew up a couple of trays.

Rian shook his head and walked faster.

"Hey, loser! Where do you think you're going?"

Rian inhaled and turned toward them. Three Pokémon stood there: the right was a Houndoom, the left was a Persian, and the center was a Scrafty. Each one had a smug grin, with them approaching and looking over Rian. He growled, hating each one with the bottom of his heart.

"What's wrong, shorty?" Alvin the Houndoom taunted. He sneered while showing off the bones protruding from his body. "Had an accident?"

"This loser is a klutz," Barta the Persian said. He showed off his blue-gray right forepaw, with claws gleaming from them. "Thinks he can work for the Guild."

"I bet this loser thinks he's better than us," Nikola the Scrafty said. She brushed back her blue mohawk-shaped crest. "You think you do, don't you?"

Rian growled and answered, "You know that's not true. I'm there to learn how to help—"

The three Pokémon laughed, cutting Rian off.

"O-ohohoh!" Barta shook his round head. "You think you can *learn* how to help Pokémon in that Guild!?"

"Ackahahaha!" Alvin laughed hard enough to cough several times. "Everyone knows that the Global Rescue Team Association blacklisted our local Guild! It's been that way ever since former Guildmaster Aubin was disposed!"

"Hohohohohoho!" Nikola leaned over Rian, who remained defiant. "Even if you somehow complete your apprenticeship, they'll have nothing to do with you once they find out where you're from! The fact that you still held onto such childish beliefs is proof of your idiocy!"

Nikola poked Rian's red nose hard and opened her mouth to taunt some more.

Rian's face turned red from rage, and he bit hard on Nikola's finger before he could stop himself.

"ACK!!"

Rian flinched and, returning to his senses, let go of Nikola's finger. Her thin, scaly skin remained unbroken from Rian's sharp teeth, though reddened where he chomped on. Nikola glared at him and clenched her hand-paws close.

"Get that loser!"

Despite being three to one, Rian remained where he stood instead of running away. He knew he could not win, but much of his anger controlled him. The fact that he was also short for a Poochyena at one foot tall did not help his chances. While growing up, fellow Pokémon, especially other Poochyena, taunted him for his shortness and hot temper.

The three bullies piled on Rian, adding their weights onto him. He yelped, straining to remain on his legs and paws. He hated being piled on, powerless to move, while others did as they pleased with him. He saw Alvin's black leg hanging close to his face and used Bite on it. That got an immediate response, with Alvin pulling his leg away.

Rian wiggled and stepped forward—

Nikola stomped her foot-paw on top of Rian's head.

"Bad boy!" Nikola jeered. "Get down on the ground."

In a second, all three planted Rian on top of his belly, with them on top. His heart beat faster from this nightmarish position. It always ended this way, from his youth to now, with him pinned down. He wiggled to break free, but his bullies prevented him from moving. With each passing second, panic seeped in along with despair.

Arceus, he hated how it always ended this way.

"Alright. Break it up." Paw steps approached along with another familiar voice. Rian groaned, liking that even less. The voice continued, "Break it up."

"You got lucky, loser," Nikola hissed into Rian's ear. "Next time, it won't happen again."

The three got off from Rian and walked away, though they jeered at him along the way. Rian shook his head and lifted it upward. He saw his 'savior' and wished it was anyone else but him.

The Arcanine, known as Officer Lennart, loomed over him with a disappointed expression. His beige fur on his head, muzzle, chest, and tail danced in the wind like a hero, though it came across as taunting to Rian. He wore a gold badge with wings on the right side of his chest, signaling him as a member of the Guild. His diamond-

shaped ears, orange like around his eyes and much of his body, flattened back.

"Now, what do you have to say about provoking them?" Officer Lennart demanded. He pressed one of his orange forepaws underneath Rian to force him back on his legs. "Don't go saying that you didn't. I saw you bite into two of them."

Rian wanted to say a fair amount of words, but instead, he asked, "So, you saw them insult and bully me?"

Officer Lennart narrowed his black eyes and smacked Rian on his left cheek. "Now, see here! As a part of the Guild, you should know better than to be above insults! Our job is to maintain order, not add to chaos! You won't rise above being an apprentice with that attitude! Given your size and how you clearly gouged yourself in berries, I doubt you'll rise even above that!"

"I didn't even eat a single one! The others tossed me into a large pot full of berries, and it took me half an hour to get out from it." Rian huffed. "I had to do extra cleaning as punishment instead of getting the juices washed off."

"Then take it as a learning example of what not to do instead of lashing out, disrupting my order." Officer Lennart frowned at Rian. "And don't complain about how it's

because you're being bullied or hazed too much. I was bullied when I was a Growlithe, and I didn't behave the same as you, brat! Now, either suck it up and go home, or else I'll find a reason to put you in a cell overnight!"

Rian bit his tongue instead of giving a sharp reply. He spun away from Officer Lennart and walked away as fast as possible. His home was at the furthest edges of the town, so he needed to hurry. Anger boiled within him about the unfairness of it all. The worst of it was how Officer Lennart declared the reason for his anger meaningless because he did not behave the same way.

As though Officer Lennart was ever a small Pokémon.

Or that he was ever at serious risk thanks to his family being well-connected to the Guild. Rian was unsure of the details but heard that Officer Lennart's family line helped run Bannockgaunux Town and Guild for decades. Anyone who dared cross them, even the weakest member, regretted it. Everything they did was to maintain this so-called order.

When Rian left Officer Lennart's eyesight, he turned around the corner and collapsed between buildings. Bitter tears flowed out of his eyes, fueled by both anger and sadness. He felt cursed being in such a small, abusable body. If he was larger, he would be taken seriously instead of as a joke.

If he was larger, he would show them all.

However, the one thing that could have done that, the anthro technology, was long gone. Even the ones that remained either decayed or did something else. Word passed in the mail about two macros, a Vulpix and a strange-looking Lycanroc, battling outside a town on another continent. He and everyone else in this town viewed it as a lie since none remained.

When the worst of the tears stopped, Rian continued his way back home.

#

Glaurung the dragon mage watched while leaning against a shop. Beside him, a Zigzagoon walked out with tears in her eyes. Officer Lennart walked opposite Rian with a satisfied expression, screaming that he had done an excellent job. He nodded to the Zigzagoon, who ignored it and walked away.

Given how Officer Lennart also watched the shoplifting incident and chose not to interfere, Glaurung could not blame her.

None of those Pokémon noticed Glaurung despite him looking nothing like a Pokémon. It was thanks to a simple spell, though nothing special. If Glorfindel took his place,

he would use a complex spell that morphed his body into a Pokémon; if he wanted to show off, it would be four-legged, like a Ninetales. Glaurung, despite having a far vaster well of magic to pull from, had little refinement. At most, he could expand his size or just certain body parts, like muscles.

As a result, Glaurung used a spell that made others ignore his presence.

"Jeez, this place sucks." Glaurung shook his head. He looked in the direction Rian had gone. "And he got the worse end of it."

Glaurung turned to the bullies who abused poor Rian, who sat in front of a shop laughing. They seemed to be planning to get a 'discount' from that place. Given how high-pitched their laughter can get, filling them up with helium might be appropriate. It would be so simple, with just a simple twitch from his chaotic-looking staff. He doubted anyone would miss them even if the spell wore out and they fell with a splat.

Glaurung shook that thought out of his head. He may be a lover of chaos, but even killing Pokémon was beneath him. Even if they were just fictional characters in his head, just like in his original universe, he would feel disgusted

thinking that. Murder was not fun, and Glaurung preferred to have fun.

He would not have done such a thing even if Glorfindel did not send that message.

Already, that message rang in his head.

"In case you somehow got into his universe, I must warn you that things are delicate. These Pokémon had a history with anthros that came to this world. No, not anthro Pokémon. I meant anthro animals. They came to this world from another universe over a thousand years ago and messed things up. As a result, the Pokémon of Myth ordered them to confine themselves in their little section of the world away from the Pokémon.

Now, I want you to not do anything rash or notable. Believe me, I learned the hard way when I snuck into one of their towns disguised as a Ninetales. Palkia had some words the day after my gift was used.

"I know you hate these words, but be careful."

Glaurung watched where Rian went off to, thinking. Even if he did choose to get payback in Rian's place, he doubted it would end with just those three; he betted that almost everyone in this town played a part in hurting him

directly or indirectly. That would get the attention of the Pokémon of Myth.

Glaurung may think highly of himself, but he knew better than to tangle with anyone their level.

He still wanted to help, though. He took a look at his chaotic-looking staff and raised an eyebrow. It had odd spirals that ended almost halfway, only to begin again upward. The gray staff finished with a diamond-shaped green gem that had an image of lightning if he looked close enough. His yellow eyes, with the sclera a lighter shade of yellow, scanned it through.

Might as well give it a shot.

Glaurung rubbed the gem twice before a black sphere with a yellow center hovered out from it.

It flashed twice before Glorfindel's voice came out from there. "Hello, Glaurung."

Glaurung smirked to himself, noting the restrained tone Glorfindel had. In many ways, the two were opposites, much like the yin-yang staff Glorfindel held. If Glaurung was chaos personified, Glorfindel was orderly to a T. In their few matchups, it was a tie, even with Glorfindel's expert magical skills.

The only one who could claim to be better at that would be Fëanor.

"Hey there, Glorfindel!" Glaurung laughed. "Meditating under the midday sun?"

"The sun just risen on my side, you idiot." Glorfindel's voice hardened. "I just watched A-Ninetales take his little apprentice for training."

"He got himself an apprentice?" Glaurung asked.

"Yes. A Vulpix with the same Flash Fire ability as his named Faith."

"That's neat!" Glaurung nodded in approval. "I hope that she's a good one."

"Glaurung." Glorfindel sounded as though he was losing patience. "Why did you contact me?"

"Ah. That." Glaurung looked around twice. "I got your message when I hopped into this universe—"

"I hoped so. I set it up when I learned how delicate things really are." Glorfindel sighed. "You would've gotten us into serious trouble if I didn't."

"Yeah, yeah." Glaurung grew annoyed from getting cut off. "However, I'm thinking of," he paused for dramatic effect, "bending the rules."

"You can't be serious." Glorfindel sounded baffled. "Those were enforced by the Pokémon of Myth, the creation trio, or whatever you like to call them. They declared that anthros like us can't interfere with what's happening outside the border."

"I know." Glaurung rolled his eyes. The thought of Rian getting slammed onto the ground came to mind. "I just can't watch someone get abused without helping."

"Even so, rules are rules." Glorfindel huffed. "If you think this is serious, I'll see if I can get A-Ninetales to help. He can do it without getting into trouble."

"Look, I'm not going to make someone into a massive ball, roll them onto a mountain, and watch as they crash through a town," Glaurung explained. He added in a softer voice, "That doesn't sound like a bad idea, all things given." He raised up to his regular voice before Glorfindel could say anything. "The worst I can do is make a Pokémon just a little bit bigger. At most a foot taller."

"That's," Glorfindel paused momentarily, "oddly restrained from you."

Glaurung rolled his eyes at that comment but did not say anything. That was another difference between the two, he noted. Glaurung would be at the center of the stage,

taking in the thunderous applause; Glorfindel would be backstage, never seen but just as crucial for the show.

"Even so, I discourage you from doing even that much." A hint of a growl came from Glorfindel's voice. "I thought I was doing something minor with that gift, but that backfired."

"That's something I'm curious about." Glaurung hovered the orb closer to his face. "How 'minor' was it?"

Glorfindel remained silent for several seconds before answering. "I left behind some Dynamax particles as a serum to study. They injected it into a Braixen by accident, making her grow and causing some damage. Even now, she's not quite back to normal."

"Glalahaha!!" Glaurung laughed while bending forward. "And you think I'm the screwup?!"

"Yes." Glorfindel sounded as though he spoke through gritted teeth. "Again, I urge you not to do this. Your lack of magical knowledge will surely backfire on you."

"It'll be fine. If it isn't, well, it's why I'm warning you first." Glaurung grinned and winked at the orb. "If you don't hear from me in a half hour, you should come ASAP."

"Are you," Glorfindel began before stopping for a moment. "Are you actually being careful for once?"

"I want to help, not flatten half the town." Glaurung winked. "Now, excuse me. I have a Poochyena to meet."

Glaurung dismissed the orb before Glorfindel could get the last word. That blasted kitsune always wanted the last word to show how clever and wise he acted. He may be a boastful dragon mage, but he knew who he was and what mistakes he made. Glorfindel, on the other hand-paw, always hated admitting that he messed up.

He sighed and brushed his yellow tuff of hair-fur on his head. His black scales that dominated much of his body glistened in the light as bright as his yellow torso and undertail. His dark blue jeans and bright blue shirt had tears that showed his shoulders, stomach, and digitigrade ankles. Behind him, his black scarf danced around his tail like a cape.

He spread his enormous wings and went into the air.

Time to meet with Rian in person.

#

Rian lay on his hay bed, looking up at the ceiling. He had already cleaned off the sticky berry juices thanks to a quick bath. He thought of making a feel-good meal or drink, but instead, he lay still. To anyone watching through

a window, it would look as though he passed on. Only his eyes and his breathing showed that he still lived.

Despite that, he wished he could disappear just as much as he wanted revenge.

Rian found himself thinking about his past and how it led to here. From what others told him, he was an orphan Pokémon raised by the town. He was never told about what happened to his parents. On brighter days, he imagined them as a top-tier Rescue Team, going into burning houses or dark forests to save Pokémon.

In his dark days, he believed them criminals who abandoned him for being a runt.

Either way, he was always treated like an outcast to be abused. Even worse, every supposed orphan and outcast told him the same thing. They were also orphans and outcasts and received the same if not worse treatment, yet they ended up well. In Bannockgaunux Town, one either gritted their teeth and bore it or left and never returned.

Funny how those supposed orphans and outcasts believed that it was best to treat others just as bad.

The unofficial Rescue Team Guild was the only thing preventing the town from boiling over. It looked like a shining point in this dark town from the outside. It was a

place where Pokémon like him could train, go on adventures, and rescue Pokémon. In a way, it was once that way with former Guildmaster Aubin. He could have made the Guild official again if he had lasted another year.

Then he disappeared, Augusta took over, and things went downhill fast.

If only he realized it before he signed up as an apprentice.

One day, he would show them all. He would show them the meaning of—

A knock came from the front door.

Rian frowned, not liking this interruption to his thoughts. It must be those bullies again, ready for another round. Or it might be Officer Lennart finding an excuse to put him behind bars for a night. Or it might be a different thing altogether. Whatever the reason, Rian kept lying on the hay bed instead of answering the door.

Another knock came.

“Hey, I know you’re in there,” A voice said from behind the door. Rian twitched his ears, not recognizing the voice at all. He pushed himself up and listened more. “I want to help you with your problem.”

Rian rolled off his hay bed and watched the brown wooden door for a few seconds. He was unsure if he should accept this stranger's word. For all he knew, it was just a trick to get in and either abuse him or steal his stuff. Perhaps he wanted to do both. Rian skimmed through the single-room house, from the lone shelf to the table holding a lonesome apple for anything someone might take.

Then again, there was a sincere tone that even pretenders could not reach.

A third knock echoed through the house.

"Alright, alright," Rian said. He groaned and walked toward the front door. "I'm coming."

Rian pressed down on the leaver that kept the door locked. A clicking sound came, followed by the door opening up. A hand-claw, covered in black scales, pushed the door open. Rian took a few steps back, confused by how this guest looked.

By all accounts, a shiny Charizard stood at the entranceway before walking in. His black wings with dark red inner spread out behind him even as he crouched to go through the door. His round, creamy belly wobbled with the creamy color going under and reaching this flaming tail tip.

He grinned and adjusted his blacker scarf, which flopped behind him and reached his tail base.

Rian saw that, but his brain screamed at him that it was all wrong. The Charizard's short legs waddled farther than possible, even by twisting his legs forward. His arms stretched longer than they should. His eyes, though, creeped Rian out the most. They were yellow, with the sclera a lighter shade than the iris, which looked wrong on a Charizard. It almost felt like a Zorua or a Zoroark using Illusion while making up details from an old anthro's coloring book.

"Whew. This place is smaller than I expected." The Charizard craned his neck so his head did not bump against the ceiling. "So, hey there, Rian. How do you do?"

Rian squinted his right eye. "How do you know my name?"

"Glelehehe. I've been observing you," the Charizard answered. "You may not have seen me, but I have seen you."

Rian gritted his teeth. "Oh? Oh, really? How can that be? A shiny Charizard like you would be hard to miss."

"It's simple, really. I just use a simple illusion spell on myself that makes others ignore me," the Charizard

answered. He spun around, noting the lone shelf with a couple of candles and a bathtub. "My friend could do it much better, though. Heck, he wouldn't need to use illusion."

Rian raised an eyebrow at that. From his word choice, it did sound like this 'Charizard' was a Zoroark or more like a Zorua after all. They were the only Pokémon he knew of that could pull such a trick like this. Even if he considered a Ditto doing this, he said it was an Illusion instead of using Transform.

On the other paw, there was a lack of stress in the word 'illusion.' Every Zoroark and Zorua he knew of always insisted that it should be sounded as though the first letter was capitalized. It was a way to emphasize how important their ability Illusion was to them.

"OK, then. Who or what are you?" Rian demanded.

"What I am isn't important. Glelehehe." The Charizard winked. "Call me Glaurung. I'm someone who can use something called magic."

Rian blinked twice at that answer, unsure what to think about him. It did confirm that this 'Glaurung' was not a Zorua or a Zoroark, though. They would explain that their

Illusion was an innate ability, not something magical. To claim he could use magic was another thing.

“So?” Rian shrugged. “Any official team has magical objects that could either enhance the holder’s powers or be used to escape when a mission is complete. I don’t see what using magic is anything special.”

“Oh, you wound me.” Glaurung pressed his hand-claws just below his neck. He had a sly, sarcastic expression, which only annoyed Rian more. Glaurung continued, “My magic can do much more than that.”

“Really?” Rian asked. He lowered his eyelids. “What can you do with your so-called mag—”

Glaurung pointed toward the apple on top of the only table. Yellow lightning emitted from his claws, causing Rian to jump back in surprise. The apple hopped once before landing in place. Glaurung stopped the lightning and lowered his hand-claws, watching.

At first, nothing happened.

Rian opened his mouth to give a smart remark, only for the apple to vibrate. It grew, doubling in size within a second. Rian widened his eyes, flattening his ears back. The apple continued to grow, with the table groaning under

its weight. As soon as the apple reached Glaurung's belly bulk, it stopped growing.

A moment passed before the table collapsed underneath the apple's weight.

"W-what?!" Rian rushed toward the massive apple that towered over him. He pressed on the side, testing its weight, and found he could not push it. He frowned and opened his mouth, taking a significant bite of it. The juices flowed into his mouth when his teeth pierced through the apple's skin. He chewed on it, loving the sweet taste, before swallowing and turning to Glaurung. "How did you do that?!"

"With magic, silly." Glaurung approached the apple and leaned against it with a smug grin. "I can grow and shrink things with my magic. Now, if only I could *eat* this apple and still make it filling. Sadly, magic doesn't work like that." He shook his head. "It's like trying to get extra power from the outlet when you're the source of that power in the first place."

"O. K." Rian raised his eyebrow. "I don't get it, but whatever."

Glaurung shrugged. "Even a mage like me cannot violate the laws of thermodynamics too far." He crouched

as low as possible and smiled at Rian. "Now, I saw how bad you were abused. I wish to help you with that. Now, I could scorch them for you, but my options are," he paused for a second, "*limited*."

Rian tilted his head, wondering what he meant.

"Because of that, I can't do any direct or significant help like that, but I can do other things. For example, I can take you far away from here, putting you in a friendlier location." Glaurung grinned. "I can be a good friend, giving you a friendly ear for you to talk to. Or I can even boost your size like I did with that apple. It can't be too much, or else bad things might happen." He turned to the apple and sighed. "Though I admit I made this apple way bigger than I intended."

Rian thought about it for a few seconds. Any of those options sounded appealing to him. He always hated his place, not just because of how hostile it was but also because of how friendless he was. He always dreamed that he could escape once he accomplished his apprenticeship, find like-minded friends, and live in peace.

His wrath flared up, with Rian's expression darkening. "I want to be bigger."

“Alright, then!” Glaurung rubbed his hand-claws together. He hummed and rubbed his hand-claws together as yellow lightning sparkled out. “It’ll take a bit to restrain my magic. Don’t want another apple incident.”

Rian smirked, watching Glaurung separating his hand-claws to show a glowing yellow orb. He wiggled his hind legs, with the front half of his body crouched low. His eyes focused on the orb, watching it shrink by a bit. He only had one shot at this. Once he got it, he would show them all.

“Now, give me another—” Glaused stopped talking when Rian pounced toward the orb. “WAIT! IT’S NOT—”

Rian chomped on the orb, feeling its energy surging through his body. His eyes glowed white, and he grinned in glee. Glaurung took a couple of steps back, with his wings flinched out of shock in horror. Rian landed, with his body glowing yellow and electricity sparking off his body.

His body vibrated and grew in size. Glaurung gasped, with Rian already reaching his height without trying and still growing. The wooden floor shuddered before breaking into splinters under Rian’s weight. His tail smacked against the enlarged apple, splitting it in half from the force. Rian’s head crashed against the wooden ceiling, breaking it apart.

“RIAN!!” Glaurung held out his left hand-claw. “STOP! LET ME CAST A COUNTER—”

Rian slammed his front right paw on top of Glaurung. “No! This is what I wanted! Revenge!”

Rian shook his body, flinging wooden debris all over. The walls collapsed all around Rian’s growing body, collapsing the rest of his house. His rear crushed the shelf and tub without even trying. He stomped with his hind left leg, implanting a deep pawprint in the dry ground. He grew with each passing second, with him grinning wider.

He only stopped growing when he reached an impressive 100 feet tall. His eyes also stopped glowing with them back to normal.

“Yes, YES!” Rian lifted his front right paw off from the ground. “Thank you, mere ‘mage!’”

Within the pawprint lay another creature rather than a shiny Charizard. He thought it was not a Zorua or a Zoroark, but he had no clue what this was. He had the shiny Charizard’s black scales but was far slimmer and taller than one. He also had clothes, something that he heard the anthros of old had. Did that mean that he was talking to one of the fabled anthros?

At this point, Rian did not care.

He turned to the rest of Bannockgaunux Town, with his ruined home at the very edge and bottom.

"Think you can bully me for being a runt and get away from it?" Rian's eyes seemed to turn red from rage. "I'll show you all."

#

Officer Lennart the Arcanine sat in front of his office with a proud smile. He watched the road before him, ensuring that order continued as intended. Every Pokémon so far walked down the road without throwing attacks everywhere. Sure, there were taunts and arguments, but no sign of fighting. Even the Scrafty, Houndoom, and Persian trio did not cause any battle, with the shop they stole from allowing them to escape.

He thought about the time before this order was set up and shook his head in disbelief. It was a chaotic time, as his parents taught him. During that time, Pokémon would strike others with the flimsiest of reasons. Riots were a weekly occurrence, often with buildings on fire. A few books claimed that it was done due to the town's government corruption, but nothing was listed as to what they did.

Then, the local Rescue Team Guild cracked down hard on the town. The rioters were either jailed to be reformed or exiled elsewhere on the continent. It was followed up by the Guild taking over the town with even a hefty tax to pay for this order. The Rescue Team global association criticized them, even making their Guild unofficial.

Order must be held, no matter what.

That order was loosened when former Guildmaster Aubin ran it for five years, with it ending last year.

At least he was taken care of.

Officer Lennart frowned, feeling the ground rumbled beneath him. He got off the ground and walked forward. The rumbling continued, with it more defined as a pause followed by a shaking pattern. The other Pokémon paused, taking note of it as well. The shaking grew worse with each one.

"What's going on?" Officer Lennart glanced around. "This isn't a volcanic region. So, how?"

Officer Lennart glanced at the downward slope and flattened his ears from shock.

A massive yet familiar-looking Poochyena walked up the road.

#

Rian gritted his teeth before he tore off a house's roof. He flung it away, splintering it into multiple pieces before it crashed onto the ground. The Pokémon within it screamed in fear and fled outside, going anywhere but toward him. Once they cleared out, he smashed what remained of it.

"Yeah, you like that, huh!?" Rian screamed at the rest of the town. His voice vibrated every building nearby, with glass shattering into pieces. The Pokémon nearby held their ears, trying to prevent them from bursting. "What do you think of me now?!"

Rian smashed another house, followed up by a store. Food splattered onto his front right paw, but he did not care. All he cared about was wrecking the town. He stomped on the ground, causing crevices to form and toppling nearby buildings.

"Stop, stop!!"

Rian paused and glared down at Officer Lennart. "What is it, 'officer?'"

"I thought it was you, Rian!" Officer Lennart huffed out his chest. "Don't you realize what you're doing?!"

"Smashing up this dump of a town," Rian answered without a care. "Oh, and once I smashed up the ones on

this road, I'll head over to the Rescue Team Guild to smash that up as well."

"Rian, you can't do this!" Officer Lennart shouted. His black eyes glared at Rian. "You're disrupting the ord—"

Rian smacked Officer Lennart away. "You didn't care when this happened to **me**! Why should I care when it happens to **everyone else**?!"

Officer Lennart landed dozens of feet away, with him groaning out of pain.

Rian turned aside and spotted those bullying trios. Each one had a look of fear, keeping them from moving. Their faces turned white as snow, with all other colors drained out. Before long, they lowered themselves and groveled before him.

"Pl-please," Barta cried out. "For-forgive us, oh lord!"

"We-er acted without thought." Alvin showered tears from his eyes along with steam. "Oh-oh, mighty Rian. We'll do as-as you please!"

Nikola panted. "Spare us, PLEASE! We'll feed you, massage your paws, and—"

Rian scooped all three of them up before squeezing them between his front paws.

"The only 'forgiveness' you'll ever get is that you won't end up dead!" Rian squeezed them hard, causing them to grunt in pain. He then flung them behind himself, with them screaming all the while. He heard them land on what remained of the buildings he smashed up. When he turned to them, he saw they were bruised but alive. "Remember that!"

Rian turned forward and continued his rampage through town. His eyes seemed to blaze out of rage, one that screamed that he lost control. He smashed the roof of an inn, glaring within before he knocked it down. He let out a howl, shattering more windows, before walking onward.

He paused when he spotted a Zigzagoon standing in front of her house. She gazed fearfully at Rian, which showed the claw marks on her face. Rian approached, stared at her for a few seconds, and walked past it. Instead, he smashed the house next to hers.

She suffered enough.

#

"Alright," Glorfindel said when he finished teleporting outside the town Glaurung was in. "Let's see how much you scr— OH, JEEZ!!"

Glorfindel stared in horror at the massive Poochyena smashing the town. He heard screams, though at least there was no fire. This massive Poochyena smashed open a shop and glared within it. He only went and smashed it into bits when the regular-sized Pokémon fled out of there. Some of the buildings were still standing, untouched for the most part by him

Even so, this was a massive disaster.

"How did you screw up this bad!?" Glorfindel slapped his palm against his face. "Ugh."

Glorfindel thought about how to fix this mess. The simplest way to do it was to cast a shrinking spell on this Poochyena to return him to normal. Under most circumstances, he would do so to counteract the latest disaster Glaurung brought whenever he came to the world. It would be simple to do.

The problem was that he still did not recharge his magic enough.

Glorfindel grunted, noting that he had spent the previous night helping Adrian develop his strength. The Flareon was determined to grow strong enough that he pushed his body beyond its normal limits. Glorfindel spent it healing and developing Adrian's strength, encouraging it

to flourish. At this rate, Adrian would become the strongest Flareon in the world. However, because it involved complex magic and needing to spend the entire night doing it, Glorfindel did not rest long enough to recover his magical reserves.

At most, he expected to have enough to cast three shrinking spells.

He needed to ensure they would hit, but how?

The answer came to Glorfindel. He twirled his staff, brown with a brown and black yin-yang symbol on its head, and cast a communication spell. A green misty ball formed before him, the same color as much of his fur. Glorfindel huffed, struggling to stay on his feet-paws. Multiverse communications sapped his strength, but it should not last too long.

The inside of the orb morphed into A-Ninetales's head. "Glorf—"

"I know I'm interrupting your training with Faith, but I have an emergency here."

#

Rian gave a savage grin while approaching the mountaintop. The Rescue Team Guild stood, still being remodeled to look like a Draption's head. A flag, red on

top of blue, flew above each side of the white eyes. Its mouth opened wide, leading to the underground.

Several fleeing Pokémon flowed out from the Guild already.

The desire for revenge burned deep in Rian's heart. All the hazing, mean pranks, and fruitless promises flashed in his mind. He gritted his teeth in anger from remembering them. To think that they believed that he would not feel resentful of it?

He thought about smashing that head and digging down until he reached the Guildmaster.

Rian's muzzle curled into a snarl, and walked higher.

A sudden flash of white lights shone behind Rian. He blinked in confusion, wondering where that came from. This was followed by a pair of thooms and shaking. Rian folded his ears back, wondering—

"Stop!"

Rian growled and spun around.

He stopped and widened his eyes in shock.

A pair of Pokémon stood, a Ninetales and a Vulpix, looming larger than him.

#

A-Ninetales gazed at the massive Poochyena, though he stood much larger than him at 150 feet tall. Unlike the Poochyena or even Faith the Vulpix beside him, his paws did not even cause a single dent to the ground. This came from years of experience at such sizes, which he taught himself.

He glanced at Faith, standing nearby, who held a confident front. A-Ninetales knew better, knowing how she really felt from her baby blue eyes. It helped that he taught her for the past few weeks. Faith would be waiting at that deserted planet until he returned if he had his way. She insisted on coming, staring at his sea blue eyes until A-Ninetales allowed it.

He hoped Faith would do well despite her inexperience.

"Remember, Faith," A-Ninetales said. "Subdue, not attack."

"Got it, A-Tales!" Faith went to the left of the Poochyena, with her lime green bow around her neck flowing from her movements. Despite trying as hard as possible, she still caused chunks of the mountain to break and fall off from her snow-white paws. She blushed but remained focused on the Poochyena. "Ready!"

"Right!" A-Ninetales went to the Poochyena's right. Despite the seconds ticking down, their target remained still, like he had turned into stone. A-Ninetales wondered about that but still went with the plan. It would be disastrous to ask when lives were at stake. "Now!"

A-Ninetales and Faith pounced toward the Poochyena from both sides. Their opponent moved at least, but it was too late for him. A-Ninetales slammed his front paws on his head and back, with Faith doing the same. They pushed down with a grunt, trying to pin him down.

The Poochyena struggled to escape, but A-Ninetales and Faith kept their hold firm on him. They applied more weight on him, trying to pin him down. To A-Ninetales's surprise, the Poochyena stood even as the ground broke apart. Thinking quick, A-Ninetales flung his right hind leg at the Poochyena's elbow, buckling it. The Poochyena slammed his belly down on the ground hard.

A-Ninetales sighed, happy that they pinned the massive Poochyena beneath them.

"OK. He's down." A-Ninetales glanced his sea blue eyes upward, where Glorfindel teleported onto between his eyes. He was using a low-effort illusion that made him look like a feral Ninetales, though A-Ninetales saw through it. "Are you ready, Glo—"

A sobbing sound came from below, startling A-Ninetales. He turned downward, confused by it and the Poochyena's shaking. At first, he thought it was futile to escape until he saw the Poochyena's face. Their target shed tears from his eyes out of fear and despair.

"Um?" A-Ninetales blinked in confusion. He turned to Faith's hold, wondering if she was pressing much harder than she should. Faith looked just as confused, though she still held on. From how it looked, she should not be hurting him that hard. A-Ninetales leaned toward the Poochyena's ear. "Are you OK?"

The large Poochyena cried louder rather than answering the question. For a moment, A-Ninetales wondered if this was some ploy to trick him. It would not be the first time that happened, though there was usually an aura of fakeness. None of that emitted from his crying face, where his nose became runny.

"Glorfindel, if you please," A-Ninetales said.

Glorfindel nodded and extended his hand-paw forward. A bright green orb with a white center formed from his fingers; he sweated from the attempt before tossing the sphere at the massive Poochyena. Once fused together, his body glowed a mix of white and green.

A second later, he shrank. A-Ninetales's green bandana and Faith's bow glowed, with them shrinking to keep pace with him. That way, they could still hold him in place without hurting him. By the time they all stopped shrinking, they returned to their regular size.

A-Ninetales raised his eyebrow at how little the Poochyena became. He was expecting him to be a foot and eight inches, not a foot tall. Even Faith, who was below average for a Vulpix, was outsizing him by almost double.

A-Ninetales and Faith released their hold on the Poochyena, expecting him to get up and run. He lay there on his belly, still sobbing worse than before. The two and Glorfindel watched, each confused and worried.

"Um?" Faith bent down to him. "Are you alright? What's your name?"

Before the Poochyena responded, another voice cut in. "Rian! How *dare* you!"

A-Ninetales, Faith, and Glorfindel turned toward the incoming voice, where a Drapion walked toward them. Several other Pokémon joined her, each one either terrified or angry. Her black pupils remained focused on the Poochyena, this Rian. He flinched at the Drapion's voice

along with each step, which A-Ninetales noted. This Drapion grabbed Rian by the scruff and opened her round, purple mouth.

“This is very *unbecoming* of a Rescue Team apprentice!” The Drapion shouted at Rian, who winced away. “Why, I ought to *put* you in *boiling water* for that *stunt* of yours!”

A-Ninetales flinched in surprise. “Hello there, um—”

“The name’s Augusta! I’m the Guildmaster here!” She pointed at the entranceway, which was shaped like hers, though with some signs that the previous head was a Raichu. “See that! That’s *my* face!” She kept her eyes on Rian instead of A-Ninetales. “And what we have is a *runt* who thought he could make it *big*! Why he decided to join *my* Guild, I have no idea! All I *know* is that he’s a no-good troublemaker, which he *proved* by smashing the town!”

Rian stammered. “I-I-I—”

“*SHUT UP!!*” Augusta slammed Rian onto the ground hard enough to crack it.

A-Ninetales widened his eyes, taking a step back. “Guildmaster Augusta, I’m Daren. I’m a—”

"I don't *care* who you are!" Augusta squeezed her pincher claws against Rian tighter. "Only *speak* when *spoken* to!"

"Don't you *dare* talk to him like that!" Faith glared at Augusta, splaying her six tails behind her. "He's a—"

"Faith," A-Ninetales whispered. He patted her head, where three orange curls with bangs lay. "Not now."

Faith scrunched her face but nodded.

"Now, *Rian*," Augusta said. She picked Rian up and pressed him against her face. "From this moment forward, your apprenticeship has been *revoked*. Again, why I let a *mere runt* like you join *my* Guild, I have no idea."

"Y-yes." Rian nodded.

A-Ninetales wiggled his ears, hearing more Pokémon gathering around them. It became a mob, with them jeering at Rian. At first, he thought it was anger over Rian destroying much of their town. When he listened closer to their tones and words, he sensed something deeper, more sinister, than that.

"I always knew that Rian was just a freak!"

"Freaking runt! Thinking he's better than us!"

"What an attitude problem he has! At least he's finally getting what he deserved."

"We should've driven him out years ago!"

"Alright, alright." A bruised Arcanine with a winged gold badge walked into the circle. Despite that, he retained a dignified air around him. "As you know, I'm Officer Lennart. As the Rescue Team's police, I'm arresting Rian for destroying the town." He frowned at Rian. "Really, Rian, I expected much better than you. Should've been accepting everything that happened to you instead of lashing out. And don't you blame it all on you being bullied."

Officer Lennart continued his rant, but A-Ninetales heard little from him. Instead, he focused on the surrounding Pokémon along with Faith and Glorfindel. Faith looked anxious building up. Glorfindel kept being stoic, but even he was surprised by all this. A-Ninetales curled his front paws close, with his claws digging into the ground. His golden-white fur flattened at the shoulders.

"And now, Rian," Officer Lennart concluded. "You'll be put into my custody until—"

"No," A-Ninetales said in a firm voice.

Officer Lennart turned to A-Ninetales. "Excuse me, sir, but this doesn't concern you. Now," he turned to Rian, "as I was saying—"

A-Ninetales stepped forward, separating Officer Lennart from Rian. "No. As the one who defeated Rian and ended his rampage, he's under *my* custody."

"Oh, *please*." Augusta sneered at A-Ninetales. "What are *you* but a *little*—"

A-Ninetales zipped toward Augusta, slamming against her chest.

Augusta released Rian from her claws and crashed into the Guild in half a second.

The jeering Pokémon became silent, with them stunned by the display. Rian widened his eyes at the sheer power. A-Ninetales set himself in front of the baffled Officer Lennart. Even Faith looked at him in shock since he rarely lashed out in anger.

Officer Lennart recovered first. "Sir, you've assaulted the Guildmaster! You'll—"

"No. *You'll* stand down," A-Ninetales said through gritted teeth. He glanced at the crowd, who looked ready to tear him, Rian, and his friends to pieces. A-Ninetales

puffed out his chest and said, "I'm Daren, also known as A-Ninetales. I'm a registered independent Explorer."

"I don't give a damn who you are or what your job is!" Officer Lennart huffed out some flames. "This is—"

"A-Ninetales?!" One of the Pokémon around them said. "Isn't he the one who single-handily defeated a Groudon?!"

"You mean he has taken down a LEGENDARY?!"

"That's impossible! No single Pokémon could have that much power!"

"But he defeated Rian here when he was a giant. And I swore he and that Vulpix with him was just as huge earlier."

"Must've been a trick!"

"Taking down the Guildmaster wasn't a trick just now, was it? And she hasn't come back, has she?"

"He could be a fake!"

"Look at his back!!"

A-Ninetales spun around, letting the crowd see his back. A lime green A was on it, much like the one on his custom Explorer's badge. That caused more murmurs to spread through the crowd and, with it, a growing fear. A-

Ninetales felt amused by it. He did not boast in glory if it was not needed, nor would he be basking in it. Even so, seeing others' aberrant behavior change when they realized the truth was always humorous. Even Officer Lennart looked more respectful, even if anger and defiance flashed in his eyes.

"It seems that my tales have reached here," A-Ninetales said. He glanced at Faith, who looked back with sparkles in her eyes and awed at him. A-Ninetales smiled slightly before continuing, "And I can demonstrate if you wish me to."

"Alright. I guess you're a big deal. I'll give you that," Officer Lennart said. "Even so, this is Rescue Team district, and it's agreed that—"

"No. It isn't," Rian said in a weak voice.

"Don't you—"

A-Ninetales stopped Officer Lennart with one of his nine tails. "Hush." He turned to Rian. "What do you mean?"

Rian lifted his teary face off the ground and shook it. "Th-the Rescue Team global association re-revoked the status of this Rescue Team's Guild since the cu-current Gu-

Guildmaster took over. We-we don't even get o-offical missions an-anymore."

"O-ho!" A-Ninetales turned to Officer Lennart. "So, the Rescue Team Guild is illegal, right?" He waited for an answer, but none came from the gathered Pokémon or Officer Lennart. A-Ninetales continued, "So, this means that this is free territory. As part of the Exploration Team Federation, I'm taking Rian in my custody for rehabilitation."

The murmur grew louder.

Officer Lennart's face turned bright red from rage. "Do-do you even realize what you're ruining?! The town's order is needed, and respect for Pokémon like me is needed to continue it! Letting mere outsiders interfere will ruin it!"

"Oh?" A-Ninetales raised his eyebrow.

"Yes! So, we can't just let Rian go free, especially after he destroyed every single building in—"

There was a loud cough, which drew everyone's eye. A-Ninetales also looked and saw a Zigzagooon with a black and white zigzagging pattern on her body. Her face was red thanks to claw marks, with sighs of recent bleeding. A-Ninetales felt a pang of pity for her.

"Not every building," the Zigzagoon said. "It-it was scary, but Rian didn't destroy everything in his way. He spared some places, including my house, during his rampage."

"Interesting," A-Ninetales said. He glanced at Glorfindel, who gave a quick nod. "That's certainly a factor to consider." He turned back to the Zigzagoon. "Forgive me for asking, but how did you get those claw marks?"

"It-it was terrible." The Zigzagoon's red eyes watered. "Th-there was a shoplifter. I-I was coming in and casually asked for his receipt. He-he slashed my face just as my boss went out to see what the issue was. We-well, I suppose ex-boss would be more appropriate since he fired me for chasing a shoplifter. I-I wasn't going to, even if he didn't show it." She then pointed at Officer Lennart. "AND YOU WATCHED AND DID NOTHING!!"

Silence coated the area, with not even the slightest whisper breaking it. A-Ninetales raised his eyebrow, his anger growing intense as he remained calm. On the other paw, Officer Lennart looked furious, and his face turned bright red. He twisted back to A-Ninetales and snarled.

"Oh, you think that's bad?" Officer Lennart asked. His muzzle furrowed with his teeth barred. "This town used to be run worse than now. If you ask any of us, you'll find

stories passed down about how horrible this used to be. It took until the Rescue Team Guild stepped in and took over, even if it revoked our status! You might think this is terrible, but it's the only way to maintain order!!"

"You call letting evil happen order?" A-Ninetales asked in return. "Or is that an excuse to soothe yourself?"

"W-what are you blabbering about?!" Officer Lennart leaned over A-Ninetales, looming over him.

A-Ninetales craned his head upward. "I seem to recall you talking about how bullying isn't an excuse for Rian to cause so much destruction to the town and almost attack your illegal Guild. That's true. HOWEVER, did you help him whenever he was treated poorly? Did you put him back on his legs and reassure him? Or did you let him get kicked and slammed to the ground until he gained trauma over it, only stepping in before it could develop into a fight?"

Officer Lennart huffed out smoke and flames. "If we let Pokémon here fight, even in self-defense, it could destroy order!"

A-Ninetales ignored him and turned to the rest of the mob. "Hear me, Pokémon of the town and Guild! Thanks to Rian, most of you lost your homes and businesses! I'm sure

you won't forgive him, and I won't demand you do! In my eyes, he is guilty!

"At the same time, I pronounce you ALL guilty!" A-Ninetales let the words ring in every Pokémon's ears. "Though I didn't see it at first, I now understand the trauma Rian went through!" He glanced at Rian, who looked surprised. A-Ninetales felt a slight pang, realizing that Rian rarely had anyone standing up for him. He continued, "Rian was abused, bullied, and attacked, all while the rest of you watched! He was left stranded, alone with his thoughts! They clearly brewed into the evil committed today! It's no excuse for causing the destruction, but it's also no excuse for you all to **ABANDON** him when he needed help the most!"

"Th-this is absurd!" Officer Lennart growled. "I was bullied growing up, like Rian, and I never caused destruction!"

"No, you didn't." A-Ninetales narrowed his eyes at him. "But since you **CLEARLY** know how bad Rian got it, it meant that you sympathized and helped him, right?" He waited for Officer Lennart to answer, but none came. "Or maybe you were just as abandoned as him, right?" Again, Officer Lennart gave no response. A-Ninetales sighed,

disappointed. "So, you got help but chose not to help in return.

"And that's my ISSUE with you all!" A-Ninetales returned to the crowd. "It took a town to drive Rian into destroying it! It would've taken at least ONE of you to prevent it!"

A-Ninetales let the words ring out with all his anger, disappointment, and shame sinking in. The gathered Pokémon around them averted their eyes from him, Faith, Glorfindel, and even Rian. The social atmosphere grew cold, with A-Ninetales sensing some of the guilt leaking from them. Even Officer Lennart sucked his lips and turned away.

Rian got up and pressed close against A-Ninetales. "I-I'm ready for your sentence."

A-Ninetales nodded and, with a press on his badge, teleported away with Faith, Glorfindel, and Rian in a flash of white light.

#

"Ugh." Glaurung rubbed the back of his hair-fur. He felt pain throughout his body. With every movement he made, he felt a joint popping. Once he shook his head, he glanced around. His face turned white upon noticing the

flattened town in the distance. "O-oh, jeez. Th-this is really bad. I should—"

A portal formed in front of him before he could finish his sentence. It had no clouds surrounding it, almost like a floating mirror. He knew it was not since it did not reflect his form. Instead, another Pokémon stood about three times his height at the other side.

Glaurung folded his ear-fins back, away from this mainly dark blue Pokémon. Gray metallic protrusion extended out from four of his legs like claws, over his tail-base like a fin, on his chest, and on his face. Light blue stripes also protruded on his legs, tail, and sides of his body and head. A diamond-like crystal lay at the center of the metallic chest plate. Glaurung gulped at his long head, with the metallic protrusion reminded him of horns and fangs.

"H-hello, Dialga," Glaurung said. Any sense of arrogance disappeared, replaced by fear. "Uh, I'm—"

"I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, GLAURUNG." Dialga completed. "I ALSO KNOW YOU LET THIS DISASTER HAPPEN UNDER YOUR WATCH. RIAN IS STOPPED, BUT NOT BEFORE DESTROYING MOST OF BANNOCKGAUNIX TOWN."

Glaurung swallowed and got to his knees while his face sweated. "I-I seriously didn't intend for him to become this huge. I-I only wanted to grow him a little, honest."

Dialga's red glowed for a second. "I KNOW OF YOUR REASONS AND INTENTIONS, GLAURUNG. YOUR FAILURE TO STOP IT AT ANY POINT IS ALSO NOTED." Dialga paused, letting Glaurung close his eyes and breathe harder. "HOWEVER, I AM GOING TO FORGO PUNISHING YOU AND INSTEAD GIVE YOU A WARNING. DO NOT TRY THIS STUNT AGAIN, OR ELSE I WILL MAKE YOU SUFFER."

Glaurung opened his eyes in surprise. "Uh, I-I'm thankful for your mercy, Dialga."

"IT IS NOT MY MERCY YOU SHOULD BE THANKING, BUT ARCEUS'S," Dialga responded. "ARCEUS FELT THAT IT WAS BETTER FOR THIS TO HAPPEN."

The portal disappeared before Glaurung could ask what he meant. He stood back up again, breathing easier since it was a warning. He took another look at the destructive path Rian made.

He saw some Pokémon approaching.

Glaurung swung his staff and teleported out from this universe, half-hoping that he would not return anytime soon.

#

Rian watched in awe at the massive A-Ninetales and Faith training in this desolate land. A-Ninetales walked with such ease that he wondered how he did not cause any craters with his paws. Faith, meanwhile, formed pawprints in the red ground with every step. She winced every time, with sweat drops forming on her face.

"I-I didn't realize that the anthros hid an entire continent to live on," Rian said. He sat on Glorfindel's lap, who held onto him close. He could also see his authentic five-tailed kitsune self instead of a Ninetales illusion. "All the tales said that they disappeared."

"You can say that it was still the truth, just missing some details," Glorfindel said. He chomped on some energy bars. "And there isn't anyone on the continent there who can use magic like me. At least, if you discount Glaurung."

Rian folded his ears downward out of shame. "I-I should apologize to him. He meant to help, which I took advantage of."

Glorfindel let out a snicker. "In time. Boy, would I love to see his face when he encounters one of the Pokémon of Myth for that stunt."

Rian hung his head down low. The memories of when he was macro, like A-Ninetales and Faith, were a blur to him. He remembered seeing red from rage, pushing him for revenge. It lessened when he saw fellow victims, but that did not stop him for long. He hoped that no one lost their lives over it, no matter how mean they were.

"Anything wrong?" Glorfindel asked.

"I-I wonder. Is it possible to forgive myself?" Rian asked. "I-I did great evil. I destroyed, hurt lives, and maybe would've killed if I hadn't been stopped. I wish I could take it all back and accept Glaurung's offer to leave for a new place to be happy. Instead, I left ruin. How can I get this peace?"

Glorfindel did not answer. Instead, he stroked Rian down his back as though trying to soothe him. Rian felt more conflicted than ever, remembering the screams. Perhaps he should not have gone with A-Ninetales; it was too merciful for someone like him. He should have been taken by Guildmaster Augusta and Officer Lennart for punishment.

At least it would be briefer than this.

"Excuse me."

Rian lifted his head to the speaker, A-Ninetales. He approached, with Faith standing behind him. She leaned out to the side past his massive tails to see Rian.

"I couldn't help but overhear," A-Ninetales admitted. "You say that you want forgiveness?"

Rian nodded, though he knew what the answer might be.

A-Ninetales let out a soft sigh. "Truth be told, Rian, you might never forgive yourself. Even if everyone in your town somehow forgives you, you may never grant it to yourself. And yes, you did evil things. But knowing that you did wrong is the first step."

"The first step?" Rian repeated. "The first step to what?"

"Atonement." A-Ninetales glanced at Faith, who averted her eyes. "You cannot seek atonement for your sins if you don't believe you did wrong. Knowing that you did, great and small, is the first step. The next step is, instead of letting it turn selfish and corroding you under the belief that you'll always be forgiven, you should take steps to repair the damage done. And don't seek it for only atonement

and forgiveness's sake, but for truly wanting to help others. Even then, I can't guarantee you'll receive self-forgiveness or peace. There's one thing I can guarantee, though."

"What's that?" Rian asked.

"As long as you keep moving forward, knowing that you did wrong without prettying up and trying to do good, you'll end up wiser for it." A-Ninetales gave Rian a slight pat with a claw. "Besides, there are few singular evils done that can truly condemn you for life. A bad decision, even a big one like yours, would only be unforgivable if you continued toward that path instead of stopping and pivoting away."

Rian blinked. "I-I'm not sure I understand." Rian raised his ears up. "But thank you."

A-Ninetales nodded, turned to Faith, and continued training her. Rian felt self-loathing burning him, but not as much as before. Perhaps it would always burn him, but it would remind him of who he should not be.

Rian let out a small smile, watching.

The End

Rian will return

About Author

Standing over six feet tall, Foxgamer01 is a writer born in Arizona and currently living in Arkansas. Though he initially wanted to be in the gaming industry, he did not realize until later, after years of playing with random toys and imagining adventures with them, of his gift of being a writer. Even then, it took some computer classes with a dry professor in college that solidified his change in becoming a writer.

Foxgamer01 has been writing, at first through notebooks and later through laptops, since 2009. There was a dry spot between 2013 and 2018, thanks to distractions and work, but he has been writing consistently since. He had written over a hundred short stories and six 'books,' including one collab story.

Foxgamer01 would like to thank fellow friends and writers Greyhound1211, SnekKnack AKA Nick, Tails230, and Kinshou-fox AKA The-Writing-Dragon AKA Huggles. They have been the biggest inspiration for getting him to write. Though Foxgamer01 carried a lot of regret over the years, he would never regret the days he founded their writings, which triggered his desire to write his stories.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read my story! I really appreciate it. If you enjoyed it, then you'll definitely want to check out my gallery accounts at:

<https://www.furaffinity.net/user/foxgamer01/>

<https://www.deviantart.com/foxgamer01>

<https://www.weasyl.com/~foxgamer01>

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I have a lot of great content there that I think you'll love.

Also, if you're interested in supporting me and my writing, please consider visiting my Ko-Fi and Patreon accounts at:

<https://ko-fi.com/foxgamer01>

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Every little bit helps me to keep creating and sharing my stories with the world.

Lastly, if you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me at:

foxgamer01@hotmail.com

I'd love to hear from you and answer any questions you may have.

Thanks again for your support, and I can't wait to share more of my work with you soon!