

Hippocratic Oath - Eeyup

The doctors left Floccesy Town, heading north. "Sure was nice of that old man to help us out," Alek said.

Riviera shrugged. "He's a has-been. Did y'hear he got his ass kicked by a child? She took his place at the League." They made their way across the grassy field.

A sentret suddenly raised itself up out of the grass in front of them and made challenging calls. Alek's eyes shone as he grasped the pokéball at his belt. "Let's do this Kippow!" A small blue mud fish popped out of the light. "Kiiip," it growled in challenge.

Riviera shook his head. "Y'know, maybe y'should get that fish thing examined. It's not right in the head."

The mudkip charged bodily at the sentret and struck true. The creature stood for a second then fell backwards, out cold. The fish crooned triumphantly before collapsing as well.

"See, that's not right," Riviera said as his friend picked up the mudkip. The trainer dug around in his bag and pulled out a revival crystal, feeding it to the blue Pokémon, who awoke and leapt out of his master's arms, yelling challenging sounds.

"He's trying his best," Alek said defensively, walking alongside his Pokémon. A hoothoot landed nearby and glared at them. "Okay Kippow, let's do this!"

Riviera watched as the mudkip knocked itself out again. "Y'know, that's the sixth time that critter's done that. Seriously, get it examined." Another hoothoot placed itself in their path. "Watch me," he said as he released his own 'mon. "Trapinch, Relic Song." The orange Pokémon started singing and the owl fell asleep. "C'mon," he said as he walked past the snoozing creature.

Alek caught up. "This isn't as easy as it looked," he said. "But Miss Bianca asked me to study this mudkip and that's what I'll do."

Riviera stopped and turned to face his friend. "Are y'sure about this? Y'know, a travelling doctor has to be a competent trainer as well. There's no shame in backing out now."

"I can do it!" he snapped. "You think that just because you got your training aboard that boat, that you know better than me?"

Riviera stepped back and held his hands up. "Y'need to chill," he said. "Don't go losing that temper now or y'll not make it far."

Alek sighed. "I'm sorry. I just want to be something."

"Other than a doctor?"

"Other than Little Alek." He kicked at the grass. "You know, Mr Lambert kept saying my diagnosis of his back pain was wrong, and he kept saying that because he taught me basic maths that he knew better than me."

They continued walking in silence. As they reached the bridge, they were stopped by a pair of children.

"Prepare for trouble," the first boy said.

"And make it doub-"

"Relic Song," Riviera ordered. His trapinch started to sing, and the boys grew drowsy, falling to the ground fast asleep. He started searching their pockets.

"Err, I'm pretty sure that's not how it works," Alek said.

"So?" The doctor pulled a pair of cards out of the kids' pockets. "Tch, they thought they were in the mafia." He tore up the crudely-made Rocket membership cards. "Where'd they get those things in the first place?" He stood. "Come on, y'need summat other than that self-destructive mudkip."

They reached the second bridge as another pair of children attacked them.

"Do you praise the Dome?" the first girl asked.

"Our leader said we gotta show people the light of the Dome," the second girl said.

"Oh for the love of Arceus!" Riviera cried. "Damned cultists! This is a waste of time."

"Hey!" Alek said. "If you don't want to battle them, leave them to me. I need the practice anyway." He held up his balls and released his mudkip and a hoothoot.

"Hehe," one of the girls said. "You want a double battle?"

Alek nodded. "Go on River, I'll catch up."

"Where'd y'get a hoothoot?" his friend asked. "Ech, I'll see y'later." He bypassed the girls.

"We'll see you later Mr Hurt," one of the girls said. Riviera stopped, then dismissed it as the wind.

He continued on his way, reaching the ranch. In the distance, a heavy set man sharpened a fork on a whetstone. In the fields, baby pichu played with one another, and one of them stared up at the doctor as he passed before running over to play.

"Pichu!" it cried cheerfully.

Several bad words passed through his mind as he stared down at the joyful yellow face sitting on his shoe.

A rough hand snatched the mouse from his shoe. The rotund man held the pichu up. "Now I thought I told ya to stop bothering strangers like that." He set the mouse down in the field. "Go play with your brothers," he said and the pichu obeyed with a joyful cry.

The man straightened himself, wiping some hay from his blue overalls. "Sorry about that. Bloody critters get to excitable sometimes. How can I help ya?"

"I hear this is a good place for beginning trainers," he said. "My friend could do with the help."

The man looked round. "Ya sure? I don't see anybody else."

"He got held up by a pair of cultists."

The man spat. "Bloody nuisance. If it were up to me, I'd have all those kids working here, but naw, their parents just give them a critter and fill their heads with ideas of becoming champion. No respect these days. Worse with all these shenanigans."

"Shenanigans?"

The fat man continued. "Once upon a time, there'd be mareep prancing about in that field over there." He pointed to where a group of meditite were play-fighting one another. "All the riolu left as well, and these chickyreeta things moved in. Got me confounded no end."

Riviera nodded. "I see. Is it just this area that's been affected?"

The rancher stared at him incredulously. "You blind boy? It's been happening all over, and not just the critters. Ya think we usually get cultists and gangsters in these parts?"

He bowed his head. "Sorry sir. Y'got any idea why this is happening?"

The man harrumphed. "Bloody soft touch parenting, that's what."

"Paw!" The men turned to stare at a young girl dressed in blue overalls come running up. She stopped as she reached them, catching her breath. "Paw, a couple of guys took Growly! Dressed in black. Claimed they were called plasmar."

"What?" the man thundered. "Where? Why didn't ya take that critter with ya?" He reached for the belt of balls hanging on a nearby fork.

Riviera held up a hand. "Sir, I know of these people. Please, let me handle this."

The man narrowed his eyes. "Ya sure ya can handle yarself, boy?"

Riviera nodded. "I served three years in the Hoenn region. I can take care of myself. Believe me, you do not want to mess with these guys."

"If yar sure," the man said. "Eeyup Eunice, show this fella where those guys were, and take that damned critter with ya!"

"Sure thing Paw. Come on Void," she called out. A small blue crocodile popped out of the grass and danced excitedly over to his mistress, cheering as he did. The totodile stared up at Riviera then croaked at him.

The doctor followed the girl into the forest surrounding the ranch, stopping just within the entrance. "This is where they grabbed Growly," she said.

"I'll deal with him," Riviera said. "If y'see my friend, send him this way please." She nodded and left, taking her excitable crocodile with her.

Riviera headed further into the trees, shaking his head as he went. This crime-ridden area wasn't how he remembered it. He whistled as he walked, scaring away any Pokémon who would seek to challenge him.

A man in green overalls stopped him. "Careful round these parts," the man said. "Saw a couple of guys in black, they were being chased by ol' Growly. Dunno what they did to rile him so."

"Thanks for the warning," Riviera said and made to continue on his way. The mop handle the man was carrying stopped him.

"Maybe I should make sure you can handle yourself," he said. "Don't wanna have to carry you back if you get yourself hurt."

Riviera clenched a fist. "Listen y'old geezer, I served three years! I was involved in numerous surgical strikes, all of which I excelled at. Y'really think I can't handle myself?"

The man lowered his mop. "Sheesh, no need to be so grouchy, was just trying to help."

There was a crashing behind them as they were joined. "Hey River," Alek said. "That girl, Eunice or Eeyup or whatever her name was, she said you'd need help."

"Y'want somebody to test, test him," Riviera said, pointing a thumb at his friend. "Green behind the ears, if y'know what I mean."

Riviera walked away as the green-clothed man challenged his friend. He walked through the winding trees, looking for signs of struggle and passage as he went.

He heard yelling up ahead. He looked to the source of the sound and saw a scrap of fabric on a tree branch. He grabbed it, studying the torn shield. Plasma! He started running, stumbling as his feet got caught in tree roots in his haste.

He stopped short as he came upon a pair of men dressed in the ninja uniforms of Neo Plasma, their badges sewn onto their chests. They were being harangued by a herdier.

One of the men broke free and ran. "Don't leave me!" his companion begged. "Dude, help me!" he yelled as he saw Riviera. The herdier turned his head to watch the doctor. Riviera began chasing the escaping man and the herdier turned his attention back to his captive.

The doctor pounded after his target. The Plasma grunt slowed, panting as he ran. Riviera, having kept himself fitter, closed in and tackled his target. They went down in a pile.

Riviera got up first. He grabbed the wriggling grunt by the leg and pulled him backwards. The grunt turned onto his back to kick at his pursuer.

"You thieving bastard!" Riviera yelled as he climbed atop the grunt. He grabbed a handful of the thief's outfit and raised his other hand into a fist, striking down. The man yelled as the fist contacted with his eye.

"Please!" he begged as Riviera continued striking him. "Stop! Help!" Riviera's fist made contact with his nose and pain blossomed in his head as the bones broke.

Riviera climbed off the man and kicked him in the stomach. "You thieving bastard!" he repeated. "You think you can just take whatever 'mon take your fancy?" He picked the man up, now crying, and threw him against a tree.

Twigs snapped behind the doctor. He turned to see Alek. He knelt down and held the thief's head in his hands, studying the bruised face. The man flinched. "Think that's a broken nose y've got there. We'll get y'an ambulance, don't worry."

Alek looked at the injured man then his friend. "What happened?"

"He tripped, went face first into a tree."

The man nodded agreement. "Please, I'm not one of those Plasma guys. They were paying guys to dress up like this, said it was for an art project."

Riviera checked his Pokégear. "Damn, no signal. Alek, stay with him. I'm gonna get out of here and see if I can get a signal." He walked off before his friend could say anything.
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