No Scoutmaster Left Behind

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No Scoutmaster Left Behind

by cptsubby

Summary

Two months after the newly founded Peak Scouts escaped from the island, they were called upon to return to it. This time, though, everything has changed and an old foe seemingly wants them to stay away. Can they brave a new set of challenges and threats while also rescuing Scoutmaster Myres in the process? Or will they fail and join him in an eternity of suffering?

Updates happening weekly!

Chapter 1: Home

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sunday, August 2nd, 2026

The time crept over into 4PM just as Riley was applying the finishing touches to their house in Minecraft. It was nothing more than a basic wooden house with a few details but what they were building didn't really matter to them. What mattered was the fact that the process was incredibly therapeutic to them. Something about the calm music as they worked away at a build felt just right.

They were sitting on the couch with Jade to their right, quietly observing. About an hour ago, Jade had decided to make Riley their pillow and they remained there since then. It was a surprise they hadn't drifted off into sleep considering they were wearing sweats and a t-shirt while wrapped up in a warm fuzzy blanket.

A few months ago, that kind of contact would've been nothing more than a distant memory. It was nice to see that Jade had warmed up to them considerably in that time. It seemed they were getting a little more comfortable falling into place in their new role and new home.

They weren't able to find much time to play video games anymore, especially not after taking in the kids, so it was nice to have a moment like that every once in a while. They didn't mind though. Their free time was a sacrifice they were absolutely willing to make if it meant their kids had a happy and safe home.

On the topic of taking in the kids: given the… "extraordinary circumstances" that Dave mentioned in the past, it made initiating the fostering process for their kids incredibly easy. On the same day they went in for the appointment, just a day after returning, they had signed a ton of paperwork to foster the kids. They were able to all go home together later that same day.

Even a few months after, they still found it incredibly hard to believe it was that easy, especially when it wasn't so easy for…

Suddenly, Jade gently nudged them in their side. It was only then that they realized they had spaced out. In that time, it seemed their laptop had also slid down their lap a bit, so they grabbed it and gently set it down on the coffee table in front of them before they could end up dropping it.

When they finally took a look to their right, they noticed that Jade was staring at them. It almost felt like they were staring directly into their *soul*, which only made Riley feel uncomfortable on top of being confused.

"Uh… what's up, Jade?"

“You doing okay? You spaced out for a minute there,” Jade inquired.

“I’m… fine. Sorry. I think I need some fresh air,” Riley replied.

“That’s probably a good idea. You’ve been hacking away at that since the others left.”

Right. The others.

Jamie, Luna and Evelyn left a few hours to go to the park after the rain had cleared up. Jamie and Luna were starting to get antsy being trapped for the entire morning, so they managed to convince Evelyn to take them out to the park.

Well… that, and a ton of begging for Riley to allow them to go. They had relented for a while, but eventually they caved in.

They were just afraid of something happening to them, especially when they were still in the part of the process where it’d be so easy to lose custody over them. At the same time though, the kids deserved to get out and have some fun too.

Evelyn was a good person though. Sarcastic and witty at times, yes, but still… a good person. Jamie had even accidentally called her “mom” at one point, but they insisted that was a complete accident. She’d never let anything happen to them.

Jade’s weight suddenly pulled away from them, prompting them to get up. As much as they wanted to stay like that, they needed some air.

Once they got up, they noticed their phone was missing. However, they very quickly remembered they left it on their desk in their room, so they had no reason to panic. They’d probably need to call Evelyn sooner than later to bring Jamie and Luna home for dinner, so they decided they’d take a detour to grab it before going outside.

When they entered the hallway, they first reached the door to the bathroom on their left and Jamie and Luna’s room on their right.

They remember the younger children’s room being quite the difficult arrangement to make for several reasons. One, Luna was hellbent on sleeping on the couch for some reason. Two, Jade didn’t like the idea of having their own room. Three, Jamie didn’t like the idea of Jade *not* having their own room.

It eventually spiraled into almost being an argument, so Riley ended up having to mediate it, which lead to Jamie and Luna sharing a room while Jade got their own. Luna sleeping on the couch was absolutely not an option.

The door was left wide open so they were able to take a look inside. It… probably didn’t hurt to make sure everything looked good anyways, though they should’ve done that *before* letting them go to the park.

The walls were a reddish-orange with a white ceiling and carpet. Their beds and desks were also white to match the floor and ceiling. All of the furniture seemed to have been dusted off

recently and the shared trash can empty. The lamp over on Jamie's end table had been left on, so Riley went over to turn it off. They made a mental note to bring it up to them later.

Both halves of the room seemed to mirror one another, at least in terms of furniture placement. In the back corner was a bed with an end-table to its side and in the corner closest to the door was a desk and chair. On the middle of the back wall was a large window with reddish-orange curtains covering it.

On Jamie's side—the left—was an accordion door which lead into their shared closet. On Luna's side was a large dresser with a small television on top. Like the closet, the dresser was also shared. The television didn't get used very often, which Riley ended up being happy about. At least some kids actually wanted to peel away from their screens still.

There were a ton of posters and miniature replicas of mountains on Jamie's side of the room; they had become even more obsessed with climbing after their first ascent of that island. They also framed the climbing outfit they had long since retired along with their old sash. They, along with everyone else, ended up getting promoted so they wanted to keep their outfit and Rabbit Scout sash as memorabilia.

Luna's side was… much emptier with only a few space posters and miscellaneous photos with their new family hung up. A telescope, neatly re-packaged, sat beside their side of the window. Riley had passed it down to them a few days after they had moved in, but seemed afraid to touch it for a few days. However, Jamie taking initiative by opening it themselves seemed to change their mood about it and it has been used frequently since.

They ended up copying Jamie with their own frame, retiring their old Turtle Scout outfit and Scout sash. They ended up jumping up two ranks to the Rabbit Scout rank, which was unheard of in scouting history. Given everything they dealt with while only being a Scout though… it was a well-deserved promotion.

In spite of Riley's best efforts to spruce up Luna's side, they insisted they were fine with what they had. Riley wasn't too happy about that arrangement, but they didn't want to force Luna into anything they didn't want or need either. They were terrified of pushing too hard and losing them.

The room was tidy… or, well, at tidy as it could be with a fourteen and a twelve year old living in it. It was good enough for Riley not to complain though, so they decided to just move on.

Next, they passed by Jade's room but since the door was shut, they decided against snooping around. The kid deserved some privacy too and it was usually extremely tidy anyways. Maybe they'd get a chance to check up on it sometime in the future.

They finally reached their own room and took a step inside. Their room's color palette wasn't quite as exciting as Jamie and Luna's, but they were perfectly fine with the black and white theme they had going on.

Across from the door sat a decently sized desk right in front of a window. On that desk was a monitor and computer tower, along with several photos with their family and Evelyn. The

chair in front of it was a black leather chair. It had certainly seen better days, but considering it still functioned fine, they had no interest in replacing it.

To the left of the desk was a door that lead to the master bathroom. They were uninterested in wandering into there at the moment.

In the back left corner was a queen sized bed. The pillows, blanket and sheets were white while the bed frame was black. They had no end-table though, which was rather inconvenient when they wanted to get rid of their phone after scrolling at night. At the very least, they did set their bed up near an outlet, so they could at least stay in bed to plug their phone in.

In the back right corner was the door to their closet, which was quite messy. Truthfully, they were scared of even going back in there, given how much of a mess it had become. They kept telling themselves they weren't a hoarder, and yet… they've done nothing to remedy the issue.

Maybe some other time they'd do something about that.

Their room was a bit messy since they often forgot to tidy it up. Jamie had pointed that out in the past when being lectured about their own room, which has forced Riley to be a little more conscious about it. Though, it was still something they forgot about at times since they've still not completely adjusted to the fact they don't live alone anymore.

While it was messy, it wasn't *filthy* by any means. They didn't eat anything in there and their drinks were limited to water and coffee, both of which were disposed of shortly after being finished. That much they could take pride in.

Unlike the others, they decided against framing their old clothing and sash from their previous expedition. Their coat was damaged beyond repair and even after repeated washing, it just didn't smell good, so they unfortunately threw it away. As for their Wolf Scout sash, they tucked it away in their closet, while their new Scoutmaster sash was tossed over the back of their desk chair.

They wished they could've given their new sash to Luna, seeing as how they were fascinated by the design, but they knew it would've caused problems with other people if they were wandering around with the wrong sash. As much as the sparkly galaxy sash would've complimented their new favorite and similarly sparkly outfit, they still weren't a Scoutmaster.

About a month after the crash, they ended up becoming the founder and Scoutmaster of Troop 525, which was also the first troop to be founded under the newly founded Peak Scouts. The troop only consisted of them and their kids, though they also extended an invitation to Evelyn in the event that she felt like transferring.

They realized they were spacing out again when the breeze from their ceiling fan brushed them in the eye, so they grabbed their phone and left their room. They weren't going to get any fresh air if they just stood around inside.

As they were walking to the back door, they noticed something peculiar in the living room. More particularly, Jade was actually *playing* on the laptop! It was hard to tell what they were

doing from where they stood, but they could tell they were at least actively doing something.

They decided against commenting on it or staring any longer, since Jade could be spooked very easily in those scenarios. They weren't sure why the kid was so averse to indulging in something like a video game but…

Right. Their grandparents. All of those kind of behaviors just… led back to their grandparents.

…

Poor kid.

Riley quickly sneaked out the back door before Jade could notice and closed it gently. Once outside, they picked a random chair to sit in and turned it to face out towards the backyard.

Despite how muggy it felt following the rain, it actually wasn't a terrible day to be outside. While it was still a bit cloudy, the temperature was just right to be out and about. Not too hot, not too cold. The air smelt nice… or, well, as nice as suburban air could smell. At least the remnants of rain on the ground helped out with that.

They noticed that the poolside basketball hoop they bought for Jamie's fourteenth birthday had fallen over onto the surface of the water. They assumed it was because of the weather though, so they didn't feel the need to lecture Jamie about it later. Instead, they approached it themselves and re-adjusted it so it was once again standing upright.

On the topic of Jamie's fourteenth birthday… they recalled that being a complete pain to sort out.

…

It was just three days after they had returned from the island when Jamie turned fourteen. Riley only remembered because Jade was panicking about it, unsure what to do for the occasion. Of course, that meant that Riley also started to panic, because they *also* didn't know what to do.

Jamie had insisted they didn't want anything for their birthday. When Riley attempted to argue, Jamie brought up the fact that they've provided them with a roof over their head and a whole new room and a bunch of "cool stuff" already.

That didn't stop Riley or Jade from feeling like they were inadequate for not doing anything though. So, one day, they convinced Evelyn to babysit Jamie and Luna while the two of them went to a random store in town. They weren't really looking for anything in particular, but they were hoping that they'd come across something Jamie might've liked.

They eventually came across a poolside basketball hoop which Jade pointed out instantly. Riley grabbed it without even taking a look at the price tag. Just before they were going to check out though, Jade pointed out the rather annoying fact that it didn't come with a

basketball, so they had to backtrack to grab one of those too. They then bought both items and took them home.

They then presented the gifts to Jamie, who seemed a bit annoyed at the gesture, but still thankful nonetheless. They dragged Luna inside shortly after and Jade followed, curious about what that was about.

In the meantime, Riley and Evelyn constructed the hoop and stood proudly at the finished product. Truthfully though, it really only needed one person to construct. They were just glad they got to spend a little time with her.

Before either of them could react, Jamie nosedived into the pool with the ball and tossed it in the hoop. Luna and Jade were far more careful with their entry thankfully. They were all in their swimwear and ready to have some fun.

“That kid’s gonna hurt themselves one day…” Evelyn sighed.

“I keep telling them that and they keep not caring,” Riley replied.

“Maybe they’ll learn when they actually get hurt.”

“I hate to say it, but yeah. Might be what they need to realize how reckless they can be.”

…

Though that bout of Jamie’s recklessness still irked them months later, they couldn’t help but still feel happy about the moment overall.

In spite of Jamie’s initial protests of not wanting anything, they still seemed to enjoy the basketball hoop. Even months after, any time they’re swimming, they made sure to shoot a couple shots. Luna had taken a couple shots at it too, but at first it seemed like they were still a bit too weak to get the ball in the hoop.

Though… Riley did steal some glances at times and often noticed that Jamie lowered it just for Luna. Eventually, they just kept it lowered and said nothing about it. Luna seemed pleased by that arrangement.

They returned to their seat and felt relaxed as a gentle breeze blew and the sounds of birds chirping filled the air. Aside from being overcast, it actually wasn’t terrible for a random Sunday in August. Given the heat they endured in the previous summer months… it was a nice change of pace.

Suddenly, the back door slowly creaked open then clicked shut just as Jade appeared in their line of sight. It seemed they had abandoned both the blanket and the laptop inside. They grabbed their own chair and positioned it beside Riley’s then sat down.

“I figured I should get some fresh air too, considering I’ve just been sitting with you all day,” Jade said.

“Yeah,” Riley paused for a moment. “It’s not so bad out here.”

“Mm. Maybe if it was a bit less humid…”

Riley shrugged. “To each their own.”

Then curiosity hit them. They couldn’t see what Jade was doing on the laptop earlier, so they wanted to ask about it. No harm in asking about it, right?

“So, Jade… what’d you end up doing on the laptop?”

Jade suddenly tensed up after hearing the question. “Uh… y-you saw me on it…?”

“Yeah. I didn’t say anything though because I didn’t want to bother you.” Riley smiled. “It’s nice to see you doing something for yourself for once.”

Jade seemed to ease up a little at the reassurance. “I… didn’t really have a plan. Just found an open spot and let my hands do the thinking.”

“That’s how it usually goes for me. Just… let it happen first, come back around to pretty it up later.”

“Sorry… by the way.”

So much for bonding on that front.

“For?”

“…Nevermind.”

They had a feeling they knew *exactly* why Jade was apologizing.

“You don’t have to be scared of openly enjoying things, Jade.”

“Old habits die hard, I suppose.”

Old trauma, you mean.…

Jade suddenly changed the topic. “Tacos for dinner, right?”

Riley seemed confused but decided to go along with it. “Yeah. Nothing too crazy. I… kinda forgot to plan something better for tonight.”

“It doesn’t always have to be some grand meal. Food’s food.”

“Yeah. I guess so.” Riley suddenly remembered they were carrying their phone when it vibrated. Just another email. “I’ll call Evelyn in a bit to bring Jamie and Luna back. I think a couple hours is enough for them to be tuckered out. We need to eat soon too.”

Jade laughed. “For Jamie? I find that hard to believe.”

“Kid’s still gonna get tired and hungry eventually.”

“True.”

The two of them sat in a comfortable silence for a while. Moments like those didn’t happen very often so they were happy to be able to enjoy it. Despite the occasional child being obnoxious somewhere in the neighborhood or someone working on some random project, it was relaxing to just… be outside.

That moment didn’t last for much longer though because their phone started to vibrate again in their pocket. This time, it lasted longer, meaning they were receiving a call.

They sighed and allowed it to vibrate for a few more seconds, but decided that whoever was calling would likely be upset if they were ignored. As annoying as it was to deal with phone calls on a Sunday, it would be even more annoying to be lectured about missing them.

They finally pulled it out of their pocket and when they took a look at the screen…

The name that showed up was one they *really* didn’t want to see.

Chapter End Notes

Moving to chapter-specific notes now that I'm not mass importing chapters from my doc. Hello! Each chapter will have a slightly more personable end note now, isn't that cool!

Anyways, this is a very descriptive opening chapter, I tried to tackle as many details as I could without being too obnoxious about it. Don't worry, the next chapter will be the complete opposite! Yay!!!

Also, I think my end notes will be slightly different here than on AO3 until it comes back on. So I guess this is another FFL exclusive.

Feel free to join my Discord server to keep up with updates and discussions of my fics! I do stuff on Tumblr too, but you may have an easier time reaching me on Discord.

Chapter 2: The Call

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

They had to do a double take on the name because they just couldn't believe what they saw.

Headmaster Raymond?!

They groaned immediately when it finally registered in their head who was calling. Raymond was one of the last people they wanted to talk to, *especially* on a Sunday.

To them, he just didn't seem like the kind of person that was emotionally mature enough be in charge of an entire subdivision of Scouts. He often jabbed at them over random things and would often tease them and Evelyn being a "thing." To make matters worse, his attitude and personality seemed to always put Luna on edge. Overall, he was just not the kind of person they liked.

Though… he did do an exceptional job at keeping everything in order, and his colleagues did recommend him for that very reason, as long as they could get past all of his flaws. Additionally, his presence relieved them of the possibility of being a Headmaster, which was a relief for them. On that front, they could at least tolerate him.

If they were in charge… well, the Peak Scouts probably wouldn't have existed for long. They were barely Scoutmaster material, let alone Headmaster material. Besides, if they were a Headmaster, they'd just be stuck at a desk doing boring stuff, much like their actual job. At least as a Scoutmaster, they actually had the opportunity to do fun stuff and it was far easier managing only one troop.

"Let me guess, Headmaster Raymond's giving you a call?" Jade asked.

"Yeah…" Riley sighed.

"Again? Why is it always on a Sunday?"

"No clue," Riley replied. "Should I just… let it go to voicemail?"

"No, remember the last time you did that?"

Oh, they remembered. Very vividly, in fact. They got an earful about "neglecting" their duties as a Scoutmaster because they just so happened to "miss" a call from him. That call happened to land on another Sunday where they didn't feel like dealing with him.

They *really* didn't want a repeat of that. Getting lectured once was enough and they were likely on thin ice regardless. They weren't in the mood to hear it again.

Riley let out a deep sigh and answered before the call could go to voicemail.

“Hello, Headmaster Raymond,” Riley flatly answered.

“Hm. I see you actually picked up this time. You couldn’t even give me a ‘good afternoon’ though? What’s the matter with you?” Raymond retorted. He didn’t sound upset though… but incredibly sarcastic, which only irritated Riley more.

“You calling me out of the blue on a *Sunday afternoon* is the matter. You obviously have a reason this time, right?”

Raymond chuckled. “Of course I do! You’re just ready to get down to business, huh?” He then sighed when Riley responded with total silence. “Yeah, okay.” The way he said that made Riley feel guilty for their hostility. “Anyways, uh… that island you all escaped from? Back in June? You remember it, right?”

“Of course. That’s… kinda the whole reason why the Peak Scouts exist, no?”

“So you do remember, good,” he replied. “A few days ago, a small team and I went out to investigate the island but… things are different from what you four reported to us.”

“Different? You sure you went to the right island? There’s probably a lot of remote islands out there…”

“Yes. It was at the same coordinates and all. Our pilots confirmed that much. It just… seemingly changed… and any signs of wreckage disappeared.”

“You sent a dive squad and all to check it out?”

“Indeed. There was nothing.”

They didn’t have a good feeling about this.

“What are you getting at here?”

“There seems to be some kind of… ‘magic’ involved. A lot of weird stuff that wouldn’t normally happen elsewhere happened there.”

They already suspected that, given all of the crazy stuff they witnessed back then, but feigned ignorance to avoid raising suspicion. They all had conveniently left out all of those details when debriefing Raymond days after returning.

“Magic?”

“Yeah. Like… we spotted some blue beam in the sky, so of course we followed it. When we got there, sitting inside a random crevice was this statue of a scout holding some kind of amulet but… when one of our guys heard voices from it, they got spooked and ran off.”

Well, now they were intrigued. They never saw that before.

Raymond continued. “And… that campsite you were at? It’s like you were never even there. There was fresh firewood and food there. No ashes, no tracks, nothing. Also, there was

another bigger statue, but…”

“But?”

“Well… shortly after one of us touched it, it crumbled and made the gal who touched it very sick. Not only that, but we saw some *creepy* zombie looking man, so we got the hell out of there.”

Oh no.

“Did he say or… do anything?”

“Yup, and this is exactly the reason I’m calling. He said: ‘You are foolish to be here. I will spare you whelps so you can warn those… ‘Peak Scouts’ to *never come back*.’”

“And… let me guess. You’re calling me to try to reel us back in? You and your crew got scared so you’re gonna ask a Scoutmaster and their *children* to do the dirty work for you?”

“Am I *reeeeeeally* that predictable?” he asked sarcastically.

“Yeah, I’m afraid so.”

“Darn. Well, let’s talk more about this at my house at 10AM tomorrow. Bring Scoutmaster Evelyn and your kids. I’ll be debriefing all of you on what needs to be done and the preparations you’ll need to make.”

“Wait, what? Eve? Preparations? Who said I agreed—” Then he hung up. “*Damn it…*”

Jade cocked their head to the side. “Well?”

“Long story short, Raymond and his crew found out something’s up at that island we were at and he expects us to go back to it. He wants us to meet him at 10AM tomorrow to discuss it more… or something. Glad we could clear up our schedule before confirming that…”

Jade simply hummed in response.

“Why me…” Riley muttered under their breath. “What do you think, Jade?” they asked Jade.

Jade only seemed confused by the question. “What do I think…?”

“Yeah.”

“I think… I don’t have a good feeling about this. I’m not very optimistic about us being the second choice to return to the island behind his ‘crew.’”

“Well, I think we could at least hear him out, maybe make a more informed decision? After all, we’ve got more experience with this island than him and his crew do. They don’t even know half of what went on there.”

“Mm. I suppose it wouldn’t hurt, but what about school? Don’t you have work, too?”

“If we get to the point of actually going, I’ll make sure he knows time is something we will not compromise on. And, uh, I can still take some of time off before the end of the year.”

“Okay. I’m in, then.”

“Then… I’ll give Eve a call, talk about what we learned, have her bring Jamie and Luna back, stuff like that.”

“Good idea.” Jade then got out of their chair. “I’m going back inside. This humidity is starting to bother me a little bit.”

“Okay.”

Jade then slid their chair back into its original spot and entered the house, leaving Riley alone with their thoughts.

Of course… We just can’t catch a break, can we? They let out a deep sigh. *Well… maybe it could be fun, considering we’re not crashing this time. Sounds like we’re not going back for fun though. Could also save Myres while we’re running around over there…*

They opened the Contacts app on their phone and scrolled down to Evelyn’s contact. They tapped on it and their finger hovered over the call button before they just… set it down.

I’ll call her in a minute.

Then their phone started vibrating again.

I swear—

This time, it was Evelyn calling.

Oh. I guess that works out for me.

Evelyn, on the other hand, was a much more pleasant person to talk to, even on Sundays. They’d kill to go back to the days where they could just… talk for hours on end. Neither of them were in school anymore though and had their own responsibilities so that ritual kind of became nothing more than a distant memory.

So, that time, they didn’t even think twice before accepting the call.

“Yo, Rye!” Evelyn chirped.

“Hey, Eve,” Riley replied, sounding just a little too annoyed.

Evelyn picked up on this instantly. “Uh… you good? Wait. Did something happen at your house? Are you okay? Is—”

“Yes! We’re fine! Sorry. Just… got off the phone with Raymond.”

“Ugh. The hell does he want from you now? And… *why* now?”

“I’ll answer that after you tell me why you called. The kids doing okay?”

Evelyn sighed. “Yeah. We’re all good. Luna’s been tuckered out for like… an hour, but Jamie had so much more energy. Both are tired and hungry now though, so I just wanted to call and let you know we’re gonna head back in a few.”

“Good timing then. I was actually about to call you for the same reason. We’ve gotta eat soon so we can settle down for the night.”

“Right. Now… answer my question.”

“So, remember that island we escaped from?”

“Yeah? What about it?”

“Well, turns out… Raymond sent a crew out there and… a lot has changed since we left.”

“Duh. With nobody there to keep up with it, and the elements doing its thing… not really a surprise…”

“Not like that. I mean… like, *completely* changed. Unrealistic levels of change. ‘All traces of us being there suddenly vanished’ change.”

“You sure it was the same island?”

“He insisted it was. Though, with all of the weird…” *Less swearing, Riley.* “Stuff we witnessed there…”

“Oh… yeah. I see how that’s a possibility now… Wait, why was he even bringing this all up to you anyways?”

“He wants us to go back and check it out. He wants all of us, including you, to meet him at his house tomorrow at 10AM. He kinda spilled most of it over the phone though, so not really sure why he couldn’t just… spill the rest.”

“Why me? I wasn’t with you four on the plane.”

“Beats me. Probably just wants to tease us again for no reason.”

“Maybe I’ll pretend I’m sick, then we won’t have to deal with that,” Evelyn suggested.

Riley laughed. “Might not be a bad call, honestly.” They hummed. “Though… you *did* say you wanted to go camping again…”

“Riley… I wanted a *normal* camping trip. Not whatever… *this* is.”

“Let’s at least hear him out *before* coming to a conclusion, okay? It’s not like either of us are guaranteed to be able to take off work on such short notice anyways. Not only that, the kids have to go back to school soon, so this could just be a bust.”

“Fine, I’ll humor him, but only for you.”

“Appreciate it, Eve. You’re the best!”

“Aww, you’re too sweet—woah, watch it, Jamie!” She then started talking to someone outside of the phone, presumably Jamie. This went on for a minute before she returned to the phone. “You, uh… wanna talk to Jamie for a sec? Seems like they’re really eager to talk.”

“Sure.”

“Cool, one sec.”

Silence, followed by the faint sound of the phone transferring to a new set of hands.

“Riley! Hellooooo!” Jamie shouted.

Riley winced and pulled the phone away from their ear for a moment. They quickly returned it though before Jamie could yell again. “Hello, Jamie. What’d you want to talk to me about?”

“Just wanted to talk about what me and Luna have been up to!”

“I’m all ears.”

“So! We played some more Zombie, and uh… I won! A lot! But… I felt kinda bad, so I let Luna win too. After that, we just started playing around on the park. Turns out that a lot of the equipment can just be climbed on top of!”

“Jamie… don’t tell me you climbed atop literally *everything* there.”

“Uh… maybe?” Jamie replied, followed by an awkward chuckle.

Riley sighed. “You’ve seriously got to be more careful before you get hurt.”

“Yeah, yeah, I know,” followed by a pause. “But, uh… I think we’re ready to come home, so… we’re gonna do that.”

“So I heard. How’s Luna doing?”

“They’re fine! Just tired, is all. They’ve kinda been laying around looking at the sky for some time. I kinda wanna join them… they seem comfortable.”

“That’s good to hear. At least you two got to get outside for a bit.” Riley smiled at the thought of Jamie and Luna sprawled out and looking at the stars. Those two definitely had grown very close in the past two months. “Could always ask them if they want to stargaze with you later tonight.”

“Yeah, maybe I will. Anyways—huh? Oh, you want the phone back? Okay… Bye Riley!”

“See you soon, Jamie.”

The phone soon returned into Evelyn's possession, as confirmed by her voice.

"Had to pry the thing away from them before they could go on and on…" *Is that a bad thing…?* "Alright, I'm gonna bring these two back now."

"Sounds good. See you all soon."

"Yup. Later!"

Then she hung up.

They looked at the time once again. *4:17PM*. They really needed to start preparing dinner soon, and they also needed to let Jade know that the others were returning.

They took one final look out at the sky before bidding it farewell. They slid their chair back into its original spot and stood up, but not without popping a few bones in the process. *I am too young to be doing that…*

Immediately upon entering the house, they noticed that Jade was in the kitchen making preparations. They didn't get far in that short time, but they were in the process of dicing an onion. They seemed to have a few more vegetables set out and ready to be cut up.

They felt very mixed about the help. They weren't complaining about it necessarily, but they also knew the kid's intent was a mixed bag. Sure, they could be simply trying to help, but they also knew that behavior also stemmed from their grandparents' neglect.

And for that… they didn't want Jade to get the idea they were being neglected again, even if it was unintentional. With that having happened in the past… that being a possibility just made them feel uncomfortable. They were perfectly capable of taking care of everyone.

Now… if they had asked *after* Riley was already in the process of prepping and cooking… that would've been an entirely different story.

"Jade," they said. Jade immediately stopped and stared at them. "Thank you for the help, but please go relax."

"Are you sure? I don't mind helping."

"I'm positive."

Jade complied and stepped away immediately. "Okay." At least they learned to stop arguing about it a while ago.

They gently put a hand on Jade's shoulder as they passed. "Oh and, by the way, the others are on their way back. Just thought I'd let you know."

"Okay. Thanks for the warning," Jade replied with a chuckle.

…

4:42PM

"…And that's what he told me," Riley said between bites.

"Wait, so does that mean we get to go back to the island!?" Jamie asked excitedly.

"Well, not quite… or, not *yet*, anyways," Riley replied. "We've gotta figure out if Eve and I can even make the time for it first. I don't really feel comfortable sending you three away on your own so…"

"I-It sounds like i-it could be fun! Well, s-since we're not… crashing," Luna added.

"Yeah! It's like… a camping trip, but way cooler!" Jamie gasped like they'd just remembered something. "Wait! We can go back for Myres too, right? Not just whatever… dumb stuff Headmaster Raymond wants us to do?"

Riley hummed in thought. "I considered that as well. Depends on what he wants us to do in what amount of time and if he'll be trying to hold our hands throughout it. It'd be a lot easier to tackle it if we could do this on our own terms without being supervised."

"It also sounds like it'd probably be a lot more interesting than what Raymond has in mind for us…" Evelyn grumbled.

"Two birds with one stone, right?" Jade added. "We do whatever Headmaster Raymond wants and we get Myres out of there too. It's a win-win… win scenario."

Luna raised their hand. "Uh… q-question…" They seemed to fold instantly when everyone's eyes landed on them though. "N-Nevermind…"

They instead seemed to whisper something in Jamie's ear. Jamie ended up echoing it out loud. "What's Evelyn got to do with all of this though? She wasn't with us when we crashed."

"No clue. My only guess is that he wants to tease us again," Riley replied.

"Seriously?" Jamie scoffed. "Doesn't he have anything better to do? It stopped being funny after like… the first time."

Evelyn raised an eyebrow. "It was funny to you?"

"Uh…" Jamie suddenly stuffed a taco in their mouth and swallowed. "Mmm! This taco is soooo good!"

Evelyn shook her head in disapproval but still seemed to be humored nonetheless.

Jamie's reaction to the news was to be expected, of course. That kid loved taking any opportunity they could get to climb, and lately… they seemed quite invested in going back for Myres. That really caught Riley's attention though, because as far as they could tell, Jamie had little interest in the guy. Maybe they just saw his salvation as an excuse to do some more climbing…?

“Wait. I already forgot. Tomorrow’s just the meeting, right?” Jamie asked.

“Correct,” Riley replied.

“’kay. Thanks.” Jamie then went back to eating, seemingly no longer interested in the topic.

“Wait… w-what about school?” Luna asked.

“You all go back on the 17th, right? Considering how long it took us the first time when we were completely clueless, I imagine this time won’t take quite as long.”

“Okay…”

“Here, how about this?” Riley started. “I’ll, uh, try to get the entirety of next week off and make next weekend our deadline… If that’s not enough, Raymond can suck it up. Should be easy. Nobody’s really taking time off around this time of year.”

“Same,” Evelyn interjected. “My work isn’t… the most conventional. I think my dad would be chill with me disappearing for a week because of a random impromptu camping trip slash rescue mission.”

“I sense sarcasm in that response,” Riley teased.

“Me? Sarcastic? I’d never!” Evelyn feigned surprise.

“That works for me,” Jade butted in. “At least then, we’d still have the weekend before school starts to… I dunno…”

“Complain about how school sucks and that we don’t wanna go back?” Jamie suggested.

Jade laughed. “Sure. That works.”

“Sounds like we have ourselves a plan then,” Riley said.

“Yay!” Jamie cheered. “More climbing!”

“We’re not—oh, what the heck… yes, we’re doing more climbing,” Riley conceded.

Nobody seemed interested in continuing the conversation, so they went back to eating before their food could get cold. They got about where they expected to get with it anyway. They’d likely just start going in circles if it continued.

Now that they were able to chat with their family about the call, they felt a little less skeptical about it all. Jade did still have a valid concern about being next in line, though given what they’ve all endured the first time around, they felt pretty good about their odds. Plus, they *did* promise they’d go back for Myres, so that was their chance to do so.

The only hurdle they needed to get over now was their meeting with Raymond, which they were absolutely *not* looking forward to.

Chapter End Notes

Welcome to the dialogue heavy chapter! I wasn't joking when I said it'd be the opposite of Chapter 1. Hopefully this helps establish a few more things though and sets the stage for how things will go.

I should've probably addressed this in Chapter 1, but I'll do it here instead. Yes, the fic is shorter. In-universe, my excuse is that they have a better idea of what to do and generally work far better together as a team now as opposed to two months ago (in the fic) when they crashed. Other than that, I don't want to spend so much time on the little things, I don't think I can handle another 33 chapter fic.

Feel free to join my Discord server to keep up with updates and discussions of my fics! I do stuff on Tumblr too, but you may have an easier time reaching me on Discord.

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