# Pokemon Mystery Dungeon: The Past Pursuits - CHAPTER 2: Cat‘s Paw




## 14 years earlier

After a good 30 minutes of nerve wracking waiting in the same spot, a local dungeons entrance on the outskirts of their hometowns forest, both Cathy‘s mother and father still haven‘t uttered a single word to each other. At best they only occasionally shared a few short-lived glances at each other.

The mother didn‘t even bother to look whether *they* were back or not. Her and the father just kept fidgeting with the item bags harnesses slung around her shoulders. A few neighbours curiously watched them for a few seconds here and there from their nearby huts.

Finally, a gray-purplish umbreon, covered with red rings instead of the usual yellow, began to emerge from the lush covered, rocky and cave-like dungeon entrance, carrying a smaller 9-year old Cathy in his mouth by the scruff of her neck.

„You-you did it! You actually saved our kitten! We truly don‘t know how to thank you, sir!“

Cathy‘s mother, a sleek liepard in similar black fur, gave her thanks in a relieved tone that Cathy had rarely ever heard from her. Both her and Cathy‘s father, a disheveled looking white mightyena with cyan markings, rushed towards them.

The smell of iron hit their noses first as they slowed to look at what instantly caught their attention: Cathy‘s tail wasn‘t kept safe properly, sickeningly bright red flesh exposed that was still faintly oozing blood, leaving behind a red trail in the grass wherever Cathy's shadow darkened the ground. Instead of idly swaying like it usually did, it hung limp like a wet noodle.

Cathy herself wasn‘t in an ideal state either; shaking, wide eyed, fur fully soaked from multiple water type attacks she likely fell victim of, nervously looking around and refusing to talk.

„Oh my...“ Cathy‘s father took a step back while the mother fell completely silent.

„Yeah, I did manage to get her out of there mostly unscathed. But her tail was already injured when I found her on the last floor. Part of the tip seems to be completely gone. I couldn‘t make out where the missing piece was either. Sorry...“

Silence fell over the meadow as the umbreon put Cathy back on the ground and looked away at absolutely nothing, just not into the eyes of the purrloin‘s parents. The only sound was the padding of Cathy‘s feet on grass as she carefully stumbled her way towards her mother, hugging her left front leg.

„Yeah, not a pretty sight to look at. Maybe it‘ll grow back, maybe not.“ The umbreon tried to introduce a more optimistic outcome, but he really wasn‘t sure of it either.

The umbreon's voice snapped both parents out of their shock. The liepard and mightyena exchanged a quick look before nodding. Cathy was swiftly taken by her mother by her scruff again as she dashed back to their house to treat the still mostly fresh wound.

Cathy‘s father turned back towards the umbreon after his spouse's steps grew inaudible in a matter of seconds.

„I still want to sincerely thank you for your service.“

The umbreon was taken aback and scratched the back of his head with a paw as the other kept him in his sitting position.
„Oh, it‘s really no big deal, Mister Fisher. I‘m just doing my job at the end of the day.“

Cathy‘s father was in thought for a moment before reaching into the bag hanging off his right side and taking out a small grey pouch, coins clinking as he put it down in front of the umbreon's feet.

„Then we please ask of you to accept our gratitude this way!“ He said, his tone leaving no room for decline.

The umbreon looked down at the pouch and back at the mightyena, seemingly puzzled.

„2000 Poke.“ The mightyena answered what the umbreon was unsure of asking.

„I-i don‘t know if I-“

The umbreon's protests were interrupted.

„we insist on it, okay?“

The umbreon took a few seconds to actually take the pouch.

„I hope that isn‘t a lot for you.“ He accepted, his own bag slung over his shoulder rustling with many various dungeon items.

„You are a truly noble Man. May I have the honor of knowing your name?“

„uhhh, my name? You can just call me Ron.“ Ron hesitantly stored the pouch in his own bag.

To fill the silence, he steered the topic away to the more pressing matter.

„Do you have an idea on why she might have marched in there, or was it really just childish curiosity?“

The mightyena shook his head, genuinely trying to think of a legitimate reason but failing horribly.

„We really have no idea what could have driven her to just march into a local dungeon when we explicitly told her not to. We will most certainly try talking to her about this.“

„i was gonna suggest that too. Lets hope i won‘t have to pull her out of another dungeon in the future. We don‘t want that, do we?“

The advice seemed to have reached Cathy‘s father as he nodded softly.

„Have a splendid day, Ron. We wish you great luck on your next mission.“

Ron nodded and turned to walk away, raising an eyebrow for just a second before his expression turned neutral once more.

„yeah, you too...“

Only a few minutes passed between their interaction and the arrival of Cathy‘s father at their residence, a considerably large brick hut built for them years ago by some zealous excadrill, many of them lightly spalled from weather cycles and age but still holding up strong.

He pushed the sliding door back behind him, the faint smell of dust and fresh wood hitting him first and the sight of his spouse waiting for him second. Cathy stood across from her mother as they waited for him, tail already treated with healing items and bandaged.

He and his spouse exchanged another look once again, her dark grey eyes meeting his sky blue ones.

Cathy‘s father turned his head towards her again and said nothing for what felt like an eternity, his look not being met by Cathy.

„...“

The young Cathy directed her focus to the clock's loud ticking, whatever put her mind at ease, fidgeting with nothing in her paws as her injured tail flicked weakly behind her.

„...“

What came out sounded completely monotone.

„Go to your room, Catherine Fisher. Now.“

No anger, no sadness, not even disappointment or fear. Just neutral.

Cathy's ears drooped and eyes softened, feeling her heart sink in her chest yet simultaneously beating harder too.

She remained silent and just lowered her head, doing her walk of shame to her rooms door as she felt both her mother‘s and fathers gazes pierce into the back of her head. She didn‘t dare meet her parents eyes as she slid the door shut without looking back, only entertaining the thought of slamming it for a split second.

Cathy just sat in the middle of her bed and stared at the wilted petals from the white hydrangeas in front of her on the windowsill for what felt like hours, like they would hold the answer.

She wished her parents had just yelled at her that night instead.

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# PRESENT

„Okay Connor, you ready?“ Cathy asked with an exhale, feeling her paws sweat at the thought despite already having been at the guild before.

„Uh huh, never been more ready in my life.“ Connors optimistic statement was undercut by his painfully bland tone of voice.

„You one hundo percent sure? I can still go back in the kitchen and make you breakfast if you want. You can take your time eating too!“

„For god‘s sake Cathy, I already told you I don‘t eat breakfast! It hinders my concentration.“ Connor yawned as he rubbed his eyes. He has hardly said anything since waking up and just stared at the same spot for a solid 10 minutes while Cathy got ready.

„Alright, if that‘s what‘chu want. Just don‘t start crying about it later.“

Cathy‘s paw touched the rough surface of the door, but turned back just moments before opening it

„Hundred percent sure? I-I mean I could go right back into the kitchen and make you something, you can take your time eating!“

„Cathy! We have somewhere to be.“ Connor insisted with a tone of finality in his voice.

Cathy slid the front door of her treehouse open with a sigh, the sunlight feeling almost blinding to the recently woken up Connor.

Connor looked even more grumpy than usual while walking next to Cathy in the morning sun.

„I‘d usually sleep another two hours at this time, you know?“

Out in the forest, Cathy kept informing Connor about what to expect from the Guild interview.

„So they actually need your, uhh, your background. And they sometimes check it too by asking around in many distant towns and everything, so yeah. You‘re a smart cookie though, I know you can come up with somethin‘ plausible.“ Cathy put her fragile trust into Connor‘s wit.

They kept walking together silently as the unspoken question hung in the air, both looking around the forest as Cathy led the way. The sounds of bird pokemon flying around chirping were more prominent at this time of day. For a bunch of wild pokemon being nearby, they seemed rather docile with foreign pokemon around.

Cathy looked back towards Connor walking beside her for a second. „unlessss you wanna?...“

„NO. I'm not laying my cards on the table like that!“ Connor shut Cathy down at a moment's notice.

Cathy recoiled softly before nodding. „Yeah alright, I get it you lame-o. Revealing you‘re human is off-limits.“

Eventually in the distance, the fourfold plaza announced itself first in the form of the sounds of groups explorers planning out the next mission, drinks being filled up and mixed at the simipour bar and crates of items being sorted in the lower floor of the ribombee storage.

„Is that the plaza you‘ve been rambling about the entire time?“ Connor asked under a chuckle.

„I assumed it was a little less...I don‘t know, just not like this.“

„Yeah, that‘s the Fourfold Plaza. But for now we‘re here for the umbreon Guild. Wanna check out the other stuff later? Like a little shoppi-?“

„Wait wait wait, there are OTHER Guilds here? T-That’s something I need to know, Cathy! Then why do you got such a boner for the umbreon one specifically?“ Connor looked around loosely and immediately noticed the 3 other buildings on different sides of the rhombus shaped plaza.

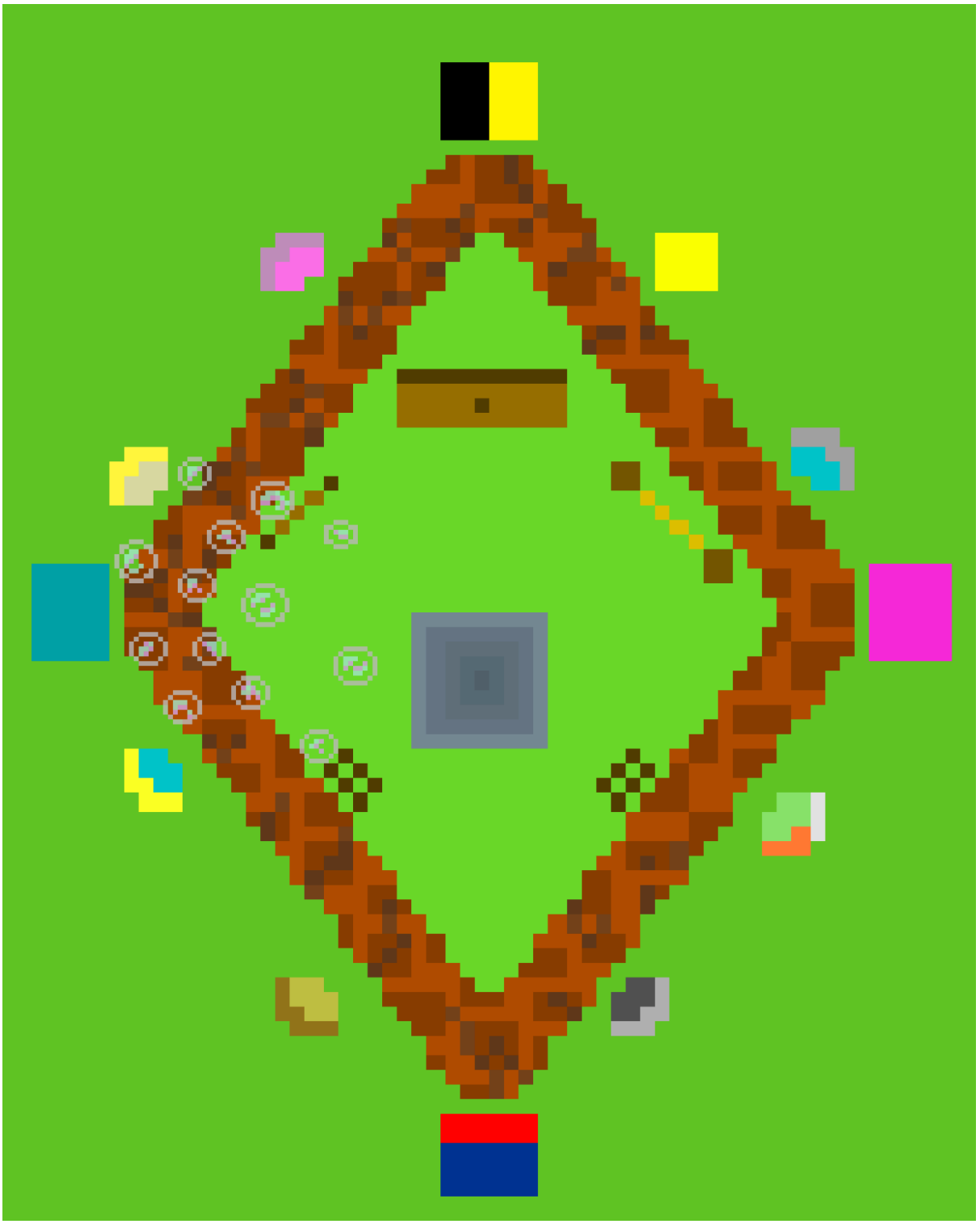
Cathy ignored Connor‘s question by steering the topic away.

„Oh, Max is already updating the community board! You wanna greet him? I know you wanna.“ Cathy avoided before pulling him faster towards the plaza, his still unaccustomed paws barely keeping up.

„Wait, slow down Cathy, answer my damn question! I just wanna get to the Guild and be done with the day! And who‘s Max?“ Connor retorted, his tone's volume increasing so Cathy could hear him among the sounds of more explorers planning out their daily grind much louder than necessary.

The continuous water flowing down the smooth copper fountain in the middle, oxidized in several spots and a poliwag‘s statue on the top, didn‘t make it easier either.

(Just a map of the layout, actual sizes and designs differ)



= Azumarill Guild

= Vileplume Guild

= Sylveon Guild

= Umbreon Guild

= Fountain

= Ribombee storage

= Simipour Bar

= Indeedee Hotel

= Kecleon Shops

= Altaria Air Taxis

= Gholdengo Bank

= Meowth Pawn Shop

= Tinkaton Forge

= Benches

= Community Mission Board

= News Board

= Press Conference Stage

After Cathy awkwardly bumped into a heracross wearing the Vileplume Guilds badge and Connors paws almost painfully sanding over the brick pathway as she pulled him along, Cathy called out to him.

„Ayo Max, you probably heard about me getting rejected from the guild, didn‘t you? Well, I found a guy!“

Max the furret turned towards Cathy‘s more or less familiar voice before the small white-black shinx next to her fell into his scope.

The dark brown-reddish furret instantly dropped his current task, pushed himself on 2 paws to give an overenthusiastic double wave and approached them with his bounding gait.

„OMYGAWD Cathy and someone else, you‘re back! And they rejected you? God I know that struggle too well, I was rejected too once because of just a flimsy 4 month gap in my resume. Such a dumb reason, really. I told them that it doesn‘t even matter and that they should still hire me but apparently they wanted someone with a “clean work record“. And then I had this whole fight with the interviewer before I just weasled my way outta there when they were about to ban me from the place.“

Max then turned to Connor after already rambling enough to power a small city, his tail excitedly swishing from side to side at the chance to gossip about the current events with someone new.

„OH! and on the topic of fighting, do you know about the fight Guildmaster Vileplume had with-

***CLANG***

A loud metallic sound rang throughout the plaza, making Connor‘s bones and teeth feel like they‘re vibrating. The sound made Cathy tense up slightly and Max‘s words die mid-sentence just before he managed to fully talk Connor‘s ears off, but the sound appeared like second nature to Max.

„Oughh, what is that?!“ Connor groaned in pain as his head turned towards the source of the noise. It was a tinkaton eagerly hammering down onto a red hot iron spike without a care in the world, the sparks sent flying with each hit making a nearby abomasnow and chesnaught back away a few steps.

„Oh, right. I think eight‘s around the time they get active in the uhhh. Uhhmmm.“ Cathy pondered as she had the word right on the tip of her tongue.

„Tinkaton forge!“ Max added.

Connor could hardly believe what he heard. His gaze instantly shot back to Cathy, his tail stiffening and eyes wide. „Yeah well, what in the world do they need to forge HERE anyway?“

Cathy shrugged like it was the most normal thing to have a forge at this place. „I mean, nobody wants to go a longer way than they have to to buy somethin‘. What‘s meant for the plaza should be built in the plaza. And don‘t blow your top about it, it‘s just open from 8 to 12.“

Cathy turned back to Max before nearly forgetting Connor's actual question and turning back to Connor again.

„Ah, and they make a lot of throwable items there you can use in dungeons and do a bunch of upgrades ‚n stuff for steel types.“

Max HAD to give his two cents on it too.

„It also wakes all of the explorers up that sleep like rocks! Guildmaster Umbreon actually paid to have it built near his Guild, he doesn‘t like anyone staying in bed after their little nap time. That‘s what he tells us at least but I swear you HAD to be there to see how everyone reacted, pretty much nobody actually bought it. I just think it‘s because he was always embarrassed about never waking up on time himself and he just flipped it to sound all caring towards his employees! Wait no that sounds bad, he's not, like, a bad boss or anything. He‘s just-“

„Max. Stop. Just, stop talking so much!“ Connor interrupted sharply, one paw still rubbing his irritated ear and temples.

„God, I haven't even met this umbreon and he already sounds like a reaaaaally pleasant guy.“ Connor complained with a grumble, His body flinching again as another loud CLANG rang out from the forge. Cathy brought the original topic back, like the sounds of the forge has reset her thinking.

„Uhh yeah, they had to reject me because they have this new rule that two explorers have to join at once because it‘s dangerous they say. Guess they don‘t care about the actual explorers decision anymore.“

„Ohhhh! And your shinx friend is gonna join together with you, am I right?? Man, that‘s an awesome combination, don‘t think I've ever seen that one before.“ Max looked up in the sky in thought, his mind analyzing the pair's potential.

„A shinx and purrloin, huh? That could work out amazingly, they basically HAVE to accept you! I guarantee you could crush any dungeon if they would actually allow you to go on missions. I mean, I wish I could too, but they don‘t let me go into dungeons that often. Not because I'm not built for them or anything, of course. If you could see the body under this heavenly fur, I swear I‘d be the fittest furret you‘ve ever seen! They just tell me that updating all the boards constantly and carrying over some

messages suits me better and stuff like that. But it‘s weird for them to say that because i‘ve always been the perfect candidate so far for-“

Max saw Connor just holding his paw up again to signal him to shut up.

„Oh, yeah, sorry. I-I‘ll tell you later.“ Max‘s ears dropped and he straightened his long body.

„awww, now you made him feel bad!“ Cathy put her paws on her hips as she judged Connor.

„You said that we‘re having the interview today, I‘m just making sure the schedule stays like that.“

„L-let‘s talk more after you‘ve gotten through the interview though! See you later!“

„Uh huh, yeah yeah. Not if I see you first!“ Connor answered deadpan while Cathy already began nudging him towards the umbreon Guild, which Connor gave slight resistance to as the sounds coming from the Tinkaton Forge intensified.

Cathy turned back with Connor, darting past the press conference stage as Max resumed his task of pinning missions on the community board. Cathy let out a long breath as she had to match Connor's slower and wobbly pace.

„Am I going crazy or is that a copperajah in front of that tree? Is that seriously the Umbreon Guild?“

„Yeah, but it‘s no big, she just protects the entrance here. She‘s nice so you don't gotta crap yourself when you see her.“

„But there has to be a reason they need actual security here, right?“ Connor‘s voice turned just a little paranoid as they stepped onto the sandy path closer to the entrance

„Man, you and your endless questions. Obviously it‘s dangerous when a guild's position is public knowledge. Oh, and you should call that copperajah Freya by the way.“

„what? There‘s no reason to call a security by name, how is that- Ohhhh heyyyy!“ Connor‘s tone changed as he noticed in his peripheral vision that he was already more than close enough to be heard by Freya.

Freya‘s ears were lightly flapping as she noticed the black and white shinx accompanying the purrloin. „My my, Cathy. I knew you‘d get a little friend by your side quickly, but in such record time is genuinely impressive!“

„Told ya i‘d be back very soon.“ Cathy smugly boasted, like it was absurd of Freya to think she couldn‘t do this.

„awww, and the friend you brought is such a cute one too! I have to know his name.“ Freya baby talked Connor as her trunk snaked down to pet him, which promptly got clumsily swatted away by him.

Cathy giggled as she met Connor‘s death stare directed towards her. „Yeah, he‘s a shy one. He‘s Connor.“ Cathy remarked in a tone one would use to introduce a pet.

„Oh well then, it would be a joy to have you in the guild, Connor. I believe you‘ll get through the interview. Not to mention you‘re lucky that our guildmaster is in a good mood today!“

Freya stepped aside from the entrance to let them both in.

„what do you mean “in a good mood“? Does something happen if he‘s in a bad mood?“

Cathy‘s body goes stiff for just a moment, trying to predict Connor‘s reaction to what she was about to share.

„You see, uhhhh, he has kind of...Well, let's say, problems with his temper. On some-“

„Aaaand we‘re going to another Guild. Let's go, Cathy.“ Connor didn‘t bother to let Cathy finish. He has heard enough.

„Huh?! Hold on and chill a little for a moment, what‘s so bad about that?? Everyone‘s stressed about work once in a while!„

Cathy tried to reason it out, already sensing Freya‘s uncomfortable expression without seeing it.

„Cathy, if there‘s one nugget of wisdom i can give you, then it‘s that having a boss...“

Connor paused to think on how he‘ll formulate this without revealing anything to Freya.

„or some kind of superior that can manage their emotions properly can COMPLETELY make or break a job! I‘ve been there once before some time ago.“

„But you do know that you still need me for-

„Once again, don‘t even bother trying. I'm not joining the Guild of some unstable nutjob who can‘t keep himself in check, end of discussion!“

„...“

„...“

"Connor! Do you realize that you still need me to go anywhere? The other guilds also require you to have a partner," Cathy lied the same moment she started facing him.

“Why are you still pretending like you have any choice in the matter?” She added.

Connor’s body went rigid and his eyes shot open. His head snapped to Cathy and he remained silent for some seconds.

“What did you say? Do you think I’ll just...Do what you say because I have no other options? Because there’s no other way out of the situation?! Because I’m scared of what’ll happen if I do something else??? YOU WANNA DO THAT TO ME AGAIN, HUH?”

Connor shouted and shot himself legs forward explosively, lowering his forehead and ramming it into Cathy’s stomach with all his force.

The attack knocked some air out of Cathy’s lungs but did little to knock her back. Connor staggered back from his own headbutt like he just ran into a trampoline

“Oough, what the. D-did you just?...” Cathy stammered at Connor’s audacity, shaking her head slightly.

Cathy looked at Connor for a few seconds before a scowl plastered her face. She swiftly tried to close the distance between her and Connor while her raised claws extended until a huge chunk of copper found its way between them.

“Stop it, both of you!” Freya scolded as she lightly shoved Cathy backwards with her trunk, the sudden motion making her claws retract instantly and her body nearly topple over.

Both Cathy's and Connor's eyes landed on Freya, their expressions returning to normal as soon as they realized their mistake, Cathy's sharp tail even curling slightly between her legs.

Freya slowly stepped back after a moment of silence and removed the hulking wall between them that was just her trunk.

"Just go in now before I decide not to let you in!" Freya huffed while the corner of her eye saw Cathy dashing right past her into the Umbreon Guild. Connor looked after Cathy for a moment before nodding at Freya

"Thanks..." Connor whispered as he made his way past Freya too. The temperature already increased by a few degrees once he went through the Guild's gate for the first time, the vine curtain covering the entrance sliding off his face before the sight of the round entrance area hit him.

The three small hallways across from him were covered with vine curtains too, a board filled with biblical amounts of mission orders held up by thumbtacks between the left and middle hallway. Connor already observed Cathy approaching a lurantis that conveniently was in the process of exiting the middle hallway.

<<The entire guild...Is just in this tree?>> Connor looked around while in thought, his paw raising carefully to touch the edge of the room, the feeling of the rough inside of the bark travelling over his paws.

Just as he went to follow Cathy, his vision picked up the lurantis already making her way up the spiraling staircase beginning at the left side.

Cathy turned to look at Connor again, her expression immediately darkening.

"We'll just wait here. She'll come pick us up in a minute for the interview...That was the guildmaster's right hand." Cathy ordered, her tone still concise and oppressed from the events that unfolded earlier.

Connor sat beside where Cathy was standing in front of the mission board with a grumble.

"So...You gonna spit it out at one point?"

“...spit out what??”

Cathy exhaled and leaned against the board behind her, looking up to the spiral staircase leading upward to what looks like all the way into the sky.

“Well, obviously what happened to you when...A long time ago! No one reacts like that to a topic that’s supposedly not all dodgy for ‘em. Like, what do you mean when I'm “Doing something to you again”?”

Connor let out a tired groan. “And you think the best course of action is to ask me again? Also it’s not a sensitive topic, it’s just none of your-”

“Excuse me.” A calm, almost monotone voice interrupted him.

Connor stopped his ranting to turn towards the source of the interruption on his right. His eyes widened noticeably and they both went silent as he registered the male, turquoise meowstic in front of them, standing at the same height as Cathy.

But the real elephant in the room was the meowstic’s aesthetic. The left side of his face was painfully, almost grotesquely swollen like it was about to pop, his left eye fully blind but its veins still prominent, looking like a cold glass of milk. His face was almost looking like it’s actively melting.

Connor shook his head a little upon realizing that he was staring. “O-oh my god, I’m sorry. It’s just, you don’t see that every day here.”

“It’s okay, I’m used to it.” The meowstic assured in the same steady tone as before. His right eye looked back and forth between Connor and Cathy.

“You’re blocking the board.” He pointed out, sounding more like he’s stating a simple and plain fact than anything else.

“Oh, uhhh, sorry. Cathy, can you?”

Cathy registered the request for a second before hastily stepping back with a nod.

At his own pace, the meowstic took off 2 different missions of diamond rank difficulty.

“Thanks.” He flatly answered as he made his way towards the guild entrance to carry them out, the bag around his shoulder lightly bumping against his waist as he walked with an ever so slight limp.

They both waited as the meowstic stopped in front of Freya, handing the mission orders over to her.

Cathy returned to her previous spot of leaning against the board, her eyes darting to Connor again.

“I’ve seen this weird guy here before but never this up close. Dude looks like a zombie.” She dropped her tone a bit to not be heard by anyone other than Connor.

Connor’s eyes kept on watching through the vine curtain as Freya took a good look at the orders before she gave them back and nodded. Meanwhile his mind was replaying the encounter.

“I don’t think he blinked even once the entire time. Do you know what happened to him?” Connor’s eyebrow raised in slight concern.

“I dunno, never bothered to ask. It’s his damn problem, not mine.”

“But…you can’t be bothered to respect MY privacy?”

Cathy’s mouth opened just a little to answer, but she didn’t get any answer out as Connor just stared at her accusingly.

“W-well, but you’re my teammate. In that case it’s something I need to know!”

“How am I your teammate? I haven’t even gotten through the interview, Cathy. And even if I was your teammate, what I did in the past has no effect on…On you…Not on you, at least…”

Halfway through as he realized what he said, Connor’s tone dropped before his posture followed while sitting. He was just staring at the same spot on the ground now like a statue, his tail flicking slightly further away from him.

Cathy raised an eyebrow and sighed as she pushed herself off the wall with a foot to face him. What Connor said was enough of an answer.

“Fine, I’ll leave ya off the hook about it for now. You happy?”

“Mhm…” Connor approved right after Cathy was done, but his voice remained somber and his eyes didn’t move either.

Cathy’s eyes narrowed again, his complete disengagement in the conversation making her blood simmer just a little.

Neither said anything as the silence crept back into the room, save for the clinking of wood and some metals coming from the third hallway and the sound of steps coming down from above.

The silence was broken moments later by Poppy’s loud and mature, yet high voice.

“Good news, new ones! the guildmaster is practically foaming at the mouth for an interview with you two, just come up here to floor 2, will you?”

Connor and Cathy looked up to find Poppy looking down at them from halfway up the stairs.

“Uhhh yeah, we’ll be there in a minute, can you wait in front of the office for us?” Cathy asked.

“Will be done! Don’t doze off on the way up there!” Poppy informed them as she took the stairs back up again.

Cathy leaned in close to Connor to whisper to him.

“Wouldn’t be the best look if she saw you waddling up the stairs like a newborn.”

After what felt like an eternity of Poppy waiting next to the sliding door leading to the Guildmaster’s office, she finally saw the top of Cathy’s and Connor’s heads poking out from the stairs.

“Really took your sweet time, huh? My grandma could’ve climbed those 3 times over by now.” Poppy teased as she watched them. Connor climbed the stairs especially slow, his uncoordinated legs shaking a little with each step.

Upon hearing Poppy’s voice, Cathy’s brain went into autopilot and she just picked Connor up between his chest and waist and hoisted him up onto the top, Connor nearly stumbling over as she let him go.

“Are you two ready to see him?” Poppy asked sceptically as she already placed one of her scythes on the door.

“Absolutely, more ready than ever!” Cathy instantly confirmed with a slight waver in her voice.

As soon as they both stood near the door, Poppy nodded and pushed the door to the right, revealing Guildmaster Umbreon sitting across his desk in the same office that hasn’t changed one bit since yesterday.

The guildmaster looked up from what he was writing towards Poppy.

“Are they here?” He asked in a tone that sounded equally impatient and equally drowsy.

“Yup, got two fresh ones on our hands! The purrloin already got a partner just after a day, can you believe it?”

Connor entered the office, walking clumsily behind Cathy as he took in the new surroundings.

Guildmaster Umbreon's ears twitched in intrigue as his eyes locked onto the new shinx.

“Good day, Guildmaster. I’m here for the interview, as your right-hand might’ve told you.”

The Guildmaster nodded towards both the chairs across the desk from him while he stored his unfinished paper in one of the left-bottom drawers of his desk. “I’ve got time, we can conduct it right now in fact.”

Cathy stopped behind the right chair while Connor approached the desk, pushing his upper body up from the desk to properly reach the umbreon.

„Thank you for taking the time today, Guildmaster Umbreon. I‘ve heard a lot about you.“ Connor shook Guildmaster Umbreon's paw with a smile that wasn‘t even close to reaching his eyes.

Guildmaster Umbreon watched Poppy close the door behind Connor and Cathy.

„Oh, it‘s no problem. We always prioritize taking our time with new explorers. Take a seat if you will, both of you.“ Guildmaster Umbreon pointed to the chair next to the one Cathy was standing behind, his voice still flat but less stiff than usual.

„So,“ Guildmaster Umbreon exhaled, like he‘s done this a million times before.

„You are interested in joining the Umbreon Guild as an explorer together with this purrloin, is that correct?“ He looked back and forth between Connor and Cathy sitting next to each other across from him.

Connor shifted a little in the hard seat, his sitting position still requiring manual effort to be kept upright in this body.

„Yes, while the concept of Guilds is very new to me, I am already greatly intrigued by and familiar with the idea of exploring. I have been told however that experience isn‘t actually necessary for joining.“ Connor claimed while he met the umbreon's green eyes, but otherwise most of his concentration was spent on taking quick glances around the room, searching for any information that might prove valuable.

„Yup, we take in greenhorns and slowly ease them into the business.“

Guildmaster Umbreon took a glance at Poppy as she prepared the forms she took out of the desks drawers. He noticed Cathy looking around the office too much and not making much eye contact, even after technically already being accepted.

„Now, I don‘t like putting pressure on the newbies during the interview already so I‘ll approach this more lightly. I value results more than impressions, you must know.“

With a quill pen in his paw, Guildmaster Umbreon prepared to write down Connors answers on a document the shinx couldn‘t quite make out upside down from his position across the desk.

„Alright, this is the number one thing every explorer needs. And I want you to answer this truthfully: Can you control yourself under extreme pressure?“ Guildmaster Umbreon's tone turned more serious while he leaned forwards slightly

Connor leaned forward too, but his voice remained the same. „Well, I‘m no stranger to life threatening situations I‘d say. That‘s why I was so eager to join, I assumed I might fit into the Guild's requirements.“

„Uh huh, well that‘s new to hear. If you‘re so accustomed to danger, can I ask in what field that might‘ve been in?“

„Now it wasn‘t in any kind of work field or like that. The danger was more so a product of my general lifestyle and habitat.“

„Uhhh, could you elaborate on that?“

Connor looked back at umbreon after analyzing his surroundings thoroughly. Around the office, crude paw paintings were plastered on several closets, small plushies of a whimsicott, swirlix and buneary on the windowsill and shelves as well as a ton of framed pictures of Guildmaster Umbreon alongside an eevee. He couldn‘t make out anything else on the pictures, but Connor already knew where the guildmaster‘s soft spot lied.

„I do hope that my origin isn‘t looked down upon here and that this Guild, like all the other ones, is accepting enough to look past it.“ Connor set up the expectations Guildmaster Umbreon will want to meet.

Cathy‘s eyes widened as they darted to Connor. The way he hyped it up made her believe for a second that he was gonna drop the bombshell on them.

„I know it might be an odd habitat for my species, but I have lived nearly my entire life in the mountains. My mother...She was this graceful and powerful luxray.“ Connor sniffed and shifted in the chair in a way so Guildmaster Umbreon and Poppy couldn‘t see his tail.

„For years, she worked as an independent explorer as a hobby until she uhhh...Didn‘t survive a certain accident. That‘s why I'd love to start exploring too. To follow in her footsteps, in a way.“

Connor kept holding only occasional eye contact as he continued to paint his narrative.

„So I want to apologize in advance for my lack of knowledge about the culture here. My intent is to learn extensively about it in the future.“

Guildmaster Umbreon nodded. „Mhm, i suppose that does explain a lot.“ He replied coldly, focused on keeping things professional, but his voice was now laced with a certain weight that wasn‘t there before.

The office was silent for multiple seconds, save for the scratching of the quill on paper as he wrote down Connor‘s answers he already gave for two questions at once.

„Good. Now I‘ll ask you a little something to gauge your resourcefulness.“

Guildmaster Umbreon laid his quill pen on the desk, signaling Connor to take time with his answer.

„So imagine you are stuck on a deserted island or in a dungeon. You have no way to get any kind of help sent to you, no communication orbs, no nothing. But you can choose 3 objects or items to take with you.“

Connor started to hold eye contact again. After all that explaining and lying about things he barely understood, he didn‘t expect a question so ordinary all of a sudden.

„Uhhhh...“

„A raft...To get off the island? I don‘t think I need anything else actually.“

Guildmaster Umbreon looked at Connor for a moment before turning to Poppy, who just met his gaze and shrugged. Guildmaster Umbreon shrugged back before writing it down

„I-I suppose that makes sense.“
he huffed like he saw Connor‘s answer as a bad joke that fell flat.

„Okay, it‘s all looking acceptable so far, now you just gotta-“

***CLUNK***

Guildmaster Umbreons talking was interrupted by the sound of an inkwell he knocked over while reaching for a form for Connor to fill out, staining only some semi-important documents and one of the four basic figurines on the desk that were designed as him and the other three guildmasters.

With a tired groan, his paws quickly scrambled to push the other documents and the lamp away from the ink spreading on the desk, pushing a few of them too far and off the edge, and placed the inkwell upright again.

„Oh my god, there‘s always some bullshit happening GODDAMNIT!“ He muttered under his breath at first, then explosively shouted, fur on his neck standing upright for a moment. The ceiling-tall shelves along the sides of the office did an oddly good job at insulating the sound.

Connor shot Cathy a look she knew she would definitely see more often in the future, one along the lines of “told you so“. Poppy‘s eyes widened and she quickly kicked Guildmaster Umbreon's nearest leg under the desk, which snapped him back to the full situation at hand.

„Oh god, I‘m so sorry. I just-

„Yeah yeah, It‘s fine-

„Poppy, can you gimme the towels-

„We got time here...“

Guildmaster Umbreon and Poppy aggressively wiped away the ink as he and Connor awkwardly mumbled over each other, Poppy moving like this was a daily occurrence.

A deafeningly silent 20 seconds later, he held the blue smudged towel towards Poppy.

„Bring this to Pania please, will you?“

She nodded and scurried out of the office as Guildmaster Umbreon put the other three figurines he knocked over too back in their previous position below the lamp, next to the now ink stained sylveon one.

„My daughter made these in art class, aren‘t they pretty?“ He distracted, staring at the new stain added to the desk and his cheeks reddening.

„Yeah, definitely gorgeous.“ Connor sighed, looking down at his paws as he shook his head

Guildmaster Umbreon slid over the form and pen to Connor successfully this time.

„Now you just have to take your time to fill this out and I will have a short talk with my right-hand afterwards to decide on the matter.“

Connor nodded, shifted forward and tried picking up the quill pen, but it slipped right out of his paws like the thing was coated in butter. He tried and failed again as it struck him that since being a pokemon, he hasn‘t even spent a minute trying to learn how to pick up things with these stupid, clunky paws.

„Sorry, sorry. I‘m just walking off a recent injury I caught in the mountains. That's why I was walking all funny too while coming in here.“

„Oh, in that case, we have this audino working in our medical bay. If it‘s bad then she could take a look at it-“

„No no, I don‘t think that‘s necessary!" Connor forgot to let Guildmaster Umbreon finish speaking.

„It‘s been getting much better the past few days anyway. I‘m used to danger but not immune to it, you know?“

Connor tried thrice more to get a proper grip on the quill pen, each attempt ending in his cheeks heating up and the pen falling onto the form and spilling tiny drops of ink on it. The silence other than Cathy‘s occasional chuckle she couldn‘t hold back that filled the office was one of the worst kinds. It felt like way more than just two pairs of eyes were on him.

„Uhhhmmm, Could you?“ he looked between the form and Cathy a few times before quickly looking down at his paws again with a sigh.

She barely stifled another laugh as she took the quill pen herself. „With pleasure, gotta help my new teammate, after all.“ She leaned in and wrote down all the basics of what Connor shamefully whispered into her ear.

„Rookie explorer - no experience“

„December 21...“

„Ooooh, winter solstice. Makes you real special, huh?“

„Just write it down, Cathy.“ Connor rushed her in a hushed tone.

„to apply my skill set properly and follow family tradition...“

Cathy stopped her writing for a moment to glance at the next question.

„It says here why this guild specifically.“

Connor looked closer at the question, his tone becoming even quieter. „God, no idea...uhhh, It‘s style of leadership aligns closely with my expectations and ideology.“

Guildmaster Umbreon's eyes narrowed as he could clearly hear what they were saying, even in hushed whispers.

Connor cleared his throat while Cathy handed over the filled out paper. A lot of it was left empty, such as education, specializations and confirmations for soft and hard skills. Thinking about it, Connor realized his narrative didn‘t give him much to work with, but it was better than nothing.

Cathy‘s handwriting was also incredibly refined for...Someone like her.

Just at taking the first look at the form, Guildmaster Umbreon‘s eyes widened back up

„I see here you didn‘t fill out any details about your bank account. I‘m assuming you likely don‘t have one? Do you know about bank accounts?“

„Nope, don‘t have one yet. And yeah, I do have a good grasp on currencies.“

„Would you mind if your earnings were transferred to your partner's account for the time being until you‘ve opened your account? I‘m trusting you two to be upstanding enough to split it fairly.“

„...“

Connor‘s brow furrowed and he barely held back his scowl as he looked to Cathy, who met his look with a smirk, knowing he had no choice but to accept.

Connor turned back at Umbreon and exhaled.

Just before Connor got his word out, the office door opened and Poppy stepped back in again. His, Umbreon‘s and Cathy‘s heads shot towards her.

„Alright, are you three finished or did I put a jam on the brakes of this romantic moment?“

Guildmaster Umbreon ignored what she said and nodded towards Connor, giving Poppy the signal.

„Oh, right. Lemme just fish it out real quick.“ Poppy pulled open the bottom most desk drawer and put down a small stack of papers, bound by a paperclip, in front of Connor on the desk.

„Just some guild policies you gotta sign so we can prove you‘ve read them. There are a few more technically, but this is the nitty gritty of it for now.“

Connor leaned forward again to take a look, but Poppy‘s voice continued.

„Oh, and uhhh, well. Now it‘s obviously pricey to finance the saving of countless lives, inspiration for many and enable others to explore the world. So we‘re gonna have to call dibs on about four fifths of the Poke that you make just from missions.“

Connor raised his head towards her and the Guildmaster again, his expression remaining neutral.

„And for that you get your own dorms, breakfast along with dinner in the mess hall and access to training grounds, the guild library and medical care. The amount of guild tax also decreases with every rank you climb, so that there‘s real motivation and potential for growth! Doesn‘t that sound wonderful?“

Cathy quickly straightened up in her chair, her paws dampening as she looked back at Connor to see how he would react, who nearly rolled his eyes at Poppy‘s attempts to make this sound appealing.

„Sure. I‘m prepared to contribute my part to this Guild.“ He accepted with an exhale while his eyes skimmed over the most important Guidelines. Cathy’s eyes widened and she leaned back into her chair again, this time with her arms crossed

--Lethal force is allowed to be used on outlaws if they resist or do not comply with capture, though capture is heavily preferred. Force should therefore be used only in potentially dangerous scenarios--

--Using lethal force on wild pokemon in order to advance through dungeons is allowed, given there are reasonable motives and doesn‘t border on pointless.--

--Guild dorms are private but can be subject to safety inspections if there are reasonable suspicions.--

--The ladder of punishment for unnecessary conflict, repeated rule breaking or other violations goes as following

Verbal warning → supervision→ salary reduction → Demotion → Expulsion, with some possibly being skipped depending on the violation.--

--Members may take personal time or side jobs but must remain available for emergencies. Relationships and friendships within the guild are allowed but disclosed if they affect teams or performance.--

--Starting off, 80% of a teams earnings through rescue missions, deliveries and outlaw bounties are forfeited to the guild to finance future operations. The amount decreases by 5% for every rank up, with exception of the different levels of master rank--

--Reports for missions are mandatory after completing them. This can be done by either directly reporting to a higher-up or by filling out the report forms in the main guild hall--

--Escape orbs are mandatory to be taken on missions, at least 3 in total. They are provided free of charge by the guild.--

--climbing rank is exclusively achieved by consistent missions performances that meet guild standards, occasional graduation test missions or by increasing one's reputation and impact on morale--

--Quiet hours from 10PM to 6AM have to be respected to ensure proper rest and best possible job performance.--

--any new important findings of an exploration MUST be reported to the guild immediately and NOT be shared with the public or outsiders first. It is part of the guildmasters duty to determine if a discovery or event is worth sharing outside the guild. This, along with sharing sensitive guild information in general, is a serious violation--

--From normal to silver rank, an exploration team will be given already chosen missions by the guilds right-hand. From gold rank and above, they are trusted and encouraged to choose their own missions from the guild board or community mission board.--

--Before carrying out a mission at gold rank or above, they HAVE to be checked by the guild security first upon leaving. This is done to verify authenticity of its rewards or requirements and promote honesty.--

--All guild property is to be handled with care. Damage of said property is to be paid by the guild member depending on accidental or intentional damage.--

--Guild members and explorers are responsible for their own health and wellbeing. The Umbreon Guild will not take any responsibility for potential harm, injuries or death--

☐- I have read and understood the above policies. I agree to uphold the spirit of the Umbreon Guild and am ready to help those in need, explore responsibly and grow as both an explorer and pokemon.

☐- I do not agree to these terms and would like to discuss them before joining.

„Okay, these terms seem acceptable. Do you mind if I ask an unrelated question?“ Connor broke the minute long silence with that.

„Uhmmm...yeah sure, that‘s...Did you already check the boxes?

„No, not yet?“

„I‘m sorry, we only take questions after the paperwork has been filled out, I hope you understand.“

Connor grumbles ever so slightly as Cathy ticks the upper box for him and tops it off with a signature for him.

„By the way, they took questions at any time when I applied here“ Cathy hurriedly whispered into Connor‘s ear, earning her a dismissive look from Guildmaster Umbreon that made her slowly sink back in the chair, avoiding eye contact while her ears drooped.

Connor sneered just a little at Cathy‘s reaction.

„I was just curious to know why exactly the rule of two explorers having to join at once was introduced. I mean yeah, it‘s dangerous. But wasn‘t it always like that?“

Guildmaster Umbreon struggled to formulate his words for a few seconds.

„Ah yes, that. We had to implement it for additional safety because of a recent increase of explorer casualties regarding rookies. From the data we gathered it seems like an unidentified outlaw seems responsible for that rise.“ He explained away while beginning to fidget again, this time with some fur on the back of his paw.

Poppy chimed in to take the pressure off of Umbreon.

„We are also making an effort to send new explorers into dungeons where this Outlaw hasn‘t stuck their snout into. We found it odd that they‘ve only been locking horns with rookies yet so we‘re still kinda investigating...Or maybe we won‘t have to! The last confirmed attack was around 3 weeks ago, so we can assure you it‘s no biggie.“ Poppy shut down any further potential worries.

Guildmaster Umbreon sighed as he carefully slid the signed policies back to himself with a paw to not knock anything over again, handing it to Poppy.

„Would you like to know anything else about our Guild?“

„I don‘t, that was the only thing I wanted to know yet.“

„Good," Guildmaster Umbreon let out a sigh of relief as he left his sitting position, out of the chair and went towards the door, his movement sluggish.

„Me and Poppy are gonna have a little talk and we'll be back in a few minutes to tell you how it's gonna go from now. I'm trusting you to be patient, Mr Baker. And you too, Fisher." Guildmaster Umbreon bid his temporary farewell, more formal this time around.

„Don't be all nervous and ruffle your whiskers while we're gone!" Poppy attempted to calm the already unshaken Connor down while she hurried after Guildmaster Umbreon and closed the sliding door behind her.

The clicking sound of the door connecting to the magnets on the casings inside confirmed their exit. Cathy's eyes turned away from the door and directly back to Connor, already anticipating a question from him.

„So how high do you think my chances are? I mean, did I do good? or did I mess up?" Connor's voice was calm, but he wasn't really interested at looking anywhere else in the room other than up.

„No idea really, but I think you were pretty solid apart from moving like it's your first time living." Cathy sank further into her chair, seemingly unbothered by the possibility of Connor getting rejected.

„And uhhhh...They are the ones that leave the office after the interview? Not us?" Connor pointed out while looking around the office more intently now, but all he got back from Cathy was an unknowing shrug.

Connor nodded as silence fell over the room again while he carefully made his way out of the uncomfortably hard wooden chair with a grunt, his eyes fixed on the framed picture from before.

Cathy watched him approach the pictures and almost jumped up from her own chair.

„Hey! I know it sucks how they take part of our earnings, but you got no business stealin‘ from the guildmasters office! Why else do you think that THEY are the ones going out of the office? They‘re testin‘ us!“

Connor stopped dead in his tracks and turned his head back towards Cathy, his already near constant frown becoming more pronounced.

„What the hell are you expecting of me? To just take stuff from the office right after an interview? God, I‘m sure you don‘t even hear yourself talking sometimes.“ Connor shot back and began examining the pictures carefully, absorbing every detail like a sponge. The pictures weren‘t taken by any camera, but rather painted with Guildmaster Umbreon and his family used in the moment as reference.

Cathy meanwhile sat back down and fidgeted with her paws in her lap again, her eyes narrowing shortly before asking.

„Wait, but now I'm kinda puzzled ‘cause...why are you so fine with the guild tax rule? I myself was damn near about to blow up when I heard about that bogus for the first time! Other guilds demanding 80% is nuts for sending others out there to risk their lives.“

Connor registered Cathy‘s question while he examined everything, noticing just 3 pictures containing Guildmaster Umbreon, a young eevee and a snow white-bluish glaceon and the rest being just of him and the eevee. Connor pushed his upper body up from the drawer to get a better look.

„I‘m just telling you that forking over part of my earnings is nothing new to me and we‘ll leave it at that, okay?“ Connor chuckled, but his tone made it clear that he seriously didn‘t want to talk about it. He didn‘t look back at Cathy and found the dates where the pictures were painted in the corners of them, the oldest one dating back 4 and a half years ago.

„You do realize this isn‘t something you can just sweep under the rug, right?“ Cathy declined his proposition, head tilting at seeing how quickly Connor attempted to shut it down.

„...Did Guildmaster Umbreon's partner die?“ Connor assumed when he began analysing the more recent pictures without Guildmaster Umbreons ex in them, his voice this time laced with a softness Cathy hasn‘t heard yet.

„Wha- no?? But they did divorce a few years earlier. I tell ya, that was a huge mess in the plaza when that was recent. You‘re seeing them in the pictures there, aren‘t you?“

Connor keeps on checking the date on each picture, his mind going through the calculations for 2 to 3 seconds.

„...They both got 50/50 custody, am I right?“

„Uhhhhh, I dunno? Not like it matters much honestly, but I think 50/50 does ring a bell in my head. Howd‘ya know?“

Connor glanced back at Cathy as he thought of the simplest possible answer for Cathy.

„The gaps of the dates on the pictures after his wife vanished in them are all multiples of two weeks, so Umbreon likely gets to see his daughter for 2 weeks, then his ex gets the kid and so on. He also looks

like he‘s aged 15 years since then from all the stress, so I‘m guessing that‘s where the mood swings could come from.“

Connor concluded his analysis by turning some pictures he moved back into place and plopping his front paws back on the smooth office floor.

Cathy‘s ears perked up in slight intrigue. Maybe this shinx was useful to keep around after all.

„I don‘t see how knowing that helps you in any way, It‘s really not that deep...But maybe you could apply that brain in some dungeons.“

„Stop talking like I‘m already in...“ Connor mumbled under his breath as he started stretching his neck and shoulders, but Cathy‘s sharp ears picked it up with little effort, though his complaint remained ignored.

„in fact, you heard about a library being in this guild. Maybe you can research all the stuff you need to know there later! I mean, I got somewhere to be later anyway so I don‘t have to babysit you. Y‘know, like a parent leaving their kid in the ball pit while they go shopping?“

Connor‘s stretching abruptly stopped, but he didn‘t turn towards Cathy.
„Are you telling me they‘d already send us into dungeons on day ONE?“

„Uhhhh no? At least I don‘t think so. Just heard from many that you gotta do a bunch of boring guild work first, because of course we have to. Just got a week or something though to see if you can even do any kind of job in the first place without shitting bricks, you know?“

Cathy complained like entering potentially deadly dungeons would be way more exciting.

„I suppose you have a point. In my world you never do the big stuff first either. I'll look for it later..."

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The echoes of Guildmaster Umbreon's and Poppy's steps on the wooden staircase were hardly audible, mostly because they were already hearing Max rambling to someone on the 4th floor.

„You-you absolutely gotta know that Cathy and some shinx are planning on joining this guild, so use this chance to make yourself all fancy, maybe brush your fur twice too. I recently found out about this shampoo that-"

Max was already enthusiastically gossiping about the potential newcomers to Alice the cinderace, the printed out yet to be accepted mission assignments laying forgotten beside him.

Max's current topic immediately died as he saw Guildmaster Umbreon's eyes land on him.

„Oh, H-hey guildmaster..." Max greets with a forced smile, positioning himself in a way to obscure the assignments from the guildmasters gaze while Alice looks past Max at the guildmaster, tail lightly wagging.

Guildmaster Umbreon slowly approached Max, his expression becoming more stern as he stopped a hair's width in front of Max. Just as Umbreon was about to open his mouth, he saw Alice looking right at him, her tail stopping its wagging as the atmosphere shifted into something chillier.

Poppy stopped behind the Guildmaster, already expecting the worst.
„seriously, Ron? it can't be too much to ask for you to stay on the rails for once!"

Guildmaster Umbreon's expression softened upon noticing Alice‘s presence. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

„Please go right back to work after you are done talking…“ Guildmaster Umbreon left the unspoken warning in the air and went right past Max and towards the balcony, Poppy trailing right behind him.

The light breeze hit them both, on the warmer side at this time of day. Guildmaster looked down at the fourfold plaza through the railing while Poppy‘s height difference of over a foot allowed her to look over it, both just observing the bubbles blown from the azumarill guilds machines flying over the bustling plaza for several seconds.

„Soooo…Penny for your thoughts? For the shinx?“

„I don‘t know, not sure about him yet“

„Remember you‘re also kinda throwing the purrloin in the gutter with that too if you reject ‘em. It‘s a two for one deal with those!“

No response came from Ron as his eyes fell on the 3 other guilds of the Fourfold Plaza. Poppy just kept on complaining to him.

„And you can‘t deny that we need more dark types, Ron. It was absolute hell the last time you left me here to run the place alone so you can go on your little low level mission!“

Ron couldn‘t hold back his laugh at Poppy‘s argument, his guffaw surprisingly boisterous. „Because the guy who‘s owned a guild for 11 years now doesn‘t know that yet, huh?“ He asked, wiping the corner of his right eye.

„Yeah yeah, do you wanna hire them now or not, you oh-so experienced guildmaster? I‘m advising you to use 100% of your brain on this one.“

Ron fell silent for another few seconds as his expression grew more sceptical.

„I don‘t know, something tells me that shinx is lying.“

Poppy looked at Ron like he just jumped down the railing.
„Uhhhh, lying about what exactly?“

Ron shrugged, taking a few steps back into the shadow to avoid the sun's heat at this height.

„About everything, maybe? I can‘t really explain it. I just think it‘s weird that Cathy found someone who‘s been living so far away their entire life in less than a day. If there's one lie, then there is always more.“

Poppy let out a sigh she very much intended for Ron to hear.

„But why the hell would he lie? What would that shinx gain?“

„For sympathy, maybe?“

Poppy turned completely away from the plaza and towards Ron, scythes on her hips.

„Wow, seriously? You think he was willing to share a bank account with his partner, play all dumb and walk like he‘s drunk just to give you a wee bit of the feel bad juice? You gotta pull yourself together with your paranoia at one point.“

Ron‘s volume heightened once more from Poppy‘s tone as well as knowing she wasn‘t gonna budge anytime soon.

„Yeah okay, Alright, I‘ll take you on your word.“ Ron gave in, with an indignant roll of his eyes.

Ron looked over his shoulder to check the floor behind them where Max and Alice were moments ago, now empty, before walking back to the railing to look over the plaza.

„I‘m not leaning far out of the window when I say he would do better than zoey?“

„You‘re the exploring professional here, not me!“

„But you look at their mission reports each day, You should know!“

„But we haven‘t seen anything of the two yet, Ron!“ Poppy shot back in a way almost only she was allowed out of anyone in the guild.

„But if the shinx survived alone for that long without any kind of evolution then he either has a ton of luck or is a clever survivor, I suppose either would help.“ Poppy added.

„...“

Guildmaster Umbreon‘s claws lightly scratched the balcony's wooden floor in thought until he took another deep breath and turned back to go back inside.

„...Fine...I think we‘ll give them a chance.“

# CHAPTER 2 END

**NEXT CHAPTER**

**PREVIOUS CHAPTER**

**BACK TO HUB**

Authors note:
Sorry for taking so long with chapter 2 (it was nearly a month i think) but i finally finished it. It took wayyyy longer because I was originally planning to make this a huge chapter of like 17K words because I didn‘t know a good point at when to end the chapter but after more thinking i think its a decent choice to end here and to not make some of y‘all wait too freaking long. Also it‘s summer and it's like 36 degrees and I‘m straight up turning into a puddle as I‘m writing this so the heat isn‘t helping with productivity either.