Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: The Past Pursuits - CHAPTER 1: The Second Life Of Ten

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(Yes, they're the same person lmao.)

Long but important disclaimer:

To whoever is reading this, your feedback on this work would be highly encouraged and appreciated, as this is my first time ever writing an actual story, and I am highly passionate about improving my skills and this project, so there might be some errors in here (especially grammatical or capitalization errors since English is not my first language). The reason I am asking for feedback is also the reason I'm telling you that this fic definitely won't be a masterpiece, so tone down your expectations; this is just made by a 17-year-old with too much free time. If you have any questions, I won't hesitate to answer them in the comments. It is also worth noting that a lot of things are changed quite a bit to be more logical or convenient, so not everything will be completely accurate to the actual games, like new/changed items and altered rules, though I don't know how common this is in PMD fanfiction, so this might not matter. Also, there will not be any Pokémon from Generation 10, A.K.A. the Winds and Waves games, since I'm writing this just a little after they were announced, and I'm not adding like 100 new Pokémon just out of the blue when the games do come out. And the most obvious thing of all, this is all a work of fanfiction, and I DON'T own the IP of Pokémon Mystery Dungeon, and all rights belong to their respective creators. This fic was also made on a desktop, so it's more meant to be read on one too, but reading this on a phone won't kill you either.

Oh, and important: TW for suicide.



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Does one's past truly define everything about them?

If that is the case, there are as few fully clean pasts as there are fully good people.

Everybody, without exception, has some kind of dirt on them.

And that's not necessarily bad. If everyone is dirty, then nobody is in the end.

And if the things that happened throughout our lives are what make us us...

Does that mean that we are just as incapable of changing ourselves?

as we are incapable of changing what happened?

"I'm so sorry to tell you this, Karo...b-but I screwed up. I really, really did. This never would‘ve happened if I had known what I'd get myself into... But it's too late now. I don't think there is a way I can fix this, not in my position.“

Elias took a deep, shaky breath, barely holding back the tears threatening to spill down his cheeks and shaking his head, gazing down at the pistol in his slightly trembling hands. He spoke into the phone again, trying to stop his sniffling from the cold. "Just do us both a favor and stay where you are for the next few days, okay? I'm sure they‘ll stop looking for you very soon after they get me! I swear on my grave that nothing will happen to you. When they stop their search, go and live the life we never could. I did all this for 6 years to give you this gift. Do me a favor and use it well...I love you, Karo..."

Elias hastily sent the voice message and waited for the two checkmarks to appear on the screen before his fingers scrambled to take the battery out and he threw his phone and the battery far away in different directions, his arms feeling stiff and immobile in the stinging cold.

The only audible sound was the phone, together with the battery, landing on empty roads afar, and his persecutors closing in, the clicking of their loaded guns announcing his impending doom.

Elias looked at his pistol once again, slowly raising its cold muzzle to his temple.

...

BANG.

"Well, I'm sorry to tell ya this, little kitten. But we don't take a Sherlock Holmes just like that anymore without his Watson, you know? No offense, of course, but even the most powerful needed someone looking out for them!” Poppy the Lurantis tried clarifying, busy stacking more reports and mail on a shelf next to the surprisingly pristine window of Guildmaster Umbreon's rather messy office.

Nearly every surface that wasn‘t the ground was filled with some kind of paper. The desk, the shelves, the closets, and the drawers. Poppy's scythe-like arms were working with surgical precision as she sorted the color coded mail, starting with the black letters first.

„W-what are you trying to say with that, if I may ask?” Cathy the Purrloin asked for a proper explanation, her ears flattening against her head. She already kind of knew the gist of what was about to come.

Guildmaster Umbreon fidgeted with a quill pen in his paws, staring at his large redwood desk for some time while Poppy conversed with Cathy. His gaze landed on the purrloin again that sat across from him.

"Poppy, because she apparently can't speak normally, is telling you that we currently don't allow solo explorers to join our guild, only at least two at a time.“

He paused to gauge Cathy's reaction. While she was good at hiding it, the room practically felt colder from her mood dropping.

"Everything coming from you so far hasn't been looking bad, but there are too many dangers in this line of work for a lone rookie. We would have to stuff you into an already established team in the guild that you possibly wouldn't fit into...neither experience-wise nor type-wise. That's what happened to that Snivy and Emolga you might have seen on the way to my office, and trust me, you really don't want that.“ Umbreon simplified, his voice already tired and eyelids feeling like lead from the usual guildmaster work of filling out endless paperwork and constantly discussing with the other guildmasters about item distribution or whatever.

"O-oh...that's...it's okay, I understand! I actually agree it would be good to join with someone watching my back." Cathy reacted, ears going flat and her eyes softening slightly. Why would they care about her choice to join alone?!

Poppy's face lit up at Cathy's compliance. "Ahh, there we go, that's the spirit! Just fish yourself someone nice who fits your vibe, and if they pass the interview just as well as you did, I'm sure they'll fit right in. And remember, the Umbreon Guilds entrance is always open for you!“

Cathy let out the faintest of sighs before she got up from the uncomfortable polished wooden chair and reached out her own paw over the desk to shake Umbreons, his grip surprisingly firm, and Cathy's was more tense than usual. "Well, if that's all, then I wish you a good day. You will see me again very soon with my new partner. Mark my words!" Cathy promised.

„Yeah yeah, have a nice day too, Cathy. You made a great impression today, I gotta say. Especially considering my last memory of you being having to carry you out of a dungeon. We wish you good luck on your search."

Guildmaster Umbreon told her goodbye and immediately started taking another look at the forms she filled out previously as Poppy waved Cathy off.

Cathy fluidly closed the office door behind her and stood there for a few seconds as a deep exhale left her nose. Her paws began padding down the spiraling staircase around the edge of the cylindrical Guild interior, all of it built into the inside of a massive redwood tree that stood there for almost 300 years. Cathy's eyes observed and ears picked up several of the Guilds explorers and apprentices either already coming back from rescue/exploration missions or getting ready along with their teammates, chattering away.

The Guilds atmosphere felt full of excitement, warmth and camaraderie. At least for the most part. Cathy's scowl deepened at the sight of what the explorers here got to experience. She had informed herself extensively about every guild nearby, yet the umbreon guild seemed the most inviting in its own strange way.

At the lower end of the staircase and dashing past the 3 hallways across the guild entrance leading to the Mess hall, Medical bay and Freya's dormitory respectively, Cathy promptly trotted outside through the Guilds entrance curtain made out of vines, the lukewarm late afternoon sun hitting her face and momentarily forcing her to squint. Freya the Copperajah,the hulking elephantine Pokemon guarding the guild entrance, towered over Cathy and watched her about to make her way to the middle of fourfold plaza. „ohhh,how did your interview go, little one? Were you accepted already?“ Freya rumbled curiously in her deep, almost motherly voice.

„Well about that, it's...they want me to bring a teammate first. They don't seem to take lone explorers anymore, shouldn't you know that already?“ Cathy vented to Freya with a slight huff. Cathy finally let her mood show in her stance and voice.

„I must say that this is my first time hearing about this new protocol too, little one.“ Freyas tail and trunk hung more limply upon hearing the news before straightening again. „thats unfortunate to hear, but you can‘t deny that

there have been quite a bit more casualties for these poor little solo rookies lately. I wish i could help them, but my duty still remains guarding this Guild.“

The 3 meter tall Freya unsuccessfully lowered herself as much as possible to Cathy's level, trying her best to seem less imposing. Her massive trunk gently pinched Cathy's cheek. Despite her incredible strength, Freya was unexpectedly skilled at controlling it. „dont beat yourself up over it, im certain such a cute little purrloin won’t have any problems fetching herself a suitable fellow explorer.“

Cathy awkwardly pushed Freya's trunk off with her paw, slightly embarrassed at the compliment and rolled her eyes. „Yeahhh thanks, I'll get someone to tag along eventually. You‘ll see me when the day comes!“

Cathy remarked with confidence, her smirk feeling forced.

She waved off and strolled towards the busy Fourfold Plaza, a slightly rhombus shaped plaza surrounded by the Four main guilds of the Cerozol region and by several establishments for explorers as well as regular visitors. Gholdengo Bank, Simipour Bar, Indeedee Hotel, Ribombee Storage, Kecleon Shops, Altaria Air Taxis, Meowth Pawn Shop, Tinkaton Forge, anything an explorer could need.

Cathy got past the Vileplume Guild, explorers and many shoppers making their way around the bustling stores and awkwardly making eye contact with some, intending to arrive at her residence a bit deeper into the woods surrounding the Plaza.

The lively sounds of explorers negotiating with merchants and teams celebrating successful missions at the Simipour Bar grew less audible the more Cathy increased the distance. Once Cathy was sure she was far enough away to not be heard, she looked around twice to confirm that nobody was near and used the opportunity.

„SHIT!!!“

Cathy screamed. The sound echoed through the forest, scared several wild Tailow nearby and scared them into flying away. She tried to violently kick some dirt away, only to end up hitting her Paw she tried to kick with on a rock hidden beneath the dirt, the pain directly shooting through her nerves after a dull thud. „AH! Goddamnit, this SUCKS!“

Cathy cursed, this time more under her breath while she held her aching Paw. It was clear Cathy didn't know any Pokemon willing to found an exploration team with her or risk their lives for a job like this.

<<screw this crap,im going home...>> Cathy thought to herself, shaking out her leg like that would have rid her of the pain. And so she made her way further into the woods, head sunk low and whiskers drooping.

The sounds of the lower hanging birches rustling, starlys chirping and distant ledybas taking off were the first thing Connors senses picked up, followed by a light and pleasant breeze that travelled through his black and white fur.

What fully woke him up was a blunt pinecone from one of the spruce trees high above falling right on his temple with a soft ‚thff‘. Lying on his side, his hazel-brown eyes shot open upon the hit, which revealed a broad forest to his gaze: sparsely filled with trees of several kinds, birch, spruce, a few redwoods and white pine trees, all standing firm and proud in the sun. Connor felt his own heartbeat in his chest, which confirmed that he was somehow still alive...

<<The hell...?>>

<<That...that clearly should‘ve killed me. Where even is this? Is it just trees?>> That thought was all that Connors foggy mind could have lingered on right now.

Still under the assumption of being human, Connor slowly and painstakingly managed to push his weary body from the ground with his front paws and attempted to stand on two legs by giving his upper body a push, which just made him fall backwards onto the forests soft grass again and instinctively roll himself onto his belly.

<<Oof! Goddamnit, my legs feel like jelly. Its like two dead wigletts down there...>>

Connor tried standing up again. Same result as before.

That's when he saw it as he looked over his shoulder to see what was wrong with his so called legs:

Two black...hind paws??? A tail?! FUR?!

Connor immediately jumped up, all traces of drowsiness gone in a second, and frantically looked all over his new body, pawing at his face and upon looking at his tail again concluding that it can only be from a shinx. He knew that star shape all too well.

„No fucking way.“ Connor whispered under his breath, hardly able to process the situation. He was now...a shinx? There was no way. This had to be some kind of sick joke! A would you rather question gone wrong! Anything that would explain this absolute fever dream!

He remembered the questions people would ask each other just for fun about what pokemon they would want to be, but actually experiencing it was a whole different ordeal he never believed anyone would find themselves in.

<<I-im a shinx. How am i shinx,how did this happen?!>> Frantic and panicked thoughts flooded Connors head, his heart rate accelerating again.

What popped into his mind next is how ridiculous he must be looking and especially *vulnerable!* He was still in the middle of a completely unknown forest, after all. Any predator would happily snag up a completely dumbfounded looking shinx. Connor instantly tried to forcefully calm himself, his body locked up tensely as he forced himself to actually breathe instead of gasping.

<<This-this cant be real. this body,its...am i actually a pokemon? how in the world?>>

Connor was blankly looking straight ahead, at least not looking like a panicked child anymore. That was progress. He cautiously observed his surroundings, looking if anyone was nearby. Nothing, at least not yet. Just trees. A whole lotta trees.

<<Okay. Shelter first,dont wanna get eaten before I even have time to think.>>

With that thought,Connor attempted to move towards a small narrow hill to his right which led to the side of one of the smaller surrounding birches. Partially to get a better outlook and to pick off one of the branches to build something to shield from potential rain showers.

The pacing gait of his quadrupedal body felt incredibly awkward and utterly foreign to him. Not accustomed at all with the new method of movement, Connors paw slipped and he nearly faceplanted to the grass, but managed to get it on solid ground again before his head hit the earth.

<<God, what is this body? Unbelievable how easy they make it look.>> The realization hit Connor like a gunshot to the temple.

With small and shaky steps, each one several seconds apart from each other, Connor trudged his way towards and up the hill. It was inconceivably more difficult to keep his new bodys core stable than he anticipated, but he could keep himself from tumbling down the hill.

With a final grunt of exertion, he found himself on top of the hill next to one of the thin tips of a birch's branches. Looking around and behind himself and over his shoulder, Connor confirmed no new observations and bit his maw around one of the thicker ones, attempting to pull it off the tree by shifting his weight backwards. The branch didn't budge.

As Connor tried pulling it left and right to loosen it, the effectiveness was confirmed by the audible cracks the wood gave off. Following a particularly sharp tug to the left, the branch came off with a loud ‚SNAP'. The instant lack of something to hold his weight caused Connor to stagger to the left. The shinx tried to place his paw on the hill to regain his balance, but his left paw only hit the air as the rest of his body followed off the hill.

„UuUhHhaAaAaAAaA!!!" Connor screamed, partly on instinct and partly in disorientation. Among the colors of his surroundings, his sight barely registered a black spot of blur jumping underneath him and all of a sudden felt a pair of paws wrap around his back and hind legs.

„Gotcha!" A purrloins voice rang out as she fell back to the ground safely on two of her feet, slightly smaller shinx still in her arms bridal style and the impact still vibrating through Connors body.

Cathy carefully let Connor fall out of her arms, his body hitting the grass and knocking a bit of the air out of his lungs. „Oough, goddamnit. Be a little more gentle, would you?" Connor quietly complained while he propped himself up again a little easier this time, barely looking at who actually saved him. It wasn't like he cared enough to look or listen.

Cathys previous look of relief was instantly snuffed out upon Connors complaint.

„Hey! Be glad I even saved your ass in the first place, guess I'll just let others fall to their deaths from now on!" Cathy shot back, clearly irritated at the complete lack of gratitude. Not even a simple thanks??

Connor froze up again, meeting the purrloins gaze with wide eyes, his mouth opening and closing a few times trying to answer. This purrloin...this pokemon...this ANIMAL was TALKING to him! with real human language!

„What the!- get away from me!“ Connor scrambled, his voice the same one he had as a human, and tried to back away as quick as he could, which wasn't quick at all considering the control he had over his body. This time he actually took a moment to process what was talking to him.

<<A black purrloin? Taller than most, pale...blue eyes, birthmark on the cheek...wait, that tail's looking oddly sharp. Looks different than usual.>> His thoughts were interrupted by Cathys ranting.

„The hell's your problem, dude?! You'd be dead if I didn't interfere!“

„N-no,it's not that! You're-you're a purrloin, a-and you talk!“ Connor clarified, his voice dumbfounded. „Pokemon aren't supposed to talk!“

„Uhhh, what are you spouting? Never seen a pokemon talk where you come from? Hell, is it-no actually, you are even talking yourself! How about you stop making up excuses for being a dick?“

„Well no, I mean, yeah! Pokemon didn't speak when I was...when I was human.“ Connor confessed, the last part coming out quieter.

Cathys irritation was quickly replaced with a raised eyebrow and holding her paw over her mouth in an attempt to conceal her chuckling „You, uhhh, used to be a human? Like, from these fairytale legends you learn about in preschool? Yeah sure thing man, and I am Arceus by the way.“ Cathy quipped, failing to hold in a giggle.

Connor finally looked directly at Cathy now, seeking to confirm on her face if she believed his claim. The sarcasm in her voice certainly didn't make it seem like it. He had no idea what an ‚Arceus' was, but that would be a very questionable name for a purrloin. „Uhm, I suppose that's not your actual name?“ He questioned, his tone sceptical.

„Ugh, nooooo! Learn to identify jokes! The name's Cathyyyy.“ She groaned at Connors first impression of incompetence.

„What are you even doing out here other than being the boogeyman of random trees and going off on strangers, huh?“ Cathy steered the topic back.

„Well, I'm Connor. Connor Baker.“ Connor satisfied her curiosity, the name tasting bitter and foreign in his mouth. A throwaway identity he never thought he would have to use.

Connor elaborated further on what Cathy asked.

„And I don't know either, I-I just woke up here! I died and like 5 minutes later I'm just in this forest I have never seen!“ Connor rambled on about his situation before remembering that it wasn't what Cathy asked about.

Cathy looked at him both like she was about to burst out laughing and like he just grew another head, the judgement in her stare making Connor feel obligated to answer even further.

„Also I was, uhh, trying to get, you know, shelter? You have any clue what this place is? It would genuinely help to know“

Cathy thought for a second, looking around in careful suspicion while her eyes remained on Connor. „This right here is in the forest outside of the Fourfold Plaza, if that jogs the noodle in your brain.“

Right after Cathy answered, an idea started brewing in her mind. He neither knew who Arceus was, nor where he even was. What if...what if there was just the slightest bit of truth in him claiming to be a human?

„Wait, hold on! Do you not know what the Fourfold Plaza is? Do you know what explorer Guilds are, Connor?“ Cathy inquired hastily, ears perking up once again and shoulders stiffening.

„Wha- no? What does some kind of Guild have to do with any of this?“ Connor shook his head a little, trying to catch up with the unexpected verbal curveball that was just hurled at him.

„I suppose I know the words ‚explorer‘ and ‚Guild‘ individually, but no idea what they mean together around here?“

That was exactly the answer Cathy was hoping for. If there was someone that would be guaranteed to join the guild with her, then it would be a pokemon that either didn't know the downsides of it or even the concept of them to begin with.

Cathys whole demeanor flipped. She stood up straighter, gave him the cutest kitty cat eyes she could muster and asked with a higher pitch than her usual more mature voice „So you really were human, you say?“

Connor hardly gave any reaction or feedback at Cathys efforts „Yes i was a human, i meant what i said. And I'm just all of a sudden a shinx now, for seemingly no reason.“ Recounting the events another time left him once again with even more questions than answers.

„hmmm, well okay, Connor. How about you come to my place a few minutes away and I'll explain to ya what the next best move would be in your position? Sound good?“ Cathy offered him, trying her best to seem as inviting as she could.

Connors eyes squinted a little, but considering his situation, he hated to admit that this was probably his best starting point. If things got rough, he'd just take her out if she tried anything funny. Maybe rob her too if she got anything useful.

„Ehhhhhhhh...yeahhhh, fine. Lead the way then. To your place, I hope.“ Connor allowed her, unsure what to think of her sudden change of how she presented herself.

Just as Cathy was about to take a step towards their now shared goal of destination, she stopped and looked back at Connor again, eyes narrowing just a little. „Actually no, you gotta thank me first for saving you!“ She crossed her arms with a slightly petty look away from him.

„Uhh, excuse me what?“

„You heard me right, thank me first or i'm not taking you with me!“

„But wh-you know, this is so pathetic! You-okay sure, alright, I guess. Thanks a lot for saving me from dying 3 minutes after waking up and I super duper appreciate it, *Cathy*...“ Connor thanked her in a slight mock tone, intentionally mispronouncing Cathys name to maybe piss her off.

„Yeahhh much better already, you should get used to thanking someone for helping. It's common courtesy, you know? Anyway, just follow me now, would ya?“ Cathy began making her way to her place, but the lack of audible footsteps behind her made her look back over her shoulder.

What she saw was Connor on the exact same spot as before.

„You alright there? Got the stick too far up your ass or why haven't you moved an inch?“

„Cathy, like I said, I was a human so obviously I am used to moving like a human! You understand?“ Connor lectured, her lack of empathy practically making him feel his blood pressure rise.

„Oooohh, i get it. You were on like, two legs all the time, right? Well, then dont mind me using helping hand. C‘mere, lemme lift your paws for you.“ Cathy closed the distance between them again, placing a paw on his abdomen to take more weight off his legs while Connors objections of „No no no,we‘re not doing this“ or „This is so unnecessary, i can walk on my own!“ fell on deaf ears.

Connors gait was noticeably less unstable with Cathys help, but Connor was anything other than thankful for her help.

„God, this is so ridiculous. Why not put a pacifier in my mouth too while you‘re at it, hm?“

On the entire way, Cathy kept on attempting to ask Connor any meaningful questions, failing to hold back her curiosity for what the hell could be going on in the human world.

Stuff like „But how‘d you die?“ or

„Is it true y‘all were moving around in these giant metal boxes on wheels?“ and

„Are you actually a former human or why are you not answering? I swear you gotta be trying to prank me or something. Is this some kinda cheap scheme to con me?“

All of her questions were promptly ignored as Connor just kept staring ahead with this curiously focused look, clearly ignoring what she‘s got to say. „Cant you see I'm thinking about more pressing matters at the moment, Cathy?“ He told her off like an adult would to an especially troublesome toddler.

<<god, this guy got no whimsy in his life. Better start looking for another teammate once I get him in that Guild>> Cathy planned in her mind before complying with Connor „Y-yeah, sure. My bad.“ She halfheartedly apologized.

Around 11 to 12 minutes passed until they arrived at Cathys home, a simple two-bedroom treehouse with slanted roof comfortably nestled inside a small birch trees crown, built out of a contrasting dark brown wood. A creaky half-turn staircase led to a small balcony with a wooden sliding door leading inside. The foggy windows on both the walls next to it made it hard to tell what was inside.

„Ta-dahhh, whadd‘ya you think? Isn' t it frickin‘ awesome?“

„Well. It's a treehouse, Cathy.“

„Wooooow, really? That's all you have to say about it?“

„Because there is nothing else to say about it! But now that you ask, I think the dark wood on a birch tree is kinda ugly. Lets just go inside so I don't have to see that anymore.“

Connor put his paw on the first step and looked away with a sigh after doing nothing for a few seconds.

Cathy failed to keep in another giggle from spilling out. „Uhhh, can you go up the stairs alone or are you still crippled?“

Connor turned to Cathy, his frown deepening. „I'm not crippled, Cathy, I'm still adjusting. I'll try going up on my own.“

Connors paws subconsciously dug into the wood tightly as he tried to get his last paw on the stair. Cathy behind him watched the almost pathetic display, shoulders slumped as her patience wore thin. Feeling a little too confident and trying to establish a proper rhythm, he tried climbing the stairs too quickly and nearly slipped again, scrambling to not roll back down the stairs.

„Alright, I'm picking you up again, this is...this is just sad to watch, ehehehe~“ Cathy decided for him as another laugh spilled out, hoisting his body into her arms again in the same way she caught him in the air. Connor just gave up with a sigh and let it happen, tail curling in quiet defeat.

Cathy swiftly traversed the entire flight of stairs with just a few jumps, dropping Connor in front of the sliding door on his paws this time, making him stumble again until he regained his footing.

„Looks like you can listen after all.“ Connor snarked before he placed his paw on the dark sliding door and pushed it to the side, which revealed the inside of Cathys home: a roughly 70 square foot ‚living room', its darkness chased away by several candles on a cylindrical rocky candle holder in the rooms corner, seemingly out of andesite. Next to it was a slightly dusty chest Cathy likely used to store items and a rough wooden desk in front of the rooms window. Next to the window hung a calendar, the date of 5th of March circled in thick blue ink.

He took a step inside, the floorboards near the door feeling a little looser. „Huh, smells kind of like old books in here. You a reader or something?“

„Pff, no! I have a life, you know? But I got a lot of the explorer magazines here, the first 13 volumes!“

Connor rolled his eyes at her seeming obsession of exploring.

Cathy pointed at the bed across from the desk, a simple straw mattress in a wooden frame, topped with a duvet cover filled with feathers. Above it was a sizable painting, something that looked eerily similar to a work he had already seen before called ‘Wanderer Above The Sea Of Fog‘.

„Sit down for a bit if you want, imma get us something in the meantime.“ She offered before wandering off, presumably into her kitchen.

Connor nodded and pushed his hind body up after his paws planted firmly on the surface, this time successfully so. He sat down by bending his hind paws into an arc and keeping his front paws straight, feeling and hearing the faint crunching of straw and feathers underneath them. The position was a good deal more comfortable than it always looked for him.

Following the clinking of glass and porcelain that filled the other room for nearly a solid minute, Cathy emerged with a marble bowl filled with oran, persim and leppa berries and put it down on the coffee table in front of the bed.

„Maybe you‘ve never seen these berries in your world either, try ‘em!“

„No thanks, im passing for now.“ Connor declined as he watched Cathy pull away the wooden stool from the desk to sit down at the other side of the coffee table. He was still awkwardly looking around the room.

Cathy took one of the oran berries and wiped her mouth with the back of her paw after taking a bite. „Soooo, about your little situation. I thought a little about it and figured that joining the Umbreon guild might be a good path to take for you.“

Connors focus landed back on Cathy again upon the sudden change in subject: „An Umbreon Guild, huh? You did tell me something about explorer Guilds before, I'm assuming that is that one of them?“

Cathys ears perk up and a smirk tugs at her lips again. Now’s her chance...

„Damn right it is. They explore these dungeons everywhere and even map them out! They even rescue other pokemon that get lost in there! O-or they find rare artifacts or old stuff from centuries ago! Just a few days ago they found the remains of an old village in the bottomless lands!“

Cathy took a short pause to regain her breath.

„God, you won't believe how cool of a job being an explorer is! I swear I can't even begin to describe it!“ Cathy geeked out, struggling to hold herself back from giving too much info.

„Uhh, okay? And tell me, what do I get out of it exactly?“ Connor demanded, almost offended that she would suggest he take a job that wouldn‘t give anything back.

„Well for starters, you can live at these guilds dorms for free, and they feed you too! I mean, you said you were looking for shelter, right? You just help them with work and they help you with your needs. Steel sharpens steel, am I right?“

Connors head tilted a little and his eyes narrowed. „If you know so much about it then why not take me there first? You work at that guild, right?“

„Nah, I-I can‘t really do that. The only problem is just...man, it sucks as a rule, but they don't take people that apply alone anymore, it's hella stupid really.“ Cathy looks down at her feet, plopping the rest of the oran berry in her mouth.

Connors stature relaxed a little. „I suppose that doesn't sound too bad. But why don't they take solo employees? There has to be a reason for that, right?“

Cathy looked back at him again, this time being the one caught off guard.

„Of course, yeah! They say it's for, uhhh...like, to build camaraderie, you know? Because they like to promote bonding with others through work and it makes the job even more inviting! And it's so you have a teammate you can start right off with! Many people look up to explorers, you know?“

She tried to explain away, suddenly maintaining eye contact the whole time.

„Aaaand if i had to guess, you want me to join one of these Guilds with...*you* of all people?“ Connor asked in that tone, the one that made it clear that he had to, but didn't want to.

„hey, what's that supposed to mean!?“ Cathy went on the defense again,quicker than an aegislash.

Connor leaned closer towards Cathy again, his gaze feeling like a knifes tip to Cathy. „You also said they explore some kinds of dungeons? Sounds quite dangerous, doesn't it?“ His skepticism flared back up.

„Wha-dont be ridiculous, it's not dangerous! It‘s pretty safe, they teach you all the ropes and they take all the-“

Connor interrupted her „You also said something about rescuing pokemon that get lost in there? And you‘re telling me exploring places that others have to get rescued from is safe?“

Cathys shoulders started squaring slightly and she started fidgeting with the leppa berry in her hand that she took before. „Well, b-because they‘re just hard to navigate ‘n shit! Why else would explorers try mapping t-“

„No no no, you listen to me now, Cathy. So-“

„But you don't know anyt-“

„Shut it!...“

Connor raised his voice,but it sounded more tired than anything else. The room went silent for about 3 seconds afterwards.

„so let me get this straight, Cathy...“

Connor started keeping a closer eye on Cathys tail.

„You are telling me that being an explorer is a job that has good pay, gives free housing and food AND is incredibly safe? Now I don't know exactly what the job market is like here but let me tell you, if there was a job

like that in my world, everyone would be breaking down the doors to apply themselves. And you say that they leave two whole positions free just for the explorers to ‘build camaraderie‘?“

His paw went to his brows as he shook his head. He has rarely seen such a poorly constructed lie before.

„You know, the fact that they want two explorers at once means that they might have even more positions open because not many pokemon would wanna apply themselves there.“

Cathy didn't answer and just kept on looking down at her feet and took a bite of the leppa berry.

Connors posture relaxed again, less rigid and leaning more back. „We‘re both adults here, Cathy. Tell me the truth. Tell me, is that perhaps because it's too dangerous for just one pokemon?“

„No! That's...the-” Cathy tried to come up with something else, but started coughing into her fist as she didn’t swallow the leppa berry properly.

Connor was about to interrupt Cathy again until he noticed that she didn't try to continue. „Good decision to stop. Everything about you was already giving you away.“

his posture slumped moderately, sighing as he looked away from Cathy for just a second.

„I don't care that you‘re trying to lure me into taking a dangerous job, I shouldn‘t even be here anyway. I just don't like being lied to my face. Also you thinking that you can trick me into this feels almost insulting, somehow.“

Cathy groaned under her breath, throwing the bitten leppa berry back in the bowl before crossing her arms.

„Fine. You‘re right, exploring is pretty damn dangerous. But all the other hooey I told you is still all true!“ Cathy dropped the act, her tone more grounded.

„Good, good. I suppose it would make sense to apply myself there. I should try finding out more about my surroundings, so exploring would help. Do I need some kind of prior experience?“

„Nah, they take in rookies and train them until they‘re ready to go on proper missions.“

“...“

Connors thinking was interrupted again by more info on the matter from Cathy.

„I actually tried gettin‘ in there earlier today and that's how I found out about their retarded rule.“

„Uh huh, so i just go in there and talk to them?“

Cathy got off the stool and took the berry bowl. „Mhm, you have to just answer their useless questions. Well, not Guildmaster Umbreons but the other ones. That Iurantis seriously asked me what orb i would be if I was one. like, what are they thinking while asking that??“ Cathy ranted as she made her way back to the kitchen.

„So there's gonna be an interview.“ Connor looked up at the ceiling, closing his eyes for some time before turning his head to the kitchen entrance. “Are they picky with who they take into the guild?“

„SERIOUSLY? So you‘ll actually join the umbreon guild with me?“ Cathy yelled back from the kitchen in delight. “I thought you were just bullshitting me back for what I told you.”

„Goddamnit, YES I’m gonna risk my life just to draw maps of random dungeons that‘ll try to kill me! Now, are they picky?“ The concept sounded even more absurd to Connor after talking about it aloud.

„Only a little,okay!?“ Cathy swore, her voices volume decreasing as she got back into the living room again.

„Is it possible to just get it over with right now?“

„I dunno, I think the guild‘s about to settle in for the night at the guild so they‘d hate another interview in their schedule. The one they had with me was already pretty late into the day for their standards.“

Connor looked down and withdrew himself into his thoughts again, attempting to come up with a solution to his new predicament.

Cathy noticed the look on his face and had an idea of what he was thinking about.

„I dont mind you crashing here for the night by the way, that's the least i owe you for joining with little ,ol me. Maybe it‘ll calm you down too. Just sleep it off whenever there's a problem, y‘know?“ Cathy proposed, putting the stool back at the desk and going over to the candle holder.

„I suppose I could use some sleep,“ Connor admitted, leaning right to look past Cathy, confirming that nighttime is about to set in.

„Sun‘s about to start setting too...“

Cathy reached her arm around the back of the holder and flipped the low switch that turned the candles off, letting the darkness reclaim its place in the room.

„Oh, those were electric?“ Connor asked, his brows and ears raising. It was nice to know that the pokemon here atleast knew how to utilize simple electricity.

Cathy almost chuckled at the amusingly stupid question.

„Duh, who‘s lighting real candles in a treehouse?“

Connor paused for a second,his tone deadpan as his eyes started adjusting to the darkness.

„You should be concerned about me expecting that of you.“

„Oh yeah, cause you know me soooo well“ Cathy joked before curling up on the bed a respectful distance away from Connor.

Connor registered quickly that cathy laid down on the same bed as him.

„You uhhh, got no other bed in another room or anything like that?“ He asked hesitantly, unsure of the prospect of sleeping next to a stranger.

„Awww c‘mon, is it that bad to sleep near me? Besides, they‘ll likely assign a dorm for us both at the guild anyway if we get in, so we‘re gonna be roommates later anyway.“ Cathy argued, still in the same position to sleep. Her tone was more dismissive from the constant complaints this time.

„Ugh, no. It's more...I'm just used to having privacy when I sleep. Or at least used to getting to sleep next to someone I liked.“ Connor admitted.

„Wow, so now you‘re a beggar and a chooser at the same time, huh?“

„Just forget what i said.“

With that, Connor settled from the sitting position directly onto his stomach and lightly rolled on his side, his look fixed on the continuously darker growing window. The light crunching of straw was admittedly grating on his ears. The feeling of no blanket covering him either or no arms around him was foreign, to say the least.

Both lied there silently for a solid half minute, but Cathy knew she couldn't fall asleep without knowing it.

She lifted her head up from her curled position, checking for a second first if Connor noticed. „Wouldn‘t it be kind of insane if what you‘re saying was true. I mean, a human that turned into a pokemon after dying? I don't even know what I would do if I suddenly turned into a human.“

Connor grumbled lightly in irritation and lifted his head up too. He thought they were already done with this topic.

„If what i was saying is true? Cathy, what I'm telling you IS the truth. What the hell would I get out of lying to you?“

„Well, you haven't proven anything yet! Lemme at least ask you one question about humans I got if you want me to believe you!“

„Fine, if it gets you off my back. What is it?“ Connor sighed, about to lay his head down again until he registered Cathy's question.

„You earlier said to me that I was a purrloin without me telling you, and you knew that you were a shinx. Does that mean pokemon were a thing in the human world too?“

Cathy paused shortly to reformulate what she actually wanted to ask.

„What place did they have, how did you treat each other?"

Connor rolled on his stomach again to focus on what information he would give her. After all, it's a slippery slope with stuff like this.

„Well, humans and pokemon did live together and help eachother.“ connor answered her question, truthfully at first.

„It was a very peaceful dynamic actually, neither side harmed the other one. I'd consider their treatment as pretty equal.“ Connor lied straight through his teeth. He started avoiding Cathys gaze, the painting above the bed suddenly looking awfully interesting to him despite barely being able to see it.

„Oh, that's...i gotta say that's really nice to know. I've heard many others ask that question too. Now I kinda wanna live in that world too. Aww, that must‘ve been cool as hell bein‘ there.“ The answer seemed to satisfy Cathy, her tone soft yet enthusiastic.

Both returned to their previous sleeping positions until Cathys voice cut through the silence again, like a scythers arms slashing its prey.

„Connor?“

Connors eyes rolled back and answered in a long exhale, not bothering to move this time. „Whaaat??“

„This is the last thing i wanna know, i swear! It's that this whole thing... must be even more absurd to you the more I think about it.“ Cathy shared her thoughts, her voice more sympathetic this time.

„Just waking up in some place you don't know right after dying, all in a body you have almost no idea how to control, Being this complete stranger and the only thing from your world you got to keep was your name and mind...“

Connors brow raised. What importance does Cathy telling him this have?

Realizing she‘s talking too much again, she cut to the chase. „Sounds kinda scary, in a way. And you‘re just okay with that, like what, 30 minutes later?“

Connors mind reeled again for a way to somewhat avoid the topic.

„...Well, in my case that would only be the mind i kept.“

„Whaddya mean? Your name wasn‘t Connor?“

„...“

„Yeah, i had a whole different name. It was...Elias.“

„Elias Kaiser..."

CHAPTER 1 END

NEXT CHAPTER

BACK TO HUB