Pokemon Mystery Dungeon: The Past Pursuits - CHAPTER 3: Gentle And Hireable



The door to Guildmaster Umbreon’s office slid open as Poppy made her way back inside together with the Guildmaster.

Both Connor and Cathy‘s heads snapped back to meet Guildmaster Umbreon's eyes as he approached them, stopping halfway inside the room and about 4 feet in front of them.

„Come here, Connor.“ He demanded in a much more lenient tone now.

Connor and Cathy exchanged a quick look before Connor carefully lowered his front paws on the floor and then the rest of his body. He stopped just in front of the Guildmaster, one eyebrow raised and head turned away a little.

Guildmaster Umbreon let the silence marinate for a moment before reaching out a paw, the edge of his lip curling upward.
„We welcome you both to the Umbreon Guild.“

Connor nodded and shook guildmaster umbreon’s paw as firmly as he could with this body.
„I‘m very honored for the opportunity to work for this guild. Me and my partner won‘t disappoint you.“

Cathy nearly jumped from her chair right after and shook Guildmaster Umbreon's paw so fast that it felt flaccid.

„We PROMISE we will deliver top performances every time!“ Cathy announced in an overly giddy tone.

Guildmaster Umbreon retracted his paw while Poppy was already busy digging out a cardboard box from the bottom part of one of the closets.

„Well I hope so, that‘s how it‘s done in our guild here. We give it everything we‘ve got. I expect a lot from you two. Especially from you, Cathy.“ He expressed his expectations with a slight hint of pride in his voice while Poppy lightly kicked the closet back shut and closed the distance between her and Cathy again, her scythe holding out the badge of the Umbreon Guild.

Cathy‘s eyes widen even further, practically sparkling as she snatches the badge from Poppy‘s scythes, admiring it in her paw.

„Just be careful with those, replacing them isn‘t cheap.“ Guildmaster Umbreon warned as he returned to his seat behind his desk.

„Oh- uhh, yes yes, of course we‘ll be careful!“ Cathy‘s hasty insistence was followed by a question from the guildmaster she had hardly even thought about.

„So...What would you like your team to be called?“ Guildmaster Umbreon asked while rhythmically tapping his quill pen on the desk.

Cathy’s body went stiff and her entire demeanor fell back to normal.

“...Our team name?” She repeated, more to herself than anyone else.

Cathy blew out some air and scratched the back of her head while looking around the room.

“That's a good question, we...Wait, do we start working today already?”

“Well, no. But you can start with your work right off the bat tomorrow. Isn’t that what you want?”

Guildmaster Umbreon stopped tapping his pen as he saw Cathy trying and failing to come up with anything.

He exhaled and rubbed his forehead with a paw.

“If you don't have a team name yet then we'll give you some time to think. It's just important that we'll still have it **today** because we do need some kind of team name to document you two under, am I making myself clear?” Guildmaster Umbreon eyed them up and down accusingly with a raised eyebrow

“I’m so sorry, we just had so much on our minds! We'll report our name to you before the end of the day!” Cathy excused herself.

Guildmaster Umbreon nodded and looked over to Poppy.

“Good. I'll trust you on your word. Poppy, will you lead them to their new dorm please?”

“Will be done. So you two freshmons are gonna come with me, Auntie Poppy is gonna show you something amazing.” She gently hurried the two rookies out of the office to leave the Guildmaster alone.

Connor shook his head and Cathy waved The Guildmaster Bye before Poppy slid the door shut and went into a squat to be on eye level with them.

“Alright, just keep your eyes on me and you won't get lost. Well, you won't either way. Navigating around here will be a piece of cake for you within a day!”

Poppy stood back up and started making her way to floor 3, which Cathy promptly followed as she beckoned Connor to do the same

Cathy and Poppy waited a few minutes until Connor managed to fight his way up the stairs too.

“C’mon, climbing those a second time can’t be that hard. A right-hands time is valuable, you know?”

Connor saw the same thing on floor 3 than on floor 1. The same circular walls out of bark and the baseboards that someone failed to sand down and connect properly, the only difference being this room containing 4 sliding doors on each side.

Poppy looked cluelessly at the different doors. „So this floor is gonna be where you two will be finding your dorm on. We always have some prepared for different sized pokemon. I think it was that door?“

Poppy picked the door from the right of where the staircase ended and slid it open. It revealed a slightly oval room built onto the redwood‘s thick, massive branches, with some of them obstructing the upper part of the dorm‘s window. The whole room was maybe the same size as Cathy‘s living room if being generous

Two straw beds sized for Connor‘s and Cathy‘s species were next to the left and right of the window, both adorned with small shelves for storing books next to the beds. In the room's corner across from the

beds sat a dusty gray wooden chest to store items, next to it a slightly smudged full body mirror and on the other side of it a wobbly table with an open book and inkwell.

The dorm smelled faintly of dust, straw and vanilla.

Cathy looked around like a child in a candy store and after throwing her badge on the table immediately pounced almost instinctively on one of the two beds in the room which looked awfully similar to the ones in her house.

Connor's expression dropped when a second bed next to the first fell into his view. „Wait, we don't get separate dorms?"

„Why would you?? You're a team now, you gotta build some camaraderie!" Poppy reasoned, like the prospect of the guild spending poke on separate dorms for everyone was out of this world.

„Yeah, right..."

Poppy noticed the shift in Connor and made her way to the door again.

„Remember that I'm either in the office or going around the guild if you need anything. The door plaque will be there in a few days but otherwise,"

Poppy took a last look around the room to check for anything she forgot.

„oh yeah, we would prefer it if you already slept here at the guild tonight so you can start tomorrow at the same time as the other guild members. Sound good?"

Connor was snapped out of his thinking. „Hm? Oh yeah, with pleasure even."

"Alright! Make yourself at home!"

Poppy nodded and closed the door in front of Connor and Cathy, marking their beginning as guild members in their personal dorm.

The room was silent except for Cathy absentmindedly kneading the bedsheets with her paws and Connor opening the chest to take a look inside, only for his face to be met with a fresh wave of dust and a hint of nothingness in the chest.

Cathy takes her hands off the sheets and gets herself upright again. „You know, I was almost scared that they actually wouldn‘t take you. Almost…“

Connor closed the chest and dropped his badge in front of the mirror to take a good look at his reflection, the layer of dust on the surface making his face difficult to make out.

“Should be justified, right? The chance was very much there.“ Connor wiped away the dust covering his reflected face before wiping his paw on the ground.

„Nah, it wasn‘t really. They just pretend to think really hard about it, but really they have to take any help they can get, y‘know?“

Connor looked back at Cathy with a frown at her withholding important information once again.

Cathy hopped off her bed before quickly snatching the guilds badge she put on the table before. „Anyway, I have somewhere to be. Have fun and don‘t get lost around here, aight?“

„Yeah yeah, do your thing.“ Connor answered almost subconsciously.

Upon hearing the click of the sliding doors magnets, Connor picked the Guilds badge up with his mouth, the strong taste of copper putting him off for a moment, hoisted himself onto the chair and put the badge onto the table before making his way for the door.

Nora the Cinccino‘s paws moved with a fluid, graceful efficiency as she dabbed at the cobwebs under the stairs on floor 1 with a feather duster. Her body flinched just a tiny bit as her concentration was cut short by Connor‘s voice.

„Uhhh, excuse me?“ Connor cleared his throat in a way that would make Nora hear it.

Nora looked over her shoulder, her eyes widening ever so slightly as she turned her body to face Connor too, nearly bumping into the stool that was next to her.

„Oh, hello. Do you need help with anything?“ Nora asked in a soft, almost quiet voice she readjusted the down on her body, her fur swaying lightly with the wind that wafted into the guild through the gate and its curtains.

„So, I‘m kind of new here and just would like to know where the guild library is located?“

Nora snapped a little out of her thoughts. „Oh yeah, of course. You can find it on the 4th floor on the opposite side of the balcony, it's marked with the gray door.“

„Ughh, fourth- Okay, yeah. Thanks for helping.“ Connor groaned and made his way to the stairs.

„Wait, I can show it to you directly if you want!“ Nora offered upon sensing Connor‘s mood.

„No no, it‘s okay. I‘m not mad or anything, I just despise stairs. Have a nice day, I don‘t want to distract you from work.“

Nora moved her down closer to her face and nodded before turning back and stepping onto the stool to reach further crevices in the stairs.

Over 3 minutes of painstakingly climbing 4 tall flights of stairs later, Connor finally found himself at the top of the step, slightly out of breath and cheeks reddening from his own struggle to carry out such a simple action.

After making sure he really had the correct room in front of him, Connor pushed the sliding door to the library aside to be greeted by a long hallway set up with several 90 degree turns, like a long maze of dust, paper and walls out of bookshelves.

All of the wood in the library was a shade darker than the rest of the guild, which made Connor feel like he was entering another world all over again.

The library had an overwhelming smell of aged leather and dust. The air also felt strangely warm on Connor‘s body.

Connor carefully took the nearest path to walk through, trying to keep a keen eye on the genre he was looking for.

He kept on navigating his way through the bookshelf maze, only to find a mostly empty reading area with an array of tables in front of the windows.

Connor turned back right away and saw Letters attached to the hanging signs on the shelves, marking the alphabetical order in which the books were sorted.

<<Did someone put these up facing the wrong direction??>>

He kept trudging along the shelves and turned once to the right until he arrived at the letter E, some more colorful books already standing out among the more brownish ones, like the guild specifically wanted its members to read these books.

His gaze looked over the book titles written on their backs, his size restricting him to the lower part of the shelf, with some books having to be turned by him to see the covers.

The aesthetic of a white leatherback book on his eye level eventually made Connors sight lock in on it. He immediately went into a sitting position to straighten himself up and grabbed it by the top, only to fall right out of his paws the moment the shelves support under the book vanished.

Connor looked around to see if anyone was watching him and went down to pick it up with his mouth by one of the corners, its pages already hanging loosely open from its own weight.

The reading area was devoid of anyone else occupying it other than Connor, Except for a snivy reading something seemingly related to Biology, albeit Connor couldn't fully see from the distance.

He stared at the snivy for some time. Sensing only complete ignorance from them, Connor made his own way to the farthest away table in the opposite corner. The leather bound book hit the wobbly and rough-textured table with a thud followed by a soft creak.

Connor hoisted his front legs up on the chair and pushed his hind legs up, shifting a little on its surface to face the book.

Connor looked at the cover of „Exploring In The Cerozol Region 101“, only designed with minimalistic letters and author information below he never bothered to read anyway, before sliding his paw over the cover to push it open.

Connor‘s eyes immediately skipped over the introductory paragraph to rather get into the meat of the topic right away. His eyes stopped at the first sentence that looked interesting enough.

-Every living being has the natural urge to explore, without exception. Even you, who is reading this, because you wanted to begin a career as explorer, or even just wanted to pick up a new book or new story to lose yourself in. The drive to explore is an integral part to every decision we make.-

<<seriously? I would‘ve gotten a philosophy book if I wanted one. Just tell me how to not get mauled to death by wild pokemon for gods sake>>

Connor internally complained as he swiped his paw at a few more pages until he arrived at the table of contents.

Page 6-13: „What Is Exploration?“
Page 14-27: „What Makes It Dangerous?“
Page 28-39: „How To Navigate Dungeons“
Page 40-55: „Surviving Wild Pokemon“
Page 55-62: „The Different Groups Of Explorers“
Page 62-89: „The Items In Dungeons“
Page 89-100: „How to deal with outlaws“
Page 100-114: „How to navigate Edge Cases“

Page 114-127: „Miscellaneous Information“

<<There we go, at least they knew to add that.>>

Connor went to the next page, eyes going over the words while he sighed and shifted again on the creaky chair, his eyes already feeling heavy from the quiet atmosphere.

Cathy‘s arms felt like they were about to fall off from how hard she was pulling at the trapdoors handle, paws sore and feeling like she bathed them in nettle plants. The creaking of pulling on the wood grated on her ears.

Then a faint, breathy chuckle that someone was clearly trying to hold in coming from the burrow below the trapdoor hit Cathy‘s ears.

Cathy perked up for a second before her grip around the handle vanished.

„OH, so you DO hear me! I was almost pulling myself to death up here!“

She heard a full-on laugh from below as it made its way to the trapdoor.

C‘mon, this ain‘t funny, Vince. open the damn thing!“

Cathy heard him climbing up the ladder below and the trapdoor‘s lock clicking before it flipped open, a white morpeko with green accents peeking his head and then his body out after confirming it was Cathy.

„What? It IS funny listening to you struggle!“ Vincent insisted before climbing back down into his burrow, leaving the trapdoor open for Cathy.

„Yeah yeah, what a funny guy you are. Just lemme in.“

Not bothering with the ladder leading into the living room, Cathy jumped down into his burrow after he got out of the way, perfectly on her feet and stabilizing the bag she went to get from her place beforehand with one paw.

Vincent‘s burrow was a large, completely hollowed out underground room held up by several wooden beams for stability, the dirt walls surprisingly smooth and smelling like old grass and somehow like sand.

A couch was right in the middle, coffee table in front of it with a half finished sewed scarf together with a mountain of sewing material lying there forgotten since Cathy arrived. Torches on the walls all around the room illuminated it dimly. Several pieces of furniture like the rug under the couch, some drawers and the large rectangular chest out of bubinga wood looked very out of place, like taken from somewhere else.

Vincent sat back down and continued working on sewing the scarf, his hands working in a dextrous and precise manner.

Cathy shifted her wait from one foot to the other impatiently.

„Did you call Cassandra already to fly us to the fair?“

Vincent chuckled, not taking his eyes off the scarf. „Chill, Cathy. She‘ll be here soon.“

Cathy opened the chest, looking through the foods and drinks Vincent had stored there, kept cold by an ice stone laying in the middle, normally used for evolution.

Vincent smirked to himself after hearing something click open.

“Wow, you gotta be one fat bitch to stuff something down your gullet right before going to a fair.” He teased.

“What? Someone rushed me during breakfast today, also I'm just drinking something. The stuff they sell there is overpriced anyway.”

Cathy defended as she sat down next to him to watch his work, placing her sharp tail on her thigh to not cut into the couch and putting the milk bottle she opted for down on the coffee table.

Then the actual project that Vincent was working on fell into Cathy’s eye; A black-purple silk scarf with dark blue spikes cutting into the color.

Cathy leaned further forward to see it closer.

„Oooh, looking good. Is the work going well?“

„Yeah. Already got 2 others done yesterday. I actually managed to sell some that day too.“

Cathy let out a low whistle, carefully patting Vincent on the shoulder.
„Good work man, Keep working like that and maybe you can quit stealing shit. It’s a surprise you even managed to stop crashing on my bed in the first place.”

Vincent’s lip curled upward both from Cathy’s teasing and from and recalling something he felt he forgot.
„On the topic of working, did you hear that Cassandra tried to apply to be one of the air taxis a few days ago. She‘s still kinda in the application process but stuff is looking good so far. She’s gonna be carrying some of the heavier pokemon I think”

Cathy perked up from her leaning back into the couch, her eyes wide for a moment before sinking back and looking at whatever spot on the wall looked interesting.
„Wait, really? God I'm so sorry man, I've been so busy the last few days I can barely keep up with everything happening. Amazing for her though, really."

„Oh yeah, you were busy trying your luck at the fourfold plaza, right? Y'know, with the Umbreon Guild?"

Cathy's eyes lit up and her smirk returned at the opportunity to brag with her news.
„Ohhh, you can bet your ass I was! You wanna know how it went?"

Vincent stopped his sewing to turn his full attention to Cathy with a raised eyebrow.
Cathy slowly reached into her back while her grin widened before her paw shot out, flashing the Umbreon Guild's badge, the copper accents glinting a little in the torch light.

„Look at it! I got in! I'm actually a member now!" Cathy squeaked like a teenage girl who was asked out for prom.

Vincent gasped a little and quickly but carefully put his sewing needles down on the table. „No way! On the first try?! How'd you pull that off???"

Cathy huffed in amusement. "What are you talking about? I just got what it takes!" Cathy boasted like it was just the natural course of events for her to get hired.

Vincent took a closer look and even turned to look at it from the side, as if checking the badge's authenticity. "What do your parents think of it? Are they going nuts too??"

Cathy's expression drops just a tiny bit before dropping the badge into her bag again.

"They don't actually know yet, but I'm DYING to see what they think!"

Vincent jumped up from the couch and bounded over to his drawer, pulling the top compartment open and looking through the blue orbs rolling around from the force like marbles. He rummaged through them quickly before locking on the one marked with a “C2”.

“What are you doing?” Cathy asked, lowering the milk she was sipping on and wiping her mouth.

„What does it look like? I don’t care if she’s in the air already, Cassandra HAS to know about this too!“ Vincent announced while Cathy shifted a bit towards the coffee table to position the sewing needles back into place so they wouldn't slip off.

The signal from Vincent shaking the communication orb in his hand was finally received on the other side, the orb’s glow confirming someone being on the other end. the orb gave the voice that came from it a slight reverb effect.

„What is it? I told you I‘m on my way!“ A tired and slightly croaky voice affirmed. The voice was a little hard to hear audibly from the wind blowing on the other side.

„I swear it's something crazy important that Cathy just told me!“

The sound of the wind grew weaker, seemingly from Cassandra landing on the ground to hear Vincent more clearly.

„Last time you told me something allegedly important it was that a child said he found your fur coloration cool.”

„On my mother, it‘s some groundbreaking stuff this time! You remember how Cathy went to apply at the Umbreon Guild yesterday?“

Vincent could practically see the look of disbelief growing on Cassandra’s face in his mind.
„Wait, are you gonna tell me Cathy got accepted?! I don‘t buy it. Did she get one of those badges?“

Vincent scoffed like it was ridiculous to not believe him.
„Of course she‘s got one, c‘mere and look for yourself! It’s 100% solid copper!“

„Yeah yeah, I'll be there any minute.“ Cassandra's voice was starting to get overtoned by the flapping off her wings again as she took off, the communication orb's becoming silent and its light dimming again.

“I think it's just the backside that's copper...” Cathy quietly corrected.

Vincent dropped the communication orb back into the compartment before closing.

„Man, she's gonna grow stalk eyes once she actually sees that badge. Why didn't you tell me right away though?“ Vincent asked and threw himself back onto his previous place on the couch, resuming his sewing like nothing happened.

Cathy inhaled sharply while straightening up on the couch again, like the truth would somehow hurt to speak out loud.

„Yeahhh To be honest, I didn't tell ya because I wasn't REALLY accepted the first try. They said I needed a partner first to join because of safety and stuff. But now I'm in!“

Vincent nodded before his expression fell flat and his eyes were fixed on Cathy.
“Uh huh, then who joined with you? Wait, was it with Moony???“ He asked incredulously.

„Nah, she wouldn't wanna do that job in a hundred years. I was on my way back after they told me to piss off and I found some weirdo lunatic shinx about to fall off a hill and we kinda got into talking after I saved them.“ Cathy gossiped before continuing to lap at her milk.

„Aaaand then they joined with you? Just like that?“

„Well...Yeah, pretty much. He claimed some crap about originally being a human or something, some real cryptic stuff. You know how some wake up drunk or after hitting their head and suddenly have some weird delusions or don't know where they are?“ Cathy suggested the possibility before chuckling at her own joke.

Vincent couldn't hold back his laughter either, having to drop his needles for a second to not mess up. „A human of all things? You sure they didn't escape from some loony bin?"

Cathy shrugged.

Vincent wiped a tear from the corner from his eye, a few giggles still escaping him. „Well good luck not dying with an absolute madman by your side. Sounds like you just adopted some random wild pokemon."

„They might actually be useful later. I mean, they can barely move around normally but delusional doesn't mean stupid. Kinda like a mad scientist or something."

Before Vincent could voice his question, Something heavy suddenly landed on the trapdoor above with a slight crack, a few splinters falling down into the burrow.

Cathy's and Vincent's chattering instantly came to a halt and their head turned towards the sound.

He jumped up from the couch and went climbing towards the entrance again, his voice sounding like this happened a hundred times, but still not any less furious.
„Oh my god, don't tell me she did it again. I told her this wasn't a damn landing site!"

He was up the ladder in no time and violently pushed his palm against it, the sight of the familiar ash gray mandibuzz greeting him, the vulture pokemon's very light red ruff around her neck taking up most of the view from below.

„Seriously??" Vincent practically spat, looking behind him to inspect the state of the trapdoor.

„I SWEAR it was an accident this time!" Cassandra defended, taking a step back and craning her head further back at his harsh tone.

„Oh you can suck me, this shit never seems like an accident! Jus' come in, this thing's getting replaced in some time anyway."

Cathy was still on the couch, hearing everything. She just watched Vincent stomping back inside while Cassandra landed on the floor of Vincent's burrow after some grunting, her bone necklace rustling and feathers messy from squeezing through the opening.

"Maybe think about a bigger opening too when you replace that thing."
Cassandra suggested before pulling herself back up and dusting herself off with one of her wings. Cathy on the couch quickly fell into her scope.

„Alright Cathy, show me the badge right now that you apparently have." Cassandra demanded, her voice still laced with scepticism.

Cathy slowly reached over into her bag that was still on the couch before flashing the badge of the Umbreon Guild towards her, the smugness radiating off her.

"See, it's a real badge! Bet you're real ashamed of doubting me now, aren'tcha?"

Cassandra smirked back and nodded in acceptance.
„Mhm, and how much nepotism was involved for you to get in?" She joked.

„Haha, very funny." Cathy commented dryly.

"But actually, fact is, my parents have no clue yet." Cathy whispered the last part, like her parents might somehow hear from miles away.

„Uhhh, is it like, because they don't want you doing this job?"

Cathy shrugged.
„Hell no, they definitely want me to! They're just busy all the time and it's hard to meet 'em so who knows when I'll be able to tell them, you should know how they are."

"Well, that sucks. I'd just send 'em a letter if I were you. I could put it in their mailbox for you the next time I fly past their place."

Cathy stopped in her step as the offer went through her mind, her eyes squinting in concentration.
„I dunno...Maybe not yet, I'll think about it."

"But I'm guessing it's nice that you don't have to stay at home the entire day anymore like a bum. Or you still have to stay at home, just at the guild now."

"Oh, and good luck with your, uhhh, air taxi thing."

Cassandra saw Vincent from across the room while he was fishing something out of the drawer next to his bed.

„You got your bag, Vince?"

„Uhhhh," He bought time as he felt the texture of fibers and cotton among the sea of useless knick-knacks before pulling it out.

„Yeah, I'm good to go." Vincent slung the bag over his shoulder and put in the two other communication orbs connected to Cathy's and Cassandra's he took out before.

Cathy chugged the milk and slammed it back down on the coffee table before trying to leave the burrow, slinging her own bag over her shoulder and coughing slightly from swallowing wrong.

Cathy already climbed to the top of the ladder, unlocked the trapdoor and pushed it away above her, letting the sun hit her face first before hopping out in one motion.

Cathy patiently waited until Vincent climbed out too with a groan of exertion, Cassandra comfortably perched on his head to barely fit through the entrance.

„Comfortable up there at least?" Vincent grunted.
"How the hell do you weigh so much??"

„What? You owe me for being willing to fly you all the way over there, you know? You have no idea how exhausting that stuff is without air currents.“ She reminded him before jumping off his head and carefully landing on the grass again with two flaps of her wings.

Cathy hopped onto her shoulders, grabbing onto her neck to stabilize herself while Vincent clung himself onto Cassandra's back.

„Cathy, don’t extend your claws in case you get scared...“

Cathy rolled her eyes and adjusted her bag again.
“Yeah yeah, I won’t do anything. Did you lock the trapdoor, Vince?”

“Duh, of course. I’m not falling victim to the same stuff I’m exploiting.”

After gaining momentum, Cassandra started flapping her wings as fast as she could while pushing herself off the ground and tucking her legs in, the further continuous flapping allowing her begin taking off.

“God, I always hate this part.” She complained as her fluttering managed slowed down once they are at a higher altitude.

“Are we there already?” Vincent jokingly asked right after they got off the ground.

“Oh shut it.” Cassandra shot back.

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10 hours later

Connor was pulled out of his sleep by a strong nudge on his shoulder from Cathy.

„mmhhh?“ Connor turned his head to the side, his eyes barely open.

„What the hell are you doing sleeping here? You got a dorm now, idiot.“

With an exhausted sigh, Connor got a paw off the table to rub his eyes „Calm down, Cathy. I was, uhhh,“

He looked down on the page he dozed off on, the trippy colors from rubbing his eyes catching him off guard for a second. He barely made it to page 37.

„Just researching...“ He explained, his voice hoarse from the library's warmer environment compared to the rest of the guild.

„Well you gotta come with me NOW. The gholdengo bank was already preparing to close when I came here, so we gotta be quick to set up your account.“ Cathy beckoned him to get up before just grabbing the side of his paw

„Don‘t I need an ID for t-“

Cathy didn‘t bother to let Connor finish and just yanked him off the chair by his paw. „wai- HEY!“ Connor called out as Cathy hastily pulled him along, his brain suddenly feeling awfully awake.

„They work differently here. Goddamnit, it‘s just meant for explorers, there's maybe 50 using that here.“ Cathy explained like a mother in a rush pulling her child along the street, meanwhile Connor tried to match Cathy's pace with just 3 paws on the ground, his paws skittering and scraping over the ground in the hurry.

„Also it‘s not my problem that you forgot when bedtime is. Actually, C‘mere, you‘re slow as balls.“ Cathy hoisted him up by his chest and abdomen to carry him to the bank as fast as possible. Connor just let out a half groan half yawn, still too drowsy to object. “I told you I usually sleep longer...”

“For another several hours? Did you have anything to do in your life??” Cathy stopped her running as she felt a flight of stairs in front of her, trying to look past Connor's body she was carrying.

Right as he was about to harass Cathy with another question, Connor let out a painfully dry cough. „Ough, Is there anything to drink around here?“

„I'll show you after we're done!"

On the bottom floor, Connor saw some guild members in his peripheral vision coming out of the mess hall, among them Nora and Max, watching Cathy go by while carrying the shinx.

The fourfold plaza was much colder and more empty than it was in the morning, but it was a nice change compared to the library.

Cathy dropped Connor on the ground after she saw, approaching the bank by herself now
„Oh C'mon, they can't be serious." She whispered under her breath.

The gholdengo running the bank was gone, probably already checking the lockers below for safety before closing for the day. Cathy put her paws on the counter while leaning over it, trying to see if anyone is coming up the stairs leading into the bank's basement.
„Excuse me, is this establishment still opened?" She called out.

The sounds of keys being turned in the basement stops before Cathy heard the sounds of gold hitting the rocky stairs coming out, loads of locker keys jingling on its belt as the gholdengo's head poked out.

„Sorry ma'am, You're out of luck for today. I suggest you come back tomorrow." The gholdengo informed before going right back down the stairs, not bothering with any further potential arguments that day.

Cathy slammed a paw on the counter in exhaustion and pinched the bridge of her nose. „Okayyy, have a good evening..." She sighed.

Connor, who was watching the exchange from afar, was approached by Cathy again as she checked her pocket watch.

„Is it this hard for you to arrive on time?“ Connor provoked.

Cathy snapped her pocket watch shut before dropping it into her bag, glaring at him with a look that could kill.
„Don‘t even try pinning this crap on me, Connor. I had stuff to do!“

Connor chuckled. „Uh huh, real important stuff I‘m assuming. Just let me go back to the guild to sleep now.“

Cathy rolled her eyes and turned back to the Umbreon Guild while Connor made his way to the plaza's fountain in the middle.

A sugary, practically diabetic voice from nearly across half the plaza called out to Cathy.
„Heyyyyy~ I can‘t believe I‘ve been seeing you here more and more often!”

Cathy looked towards the source of the voice, the slight creaking of wheels moving and paws padding over towards her.

Who she saw was Guildmaster Sylveon, bound to a dog wheelchair but still enthusiastically padding over to her. His blue fur as well as dark blue and red accents looked freshly groomed. his right-hand zangoose behind him was still occupied with putting the newspaper stand back into the guild.

Cathy‘s agitation melted away in his presence like an ice cube in the sun.
„Uhh, hello Guildmaster. I...think you never approached me just like that.“

The sylveon giggled at Cathy addressing him as guildmaster.
„Oh, there‘s no need to be so formal and serious. You‘re a pokemon just like me!“

One of his ribbon-like feelers wrapped around Cathy‘s paw to shake it while Cathy’s gaze met his right amber eye, which looked so bright it almost looked like it was glowing while the left one was nearly fully white, presumably blind.

„You can just call me Alaric! Have you been coming here more often to check out the guilds?“

„I mean, in a way, yeah. I‘ve just checked one this morning and uhhh...heh.“
Cathy quickly rummaged through her bag with a sneer and held up her badge of the Umbreon Guild like it was the coolest thing to exist.

Guildmaster Sylveon stared at it for a second before his smile widened.
„That really doesn‘t surprise me in the slightest. I suppose the first stepping stone really is just being curious. Guildmaster Umbreon told me that. He really is a wise one, isn’t he?“

„But I‘m wondering who your teammate is? Ohhhh, I would die to meet them!~ Can I see them, please?“
His ribbons moved into different directions in excitement, as if trying to sense any nearby presence.

Cathy glanced at the fountain for a moment before pointing towards Connor.

„Oh, uhh, that was with him over there. HEY! CONNOR! SOMEONE HERE WANTS TO SPEAK WITH YOU!“
She called him over from across half the plaza, her voice being notably more audible there in its less busy hours.

Connor looked back from where he was at the fountain, his muzzle soaked before wiping it with the back of his paw and hobbling over to Cathy with huff.

“Who's this now, Cathy?” Connor asked while eyeing the sylveon up and down, his voice sounding less dry now.

Guildmaster Sylveon answered for him while shaking Connor's paw with his ribbon feelers too. That's when Connor noticed how two of this Sylveon's feelers looked shorter than the others, like parts of them were ripped off.

“Oh wooow, a completely new face! Just call me Alaric, Mr Shinx! I'm the guildmaster of the Sylveon Guild over there.”

Connor’s expression was about to darken until he heard Alaric introduce himself as guildmaster and reciprocated the handshake in full eagerness.

“Oh, it's an honor to meet you. I'm Connor Baker. I just joined the neighbouring guild with Cathy in case you were…Y’know, hoping to…”

Alaric let out playfully light scoff at Connor.
“Oh don't worry, you two can check out my guild anytime too! Everyone is welcome in the Sylveon Guild, without exception!~”

He leaned in a little too close comfort, but his soothing presence made it less of a problem for Connor than it would be.

“So how did you and your purrloin friend meet? Was it a gathering? just bumping into each other? Oooh, maybe you are childhood friends?” Alaric theorized like he was solving a fun puzzle.

“Uhmmm, I don’t see how that is relevant information. You should know it’s a rather mandatory arrangement. Shouldn’t another guildmaster know about the Umbreon guild demanding two explorers joining at once?”

Alaric’s expression dropped just a little, his ribbons slowing their movement and tucking themselves closer to his body.

„Don‘t you believe that guild rule should be a warning sign for you? That it is a considerable danger? It's a guildmasters duty to keep his workers safe, after all. Respectfully, maybe you could wait a bit until the casualty rates normalize before you start?“

Cathy raised an eyebrow in thought, trying to remember if she’s ever heard him say something like this. For the first time she actually had to actively think about what exactly to say to Alaric.

“…a warning sign? I kinda already knew what I was getting myself into…Don’t you trust us to make good decisions?”

Alaric sensed the shift in Cathy.

“Ugh, my dearest apologies, I'm being far too idealistic again. I believe there should be less explorers. A lot less. The thought of so many being hurt just saddens me.“

His ribbons hung limply for just a seconds before he lit up again with a renewed spirit, a feeler coming to shake Cathy’s shoulder.

“But it’s all just in the spirit of exploration, am I right?” He snickered, the feeler gripping her shoulder a little tighter, possibly unintentionally.

“The time to be exploring is simply a little rocky right now, with the spike in casualties for the other guilds and everything. But there is always an up after each down! Promise me you two will look out for each other and rise above the rest!” He attempted to hype Cathy up, his ribbon on Cathy’s shoulder not leaving.

The smirking Cathy gently pushed the ribbon off her shoulder, her cheeks heating up and feeling like she was in the morning sun again.

“There’s no need to tell us that! Right, Connor?” Cathy’s enthusiastic confirmation was only met with a shrug from Connor, who was already eyeing the entrance to the Umbreon Guild again.

“Well, it’s getting late and we kinda have to prepare for our first day tomorrow, I hope you understand. Have a nice evening, Guildmas- Uhh, Alaric!” Cathy awkwardly corrected herself.

“Awww, it’s good to hear you’re having your first day. Have a nice evening too, My guild is always open for you both!” Alaric waved with a feeler like he was saying goodbye to a preschooler.

The guildmaster was just about to make a turn backwards, his wheelchair complicating the process, before he hastily turned back towards Cathy and Connor in feigned recollection.

“OH wait, Cathy! I think I noticed something before!”

Cathy turned her head and then her body, believing what was about to follow to be crucial as she approached the Guildmaster again.

Guildmaster Sylveon's face lit up as one of his feelers reached behind Cathy's head.

"Is that...Ooooh, are these two bows behind your ear??"

He exclaimed with a melodic giggle, waving 2 handmade bows in front of them. Cathy could only facepalm, cheeks reddening this time for a different reason while Connor rolled his eyes at the sylveon's childish display, their expectations of its importance clearly not met.

Cathy looked back at Alaric while he put one of the bows into her bag slung around her shoulder while humming to himself.

"That's, uhhh. That's very nice of you and we appreciate the gesture, but are you sure those actually look good on us?" Cathy shook her head while giving the sylveon a side eye that looks almost habitual, trying to not seem ungrateful.

Alaric gasped, like bows not fitting with every style is impossible.
"But everything can look great on you if it fits your charme! Look!"

Guildmaster Sylveon insisted as his feelers adjusted a bow on Connor's head to demonstrate his claim. Connor just scowled and let it happen, not trying to risk getting on a guildmasters bad side. The bow smelled very strongly of Alaric himself, but quite the opposite from unpleasant.

"Awww, someone's looking SO much more approachable already!"



“Nevermind, I’m convinced now.” Cathy commented while trying to stifle a laugh.

Connor carefully shoved the bow off his head and placed it into Cathy’s bag along with the other one.
“Thanks, this looks very nice...” He sighed before he went off to the entrance of the Umbreon Guild.

Cathy looked at him go without saying bye before turning back to Alaric.
“Don’t mind his attitude, he just got woken up so he’s a little grumpy.”

“Uhhh, Guildmaster?” The guildmasters right-hand pokemon called out to him, already holding the keys to close the guild’s gate. The zangoose’s voice was surprisingly less rough than one would expect.

“Coming!” Guildmaster Sylveon called back before turning to Cathy again.

“Good luck with your first day tomorrow! I should go. My duty is still my duty. I’ll cross my ribbons for you!” Guildmaster Sylveon ruffled Cathy’s hair with one of his feelers and tried to turn back.

“Nah, no big deal, I get it. Good luck to you too with...uhhh- your stuff!“ Cathy awkwardly added as Guildmaster Sylveon padded back to his guild entrance

Cathy looked behind her at the still tired Connor walking back into the guild, annoyedly mumbling something under his breath like he was mimicking something Alaric said, before swiftly following.

It’s gone completely silent outside by now, safe for the wind softly blowing, some kricketots chirping and noctowls hooting. The rustling of straw filled the room as Cathy turned for the 6th time on her bed, this time on her back. The entrance part of their dorm was illuminated by some moonlight coming through the square window, making the dust particles floating through the air visible and leaving Cathy and Connor’s beds in the dark. The room’s smell was still largely dominated by the bows Alaric gifted them, despite Connor putting them into the closed chest together with their guild badges earlier, almost smelling like a perfume.

Connor has already fallen asleep a solid hour ago after staring at the wooden wall, his snoring keeping Cathy awake. Cathy however wasn’t trying to sleep in the first place, but was rather deep in thought while her eyes kept concentrating on the weird dent on the ceiling, occasionally glazing down at her pocket watch.

Cathy suddenly pushed herself up from her bed with a gasp before reaching over and violently shaking Connor awake, which only did little as getting a sleepy grunt out of him.

“Connor! Psst, Connor! I just got an idea for our team name! Y’know? Guildmaster Umbreon told us to report before the end of the day.” Cathy whispered loudly enough for Connor to register.

Cathy’s voice as she eagerly shared her suggestion sounded to Connor like a bumbling caveman was talking to him.

“Hm? mhm, great.” The half asleep Connor muttered before turning further away from Cathy and exhaling sharply.

With her teammate’s confirmation, Cathy excitedly jumped off the bed and sped towards the door, her natural quiet stealthiness posing no danger of waking up any guild members who happened to be sleeping.

Connor only heard the click of the sliding doors magnet before he fully drifted off back into his sleep.

CHAPTER 3 END.

PREVIOUS CHAPTER

BACK TO HUB

Author's note: Sorry for the wait of a month again. I’m having a little more time in the future I think but a recent health issue has slightly hindered my progress the last 2 days of writing but it’s all sunshine and rainbows now.