

Chapter 1: Make Way for Maggie

The Zangoose walked amidst the trees, looking around for any berries or apples that had grown in the area. This was a rather fertile place, and in theory finding food should have been easy. The problem was that others local to the area knew this as well, and at times it was hard to find any food others hadn't already claimed. He couldn't blame them, of course, but it made gathering food an occasionally frustrating endeavor.

At the very least, though, it was a nice, relaxing day. Those were unfortunately rare. As of late, the weather had turned generally foul, but today was a nice, soothing, warm and sunny day, and much of his time during his search was spent under the cooling shade of the trees. Nearby, he heard, the soft rustling of the leaves, which made things all the more... wait, there was no wind. Why were the leaves rustling?

He looked over at the source of the noise, just in time to see a Seviper darting out from above, trying to ambush him. He leapt out of the way, turning to face his assailant, as the ground began to quake. *Another* quake? It was brief, at least. The two paid it no mind and instead glared at each-other, ready to attack. Though they personally had never met, they both saw in each-other a mortal enemy, and they both knew that this would not end until one of them fell.

"Somebody! Please, help me!"

Zangoose looked toward the source of the cry, though making sure that Seviper did not leave his peripheral vision. The trees were quite thin here, and he could see a Butterfree flying around. From her worried expression, he could easily tell that she was the source of the call for help.

Under normal circumstances, a distracted foe was a perfect time to strike. However, much as the logical side of the Seviper knew that striking now would improve his odds of winning, the distraction in this case was a desperate cry of distress, which no Pokémon could be blamed for paying attention to. To strike now would feel too low even against a Zangoose. Seviper glanced in that direction as well, seeing the distressed Butterfree.

Then, into view came a Murkrow. It stood rather small, at a mere 1'2" (or about 35cm, if you prefer), and both of the observers could readily tell that this Murkrow was a child, an assumption that was reinforced by her voice. "What's the problem?" she asked.

"It's horrible!" the Butterfree said, "My Caterpie fell into a cavern! My poor baby!"

"Never fear! Maggie's on the case!" the Murkrow said, to the surprise of all three.

"Isss she ssssserious!?" the Seviper muttered under his breath. Now both his and the Zangoose's gazes were fully fixed on the scene before them. Theoretically, if either had attacked the other then, it would have caught the other completely off-guard, but neither of them did. Instead, they watched in shock.

"Y...You'll help him?" Butterfree asked. She was hesitant to ask this Murkrow for help, but with Caterpie at stake, she wasn't going to turn help down.

"Right! So where'd he fall?" Maggie asked.

Butterfree pointed with one of her stubby hands, toward a nearby fissure. it was a narrow one, just wide enough for a Caterpie to fall through, but not large enough for one such as Butterfree to get into. However, judging by the light coming from the fissure, it looked like the fissure lead into an existing cave, with some sort of light source. There was a cave entrance nearby. Perhaps that would lead to where Caterpie was?

"It's horrible! That fissure opened up in the ground, and my Caterpie fell in! He's too young to crawl out by himself! My poor baby!" Butterfree said.

"So, that cave entrance should be the key to getting him out, right?" Maggie said.

Butterfree nodded. "I tried to go in there to get my baby, then Pokémon suddenly attacked me!"

"What? Why?"

"They must be enraged by the fissure... and out of control! That's what I think."

"Well, that's not gonna stop me! I'll be back out with your Caterpie in no time!" Maggie said.

"WHAT!?" Seviper called out, loud enough for Maggie and Butterfree to hear.

"H-Huh?" Butterfree asked, backing away.

"She'sss jussst a kid hersself! She can't go in alone! She'll get clobbered!" Seviper said, slithering into view.

The Zangoose stepped forward, looking toward Maggie. "I know you want to help, but you're too young. You really should go home and let someone else handle it."

"Naaah! Don't worry, I can do this, 'cause I'm a hero!" Maggie said, quite clearly undeterred.

"You're a child!" Zangoose said, "You can be a hero when you're older."

"That'd take too long," Maggie said.

"Ssso you're jussst going to go in by yourself, into a cave full of dangeroussss Pokémon!?" Seviper said.

"Well, you're welcome to tag along if ya wanna!" Maggie said, heading toward the cave.

Zangoose and Seviper were quite unsure what to do. They could try to stop her, yes, but in doing so they might end up having to hurt her just as badly as the Pokémon in the cave would, defeating the purpose. It was clear to them that this Murkrow would not listen to reason. After some thinking, they both said, coincidentally at the same time, "Alright, I'll go."

They then glared intensely at each-other, as if they could somehow cause the other to faint by mere thought alone. "Do you really think she needs help from a giant wet noodle who can't even ambush someone properly!" Zangoose said.

"Isss that sssso? Do you realize how clumsssy you looked when you jumped out of the way? I half exsspected you to trip over yourssself!"

"I landed far better than you did. I'm surprised you don't have chunks of dirt stuck on your fangs." Zangoose pointed his claws at Seviper. "Now go back and let me handle this."

"Yeah right!" Seviper pointed his tail blade toward Zangoose. "If you think she wantsss a..." He blinked twice, before looking around. "Where'd she go?"

"Whoa!" the two of them heard echo from within the cave. It sounded quite like Maggie, and the two of them quickly deduced that she'd entered the cave while they were arguing. And worse, it sounded like she was in trouble! The two of them rushed toward the cave after her, seeking to help her out of whatever mess she'd gotten into.

The entrance of the cave was quite dark. The dark was not nearly as bad for a Pokémon as it was for a human, but it was still dark. Even in this darkness, they could see Murkrow. She was facing away from them, looking down at something.

"Maggie? You alright?" Seviper asked.

"BWAH!" Maggie jumped in surprise and spread her wings, unintentionally tossing up the crescent-moon-shaped rock she'd found. Zangoose, seeing the rock was heading right toward his head, leapt back, only for the rock to land on his right hind paw. His cry of pain was drowned out by Seviper's laughter, as Maggie turned around.

"Oh, hey guys! What took ya?" she said, not bothering to ask what was going on or why Zangoose was hopping on one hind paw while holding the other in his forepaws.

Seviper consciously had to slow and stop his laughter in order to answer. "Oh, don't worry about it. Rocky ssstart, but everything'sss fine now!" He continued laughing, now at his own pun as well.

"Shut up..." Zangoose said, glaring at Seviper.

"Alright! So, let's get going! Onwaaaard!" she declared, pointing forward before continuing on into the cave.

Zangoose set his hind paw back down before crossing his arms, pushing back the pain. "She seems to think of this as a game of sorts," he said, before he and Seviper continued following Maggie.

"So, what're your names, anyway? I'm Maggie!" said their apparent leader for time being. Or at least, she certainly seemed to think of herself as one.

"I'm Dice," Zangoose said.

"And I'm Sssslash!" Seviper said.

"Nice of meet you, 'Sssslash'," Dice said dismissively.

"Oh, shut up!" Slash said.

The trio traveled a bit onward, Slash and Dice keeping a close eye on each-other, though this did once result in Dice tripping over a rock due to not watching where he was going, which amused Slash greatly until he fell into a shallow hole while busy focusing on teasing Dice.

Maggie looked back as she walked, to see what the noise was about. "You guys should really pay attention to where you're go-ack!" she said, as she bumped her head on a low part of the ceiling. Maggie rubbed the top of her head. The thick plumage atop her head cushioned the blow a fair bit, but it still hurt. "Ow..."

Then, she saw something quickly approaching from the side. Reflexively, she backed up, before a brittle stone whizzed past where her head was, crumbling upon impact with a nearby wall. The group looked over toward where the stone came from, seeing a rather upset Pidgey.

"Shut up! Just shut up, would you!?" the Pidgey shouted. "I came in here to finally get some peace and quiet, and now you lot barge in here, and..."

"Sorry, alright? I..." Maggie began.

"And now you have the gall to interrupt me!? I'm gonna teach you a lesson!" Pidgey shouted.

Slash quickly slithered between Pidgey and Maggie. "Oh, *you're* gonna teach a lesssson!? I'll teach you one right now, about throwing rocksss at little kidsss!"

"Oh, you think you're so tough!? Try having the week I've had and we'll see how you feel afterward!" Pidgey shouted.

"I don't care what your week wasss like! Peck a pillow or sssomething!"

"Peck a pillow!? Are you making fun of me now!? I'll..." Pidgey was interrupted, however, by Dice leaping by, knocking Pidgey out with a single scratch, then twisting in midair to land on all four paws, facing his defeated foe, skidding back on the dusty cave floor a bit before coming to a full stop.

"Woo! Go, Dice!" Maggie called out.

"...Show-off," Slash said.

"Merely a taste of things to come," Dice said, glaring at Slash.

"So that means you're gonna keep that up 'til we find Caterpie, right?" Maggie said.

"...Yes," Dice said, figuring it best not to spell out his true intended meaning for the naïve little Murkrow child. "Yes, that's exactly what I mean."

"Woo! We're gonna be done in no time!" Murkrow said, continuing onward down the cave.

The trio continued through the cave, without further complication (aside from Slash not paying attention and falling down another hole, which Dice made sure to quip at), until they heard voices up ahead. They sounded quite angry. They turned a corner, now able to see and hear what was going on. Up ahead a fair distance was a section of the cave with a fissure at the top, through which the sun was shining. There were three Rattatas, staring down a single crying Caterpie.

"You got some nerve, comin' here on *our* turf!" one of them shouted.

Another of them stepped forward. "Let's teach this guy a lesson, once and for..." He was interrupted, however, by Dice leaping by, knocking the Rattata out with a single scratch, then twisting in midair to land on all four paws, facing his defeated foe, skidding back on the dusty cave floor a bit before coming to a full stop... then being hit head-on by two tackles from the remaining Rattatas and sent tumbling back.

"We've got other company!" one of the remaining Rattatas said, looking at Maggie. However, he'd failed to notice Slash until after Slash's coils were twisting around him, loosely at first, but quickly tightening, wrapping him up and squeezing him, causing him to cry out in pain.

The third Rattata turned to face Slash. "Hey! Let him go and mind your own business, before we..." He then felt a sharp pain atop his head, hard enough to knock him flat. He rolled over, just barely avoiding Maggie's second peck as it landed on the hard floor.

"That's it!" the Rattata shouted, before lunging at Maggie, sending her tumbling back with a tackle. He looked back toward Slash. "Now, let him go!" the Rattata shouted, before lunging at Slash to bite him.

Slash lifted up his tailblade, Rattata along with it, watching the little Pokémon gnaw at it. "...Are you ssserioussss?" He was surprised Rattata had avoided cutting himself on it. Meanwhile, Slash loosened his grip on the wrapped Rattata, noticing that it had fainted.

As the remaining Rattata was being held up and distracted by trying to bite the tailblade, Maggie got back up and lunged at Rattata, knocking him out with another peck.

Dice stood up and dusted himself off. "That should take care of that."

Slash looked toward Maggie. "Are you alright?"

Maggie stood up. "Ow... Yeah, I'll be fine." She held up a wing. "No big deal for the legendary heroine, Maggie!"

"L...Legendary?" Caterpie asked, looking at Maggie.

"Well, uh... maybe not legendary YET. But I will be!" Maggie said. Dice and Slash exchanged glances, before quickly looking away once they consciously realized just what they were doing.

"Cooooo..." Caterpie said, staring adoringly.

"What about you? Are you alright? Did they attack you?" Dice asked Caterpie.

"Oh, uh... no, but I think they were about to..." Caterpie said.

"Let'ssss get out of here. We can talk more onccce you're sssafe," Slash said.

"Right! Onward!" Maggie said, pointing the way out. Fortunately for the four of them, the trip out was uneventful. Caterpie rode atop Dice's head on the way out, noting that it was quite soft. Though she did not say anything at the time, Maggie could not help but think that, at some point in the future, she should perch atop Dice's head to see just how comfortable it was.

At the entrance of the cave, standing as close as she felt she could without risking being suddenly attacked by a Pokémon from the cave, was Butterfree. "Caterpie!" she called out, flying over and picking up her son.

"Momma!" Caterpie said, "I was so afraid. There were these bad Pokémon, and they were about to hurt me!"

"I heard... I... I couldn't look down... I couldn't watch," Butterfree said.

"But it's all okay now, because these Pokémon helped me!" Caterpie said.

Butterfree gently set Caterpie down, then looked toward the three rescuers. "I don't know how I could ever thank you properly..."

"Aw, no problem. It's what heroes do!" Maggie said.

Dice rolled his eyes at Maggie's wording, though Slash couldn't help but feel a bit warmed inside, being called a hero.

Butterfree looked toward Dice and Slash. "And you two, putting aside your differences to help my son... thank you. Please, may I have your names?"

Dice crossed his arms. "They aren't quite as aside as you think, but my name is Dice."

"And I'm Sssslash!" Slash said.

"Oh, such a ferocious name for such a kind soul!" Butterfree said.

Maggie looked toward Caterpie "And I don't think you heard my name yet. I'm Maggie!"

"Thank you, Dice and Slash and Maggie!" Caterpie said.

Butterfree flew over to a nearby tree and grabbed the three berries underneath. "I was gathering berries when the fissure opened up. I know it isn't really enough, but this is a token of our thanks. Please accept it," she said. She flew over and placed an Oran Berry in front of Maggie, a Pecha Berry in front of Dice, and a Rawst Berry in front of Slash.

“Thank you so much. Good-bye,” Butterfree said, before flying off, though not far from the ground. Caterpie followed shortly behind, though giving one more glance toward the heroes who had saved him. “Thanks!” he said.