

Chapter 4: There's Trouble in the Forest!

Wild Pokémon roam throughout the forest: Frolicing in the greens, even talking with one another! The vibrant, lush flowers sprout at each bush, wild Buneary goes to sniff one before sighing in relief. It then spots the three wanderers, hopping away.

The Zorua's maw hangs, eyeing around. "Whoa," he says, his tail wagging in glee. "Never knew the outside looked this...lively."

Justin has his hands behind his head, smiling as bright as the sun itself. "That's the beauty of nature, dude." He sniffs, closing his eyes. "All of these fresh greens and wild Nativus living their life is what makes it great to see." The boy points up, staring at the sun. "You can even see the sun smirking down at us."

"Yeah!" Ramon blinks. *There goes the mention of Nativu again. I wish I knew what he meant by that...* The fox sniffs the fresh air, breathing it as if it's his first time. Exhaling, the fox puts up a toothy smile. "Oh it even smells *amazing* here, Justin! The fresh aroma from the plants nearby makes my snout not want to hurl in a corner!" He hops around. "No more foulness from the facility's corpses: I'm stench free!"

Ada and Justin's eyes leap. "Corpses!?" the two yell, the Zorua covering his ears in response.

"Ye-Yeah. I smelled nothing but the corpses while roaming around the facility."

The teens look at each other, drilling into uncertainty. "I guess that explains the dried blood on your face," Justin says, his laughter sounding like a creaking windmill.

Ada folds her arms, lifting her brow. "Justin, that wasn't funny."

"What? That wasn't me laughing at him. It was just—"

"A laugh, right?"

"Ye-Yeah. But it wasn't like a laugh laugh. It was...uh." The teen scratches the back of his head, looking down at the ground. "Nevermind."

Ada sighs, looking at Ramon. "Did you happen to find Yvonne along the way?"

Ramon looks off to the side, lowering his brows. "Hmm..." He closes his eyes, humming. After some time, he opens his eyes, twiddling his paws. He shakes his head. "No. I don't recall meeting him."

"Hmm." Ada lays a hand on her chin. "This is all strange: You mentioned there being corpses in the institute even though the institute was destroyed...Why's that the case?"

Justin puts his hands in his pockets. "Beats me. Something must have happened there."

"Yeah...Something big."

Silence.

The three stare ahead, their minds perplexed. The wind blows against them, sounding similar to one's whistle.

"So, uh," Ramon pauses. "Where are we heading?"

"...We're not sure," Ada responds, shrugging.

Ramon blinks. "Huh?" Eyebrow raises. "Mind clarifying?"

"As I've said: We're not sure." The girl sighs. "Justin and I have been traveling around the region for awhile now. We have yet to see any village nor town nearby." She looks at the fox. "Do you perhaps know where we can find a place to stay?"

Ramon shakes his head. "I escaped the facility not too long ago. That's why I asked you if you know where we're heading."

"Oh..." Ada stops for a moment and bows. "My apologies for the misunderstanding."

Justin snickers. "So quick to belittle someone, yet can't understand someone's question the first time." Ada glances at the boy and springs her fist, jabbing his stomach. He groans, covering it. "Ooof! That freaking hurts!" He chuckles, his voice cracking.

Ada cracks her fist. "Next retort will be a roundhouse kick. Keep it up."

"Damn. With a punch like that, you could send a boulder flying into outer space!" Justin lifts his arm up, pointing. "Not even a meteor would want to hit you knowing that fact, fam."

Ada sighs and folds her arms, shaking her head. "Oh you're exaggerating. You know I'm not that strong."

"But that punch, though." Justin gets on his knees, clenching his stomach: Cries. "The pain will not go away, man!" His head moves back and forth, his eyes boiling with liquid. "IT BURNS!" He rocks like a chair, shivering.

Ada's hand hovers over her face, poking Justin's head with another. "Stop your hysterical nonsense, please," she says, the boy chuckling within seconds.

Ramon laughs along, glee flourishing. He then gets close to Ada, eyeing up. "Hey, I have one more question to ask you two before saving the rest."

"Go ahead." Ada waves her hand. "May as well since you have a lot on your mind."

"Why are you two traveling?" He tilts his head. Justin and Ada look to the side, drooping. The boy clenches his fist, gradually sighing. Ramon lowers his ears, devolving into guilt. "Di-Did I say something bad?"

Justin shakes his head. "It's...best if we tell you once we find someplace to stay."

SCREECH!

Flicking his ears, the Zorua turns to his left: Ada using her Enchantment Claws on the tree, shredding and tearing the barks. She stops, a lone claw mark painting it. The girl sighs, staring down in loneliness. The fox drowns in concern, shaking.

O-Oh...Understood, then.

Nodding at Justin, Ramon and the two remain silent throughout their travels. Until—

"AAAH!"

A voice screams.

The three stop, turning to their left.

"HUH!?" Ramon says, jumping back.

"Someone may be in trouble," Ada concludes, frowning. "Let's go help them." She takes off running.

The two jet after her, zipping past the trees and bushes. Ramon blinks, frowning off to the side. *That's...strange*, he thinks, looking ahead. *I'm sensing something*. They curve to the side, hopping over bushes, and hurling around trees.

Soon, the three come across two men possessing a container. The fox groans, glaring. *That feeling. It's getting stronger now. But from where?*

"Yo, are you good?" Justin whispers.

Ramon looks at him and nods. "I'm fine, y-yeah." He smiles.

One of the men holds the container, shrouding it in purple auras while above his hand. Inside is a yellow tapir, the lower half of her body being colored brown. A blue ribbon wraps around the Drowzee's neck, hugging onto it.

"Ugh...She was such an annoying Pokémon to catch," the second man says, groaning. "I wish we caught her in a more stealthy manner."

"Pl-Please let me go..." The Drowzee whimpers.

The first man hits the container, the tapir yelping back. "Shut up!"

Ramon gasps, the Drowzee shaking and tugging on the other end. "She needs help!" he says to the two, his ear flickers. "...Hey?" He turns towards them, the teens roaring at the adults with their eyes. "Um...Are you two oka—"

Ada storms toward the two, forming her claws. "Ada, wait!" Justin shouts, his fist gripping in boiling pressure.

The call is far too late: Ada strikes the first man from behind as he screams in pain, dropping the container. It collapses, shattering.

The other guy fires his multiple beams at Ada, rearing at lightning speed. Ada leaps back from one after another, twirling and flipping herself around. She lands and pats herself, dust flying off. Justin and Ramon rush to her side.

"Are you alright?" Ramon asks, quaking with concern. Ada lowers her arms: Claws intact, her face yelling with boiling volcanos. She glances at the two men, stretching her claws out.

"I recognize you purple monsters from anywhere," she says, being correct about their outfits' color. It's also dark, with the two men carrying shades and black gloves. One of them adjusts himself, brushing off dirt.

"What is the meaning of this?" the first man says, rubbing his fist.

"Ada, do you know these guys?" the Zorua questions.

Ada nods. "So does Justin." Lifts her claws. "We'll explain later. Right now—" she gets in a posture. "We got business to attend to."

Blades spawn their way into Justin's possession, firmly gripping them. Ramon blinks before sighing, shaking his head.

This continues to get more and more confusing.