

Chapter 11: "Hello, Ramon."

Those very words shivers Ramon's spine.

Majestic City Arc.

The red-tufted fox stares, remaining in place: His furs spiking, his face tumbling in the abyss. The blue-tufted fox gazes, smiling.

"Y-You. U-Um." He stumbles. "E-Erm..." Ramon leaps back. "You're the Zorua I saw earlier!"

The Shiny Zorua nods. "Yes." His voice is softer and smoother than Ramon's, giving off serene vibes. He walks forward, the Zorua backing away in response.

"U-Uh..."

The blue fox engulfs Ramon with his forelegs, hugging. "Finally, I can talk to you at long last! Yes!"

Ramon looks at him, his cheeks nudging his'. "Really?" he asks.

The shiny fox releases Ramon, nodding. "Indeed!" His tail wags. "I thought I'll never get the chance to communicate with you. But I was wrong!" Purrs.

"I...see then." The Zorua tilts his head. "Who are you and—" blinks. "How do you know my name?"

"Why I'm glad you asked!" The blue fox sticks his chest out. "The name's Nomar. I've tried contacting you several times through Telepathy." Sighs. "The...communication line can get really nasty, depending on the distance."

"Huh."

Nomar perks up. "And of course I know you: You're my brother, after all!"

"Brother?" His head tilts to the other side. "I...have a brother???"

Nomar nods. "Yeah!" He pounces forward. "Remember the time we used to run around and chase each other in the woods?"

"..."

"Or how about the time we fought those Ursarings when they tried to hurt our parents!"

“ ...”

“...Or when we relaxed by a boulder nearing the sunset.”

“...” Ramon blinks.

Nomar tilts his head. “None of those ring a bell?”

Ramon shakes his head. “Not a single one. Sorry.”

“Oh.” Nomar lowers his ears. “That’s...a bummer. I was hoping when I reach you, you’d be rejoiced by our reunion.”

Nomar gazes at the void, lifting his paw. Several images display themselves, showing the things Nomar mentioned: Two Zoruas chasing each other in the forest, the Ursaring attempting to attack them, and the descending sun while the foxes sleep on a boulder. Their backs rest against each other.

“Are you certain you don’t remember these?”

Ramon gazes at the images, mesmerized. “Whoa...” The images move from one event to the next, with no pauses. He then looks at Nomar, shrugging. “None at all, unfortunately...”

Nomar’s ear flickers. “Not even our memories together?”

Ramon shakes his head once more.

“Hmm...” Nomar stares off. “Do you want to know about your past?”

Ramon gasps. “Yes! I’ve been traveling for that exact reason!” He pounces toward Nomar. “What else do you know?”

Nomar blinks before nodding. “From what I recall, we were hanging out together until a vile storm happened.” Shudders. “The weather was so severe that it separated us from our parents.”

“Really?”

Nomar raises his paw again: Another image showing two Zoruas flying away, their Zoroark parents racing after them in horror. Lightning strikes their path, the parents leaping back.

“Yes...” Nomar’s ears descend. “From there we...encountered these humans in these white things trying to snatch us.”

Upon another lift, one image pops in front: Three humans in white coats take the red fox while the blue one trembles at several Pokémon.

Nomar looks down. "I-I tried to stop them, but their Pokémon were...too strong."

The blue fox is shown backing away, running off into the bushes afterwards.

"So I had to hide. Never to see you again since." Nomar sniffles, tears springing up.

Ramon glooms at the dark ground. "So...that's how I ended up in that facility," he responds, glancing.

Nomar shakes away the tears, staring at the Zorua. "Facility?"

Ramon looks up. "Yeah: I remember waking up in a dark room only to realize I'm in a building." He stares at the shiny fox. "Have you heard of the Prospective Institute?" Frowns. "That's what the facility is called."

"Hmm." Head shakes. "Never heard of them. But I assume they're filled with no good humans." He glares. "Especially the ones who'd taken you away!"

Ramon flinches. "Why's that the case?"

"Because—"

Nomar looks away, squinting. His paw lifts, the last image forms in front of them: A Shiny Zorua sits in a pool of blood, gagging against the grass. Two men grin down, twirling their knives. One of them spits on the fox before the two walk away, blood trailing.

"I was *killed* by them."

Ramon's legs tremble, his eyes shaking. "Wh-What...?"

Nomar closes his eyes. "While traveling around, humans decided to take my life away." Strokes the wet ground. "They do it...out of enjoyment. Craving the thirst for hunting Pokémon."

The images deteriorate.

"They don't care if you don't bother them..."

The images distort.

"They'll tear you apart the moment they can. Like a game of tag, except—"

The images explode into pieces, fading.

“The tagger *kills* you.”

Ramon whimpers, lowering his ears. “O-Oh. I, um.” Flinches, feeling as though he’s being rocked by an earthquake. Tears slide down, chills of guilt rising. “I-I’m sorry that happened to you, Nomar! I didn’t know, and I wished I was there to help!”

Nomar doesn’t say anything: Gazing into the abyss, the red fox’s cries persisting.

“...Ramon,” he says after what feels like hours of silence. “It’s not your fault. Don’t blame yourself over my death, okay?”

Ramon looks at the Shiny Zorua, sniffing and shaking. “I...O-Okay then.”

Nomar turns towards him. “I want you to do me a favor.”

Ramon wipes his tears. “Hmm?”

“Head to Gloria Falls by Glory Pride City and revive me. That way, we can reunite in person and hide away from humans.” Nomar glances. “Including the ones you’re with.”

The Zorua flinches. “Wait wait: Gloria Falls? Glory Pride City? What is all of this, Nomar???”

Nomar tilts his head. “Too much information?”

“Yes! I don’t know where those places are! Nor what they look like!”

“I’ll guide you.”

“How?”

Nomar blinks, deadpanned. “Telepathy, brother.”

Ramon scrunches up. “But you’re dead! How are you able to use Telepathy!?”

Nomar snickers. “You never knew the dead could use Telepathy?” Shrugs. “Admittedly, it’s tough because of the communication barrier. But it’s possible.”

“Oh...” Eyebrow raise. “But are humans aware of the dead being able to—”

Nomar’s paw presses the fox’s maw. “Brother, you’re asking too many questions.” He frees it.

“Sorry.” He sighs. “I’m just interested, that’s all.”

“And I’ll answer all of those questions as soon as we reach Gloria Falls.” Nomar smiles.

Ramon nods. “Alright.”

“Speaking of...” Nomar frowns. “I want you to promise me something.”

“That is?”

“Don’t tell anyone about where you’re going.”

Ramon’s head tilts. “Why’s that?”

“Because humans cannot be trusted.” Nomar sighs. “My examples should be proof enough.”

“O-Oh...”

He leans forward. “That means not even your ‘friends’ should know.”

“But...” Ramon’s ears lower. “I don’t see any bad intentions from them: They’re as lost in this world as I am...”

Nomar’s eyes roll. “Of course they have bad intentions!” He stomps. “Humans put on their friendly masks before slowly stabbing you in the back. That’s what happened to me: I’ve shown you!” Snarls. “They crushed me when I gained their trust, when my guard was *lowered*.”

Ramon’s eyes spread, dreading within. “B-But Justin and Ada are my friends! Th-They...” His heart beats. “They wouldn’t do those things to me!” He gazes to the side. “...Would they?”

Static.

The darkness—*Everything* is trembling.

“Looks like my Telepathy is fading,” Nomar says.

Ramon gasps. “Wait!” Yelps, struggling to stand up. “I have more questions to ask: How do we reach Gloria Falls? How’s the dead able to communicate with the living via Telepathy?” Winces. “What else do you know about my past!?”

“Like I’ve said!” Light shines. “You’ll...know...lat...er...” Nomar’s voice fades in and out, the light brightens.

“Aaah!” Ramon screams, floating in the light. The light engulfs everything, static louder and louder. The Zorua lowers his ears, clenching his teeth. He closes his eyes.

. . .

Ramon lifts forward, panting. The sun shines through the window, brightening the room. Baggage cast under the Zorua's eyes, glaring at the wall. His ear flicks, the door opens: Justin's hand rests on the knob.

"Hey dude, there's breakfast if you want some," the boy mentions. He then raises his eyebrow. "Fam, you good?"

Ramon blinks, shaking his head. "It's...nothing." He smiles. "I'll join you in just a moment."

"You sure?" Justin rubs the knob. "Something's on your mind?"

The Zorua shakes his head once more. "I just woke up, that's all. I'm okay."

Justin stares for a moment before turning around. "Well alright then?"

As the boy leaves, Ramon hops off the bed, looking out the window. *I wish you told me more, Nomar*, he thinks, air flowing from his maw.

. . .

Somewhere in a dark alley, a man in a dark purple suit falls with ease. Soon, more Team Conjure members land beside him, the blue teleporter fading above. One Conjure grunt has tangled, messy hair with black glasses keeping it all in order.

He reaches in his pocket, taking out a map. Unraveling, the map of Majestic City displays itself: The man pointing towards the 'X' mark, where a tall building lies. He looks at the group, nodding before turning towards the large building ahead.

"Let's go," the tangled-hair man says, his voice cracking. The Conjures chuckle at him, the man clenching his fists. He grits his teeth, crushing the map. He quickly turns. "Shut up!" He and his group rush out, sneaking around.