

Chapter 4: Trouble in the Noctis Forest Part 2.

Alro and the 5 Malamars tie the three against the tree. They laugh at the them, tormenting them with their cruel words.

"Alright alright. We've insulted them enough. Now it's time for the real fun of torture to begin." Alro says, grinning deviously. Carrie rolls her eyes.

"I thought the real fun already began." She says.

"Oh those were just the warm-ups, silly." Alro looks around and picks up a sharp stick, lust for pain widening his lips as he glances at the Lucario insanely. "Now then, you and your kids can take this affliction like the good Pokemon you are. Heh heh heh..."

Alro slowly slides the sharp stick across Carrie's body while the Malamars chuckle. Carrie shivers as it touches her skin. "Stop." She says angrily. Alro continues sliding the stick, gashing Carrie's smooth leg. Carrie grits her teeth at the Malamar. "I said stop!" Soon, Mark and Natalie become furious.

"Hey! Leave my sister alone, you jerk!" Mark says. "If she says stop, that means stop!"

"Yeah!" Natalie says, growling at Alro.

Alro stops and looks at the two Pokemon. His face slowly demented, looking even more sinister than the last. "I think we should torture those two first, sir." The second Malamar says.

Alro withdraws the stick from Carrie. "Sure. They need to learn why they shouldn't talk back to adults." Alro positions the stick in front of Mark and Natalie. He turns the stick right to left. "Eeny. Meeny. Miny. Moe." The Malamar says, pointing the stick at Mark. "You'll go first."

"Wh-What!?" The Riolu jumps, feeling scared from being chosen. "Wh-Why me!?" Alro grins, having the stick close to the side of Mark's face.

"Because you're the one that stood up for your sister. Might as well take the pain, too." Alro says and laughs. Mark slowly looks at Carrie, shaking in fear.

"C-Carrie." Mark tears up slowly.

"Mark!" Carrie cries out. She then looks at Alro. "Please, don't do this." Alro looks back, still having the stick against Mark.

"Witnesses are a pain in the ass when it comes to discovering something they weren't supposed to know, girl." Alro says, moving the stick towards Mark's leg. "Now let's start from scratch, shall we?"

Mark lets out a small yelp. "N-No, plea--" Then the stick pierces his right leg, causing him to scream. He feels Alro driving the stick into his leg with no effort, crying in pure pain. Natalie tears up as Carrie grows infuriated by the action.

"Mark, no!" Natalie and Carrie yell. Mark tries to pull his leg from the stick but that only increases the pain further.

"Stop! It hurts!" Mark cries, tears streaming down from his eyes.

"You monster! Stop it! Stop it right now!" Carrie demands. She growls at the Malamar as he continue pressing the stick. Then, Alro stops and pulls the stick out, blood covering it. Mark sniffles as his leg leaks out red liquid.

"Aww. So sad to see a poor creature like you get hurt. But I have no choice." Alro says with a smug look on his face. "Alright. Next up is you." He points the stick at Natalie's face, the stick dripping a bit of blood. She stares at it, horrified from its view.

"N-No. Not me. Pl-Please, not me!" Natalie says with a tear sliding down her face. Alro lifts her chin up with the stick. The Malamars behind him continue to laugh and torment.

"Oh, don't worry. I won't hurt you the same way I hurt the Riolu." He says with a grin. He positions the stick towards Natalie's ear. "Let's get those eardrums damaged. You'll struggle to hear your friends ever again." Natalie gasps as Carrie tries to get out of the strong vine once more.

"No! Don't you dare hurt her!" Carrie yells fiercely.

"Or what? You'll be next anyway. So enjoy seeing them suffer while you can."

Carrie snarls before Alro stabs Natalie in the ear, laughing as he hears her scream in pain. "Natalie, no!" Carrie cries out, still trying to get out of the vine's grasp. Alro withdraws the sharp stick and stabs Natalie's other ear, grinning widely. Natalie screams even louder, feeling more pain in that ear.

"It hurts! Aaah!" Natalie cries out, her eyes raining down tears. Then Alro soon pulls out the stick as more blood covers the tip of it.

Alro looks at the tip sadistically as Natalie's ears are slowly leaking out red liquid, her continuing to sob along the way. "Ah, such a lovely looking stick now. I hope the new world is like this kind of color: Red." Alro says with a smirk, tilting his head at the stick. "Because red...is the type of color that creates the most beautiful imagery I'd ever witness. And blood is being the perfect example of that." He then looks at Carrie, who is shaking her head in disbelief. "Now it's your turn, my darling." Carrie grits her teeth, showing raging fire in her eyes.

"You better not lay a single tentacle on me, you sick evil squid." Carrie says bitterly. Alro smirks, his fellow Malamars glancing at the three Pokemon, mostly the Lucario, in a psychotic way. Alro raises the bloody stick at Carrie's throat.

"Oh, relax. Your torture will end soon." Alro says, smiling. He pauses for a moment, only to lean forward against Carrie's face and lick the side of her cheek. Mark notices the lick and growls furiously. "Although, it pains me to kill you. Because you're such a beautiful looking Lucario. Like a flower blooming so elegantly after being taken care of for years and years...It would be a nightmare for me to waste that divine beauty of a flower. But you know, I can't have snitches roaming around and potentially screwing up our plans. And besides," Alro leans closer to the Lucario's ear. "You'll probably look even more beautiful in *red*." Carrie shivers from the lick and spits on the Malamar.

"When I get out, I'll tell everyone about this. Even the government." Carrie says, glaring at the Malamar. Alro wipes the saliva off from his face and chuckles quietly.

"No. You. Won't." Alro says. He slides the stick across her body then stops at her shoulder. He then stabs her shoulder instantly, leading her to scream in pain. "I love your screams too, by the way." Alro laughs as he pushes the stick forward. Carrie lets out a loud scream, feeling the pain on her shoulder increase.

Mark writhes, trying to get out of the vines. "Stop! Leave her alone!" Mark cries out furiously. Alro and the 5 Malamars laugh evilly as Carrie's scream grows louder and louder.

Somewhere in the forest, the red scarf Heracross runs through the area. He soon stops to hear Carrie's scream. "Hmm? That's a different scream...but it's coming from the same direction." The Heracross says, scratching the side of his face. "Strange...Is there more than one Pokemon needing help?" He blinks before sighing. "Guess I'll have to find out." The Heracross starts jumping from tree branch to tree branch, following the voice's location.

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Meanwhile in the Noctis Village, Iris and the others are renting themselves a home to live in. Ashen, Lucas and Anna seem to be eating Oran berries while staring at Iris patiently. Iris herself is talking to a brown duck with a white underbelly and wielding a white stick that has the color green at the top: Farfetch'd. The Farfetch'd also has a whistle hanging around his neck as the Dragonite hands him something.

"Here's your 20 Pokedollars." She says, holding the money out in her hand. The green Pokedollars has a bald eagle-like Pokemon, Braviary, in the middle of it and dollar signs on the sides. The Braviarys are looking sternly to their right as they lift their heads up, much similar to how soldiers salute to their lieutenant.

"Thanks...um." The Farfetch'd says, looking up at Iris. He scratches the back of his head with his stick as the Dragonite looks down at him confusedly.

"What seems to be the problem?"

"Nothing. It's just that..." He coughs. "You're way taller than me..."

Iris becomes embarrassed by the comment and forms a sweatdrop by the side of her face. Ashen and Lucas begin bursting out laughing while Anna giggles softly. Iris glances at them and growls. "Oh hush up. Not my fault that I was bound to grow into a tall Pokemon." She says, rolling her eyes.

Anna stops giggling. "Sorry Iris but I got to say, that was quite funny to witness." She says, smiling as Iris sighs.

"Whatever." The Dragonite says. Ashen and Lucas stop their laughter as the dragon turns toward the Farfetch'd. She gets on her knees and leans her head closer to the duck Pokemon. "Sorry about our major size difference...Although, it is rude to call out someone's size like that."

"Haha...It's fine. And my apologies for mentioning that." The Farfetch'd says with a chuckle. "I sometimes have this happening to me whenever someone wants to rent a home. It becomes a bit nerve-wracking at times..."

"Huh. Why would you feel nervous around someone ridiculously taller than you?" Iris tilts her head curiously.

The Farfetch'd shrugs awkwardly. "For starters, a Pokemon about your size tried to eat me." Iris raises her brow.

"Really?"

"Yeah. She's a Haxorus and apparently couldn't hold in her hunger for 'preys' any longer." The Farfetch'd looks to the side and shivers uncomfortably. "Good thing the mayor saw her and called in backup to arrest her before almost gotten eaten." The Farfetch'd sighs in relief, sweatdropping. Iris scratches the back of her head.

"Yikes. I see then..."

The Farfetch'd takes the money off of the dragon's paw gently. "Well, at least something like that can be solved by me blowing a whistle for protection." He says, pointing at the whistle with his stick. "This village can have bizarre moments like that happening from time to time. With the forest Pokemon not taking a liking to our presence and larger Pokemon trying to eat me, things can get quite hectic around here. Heck, I wouldn't be surprised if one of the forest Pokemon decided to raid this village because of how much they don't like us."

"Huh. Guess it's good news that you have something to protect you, then." Iris proceeds onto her feet, the duck nodding at her before looking around his surroundings.

"Alright then. Enjoy your temporary stay, ma'am." He says gleefully.

"Thanks." Iris replies. The Farfetch'd nods and walks away, heading to another house that has a penguin's fin at the top, different from all the other houses. Iris looks at her crew and smiles in relief.

"Well, what are we waiting for?" Ashen says happily. "Let's go inside!"

Lucas jumps in joy. "Yeah, mate!" He yells. He gives Ashen a high five and the two enter inside of the house. Anna looks at Iris and jerks her head to the side a bit.

"Let's see how the house looks on the inside." Anna suggests, smiling warmly.

"I guess I'll take a look before searching for Ego." Iris says with a shrug. The two Pokemon then walk inside with no hesitation.

The house itself has two rooms; One has two huge beds with golden swirls decorating the covers. The other is the bathroom, having shiny white tiles padding the floor and a single sink sits below a clear mirror. Lastly, a curtain is draped at the end of the home, covering what seems to be the window. The four Pokemon look around in amazement at the neat arrangements. "Wow, this looks amazing for this kind of environment." Ashen says with a smile.

"I know right?" Lucas replies in glee. The two Pokemon go to the beds and jump on them, laughing in joy. Anna giggles at the two.

"Quite a lovely home, isn't it Iris?" She says, turning her head towards the Dragonite. Iris nods.

"Yeah. It looks nice." The Dragonite agrees as she turns around. Ashen and Lucas race towards the bathroom.

"Hey, you lost the dibs!" Ashen says, shoving Lucas aside.

"But I wanted to try the hot shower!" Lucas whines. Ashen rolls his eyes. "Wait, I have an idea! How about we take the hot shower together?"

"What!? No! That sounds...weird." Ashen says, his face crinkled in disgust.

"Well it's either that or let me get in the hot shower first!" Lucas argues.

"But I won the rock-paper-scissors. Which means I won the chance to take a hot shower."

While Ashen and Lucas argue, Iris begins to walk towards the exit. Anna looks at her confusedly by her choice.

"Hmm? Where're you going?" She asks the Dragonite. Iris stops and turns her head slightly.

"Did you forget? I'm here to find someone, not to lay around." Iris answers firmly, staring back at her. Anna blinks at her before sighing.

"Oh. Right..." The Ninetales shrugs. "Well, I'm coming along anyway. Just to look out for you and what not." She sits down calmly and swifts her tails elegantly from left to right. "Should we bring Ashen and Lucas, too?"

"Well, they seem to be enjoying their time here...Kind of." Iris corrects herself with a shrug, pointing at the two Pokemon. Anna turns her attention towards the Linoone and Furret, the two continue their silly squabble.

She looks back at Iris and says, "Eh, they'll be alright. Let's go find this Ego guy you're talking about." Iris nods and walks out. Anna follows along but stops to turn her head towards the two Pokemon again. "Hey, you two watch over the house while me and Iris go looking for Ego, alright?" The two Pokemon stop and look at Anna. They stiffen themselves and put their arms by their sides like soldiers.

"You can count on us, ma'am!" Ashen and Lucas say. Anna giggles and walks outside with Iris.

As the two exit, they heard someone screaming. "Hmm?" The two say, looking around curiously.

"Did you hear that, Iris?" Anna asks.

Iris nods. "Yeah, I did."

The scream rings out again, loud enough for others to hear it. The villagers start to whispering to each other about it as Ashen and Lucas come outside.

"Hey, what was that just a second ago?" Ashen asks with his brow being raised. Iris looks at him.

"I don't know. I think that's what everyone's wondering right now." Iris answers.

As the four continue to chat about the situation, a penguin-like creature walks towards the four Pokemon with two Emboars. He has quite the regal look, navy blue steel affixed on his black and white 'coat' and trident prongs on his head that resembles a crown. An Empoleon, a name

would fit for such a Pokemon. "Ahem." The Empoleon says, catching the four Pokemon's attention.

"Yes? What do you want?" Iris says in a rude tone.

"Ah, no need for rudeness, dear. I'm here to introduce myself to you and the other three, since I've never seen you four before." The Empoleon says humbly. "The name is Wyvern and I'm the mayor of this village." Wyvern holds out a flipper and Iris looks down at it.

"The name is Iris. That's Anna, the Furret is Lucas and the Linoone is Ashen. We're just travelers loving to see different places and such."

"Ah, a pleasure to meet you fellow travelers then, Iris." The Empoleon shakes the Dragonite's hand as the others greet him as well.

"So I'm guessing that you introduce yourself to any newcomers that arrive at this village?" Anna asks.

"Of course, my dear chap. It would be rude of me to not let those newcomers know who the mayor of this village is, after all." Wyvern answers.

"So why couldn't you introduce us when we first came here?" Ashen wonders. Wyvern looks at him.

"I was busy with paperworks. The government and I are quite involved with this village after all, haha. With numerous amounts of havoc appearing here and in the forest, too."

"Oh." Ashen scratches the back of his head. "Iris had a similar conversation with the Farfetch'd salesmen about that. Why is that the case?"

"Ah. Glad that you ask. Well you see," Wyvern pauses for a moment to look at the villagers staring at the forest. "Ever since this village has a deep relationship with the government, violence tend to occur here occasionally. Rather it be from the Pokemon in the forest or the visitors themselves." He notices a Bellsprout and Weepinbell clinging to a Victreebel, shaking out of their minds. "Throughout my years of being mayor here, I noticed the amount of fear built into my fellow villagers. So I attempted many, many times to tighten up the security here." Wyvern sighs and shakes his head melancholy. "But even then, I still witnessed fear being present within them."

Wyvern looks back at the group. "I'm a humble and fair person. So seeing fear within my villagers is the *opposite* of fair to me." He says, forming a stern look on his face.

Iris and the others look at the Empoleon before looking at the villagers, noticing the concern look on their faces. *Living in constant fear of chaos because of governmental relationship...I feel bad for the villagers and the mayor here.* Iris thinks, glancing at the forest.

"Anyway, I suppose that you all heard the scream from the forest too, hmm?" The Empoleon asks, taking his eyes on them. Anna looks at Wyvern and nods.

"Yeah. I don't know what's happening in there but it's most certainly far from good, that's for sure." She replies.

"Hmm..." Iris wonders, continuing to glance at the forest while the others proceed to converse with each other. While that happens, someone lurks at the corner behind a house, black as a silhouette. The only thing distinguishable on them is a crown atop of their head as they watches Iris silently.

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The red scarf Heracross jumps from branch to branch with haste. He pants heavily but never stops. "Come on. Let me hear you again so that I can find your location!" He says to himself.

Back with the Malamars, Alro just withdraws the blood covered stick from Carrie's other shoulder. He looks at the tip, admiring the amount of red liquid taking over the stick. He laughs evilly from the red site.

"I think our torture time is over." He says. "We can kill them now, boys." He drops the stick to the ground as the five Malamars prepare a Psycho Cut. Alro looks at the three with his tendril emits a dark pink light. Carrie pants, gritting her teeth in frustration as she looks at the six Pokemon in front of her. Mark and Natalie stares at the Malamars in shock and terror.

"N-No." Mark says. "I-I don't want to die!" Natalie tears up as Alro smirks.

The Malamars then laugh insanely, him and the others having their Psycho Cuts ready.

"No!" Natalie cries out. "No! Aahh!" Mark leans his head against Carrie's blood leaking shoulder and closes his eyes. Carrie closes hers too, wincing in pain from the contact.

As soon as the Malamars about to attack, the sixth Malamar gets kicked in the head. He crashes into a random tree and passes out. Alro and the four Malamars stop to look at their fallen comrade. Then they turn their attention to a scarfed Heracross, Alro lifting his brow at the Heracross' appearance.

"What a rude entrance. Who are you?" Alro asks in a calm manner. Natalie looks at the Malamars, wondering who they're staring at. Mark and Carrie open their eyes and gaze as well.

"What's going on...?" Carrie asks.

"I don't know..." Mark says, still leaning against Carrie.

The Heracross shifts his scarf a bit before speaking. "The name's Jimmy. I roam around this forest and make sure that there's no trouble. By doing so, I became an well known hero of the Noctis Forest. But you wouldn't know that since it's old news nowadays." Alro lift his head a bit, glaring at him.

"I see. I'm Alro and this is my business you're entering." Alro says firmly. Jimmy glances at him.

"And your business is to hurt innocent Pokemon?"

Alro grits his teeth. "They barged into our plans. We had no choice but to annihilate them."

"Plans, eh?" Jimmy cracks his shoulder while narrowing his eyes at the Malamars.

"You just stay out of this, 'hero'."

"Make me." Jimmy creates a fist. Alro snarls at the Heracross before grinning instantly.

"Alright then." Alro lifts his arm up as dark pink aura forms around it. "Boys, kill this Heracross." The Malamars nod, preparing their Psycho Cuts.

"Yes sir!" The Malamars yell. Jimmy's pincer soon begins to glow white.

The Malamars fire off their Psycho Cuts. Jimmy's pincer suddenly stops glowing as he grins at the attacks. The Psycho Cuts then hit him, black smoke beginning to rise from the attacks as Alro smirks. "Well that was easy." The Malamar says. Natalie gasps.

"What's going on?" She yells. "All I heard was some voice saying its name and then a fight happens!" Carrie looks at Natalie.

"Natalie, we heard it too. And I'm not sure what's going on, neither." Carrie agrees. One of the Malamars looks at the smoke, noticing something unusual.

"Um sir." The third Malamar says. "The Heracross just *let* us use our moves on him..."

"Huh...Now that I think about it...that was kind of weird." Alro replies curiously.

"What the heck!?" The second Malamar yells. Alro whips around to him.

"What?" He asks.

The Malamar points to the sky, leading Alro to find Jimmy in the air, arms glowing white. "What the hell!? He should've been killed by those Psycho Cuts! How did he--" Alro pauses for a moment to notice the red outline around Jimmy's body. *Endure*... He immediately thinks. Natalie notices the Heracross in the sky.

"Huh? Is that the Pokemon the Malamars were looking at?" Natalie wonders, tilting her head a bit. Carrie and Mark stare at the Heracross as well.

"Seems like it, I guess." Mark says weakly. "But shouldn't those Psycho Cuts have knocked him out?" Jimmy falls closer to the Malamars.

"Well Mark, he use a move called Endure. It guarantees that a Pokemon can survive a move that could KO them." Carrie says. "The Heracross species can learn that move and so do a ton of other Pokemon."

"Oh."

Alro is about to use Psychic on the Heracross until Jimmy lands with a boom. The Malamars jump back, Jimmy dashing towards two Malamars and punches them. He turns and finds another heading at his direction. The Malamar throws down his arm, a white light emitting from it: Aerial Ace. Jimmy grabs the two Malamars and throws them toward the third. The third Malamar gets slammed by the two Malamars, having the three crash to the ground. Alro grits his teeth.

"Grr..." He snarls, looking at the Malamar next to him. "Don't just stand there! Attack him!" The second Malamar jumps and nods.

He dashes toward the Heracross and tries to use Psycho Cut on him until the Heracross lands a Close Combat him: The Heracross punches and kicks the Malamar all over the place. "Eek! Ah! Uff!" The Malamar cries. After several hits, Jimmy delivers a strong punch to the Malamar's face, sending him flying towards Alro. "Aaah!"

Alro tries to use Psychic to stop him but the move has no effect. "I forgot that my kind is immune to Psychic type mo--" He gets plowed into and slams against the ground before he could even finish his sentence.

Jimmy surveys the area, making sure nothing else is there. Then he looks at the three hostage Pokemon and runs toward them. Mark, Natalie and Carrie look at Jimmy as he unties them.

"Th-Thank you, sir." Natalie says, waiting to get out of the vine's grasp. Jimmy nods.

"No problem." Jimmy says as he cuts the vines out with a simple claw. The three Pokemon are free from the vine. Mark falls to the ground due to his injury as Natalie goes to aid him. Carrie stands on her legs, holding the wounds on her shoulders and wincing drastically.

"Ugh...finally, we're fr-free..." Mark says, trembling. Carrie looks at Mark and rushes to his aid, weeping more from her injuries.

"Are you okay!?" She asks.

"C-Carrie...m-my leg..." Mark looks, whimpering at his blood leaking leg. Natalie snuffles from seeing Mark injured then notices the drip from her ears.

"My ears..." Natalie says softly, shaking in fear. Carrie gazes at Natalie before staring back at her brother.

"Don't worry. I'll take us to the medics, alright?" Carrie says. Mark looks at Carrie, tears sliding down from his face.

"I don't want to die, Carrie."

"I know, Mark. And I'm going to make sure that you're not. Just hang in there."

Mark nods shakily as Carrie hugs him. He snuffles and cuddles against the Lucario, shaking in terror. Natalie huddles up along with the two, tearing up as well.

"I'll always protect you and Natalie. Even if everything you know and love is being taken away from us, I'll still be there to support you two. No matter what happens."

Everything becomes quiet for a moment before Jimmy speaks. "Um, I would hate to break your bonding moment but, um..." Carrie looks up at the Heracross, still hugging the two Pokemon.

"Oh. Uh...Who might you be again?" She asks, letting them go.

"The name is Jimmy, ma'am. You are?"

"Carrie. This is my little brother Mark and his friend, Natalie." She smiles. "Thank you for saving us, Jimmy."

"No problem. I am known for doing stuff like this after all." Jimmy says happily. He turns around and notices three of the Malamars getting up. "Although, don't thank me just yet." Carrie looks at him, forming a confused look on her face.

"Why would you say that?" She asks. Jimmy points at the Malamars. Carrie gives them a firm look. "Oh..."

The three Malamars glower at Jimmy, eyeing at him precisely. The Heracross forms a battle pose as the two younglings huddle close to Carrie. "Don't worry. I'll handle these evildoers." Jimmy says.

Carrie pets Natalie on the head. "No. I'll help you." She says to him. Mark clings to his sister.

"No! I don't want you to get hurt anymore!" Mark cries, the side of his face pressed against Carrie's stomach. Carrie looks down at the Riolu.

"Mark, I promised that I'll always protect you and Natalie. And I'm never breaking that promise, okay?" She says, patting the Riolu on the head. She looks at Natalie as she gets up. "Natalie, I want you to protect Mark for me, alright?" Natalie nods.

"O-Okay..." The Zorua says with a whimper, remaining by the Riolu's side. Carrie walks next to Jimmy, confidence and determination enlightening her will to fight as she glares at the Malamars. Mark tries to get up, wincing at the pain coming from his leg.

"No! Sis!" Mark yells, holding onto his leg. Natalie hugs Mark from behind, holding him back.

"No Mark. She'll be fine. Plus, you're hurt."

"But I wanna protect her Natalie! I...I don't want her to...get herself...killed..." Mark tears up as Natalie leans her head against his.

"I know how much you care about your sister. I know that she's the only family member you have left and I understand that. But she'll be fine...she's strong and brave after all." Natalie says, hugging the Riolu more. "I-It's my fault that I got us in this mess and...and she can get us out of it...like she always does." A tear slides down from Natalie's face. "I'm always the one giving you two trouble...Always..." Mark looks at Natalie.

"Natalie..." He says softly, feeling sorry for the poor Zorua.

Carrie and Jimmy continue having their eyes on the three Malamars.

"Now ma'am, are you sure about this?" Jimmy asks, being a bit cautious. "I mean, your shoulders is bleeding out...badly, no less."

"Oh yeah, I am indeed." Carrie says, cracking her neck and her fingers. "I haven't been in a fight since I was a little Riolu. And besides, those shoulder stabs doesn't hinder me from fighting, anyway. I can still move these move arms and such." She grins and giggles, the Heracross looking at her with concerns.

"I see then..."

The three Malamars float towards them quickly, preparing a Aerial Ace. Carrie's fist envelopes in red aura as she runs toward a Malamar and punches him in the face with Power-Up Punch. The Malamar flings toward a tree while screaming, crashing into it. The other two Malamars try to hit Carrie from behind but Jimmy gets in front of them, grabbing the two's arms.

"Huh!?" The two Malamars say. Jimmy smirks and slams the two into each other. He then jumps in the air and throws them both toward the ground. To the left side of the area, Alro pushes the second Malamar off from him and looks, seeing Carrie and Jimmy standing.

"Grr. You will not interfere with our plans! Not at all!" Alro yells as the second Malamar gets up. Carrie and Jimmy look at Alro, seeing him eyeing at the younglings. He smiles sadistically and floats toward the two, preparing a Aerial Ace. Carrie gasps at the action taking place.

"NO!" She yells and dashes towards Alro immediately. Jimmy looks at Carrie.

"Carrie, hold on!" He says. Suddenly, a Psycho Cut hits him and sends him crashing into another tree. "Gah!" He coughs, being covered in red outline. *Good thing I used Endure again...* He thinks, looking at where the attack comes from. He sees the second Malamar grinning at him, preparing another one. He then sees three other Malamars behind him. A bead of sweat appears on the side of the Heracross' face as he's getting gang up on, gulping awkwardly. "Well...this is gonna take awhile."

Natalie and Mark notice Alro heading at their direction and cower. "Ah!" The two scream, hugging each other in fear. Carrie gets in front of the two and clashes her Power-Up Punch with Alro's Aerial Ace. Smoke begins to emit due to the impact.

Over at the Noctis Village, everyone hears the sound and begins to gossip about it.

"What was that!?" Ashen yells in confusion. Lucas shakes in fear as everyone else looks at the forest suspiciously.

"I don't know but I'm curious enough to find out myself." Iris says firmly, making a fist.

"I-I'm sure th-that nothing is wrong. I mean, come on mate." Lucas says. "If there was, a tree would be shooting at us right now."

Like magic, a tree blasts out of the Noctis Forest and falls towards Iris and the others. Iris gasps and pushes everyone out of the way. The other Pokemon in the village gasp as well. "Move!" She yells as the tree crashes to the ground. Wyvern, the two Emboars and Anna's eyes widen at the crashed tree. Everyone in the village seems to carry the same shock value as well. A bead of sweat runs down the side of Ashen's face while he looks at Lucas.

"W-Well, that was one tree. Not like multiple trees could be coming at us."

Now it's a spell. More trees shoot out of the forest and fall toward the seven Pokemon. Everyone scream for their lives.

"Oh, you gotta be kidding me." Iris says. She uses her tail this time to move the six Pokemon to the side then flies towards the crashing trees and grabs all seven of them. She throws them all far across the sea and pants, landing back onto the ground. Iris looks at the Empoleon, sweatdropping. "Now I'm starting to see your point on this village having chaos appearing at random."

"Yeah..." Wyvern replies with an awkward shrug.

Everyone sighs in relief and thanks Iris for saving them all. "Oh it was nothing, really." She says proudly.

Lucas smiles happily. "Yeah. It's not like more trees would co--"

"OKAY, WE GET IT!!!" Everyone yells at Lucas, interrupting him. Lucas jumps a bit from the yell.

"Okay okay. Just saying."

Anna rolls her eyes as Wyvern coughs a bit. "Ahem." The Empoleon says, clearing his throat. "Aside from that...crisis from earlier, if anyone in this village wishes to investigate the forest, please say 'I'." Everyone in the village is quiet for a moment until Iris steps toward Wyvern, looking down at him.

"I." She says firmly. The villagers gasp, except for Wyvern and the two Emboars. Anna sighs and sits next to the Dragonite.

"I would like to come with her as well." Anna says. Everyone gasps again, except Wyvern and the two Emboars. Iris looks at the villagers slowly.

"Okay. Was that even necessary?" The Dragonite questions. The crowd gasps yet again, causing Iris to put her hand against her face. Soon, an avian-like creature with his black head resembling an eighth note (Chatot) stares at the two Pokemon.

"But it's too dangerous to go in there. There's Houndooms and other Pokemon that dislike our presence due to us living civilly while they prefer the wild!" The Chatot says worriedly. The Pokemon within the village agree with him as Iris sighs.

"You really think I don't know that? I sorta guessed that the moment I step foot here." Iris says. Everyone in the village blinks confusedly as Iris shakes her head, sighing in disbelief. Wyvern looks at the two Pokemon, feeling a bit worried.

"Are you sure about this? The forest can be quite tough to enter in and exit out." Wyvern says in a rich tone. "As I've stated before, it's an issue that could damage my village here." Anna and Iris look at each other before nodding with a smirk and stare back at the Empoleon.

"Mayor, we can handle this. We've been through a lot of places and most of them involves dangers. This isn't new to us." Anna says with a grin. Wyvern thinks for a moment before nodding.

"Very well then."

The villagers are still a bit shocked at the response. "But sir, you remember what happened to one of our villagers that entered the forest last time, right?" The first Emboar guard whispers. "He didn't make it out until 10 months later..." Wyvern sighs and looks at the Emboar.

"I think it'll be different. That Electivire went in there because some attractive ladies decided to go in. Pure foolishness, I'd say." The Empoleon says to the Emboar calmly. "I'm sure it won't be the same for these two. After all," Wyvern looks at the two Pokemon, seeing them staring sternly at him. "I did told them about the village's history. Surely, they'll know what to do." The Emboar shifts.

"I hope so..."

"Anyway, would you two like to bring someone along?" Wyvern asks the two Pokemon. Lucas immediately raises his hand.

"Pick me! Pick me!" He says. His face holds the innocence of a child but his act is simply annoying to Iris and Anna. They look at Lucas weirdly.

"Nah. We're good." The two Pokemon say to Wyvern instantly. Lucas puts his hand and ears down, looking rather sorrow.

"Aww..." Lucas says. Iris looks at Ashen.

"Hey Ashen. Can you and Lucas watch over the house and maybe this village for us while we investigate, please?" Iris says firmly.

"Will do, Iris." Ashen says, nodding.

"Alright..." Lucas says, mobbing.

"Good." Iris looks at Anna. "Ready to go?" Anna looks back and nods. The Dragonite then turns around and walks towards the forest. Anna follows along as everyone moves out of their way.

"Good luck, you two!" Ashen shouts, waving at them. He then takes his attention toward Lucas, seeing him sigh sorrowfully. He pats the Furret on the back. "Hey, it'll be alright." Lucas still looks unhappy and sighs once more. "Look, I'll let you get in the hot shower after those two come back, alright?" Lucas springs up in joy and looks at Ashen.

"Really!? Thanks, mate!" Lucas says happily.

"Hehe, no problem." Ashen says, smiling.

Wyvern glances at Iris and Anna, seeing them disappear inside of the forest. *I hope to Arceus that nothing bad happens to those two...* He thinks, looking rather worried. The silhouette figure from earlier begins to turn to the side and walks away.

Iris and Anna roam through the forest, beginning to hear sounds along the way. "Think we're close?" Anna asks. Iris looks at her.

"I'm not sure. I mean, I can hear noises but I feel like it's not from the...well, scream...and the trees." Iris answers in a firm tone. "In fact, we just now exit out of the vill--" She then stops in her tracks, glancing at something in front of her. The Ninetales stops as well.

"What is it, Iris?"

Anna soon hears a bunch of growls in front of her. The two see four canine-like creatures with skull-shaped pendants on their throats and horns on top of their heads: They're known to be Houndooms. The Houndooms growl at the two Pokemon furiously.

"Who are you and why are you entering our homeland, intruders?" The Houndoom in front of the others demands. Anna glances at the four while Iris facepalms.

"I should've expected something like this to happen to me..." Iris says to herself, groaning uncomfortably. The front Houndoom slams his paw down.

"Answer me!"

"Look, we didn't come here to harm anyone, especially your kind. We just came here to investigate the loud noises." Iris snarls. "And who I am is none of your business whatsoever." The Houndoom raises her brow before growling once more.

"I don't believe you. You two look like troublemakers."

Anna facepaws. "Does that lieutenant-looking face look like a troublemaker to you? Really now." Anna says, rolling her eyes. The Houndoom looks at her.

"Then what doesn't make you two troublemakers?"

"Oh I don't know, maybe us not doing anything? Besides entering a forest...that's about it." The Ninetales sighs heavily. "You guys are slow and I hate that." Anna switches her tone to seriousness, glaring at the Houndooms. "Now would you kindly move out of our way, please." The Houndoom in front of the others shakes his head.

"Not until you get past us first."

Anna smacks her lips, feeling quite annoyed. Iris looks at the wings on her back before getting behind Anna.

"Huh!?" Anna yelps.

"Next time, pal." Iris says, winking at the Houndooms with a smug look before lifting Anna up by her forelegs and flies into the air. She soars past the Houndooms while carrying Anna. The Houndoom in front turns around along with the others.

"What the!?! Hey! Get back here!" The Houndoom yells. "That's not how things are supposed to go! Damn yooou!"

Iris slightly closes her eyes as she flies away from the yelling Houndoom. Anna sighs in relief.

"Glad that ended real quickly." Anna says.

"Pfft, tell me about it." Iris replies in a sassy tone.

"Although, I do have a problem with you carrying me...I feel so...embarrassed and awkward right now." Anna blushes. Iris chuckles softly.

"Ah. This reminds me of the time where I was carrying you like this but instead, you were--" Iris looks down at Anna teasingly with a smile on her face. "--a cute little Vulpix." Anna blushes madly.

"H-Hey! You only carried me because I didn't know how to experience the outside world back then!" Anna says. "B-Besides, I was still an adult at the time...just didn't feel like evolving until now." Iris looks forward and nods.

"True...But you was still cute though." Iris snickers as Anna blushes more.

"C-Can we go back to the previous subject instead of talking about you carrying me? You know, *the sounds?*"

"Alright, alright." Iris stops for a moment and looks around carefully. "Not seeing anything exploding yet." She then hears a loud explosion coming from her upper right. She looks

immediately, noticing the smoke rising from afar. "Ah, there's the explosion." Anna nods at the Dragonite before Iris soars towards the smoke.

Over at Jimmy side, he, Carrie, and the Malamars seem to be exhausted. Jimmy and Carrie pant while eyeing at their opponents. Alro's eyes widen a bit as he looks at Carrie.

"Damn...it's like you get stronger and stronger each time you use that move..." He says. Carrie slowly smirks at him.

"Well perhaps...you...don't know...what Power-Up Punch is..." She says, panting more. "It boosts your physical attack each time after hitting your opponent..."

"I...I see then..." Alro suddenly freezes. "Gah!" His eyes widen in horror as he stares at the Lucario. Natalie hugs Mark from behind, clinging to him while he hugs back. Jimmy backs up against a random tree, being surrounded by the Malamars.

"It's over, hero boy." The second Malamar says, preparing a Psycho Cut along with the other three. Jimmy and Carrie both grin.

"Actually..." Jimmy shifts his scarf.

"It's over for you!" Jimmy and Carrie both yell. Jimmy runs toward the second Malamar and roundhouse kicks him, causing the Malamar to slam into the others like dominoes. Carrie does the same attack to Alro, causing him and the others to get knocked out yet again. Jimmy and Carrie pant, looking at each other before fist-pumping one another. Bruises appear all over the two's body as Carrie turns her attention toward the two children, smiling softly.

"It's over now...We can finally go home." Carrie says, walking towards the two. Natalie tears up in joy while Mark opens his arms, wanting a hug from his older sister. Jimmy looks at the three and smiles in glee.

"Boy, do I enjoy seeing happy endings. Always a beautiful thing to witness in life." He says to himself happily. Jimmy then turns to the side slightly and finds Alro grabbing the sharp stick from earlier. He gasps shockingly before looking at the Lucario. "Carrie! Behind you!" Carrie stops and turns around slightly.

"Hmm?" She says confusedly. Within seconds the stick drives through Carrie's stomach, causing her to grit her teeth. "A-Gah!" She coughs out blood, her eyes widen in horror. Mark and Natalie become terrified, seeing their only guardian being stabbed right before their eyes. Carrie slowly stares at Alro, him panting heavily and menacingly before thrusting the stick more. This leads the Lucario to scream in pure agony.

Iris and Anna hear Carrie's scream from a distance. "Looks like that's the same female scream from earlier but this time--"

"It sounded like she's in real pain again!" Anna says, interrupting Iris. Iris looks down at her and nods.

"Yeah. Let's hurry." Iris says firmly, speeding up.

Back with the others, Mark begins to tear up nonstop at the tragedy. "N-No...S-Sis!" Mark cries, forming a fist as tears land onto the grass. Alro then pulls the stick out, allowing Carrie to fall towards the ground.

"You...You absolute monster!" Jimmy yells. "This was supposed to be a happy ending for them! Not a bad ending!" Jimmy's eyes glow the color gamboge (light brown) and dark red. His scarf, horn and arms begin to glow white as he rushes toward the Malamar. "Close Horn Combat!" Jimmy screeches and leaps toward the Malamar. He tries to attack him but is stopped by Alro's Psychic. Alro shakes his head with a grin.

"You Pokemon are so funny. Trying to save those who are 'innocent'. I mean, there's no use for it. Everyone's either a predator or a prey. There's no good nor bad because that's how it is in life no matter how many times you try to enforce the rules here." Alro says, grinning deviously. He looks up at the pausing Heracross. "At the end, It's all about survival. I'm the predator--" Alro slams Jimmy to the ground hard with Psychic. "--and you're my prey!"

"Gaah!" Jimmy screams in pain. His eyes, arms, horn and scarf stop glowing altogether.

"Jimmy!" Mark and Natalie yell.

Alro laughs sadistically. "Thus truly, happy endings are nonexistent." He turns to the side, glancing at the two with madness. The two Pokemon rear back in his presence.

"Oh don't worry, you two. You'll join them real quickly." Alro says, walking towards the two slowly. Natalie tears up and growls at the Malamar, getting in front of Mark. Mark looks at the Zorua with wide eyes.

"Natalie, what are you doing!?" Mark says while shaking.

"Protecting you." Natalie says, snarling at Alro. "Leave us alone!"

Alro snickers sadistically. "Leave you alone?" He says. "You're the main reason for all of this to happen." Alro says, smiling evilly. "If you would've taken your death like the good girl you are, none of this would've happened." His eyes widen in insanity, filled with madness and sins. Natalie grits her teeth for a moment then opens her mouth, creating a black purple-like ball in front of her.

"I said leave us alone!" She yells, firing a Shadow Ball at the Malamar. Alro laughs maliciously and use Psycho Cut on the Zorua's Shadow Ball. The two moves collide together menacingly, smokes forming from its collision. Natalie flinches from the impact a bit then looks in front of her, noticing Alro's figure within the smoke. Then Alro instantly gets in front of her and smacks her towards the side.

Natalie crashes into another tree, yelping from the pain she received from it. Mark looks at his defeated friend.

"Natalie, no!" The Riolu yells in absolute dread. Alro looks at Mark with a smile.

"Oh I'll kill you right after I kill your friend, little one." Alro says, laughing more while walking towards Natalie. He's clearly gone haywire.

Mark grits his teeth. "Leave her alone!"

"U-Ugh..." Natalie says weakly, trying to stand up. Mark tries to get up as well but winces in pain from his leg.

O-Oh no. I-I don't know what to do. Mark thinks. *Come on. There's gotta be something I can do...Stupid injured leg.* Mark looks to the side and notices something glowing within the bushes. *Hmm?* He begins to crawl towards the bush in curiosity, wincing along the way. *Come on, almost there.* He reaches towards the bush and looks underneath it, noticing a brown bow. The bow is glowing on and off, repeating its cycle over and over again. The Riolu stares at the bow, feeling off about its presence. "Huh? What is a bow...doing around here...?" Mark says, tilting his head a bit.

Jimmy weakly tries to get up as he sees Alro walking towards the injured Zorua. "L-Leave h-her...b-be..." He says, coughing afterwards. Alro ignores the Heracross and stops in front of Natalie. Natalie looks up, terrified to see the deranged Malamar up close. Alro then wraps his scythe-like hand around Natalie's neck, choking her as he lifts her up. Natalie gasps, struggling to receive air.

"It's sad that you never get the chance to grow. To see this filth of a world till the end...But I guess it's for the best." Alro says as he slams Natalie against the tree, strangling her some more. He laughs while tightening the chokehold, Carrie looking at him and Natalie weakly.

"Na...talie..." Carrie says in a fragile tone. Natalie feels as though she's nearing her death, her vision beginning to fade.

"H..el..." Natalie tries to say something but couldn't. Mark looks at Alro then at the bow, sighing heavily.

I don't have much time left so...I hope to Arceus that this can save us. Mark thinks, immediately grabbing the bow. After wielding it, he notices that a red tip arrow magically appear on his other hand, causing him to blink in surprise. *Huh?* Then catches his attention to Alro's psychotic laugh.

"Say goodbye to your life, little Zorua. You and your friends here." Alro says and furthers the tightness. Mark raises the bow and aims it at Alro, shooting the arrow towards him immediately. The arrow strikes Alro from behind, causing the Malamar to gasp and drop the Zorua. He turns around slowly, staring at Mark wielding the bow. Natalie's vision goes back to normal as she coughs heavily. Alro begins to feel woozy from the arrow shot. "N-Nice...shot..." He gets on his knees. "Kid..." He falls to the side, coughing out blood. Mark shakes in fear, dropping the bow to the ground. His eyes widen as he sees everyone in front of him either knocked out or badly injured.

"O-Oh...d-dear..." Mark says, whimpering in terror. Alro looks in front of him and notices an ornate shield being beside one of the bushes. He grins and weakly raises his arm up, using Psychic to bring the shield towards him as his vision begins to fade a bit. As he grabs the shield...something bizarre happens.

Alro and the other five Malamars freeze in place. Within a couple of seconds, a dark mist forms around them, covering the Malamars mysteriously. The four Pokemon look at the Malamars, confusion and fear spreading across their faces.

"We got the shield for you, master...Now we'll search for...your...sword..." Alro says weakly as he and the other Malamars disappear into the dark mist. Everything becomes quiet for a moment until Carrie coughs out blood.

"Carrie!" Mark and Natalie yell, Natalie walking towards Carrie weakly while Mark crawls as quickly as he can. Jimmy finally gets up on his feet, wincing a bit in pain while looking at the two Pokemon surrounding their guardian.

"I-I never thought it would end like this." Carrie says, beginning to tear up. Natalie nudges her face, her tears gradually sliding down her face. Mark begins to form a fist, him tearing up during so.

"Sis, it's going to be alright. We're gonna get help, okay?" Mark says, putting his paw on Carrie's. Carrie gazes at Mark and smiles weakly.

"Mark...you have always been a great brother to me...Everything about you is so funny and enjoyable...When you do things to unintentionally embarrass yourself...and likes to cheer someone up whenever they're in need for happiness..." Carrie says, continuing the dreadful tears. "And Natalie has always been an interesting kind of child to take care of...W-with the tricks she pulls off to make me laugh and...the sass she does may tick me off at times but also makes me happy to take care of such an adorable child..." Carrie chuckles softly, nuzzling the

two Pokemon. "Either way, you two have always brought joy to my heart. Rather during the down times...or the memorable times..." Mark wipes the tears off from his face.

"Carrie, pl-please don't talk like that. Y-You're going to live, okay!?" Mark gets close to Carrie. "Please hang in there." Carrie puts one hand behind Mark's head and the other on her stomach.

"Mark, just remember that...I'll always be with you...and...Natalie...in memories..." Mark puts his hand onto the side of Carrie's face. "I...love...you...brother..." Carrie leans her forehead against Mark's, both sobbing in sorrow. Natalie sniffles, tears streaming down like waterfalls at this point.

Soon, drops of liquid start falling from the sky as Carrie closes her eyes and lies down on the ground, not breathing nor moving. Mark shakes Carrie immediately.

"Carrie...Carrie!" Mark cries out, repeating the Lucario's name over...and over. Natalie whimpers, hugging Carrie's head in melancholy. Jimmy simply puts his head down, no longer wanting to look at the heartbroken view.

Iris and Anna seem to be closer to the four's location. "Ah dammit, it's raining." Anna says, frowning in a unpleasant manner. "I hate the rain..." Iris looks at her with a grin.

"Of course you'll hate the rain because you're a Fire type...What Fire type would like the rain...?" Iris says sarcastically, chuckling afterwards.

"Oh hush up." A bead of sweat runs down Anna's head.

Soon, Iris lands onto the ground and sees Mark and Natalie hugging the dead Lucario. Her face immediately changes to a serious, stern expression along with Anna's. "Hmm? What happened here?" Iris asks, putting Anna down. Jimmy looks at Iris slowly.

"A lot has happened, my Dragonite friend..." Jimmy says. "If you're here to harm us, now's your chance...I'm too weak and depressed to even continue fighting at this point..." Iris blinks at the Heracross and shakes her head.

"We're not here to harm anyone. We're here to investigate the madness going on in this forest..." Iris looks at the two Pokemon surrounding Carrie. "Though, it looks like we've found exactly that." She looks back at the Heracross. "By the way, the name is Iris. The Ninetales is Anna." Jimmy gazes at the two woeful younglings.

"Jimmy. Nice to meet you two..."

Iris nods slowly. She and Anna then walk towards the three Pokemon. Natalie looks up and notices the two, growling at them weakly. Iris and Anna stop for a moment.

"Leave us...alone..." Natalie says, sniffing. "We don't...want anymore...trouble..." Iris looks into the Zorua's eyes, knowing how much sorrow she's feeling.

"Me and my friend are not here to hurt you two. I promise to Arceus that we're only here to investigate what's going on in this forest...and sadly, we kind of found out about it." Iris says firmly. Natalie cries some more.

"Then what!? You'll hurt us afterwards!?" Natalie yells, making Mark stop his sobbing and turns around. Jimmy gets beside the Dragonite.

"No, Natalie. They're on our side, okay? They're not going to attack us...I promise." Jimmy says calmly. Natalie grits her teeth before nudging against Carrie's head, crying loudly. Mark looks at the two Pokemon for a moment then turns around, staring back at Carrie. Iris walks toward the Riolu and gets on her knees.

"Are you okay, little Riolu?" Iris asks firmly. "Your leg doesn't look good..." She then looks at Natalie, noticing her ears being damaged. "...Along with your friend's ears..." Mark stares to the side.

"Those Malamars...hurt me, my friend and my sister...Then he...he..." Mark says, turning around with tears. "He killed my sister!" Anna looks at him, shocked and worried about what he said. Iris glances to the side, making a fist.

"Oh my...Wh-who...killed your sister?" Anna asks worriedly. Mark grips his fist, gritting his teeth.

"A Malamar...named Alro..." Mark sniffles. "He killed my sister...and all of this madness started after the Malamars tried to kill my friend, Natalie...Just because she knows about their plans..."

Plans? Anna thinks before Iris goes to hug the Riolu. He hugs back, crying into the Dragonite's belly.

"I'm sorry to hear about that...If we had gotten here earlier, this would've never happened..." Iris says, feeling down for herself. *Something similar to what Mewtwo told me after my father died...* The Dragonite thinks, grim and sorrow spreading across her face. Anna looks at the group, shaking her head as a tear slides from her eye.

"I promise...that I...I..." Mark grits his teeth. "I'll get my revenge on him and his goons. I promise to my sister that I will!" Iris looks at Mark shockingly. She imagines him as her younger self, wanting to avenge her loved ones after seeing their deaths. Anna stares at him, shocked to hear that as well. Then she takes her eyes onto Iris worriedly.

Iris remains there, looking at the Riolu as she continues to hug him. In the foreground, a shadowed figure is on top of a tree staring down at the group silently. It looks like a green blob with a red dot on its stomach as it sighs sorrowfully.

"Poor thing..." The figure says, looking rather gloomy and miserable.

End of Chapter 4.