

Chapter 17: Suspicion Within the Kingdom.

Cloyster Kingdom Arc.

The Cloyster guards search throughout the Zero Forest, the prisoners in the area looking rather confused by the rapid search. Somewhere inside of the castle is the king laying down on the bed within his room; The room contains luxury materials and furnitures such as the bright yellow bed itself and the beautiful red walls. The dressers are positioned across the bed, pinning against the top left corner. Cocoon's bed is kingsize, with red curtains being on top of the bed. The four brown wooden poles on each ends of the bed are holding the curtain, making sure the curtain doesn't fall off.

Cocoon glances at the ceiling before letting out a soft, lament sigh. "I didn't want to see you go, Brisk..." Cocoon says, shaking his head. "You were such an amazing friend. Who cared enough to help me overcome family issues, the difficult task of being a ruler, and stress in general...Now that you're gone...I feel like I can't be as positive as I used to be..." Cocoon shuts his eyes.

He imagines a festival going on in his head. He was in front of a crowd of Cloysters and Shelders, talking about the goals he achieved in protecting the kingdom and being proud of it. Then a gunshot was heard and a Cloyster got in front of him, the bullet hitting the Cloyster's head. Cocoon stared at the gundown Cloyster in terror, shouting the name, "Brisk!"

Returning back to present time, he opens his eyes and shakes his head. "I wish it was me who got shot...not you..." A tear slowly drips down from his eye, sliding off from his face and landing onto the bedsheets. Soon, he hears a knock coming from his door and looks at it. "Come in." The king says before seeing a large barbed Cloyster entering his room. The Cloyster, Sheer, closes the door behind him quickly.

"My king, I have serious news to tell you!" Sheer says in a worrisome tone.

Cocoon tilts his head in curiosity. "What is it?"

"The two prisoners had escaped their execution from Ster Town!"

Cocoon lifts his body up, looking rather tense. "What? How did they escape?"

"From what Exo informed me, the green thing from last night appeared in front of the executioner and blinded him by glowing. Then it released the two prisoners from their straps and escaped with them."

"I see..." Cocoon looks to the side, thinking deeply about the situation. "Well, be sure to tell the guards to keep a look out for both the thing and the prisoners. Even in the castle, too."

Sheer nods. "They're already doing that but I'll be sure to remind them again, sir." Sheer then turns around and floats towards the door. He is about to exit the room until Cocoon's voice puts him on halt.

"Wait, Sheer."

Sheer turns around and looks at him curiously. "Yes, my king?"

The shiny Cloyster looks to the side, glancing at the ground. "I...wanted to ask you something: Have I ever made any good decisions for the Cloyster Kingdom? I mean..." He groans depressingly. "Ever since my previous senator passed away, I...haven't been myself lately. Or at least it seemed that way for the past couple of years since the Cloyster Ceremony incident..."

Sheer floats towards the king and sits besides him. "I'm sure that you have, sir."

"But the folks I'd taken in as prisoners lately...They said that the rules here are unfair and unhealthy. They're not what it used to be..."

Sheer shakes his head. "Don't listen to them, sir. They're only mad because they couldn't follow the rules, that's all."

"But it seems more than just th--"

Sheer turns the king towards him, interrupting him. "I guarantee you that you're doing an amazing job at protecting this kingdom, my king. After all, no one has complained about the kingdom before. Why wait until now when they could've complained about it back then? That's how you know they're ignorant and disobedient."

Cocoon shrugs. "Are you sure, Senator Sheer?" The shiny Cloyster asks cautiously.

Sheer nods humbly. "I'm positive, sir."

Cocoon lets out a sigh and lays down on his back. "Alright. Thanks for cheering me up, Sheer."

Sheer smiles and gets up. "Anything for a king of mine, sir." He then floats towards the door and exits the room. As he closes the door behind him, he begins to smirk before turning to his left and head downstairs.

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Meanwhile at the forest, multiple guards continue their hunt for the escape prisoners. Some are searching on the right side while others search on the left. A pretty hectic movement going on for the guards, in general. Within the area, the gang are socializing about the situation going on

today. They're surrounded by three trees and a couple of bushes, a small pond being behind the bushes.

"I can't believe that it took us two days to realize Cerise is gone." Iris says, looking off to the side sternly.

"Yeaah..." Anna replies, scratching the back of her head.

"We were so focused on the situation going on in this kingdom that we forgot about him..." Ashen joins in the conversation, sweatdropping.

Anna looks at him. "Yeah, I know."

Claire sits down as she watches the guards. "He could've ditched us when we were getting caught." Claire says calmly.

The gang all narrow their eyes at the Shinx. "No way! I refuse to believe that, Claire!" Natalie says.

"Yeah! Cerise is our friend and he'll never do that!" Mark agrees, gripping his fists.

Claire turns her head towards the two and says, "Well, what other reason do you think he's not with us then?". Natalie glances at Claire, leading her to shrug unsurely. "I'm sorry, mistress. As much as I'd like to agree with you, I can see my point of view standing out more towards this. I mean again, why else would he be gone?"

Natalie blinks at the Shinx before shaking her head. "No. It...can't be that...He can't just ditch us like that..." Natalie looks at Iris, Ashen, Anna, Lucas and Trent. "R-Right?" The five look at each other for a moment before shrugging at the Zorua, leading her to become anxious. She whimpers, shaking her head once more. "No way. He's our friend!"

Claire rubs the Zorua's back gently. "Maybe he didn't see us as his friend. Thus, leading him to betray us."

Natalie sighs. "First Iris being a jerk, then us getting imprisoned here, and now two of our friends aren't with us." Iris rolls her eyes and folds her arms, looking away from Natalie. The Zorua then slams her paw down. "Are there any more terrible things about to happen!? Maybe like, I don't know, a meteor striking down at us or something!?"

Claire's eyes widen a bit. "Now that sounds like a badass way to die." Everyone, except Iris, blinks at the Shinx in a concerning manner. "...I'm not helping, aren't I?"

Anna sighs and walks towards Natalie. "I think that you're exaggerating over this, Natalie. You too, Claire. Cerise couldn't ditch us because he had nowhere else to go. I'd sure as heck be confused as to where I'm going if I was planning to ditch you all." Anna speaks.

"To be honest, who knows if he could be faking his amnesia and know his way around these areas this whole time?" Claire solemnly tilts her head at Anna, giving the Ninetales an unsettling feeling.

Ashen shrugs. "Can't help but say that she does have a point, Anna...Even for a kid, oddly enough." Ashen says.

"Why thanks for agreeing with me. And I'm not a kid for the last time!" Claire glares at Ashen, making him feel uneasy as well.

Mark frowns, folding his arms. "Like Natalie and I said, we refuse to believe that." He says, looking at the Shinx.

Claire looks back. "Why's that?"

"Because Cerise felt terrible for the loss of my sister, leading to him wanting to travel with us..." Mark looks off to the side, sighing. "So him ditching us *can* be out of the question."

Claire blinks in a peculiar manner, raising her brow. "I see."

The Shinx then licks her paw before Lucas slams his fist on top of his hand. "That green glowing thing is Cerise!" Lucas shouts at random. The gang looks at him, raising their brows.

"I'm sorry, what?" Ashen says, tilting his head confusedly.

"I'm saying that the glowing figure that took Jimmy and the random Cloyster is Cerise, mate! My gut is telling me so!"

Anna shakes her head. "Or maybe your gut is stirring you wrong. Because to me, that thing looks like something other than Cerise." Anna says.

"Well I just have a feeling that it's him. Wanna bet, mate?"

Anna grins. "Sure. If I win, you'll have to keep your mouth shut for three days."

"And if I win, you'll have to be nice to me for six days!"

Anna's eyes widen. "Six!? That's a lot for me to handle!"

"I was thinking twenty days." Lucas leans forward and raises his brow sinisterly. "Do you want that instead?" Anna gulps and shakes her head. "Alright. Then do we have a deal?"

Anna grins once more. "Yep. A deal it is." The two go to shake each other's paws before three guards arrive at their spot and tell them to continue the hunt. They all begin their search: Claire and Natalie look through the bushes, Mark climbing up one of the trees before searching through its leaves, Trent walking to a small pond, and the rest beginning to dig the ground or skim around a bit.

Trent gets on his knees and searches through the pond, swaying his arms separately inside of it calmly. His hands are touching nothing but pebbles and rocks within the pond. After awhile, he feels some type of hard mineral nudging against his paw. "Hmm?" He says, blinking curiously before grabbing the hard mineral and taking it out. He sees a marble-like stone with an blue, reddish symbol in his hand. His eyes widen in shock and awe, leading him to turn around immediately. "Hey! I found a Mega Stone!"

"What!?" Everyone says, stopping putting their progress on halt and looks at the Lucario. The three Cloysters float towards the Pokemon immediately, one of them eyeing at Trent sternly.

"Are you certain that thing is a Mega Stone?" The first guard asks. "Because last time, I had to backhand a prisoner in the head with my spear because they thought they found a Mega Stone when really, it was just a rock."

Trent blinks before shaking his head. "No no. This is the real deal. See?" He shows the Cloysters the Mega Stone, having them awe in amazement at its glorious glitter due to the sun shining at it.

"Well I be damned, he's telling the truth!" The second guard yells.

Soon, Sheer arrives in the forest. "Alright men, keep searching for the prisoners. It's by the order from the ki--" Sheer pauses for a moment and notices the group of Pokemon surrounding the Lucario by the small pond. "Oh?" Due to curiosity, Sheer floats towards the group. "What seems to be going on here?" He looks at the guards, awaiting an answer.

The first guard looks at Sheer and says, "This Lucario here happens to find a Mega Stone, sir.". Sheer looks at the stone in Trent's hand and begins to widen his eyes in amazement.

"You sir just earned yourself a break throughout the whole day. Come follow me now, please."

Everyone blinks in surprise from what Sheer said. "Follow you!?" The crew yells, eyeing at the large barbed Cloyster.

Trent shrugs. "Erm, don't you think it's a bit unfair to give me the full day off and not them?" The Lucario says, looking at Iris and the others.

Iris nods and says, "I agree. Why give him a break throughout the whole day when he found something rare, but not us?"

Sheer shakes his head humbly. "Tsks tsks, lady. That only happens when you find a Mega Stone." Sheer says calmly, smiling at the crew.

Iris grits her teeth. "What!? But you said we only get a one second break from any rare items we found."

"Well now I'm saying that you get a one second break from any rare items that you find *besides Mega Stones*. I forgot to mention that." Sheer smirks at the Dragonite. "My apologies."

Iris snarls. "Are you flipping--" Iris begins to shout some random insults and slurs at the large barbed Cloyster as Sheer and the guards guide Trent toward the exit of the forest. Iris then folds her arms, huffing in anger. "Can you believe this guy?"

Anna glares at the four Pokemon leaving. "Yes, this guy is a total jerk." Anna says before turning towards Iris. "Just like you."

Iris looks back and shakes her head. "Still on that, huh?"

"You're damn right, sista." Anna and Iris' eyes come in contact with each other, Iris glancing at her red eyes sternly while Anna stares at her grayish green eyes.

The Dragonite then sighs heavily and looks away. "Whatever."

As the four Pokemon leave the forest, Sheer floats next to the Lucario and whispers something to him. The crew happens to notice this from a distance, looking rather confused by the action being performed by Sheer.

"You know...I really don't understand why Sheer always whispers into Trent's ears." The Ninetales says, putting her paw against her chin. "It's gotten me curious, honestly."

"Same here, Anna." Ashen agrees, scratching the side of his head. "I have a feeling that he could be planning something with Trent. Not quite certain on what exactly."

Natalie glances at the exit for a moment before nodding. "Yep. And that's why, I have an idea!" She says, getting up on her feet.

The crew looks at the Zorua, taking quite the interest into her thought process. "What would that be, Natalie?" Mark asks.

"Well, it's something that just popped in my head, and I kinda feel like an idiot for not thinking about it until now. Wanna hear it?"

Claire nods obediently. "We'll certainly like to hear your idea, mistress." Claire says, leaning close to Natalie.

"Alright then." Natalie then tells everyone about the idea while whispering to them.

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Back at the castle, Exo is humming and minding his own business while strolling through the hallway that happens to be nearby the stairs. He seems to be carrying a badge that looks like a Cloyster shell with it being color yellow as he stops by a door next to him. He then knocks on the door calmly.

"Why hello Sheer, are you there?" He asks humbly. "The king asked me a favor on giving you a special gift." No response. Exo shrugs nervously. "Um, you there Sheer? You...normally don't allow anyone in your room so...Just, wanting to make sure." No response, again. After waiting for awhile, Exo decides to open the door and enter inside. "Erm, I'll just set the badge in your room, if you don't mind." He closes the door behind him and gasps. "Whoooa. So this is how Sheer's room looks like."

Exo marvels at the inside of the senator's room; Seeing a blue bed being by the upper-left corner of the room while a red dresser is on the opposite side of the bed, being at the upper-right corner. The dresser contains a quill inside of an ink container, all sitting on top of the dresser. The walls are painted the color yellow, and there's another dresser positioned parallel to the first. The second dresser has a chair sitting beside it, and a lamp sitting on top of it. There's also a closet in between the two dressers on the right wall, and a window next to the bed.

"Sheer has quite the intriguing room, I must say." Exo sighs heavily. "Sadly, throughout all these times I've been living with the king," Exo stares at the window with tears streaming down drastically. "I NEVER HAVE A WINDOW! LIKE, IT WOULD BE NICE FOR ME TO SEE THIS KINGDOM'S GLORIOUS NATURE FROM MY ROOM!" He then takes a deep breath and exhales. "Alright alright. I got to calm down. Can't let something as ordinary as a window ruin my day...as if the day wasn't ruined the moment those two prisoners has escaped thanks to some glowing thing." Exo sweatdrops as he floats towards the left corner dresser. "First it kidnapped the egg, now the two prisoners! Seriously, what is that thing and why is it doing this!?" Exo sighs and sets the badge onto the dresser. "Ugh...hopefully they'll capture that thing and return the prisoners soon." He soon comes across a paper being on the dresser, looking at it confusedly. "Hmm?" He notices the paper seems like a checklist as he picks it up. "Looks like some type of to-do list..."

Exo reads the paper carefully and notices a checkmark being next to the words 'Assassination of Senator Brisk'. Exo gasps in shock and horror, looking up at the wall in front of him. "Oh dear...H-Has Sheer been planning Brisk's death all along? I mean, this can't be true...right?" Exo says to himself before looking back at the checklist paper. He notices another checkmark next to the words saying 'Manipulate the king into thinking he's making the right decisions'. "Oh dear Arceus..." He also spots something else that hasn't been checkmarked yet, but it leads him to become terrified: 'Kill King Cocoon, take all of his Pokedollars, and leave the kingdom in ruin'. The door begins to open behind the Cloyster, him not being aware of it. "I-I have to warn the king about Sheer's doings right now!"

Within a flash, Exo is hit in the head by a chair, leading him to fall towards the ground. He's passed out, him groaning a bit while lying there. Behind the Cloyster is none other than Sheer, who's wielding a now broken chair. "I didn't have to do this, Exo. But you just couldn't wait on the owner of this room to come by first, can't you?" Sheer says in a silent yet annoyed tone. He drops the chair and takes the checklist paper out of Exo's possession, opening the dresser in front of him and setting it inside of there. "I should really put that paper in this dresser next time." He mumbles to himself before looking at Exo's body. He grabs the body and stares at the closet, dragging the Cloyster towards the two doors. He then opens the closet and sets him inside of it. "...Ropes. That's what I'm missing."

Sheer looks at the second dresser and floats towards it immediately, digging inside of it only to get out a rope. Afterwards, he returns back to Exo and wraps the rope around him, tying him up. He then closes the closet and locks it by pressing a button on the doorknob. Sheer takes a deep breath and sighs, looking at the badge on the dresser. "Well don't mind if I do take this lovely badge here." He grabs the badge and looks at the closet. "Ah, badges like these bring me back to my childhood. When my grandfather had given me something similar to this...before telling me to throw it away, because badges seemed meaningless, when bold words and actions are the way to earn true respect." He smirks and puts the badge onto his inner shell. "I suppose I can agree with him on that. But I'll put it on anyway because I never gotten the chance to wear a badge in the first place."

He looks at the closet confidently. "You probably gave it to me on request of the king. I thank you for that, Exo." The large barbed Cloyster sighs in relief before staring at the exit. "Have fun staying stuck in the closet, my fellow comrade." Sheer then floats out of the room and closes the door behind him.

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Nighttime has arrived. The guards outside of the castle are still in search of the prisoners at the Zero Forest. Meanwhile, inside of the castle, other guards are returning the crew to their respective prison cells. Trent, Norah and her family are in their cells already as they look at the gang. While this happens, Anna and Natalie look at each other before Natalie lets out a cry.

“Waaah! I want to go use the restroom so badly!” The Zorua cries, pleading one of the guards. Lucas looks down at himself and blinks for a moment.

“Me too, actually.” Lucas says before squirming a bit. Anna glares at the Furret.

“Shhh!” The Ninetales whispers to him immediately.

“But I really do need to use it.” Lucas whimpers, squirming some more. “I haven’t used the restroom in a while, mate.”

“Well you better flipping hold it for now. Because we really need Natalie to pull this off. Got it?”

Lucas whines while nodding. “O-Okay.”

The guard sighs at the Zorua and shakes his head. “No. You can hold your fountain.” He says to her.

Natalie shakes her head and whines some more. “But I have to use it so badly! I-I don’t think I can take it anymore!” She exclaims, nudging against the Cloyster and clinging to him. “Please! Please! JUST PLEASE, LET ME USE IT!”

The guard looks at the others and rolls his eyes. “Fine. Just follow me so that you can shut up, alright?”

“Yaaay!”

Natalie clings to the guard as he looks at the others. “You four stay here while I take this Zorua to the restroom.” The four nod before he exits out of the dungeon with the Zorua hanging onto him. Everyone looks at the two leaving, Anna gulps nervously.

Be careful, Natalie. Anna thinks while lying down on the cold ground, having her face be on top of her foreleg.

The two head towards their right within a hallway and stop by a gray door. The door has the male and female symbol on it as the guard opens the door. As he enters, there’s a sink being on the left side along with a mirror. And on the right side are two doors leading to separate restrooms: One for males and the other for females. He heads towards the female restroom door as Natalie hops off from him.

“Okay little Zorua, hurry up and use it. I don’t have all day so--” The Cloyster is suddenly interrupted by a Shadow Ball hitting him, sending him crashing against the wall. “What the!?” He looks to see Natalie sticking her tongue out at him, leading him to become infuriated as her eyes begins to glow dark red. “Why you little brat!” He takes out his spear and charges towards the Zorua. He tries swinging at her but misses and gets slammed against the sink from Natalie's

Night Daze attack, falling to the ground face first. The sink breaks due to the impact, water spilling out of it. The guard is knocked out cold as the Zorua's body stops glowing red along with her eyes.

"Well that wasn't so hard." Natalie says, brushing herself off before giggling. "What a fool for letting a *Tricky Fox* Pokemon such as myself go to the restroom. Teehee." She then opens the female restroom door and pushes the guard inside of it, huffing while doing so. She closes the door afterwards and sighs in relief. "Phew. Now to do something that I should had done before." Natalie soon begins to glow dark pink, enlarging herself and changing into something else. Spikes beginning to appear on both sides of her body and a horn appearing on her forehead as well. She stops glowing only to reveal that her appearance has changed into a Cloyster, no longer her Zorua self.

"I can't believe that it took me till now to realize that I have the Illusion ability." She says in a male voice. "Oh...and my voice is different now that I'm taking on the appearance of this Cloyster." She begins to squirm, moving her body sluggishly. "W-Wow, this body feels weird to control. So heavy and...awkward." The Cloyster sweatdrops. "How do these Cloysters even get out of bed with this much weight on their bodies!?" Natalie huffs before turning towards a spear near the sink and grabbing it.

"Alright. It's time to go find Sheer!" She says to herself, floating towards the door and leaving the restroom. Despite changing her appearance, her tail remains visible at the end of the shell body. She begins searching around the castle, leaving the hallway and entering the center area of the castle. She stumbles across Sheer and Mat chatting with each other by the stairs, leading her to float behind a wall and spy on them.

"Glad to see that you achieved the King's Respect badge, Sheer." Mat says.

"Why thank you, fellow Mat. It takes time, patience and effort to earn such an honorable badge." Sheer replies back, looking up at the stairs firmly.

Mat chuckles nervously. "Well, I tried all of those but apparently, the king isn't giving the badge to me yet. It's almost as if my hard work being a guard here was for nothing."

Sheer looks at Mat, eyeing him. "Maybe you're not trying hard enough. With the amount of joking around and immature acts that you tend to do, no wonder he doesn't give you the yellow badge of respect." Sheer smirks at Mat, leading him to shrug and become speechless. "Now then, I'll be off to bed. Had a long day today and I feel like starting fresh for tomorrow."

"Yeah...same here." Mat sees Sheer floating upstairs as he follows along, looking rather upset. *Asshole.*

Natalie is about to follow the two upstairs until she is spotted by another Cloyster guard. "Hey! What you doing by the stairs, and not with the others at the dungeon?" The guard asks, eyeing Natalie.

"Oh, um, ahem." Natalie clears her throat. "I was looking around the interior of this wonderful castle. I was so amazed by the designs here, that I got so distracted by it lately!" She says in a cheery, male tone. The guard raises his brow at the Cloyster.

"Erm, glad to hear that. The castle does look lovely indeed. But we got work to do so no loafing around at random."

Natalie salutes to the guard, exposing her tail slightly. "Roger that, sir!"

The guard then notices the tail and tilts his head confusedly. "I...didn't know that Cloysters have tails before. In fact, I don't recall one ever having such."

Natalie blinks for a moment before looking behind her, noticing her Zorua tail being visible and sweatdropping. *Oh crud! I didn't know that my ability would expose my tail during the Illusion!* She thinks before looking at the guard. "U-Um...it's a, um, new type of fashion I have for Zorua's tails. Yeah. I got this tail after axing off a Zorua before coming to this kingdom...I just really adore them, that's all."

The guard's eyes widen in disturbance. "Oookay. I'll be heading outside to go help the others find the prisoners now. You take care, buddy..." He then scurries off to the exit of the castle quickly as Natalie waves at him with her spear.

"You too, bud!" Natalie then proceeds to head upstairs, trying not to be spotted along the way as she sweatdrops. *Holy heckles, was that embarrassing to say...* After reaching the top floor, she sees a narrow hallway in front of her. On the left side of the hallway are about four windows, while on the right are two bedrooms. Natalie sees Mat entering the first one, him violently slamming the door behind him.

Natalie flinches from the amount of force Mat puts into the slam. *Jeez. He must be real mad about what Sheer said to him.* Natalie thinks. *Sheer is such a jerk, I swear.* Speaking of which, Natalie spots the large barbed Cloyster turning to his left and heading into another pathway. Natalie floats quickly after him. While following Sheer, she looks around the hallway and admires its beauty surrounding it throughout. The walls are painted the color red and have some decorations on it, such as a drawing of a Cloyster holding a Shellder. *Wow. I've forgotten about the beautiful scenery that this castle has.* She smiles. *Guess I was right about the king's castle looking pretty.* She soon stops to see Sheer opening his door and entering his room. She looks to the side several times to see if anyone is around. Nothing so far. She then glows dark pink again, her size decreasing as her spikes begin to disappear. She drops her spear as she hurries towards the room, completely changing back into her Zorua self.

Sheer closes the door behind him, Natalie managing to enter just before it fully closes. This leads him to blink and look around immediately. "Hmm?" He says confusedly. Nothing seems to be out of the norm, leading him to raise his brow. "Weird...Thought I saw someone passing by just recently." He lets out a heavy sigh. "Oh well." He then floats towards the first dresser and opens it, taking out the checklist paper. Over at the second dresser lies Natalie staying hidden behind it, looking at the large barbed Cloyster.

Hopefully I'll find out what he whispered to Trent earlier, or else I'll be sleeping here instead of the prison. Natalie thinks before shifting a bit. ...*Which I wouldn't mind, actually.* She watches Sheer grab his quill, dip it into the ink container, and put a checkmark next the words 'Find a specific Mega Stone'. Sheer soon sighs in relief.

"Now that the Mega Stone is checked off from the list, I can proceed to the final step: Kill Cocoon and steal his Pokedollars." Sheer sets the paper onto the dresser and grabs something else within his dresser. He takes out the blue, reddish Mega Stone from earlier, admiring its beautifully spherical structure. "Only then, will our deal be achieved, my friend. And I will have my every wish granted at long last." Sheer grins and puts the Mega Stone back as Natalie gasps at what she witnessed, her eyes jolting right open.

Sheer is planning on killing the king!? All because of this deal he has with someone? Natalie looks to the side, thinking deeply. *Then that means...Oh no.* She grits her teeth. *I have to warn the others before it's too late!* She then begins to sneak out from the dresser, trying to head towards the exit. But she's greeted with an Ice Shard almost hitting her, yelping from the sudden attack as she jumps to the side.

"I don't think that's necessary, little Zorua." Sheer says calmly, leading Natalie to turn around slowly. He has another Ice Shard prepared within his possession. "Haven't your parents ever told you that intruding on someone's privacy is wrong?"

Natalie snarls. "So is making a deal that involves killing someone!"

Sheer glares at Natalie. "*You'll* be the one killed if you dare move, little Zorua."

Natalie lifts her foreleg up, forming a Shadow Ball on her paw. "I just did!" She immediately fires the Shadow Ball at Sheer. Sheer flings his Ice Shard at the ball, causing it to collide massively with the ghastly orb. Sheer sees black smoke forming from the two attacks before Natalie jumps out of the smoke, her body forming a red aura around it along with her eyes being dark red. She screams while using Night Daze on Sheer, pushing her paw forward. Sheer's eyes glows blue, causing the Zorua to stop glowing completely. She hits Sheer's shell normally, gritting her teeth into frustration. "Dang it!"

Sheer then slams Natalie down with his large, barbed horn. Natalie struggles to get out of his grasp. She then bites down on the horn, leading Sheer to scream in pain and fling her violently towards the wall. Natalie yelps after crashing into it, groaning from the impact. "Ugh.

You...insignificant parasite. Trying to cling towards my plans and ruin them!" He floats towards her, glancing sternly as he have his face closer to hers. "Then you try breaking my horn. Which I've been keeping clean and sharp for so long. You filthy peasant!" Natalie blinks for a moment before giggling softly. Sheer raises his brow. "What's so funny?"

The Zorua sighs in relief. "Nothing, nothing. I just so happened to find your weakness..."

"And that is?"

Natalie stares into Sheer's eyes and grins deviously. "*Your horn.*"

Sheer widens his eyes, a fiery rage growing within them. "SHUT UP! I DON'T NEED SOME STUPID BRAT TELLING ME WHAT IS AND ISN'T MY WEAKNESS!" Then the enraged Cloyster smacks Natalie towards the second dresser with his spike, leading her to break it due to the impact.

"U-Ugh..." Natalie lies on the ground unconscious, barely moving her body.

No enemy shall know about Force Shatter's weakness. NONE! Sheer thinks to himself, rage still burning within him but able to think normally again. He then looks inside of his broken dresser and takes out another rope.

"I better hope that no one else notices this, because this is my last rope..." Natalie could hear the still apparent anger within Sheer's voice. He sighs and goes to tie up Natalie, having her forelegs be unable to move. After unlocking the closet, he opens it and tosses Natalie inside of the closet with Exo. Sheer then sees that Exo is beginning to wake up and sweatdrops. "Oh bucket of icicles..."

"Hmm? Huh!?" Exo says before looking at Natalie and then at Sheer. He soon screams, "HELP! SOMEBODY HEL--"

Sheer interrupts him by slamming the closet door immediately, locking it. All Sheer could hear are muffling noises as he sighs stressfully. "Something tells me that I should had put some cloths in their mouths..." Sheer says to himself before hearing a knock on his door.

"Hey Sheer, are you alright in there!?" A male voice says in a worried tone.

Sheer jumps, recognizing the familiar voice. "Great. Now I REALLY wished that I covered their mouths with some cloths! U-Uh..." Sheer then screams and yells as he floats towards the door, opening it. He sees Mat in front of him while he continues his screaming banter. "OH HI, MAT!"

Mat raises his brow at Sheer, looking at him strangely. "Uh...you okay there, pal? I heard noises and--"

“OH THAT’S ME JUST BEING EXCITED TO START A FRESH NEW DAY IN THE KINGDOM, TOMORROW! JUST SO ECSTATIC, YOU KNOW!?”

“Uh...it’ll be just like every other day we have at the kingdom. No need to get too excited about a new day happening tomorrow, buddy.” Mat blinks.

“I DON’T CARE! I JUST NEED TO EXCITE MYSELF SO THAT TOMORROW CAN BE WORTH IT FOR ME!” Sheer sighs happily. “NOW LEAVE PLEASE! I’M TRYING TO WITNESS THE AMOUNT OF JOY I WANT TO MUSTER AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE!” He then slams the door in front of Mat’s face, continuing his screams and yells.

Mat looks at the door with a ‘What the heck?’ expression as he sweatdrops. “Yeaah...and I’m the one doing the immature acts at times.” He says in a sarcastic manner before heading off to his room.

Sheer’s screams slowly starts turning into a laugh as he looks up at the ceiling in satisfaction, the closet continuing its muffling noises. And while the setting cuts to black, Sheer’s laughter echoes for a brief moment before fading away.

. . .

The next day has arrived; The sun shining its rays towards the Zero Forest, including its deep part. Within the deep part, Zeke and Jimmy are munching on some berries they found from one of the trees. They were three different types of berries: The blue orange-shaped Oran, the citron-shaped Sitrus, and the plum-shaped Lum. Sitting down on a small hill nearby the two is Cerise, who’s looking at the dim light stretching through the trees.

Hmm...knowing that I can change my appearance now, I do wonder... Cerise looks down at his paw, glancing at it. *If this’ll further aid me in finding out who I am.* The canine then takes his eyes onto the two Pokemon, seeing them finishing their meals. “Are you two ready?”

The two look at Cerise and nod. “You bet your sweet Icy Supreme that we are!” Zeke says confidently, standing firm in front of the canine. “It’s time to save this kingdom!”

“And rescue our friends!” Jimmy follows along.

Cerise smiles at the two and stands on all fours. “Alright then.” Cerise lifts his chin up while Jimmy cracks his knuckles and Zeke gets in a battle stance, shifting left to right repeatedly. “*Let’s do this.*”

End of Chapter 17.