

## Rubber Rocket Attack (WIP) Preview

By: Firingwall

“And here is your espresso,” Reggie said, holding back a tired sigh as she handed the beverage over to the woman. “Thank you for coming, and I hope-”

“Yeah yeah, drone,” snapped the platinum blonde, uppity customer, “‘Have a happy day’ and all that stock, boring drivel daddy has you say. God, you are such a drone that I don’t think this espresso will help me through this.”

There were a few snickers, Reggie’s right eye twitching. In the back of her head, all she could think was, *just get lost already, Caitlin. I really, REALLY don’t need you right now.*

Reggie was working at Quick Energy, a local coffee shop in her hometown. She was working there to help pay for her apartment and, eventually, her ultimate goal. She wanted to finally put enough money together to begin her own, personal Pokémon journey. It cost a lot more than she expected, but that did not matter. She was more than willing to put up with a little manual labor to achieve her dream.

The only unforeseen issue was the owner’s daughter. A bratty lady around her age named Caitlin. She was an utter frustration to Reggie with her nasty attitude, how she constantly looked down on her, and how she liked bringing in this mean girl squad with her to back her up. It was an irritation like no other to her.

*You can do this*, Reggie thought, sighing a breath of relief as Caitlin and her friends went over to their corner to chat away about whatever nonsense they were on about, *just two more months I should be good...*

The jingle of the front door snapped her attention away from her thoughts. She felt her cheeks warm, her heart race just a touch. In had walked a figure that excited her greatly.

“Hello,” said the young man that approached. He flashed a smile and a wink, her heart beating harder at the results.

“H-hello Kyle,” she answered. *Remain professional, Reggie.* She cleared her voice and said, “May I get you the usual or will we be trying something new today?”

“The usual will be fine but thank you for asking. You are so sweet.” Reggie felt like her heart was going to cartoonishly flutter, and that her face was going to turn beet red.

However, she composed herself and went to prepare the young man’s coffee. She wanted to make sure it came out extra right. Anything for this lucky guy.

Kyle was a regular of the coffee shop, having shown up a few weeks after she started working there. Apparently, a Pokémon trainer himself, she couldn’t help but be pulled in by his strangely alluring life and adventures he liked talking about. Plus, his charming good looks helped

make him even more appealing to the young woman. He was definitely one of the highlights of working there.

After fetching his drink and him paying, she said, “I hope you enjoy your drink and the rest of your day.”

He took a sip from his cup, gently blowing some of the steam rising off it first. Afterwards, he gave her a curious look. “I’m sure I will... but I gotta say, you are something special. Care to join me for a little stroll around town?”

Time felt like it slowed to a crawl, the whole world fading around the two of them. Reggie felt her heart thump against her chest. *Did he... did he just...?*

She cleared her voice and asked, trying to remain calm and collected, “What was that?”

He chuckled, taking another sip before saying again, “Did you want to join me on a stroll around town? Nothing too long. Just you and me.”

Reggie gulped. This was it and it was just so out of the blue to boot! A chance date with her big crush? She felt like her heart was going to explode right there and then.

“W-well,” she hesitantly answered, “That does sound lovely. How about after I get off?”

“I was thinking more right now since I’m going to be busy later. But, if you can’t right now, I get it. Maybe we can chat next time I get into town.”

Reggie felt the sweat on her forehead, the air leaving her body. She quickly glanced at the clock off to the side. *Well, my break is in a few minutes... maybe if I ask, I can take it now?*

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“Yeah, being a trainer is great and all,” Kyle said in a casual, laid-back tone, “Meet new people, see neat places, make money. The Pokémon are neat, I suppose, but it’s more about the experience after a while, ya know?”

Reggie nodded. She didn’t really see becoming a Pokémon trainer the same way as he did, but she could see the appeal of some of the things he was talking about.

All in all, the date has been going well. Reggie and Kyle had taken a nice walk through the park nearby and were sitting down, eating some of the cookies from the cafe. Everything was going better than she could have hoped for. Yes, he was a little full of himself, but she just couldn’t help but be sucked in by his charm.

“What are you hoping to do when you get out there?” He asked curiously, “What is Reggie’s goals and wants out of a Pokémon journey experience?”

“Oh! Well, I suppose I just kinda want to do something... different with my life. I just wanna throw caution to the wind and get out there, travel from place to place. I just want to see what it’s like... it’s silly.”

“Nah,” Kyle stated, patting her on the shoulder and giving her a pleasant look, “Nothing wrong with that at all. Again, it’s all about the experience and finding yourself.”

She felt her cheeks warm, a smile slipping on her face. This was nice. She never really been on a date, or whatever this was called before. It felt really, really nice. She felt like she could do this for hours and hours. Just here, with him, walking and talking.

*I wish this could last, I wish this could-*

Something in the back of her mind clicked, her heart beginning to pound. *Oh crap!* She tucked her hand into her pocket and snatched her phone out of there.

“Crap!” she said, catching him a little off guard, “I gotta... I gotta go right now!”

“Wait, did I say some-”

“Nojustgottagetbacktowork!Thanksforeverything!” With that jumble of words, she turned and began running back. Her break had just ended five minutes ago, and she was quite a distance away from the coffee shop. She had to run as fast as she could.

But yet, in the back of her mind, she realized that it wouldn’t really matter.

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He looked Reggie straight in the eye. His face looked calm, relaxed, but in his eyes was this serious, piercing look. It unnerved her to no end.

Reggie had gotten back to Quick Energy, twenty minutes late. The owner was waiting for her, having taken over her post in the meantime. He was all smiling, chatting with the customer at the counter. But, the second he saw her, that look came over him.

She could feel her face burning up, her body trembling. *I screwed up, so, so badly*, she thought. *No excuses. Just plead for forgiveness.*

She approached him and said first, “Mr. Byers, I am sorry for being late. I lost track of time and tried to get back as fast as possible. I should have been watching the clock more closely than I did. I am really, really sorry for this.”

Mr. Byers stared at her, saying nothing. It felt like an eternity before he finally made a noise by clearing his throat.

“Alright then, Ms. Caryle,” he responded, “A mistake. Time simply forgotten and lost track of. Happens to the best of us, I know.”

Her heart felt like it skipped several beats. ...*but... but...*

“But...” And there it was, everything sinking and falling. “...it does not excuse you being this late getting back. Five minutes? Would have been understandable. But nearly half an hour? That is simply inexcusable here.”

Her heart started racing. She wanted to say something in her defense, but nothing was coming out.

The man let out a heavy sigh, saying, “So, I’m going to have to let you go for today. I’ll call you *when* you can come back. You need to reflect on the value of responsibility.”

Reggie flinched. “But, Mr. Byers, what about my pay? I need to pay for rent soon and-”

“Sorry, but you need to understand things from my perspective.” She didn’t hear the rest of anything he said until he asked if she understood him. She didn’t care. She just felt like she had got punched in the gut, like everything had fallen apart.

So, when he did get to the “you understand” portion, she merely nodded her head and left. She never felt so low.

*Dammit*, she thought, gritting her teeth, *I just... I just thought I have a little fun in my life while I wait for it to actually start... why did everything have to...*

“Hey Reg, why the long face?”

The poor lady stopped in her track as she stepped out the front door of the coffee shop. She looked to the right and right there was Caitlin, having this nasty, mean grin on her face. Her posse wasn’t around this time, but it still didn’t matter. Reggie had no time for this.

She sighed and said, “What do you want?”

The platinum blonde chuckled. “Oh, nothing really. Just seeing such an incompetent, lazy, bad drone as yourself get chewed out by daddy. You really messed up dear and honestly, I’m surprised he didn’t fire you right there. But, I suppose, there’s always next time.”

*I’m guessing she keeps badmouthing me when they’re in private*, Reggie thought, rubbing her face. However, it didn’t matter.

“That it? Can I go now?”

“Weeellllll, I suppose you can-”

“Hey! There you are babe! Thought you’d meet me inside?” That voice instantly snapped Reggie out of her frustration, her heart beating quickly.

Rushing up was Kyle. He looked quite ecstatic and excited. She wished she could extend the feeling or at least feel the same way on some level.

“Oh, hey, now’s not the right-” Reggie stepped forward to meet him, but he just ran past her. Her heart skipped a beat. A drop of sweat dripped down her forehead as she heard a wet, soft smack behind her.

She turned and looked. There he was now. His arms were around Caitlin, hand on her hip and another clenching her back. His face was against hers, giving her another kiss on the lips. Caitlin, in turn, had her arms around his back and was returning the kiss.

Reggie stared blankly. Nothing was processing or going through her mind correctly. All of it was just completely screwy and messy.

After all that staring though, Caitlin finally broke away from the kisses to look back at her. She smiled widely, brightly. “Oh hey,” she said in this sweet and innocent tone, “Reg, this is my boyfriend, Kyle. Isn’t he just the greatest?”

Reggie said nothing. She just looked at her and then at Kyle. In her mind, all she could think was, *is... is this some kind of sick joke?*

Kyle finally looked at her and smiled. However, while there was still his sense of charm in it, there was something else now. Something sleazy, something vile. Something just downright ugly that made her insides revolt.

“Hey, you’re... you’re... oh! That girl that always gets my coffee wrong,” he said, acting all casually. “Gees, what’s with that freaky look? You get fired or something?”

Reggie wanted to ask him what was happening. She wanted to ask Caitlin what was going on. She wanted to scream loudly at the top of her lungs. She just wanted to cry.

But, Reggie knew anything like that would just hurt more. She held her tongue on that and tried to be as cool as she could, “Oh... n-no. Just got the day off. An-anyway, I should get going. Just... get going...”

“Oh, well alright,” he said simply.

Reggie turned to leave, but as she did, she heard him add, “Oh, next time I’m in, try to listen to what I say, alright? One more mix up with my drink and I’ll have to ask for your manager.”

Reggie nodded and walked away. She could then snicker and laugh to themselves, her pace beginning to pick up speed. She had to keep moving. She just had to get away from that. She did not want to be around it at all. She just wanted to be as far away as she could.