

IT would soon be winter. Venturing outside had become a rarity. In the towns, the shops and cafes closed early: their trade withered as soon as the sun began to set. Even the Pokémon were less likely to leave their homes and nests than usual. The sky darkened early, and the wind blew, and it seemed a good idea to stay away.

Bulbasaur walked through the forest, glad there was still a little warmth in the air. It was quiet with fewer Pokémon around than usual, but the path was covered in brown and yellow leaves, crunching gently as Bulbasaur padded through them. They felt soft under Bulbasaur's feet, and on some parts of the path they were piled up more thickly, tickling against Bulbasaur's belly too. But as pleasant as those feelings were, something seemed incongruous. The bulb on Bulbasaur's back seemed strangely heavy, oddly out of place for a walk through the woods, as if it was about to topple off.

At the edge of the forest, where the bare trees thinned, there was a field. A Sawsbuck stood in the middle, surrounded by a few Deerling in their autumn colours, their brown and gold matching the leaves of the forest floor. Those coats had changed colour since the summer, and Bulbasaur thought, they would change again once winter came. The deer Pokémon were in harmony with the seasons: it was an appropriate reminder of how the year turned, and how nature and Pokémon depended on each other as time passed through all its phases. And then Bulbasaur realised what was wrong. That bulb – all

of Bulbasaur's body, in fact – its appearance didn't change like Sawsbuck's and Deerling's did. It stayed green all year round – and it was appropriate for the warm, bright seasons, but in autumn and winter it seemed garish. It clashed with the subtle palette of the leaves. It made it seem as if there was new growth and new life, when everyone was just trying their best to get through the coldest and darkest part of the year.

Returning home, Bulbasaur was embarrassed. There seemed to be no such shame among Bulbasaur's fellows, who went about their lives in much the same way as they did every other evening. But Bulbasaur still felt disconcerted, and went to seek out the wise Venusaur who governed their clan, hoping to gain some insight into what this feeling meant, and how it could be overcome.

"You're worried, aren't you?" said Venusaur. "You find it hard to believe that anyone would want to see a Pokémon that looks so verdant when the leaves are turning brown and falling from the trees? But, Bulbasaur, your foliage is a sign of hope. It reminds everyone that the spring will return. That bulb on your back signifies life to come. When the humans began to catalogue and describe us, they placed you first on their list, because that bulb is the start of everything. You must go out and show your green colours, even when the leaves are falling and dying, because it tells the world that they will be reborn."

And so, as the sun rose into a grey sky the next day, Bulbasaur went back into the woods and felt the leaves crunch

underfoot. That clash of colours had become a source of pride: just as Venusaur had said, it was proof that everything would eventually cycle around once more. However harsh the coming winter, it would one day be spring again.