

A Very Confused Pokémon Adventure

Chapters 31-34

Novus Peregrine

Disclaimer: I own neither Pokémon or Nier Automata. All rights to Pokémon belong to Gamefreak (so far as I'm aware). Likewise, Nier belongs to PlatinumGames (as far as I'm aware), not me.

Chapter 31 – Off to See the Maniac!

“You know, I don’t think I’m ever going to stop being surprised when you keep name dropping famous people casually and announcing you want to visit them. I mean, *technically* this is sort of the first time, since we haven’t visited Professor Oak, but the point stands.”

2B cocked her head as Zoey broke the companionable silence that had settled over them as they walked along Route 24 this morning. They’d taken a single day to rest and recover after their gym battles, before 2B had explained to Zoey that Bill had wanted her to stop by when she passed through Cerulean City. Zoey *had* seemed surprised, but had also jumped on the idea immediately.

“You didn’t seem bothered by the suggestion when I brought it up?”

Zoey stared at her for a moment, then shook her head.

“I’m not *bothered* by it, 2B. I’m just surprised. Bill is almost as famous worldwide as Professor Oak is, for being the inventor of the Pokémon storage system. Unlike Oak, though, Bill is known to be an introverted recluse who doesn’t like people bothering him. So the idea he *asked you* to come visit him is worth mentioning. How do you even know him?”

2B blinked, processing that with a small frown. She supposed she hadn’t really thought of Bill as someone famous. He was just a ‘computer nerd,’ as Daisy had labeled him. Sort of like a less dangerous 9S who she probably wouldn’t have to murder for trying to kill everyone. He *did* remind her enough of 9S that she’d hacked into his systems to make sure. Thankfully, the worse she’d found was some extremely dubious kink fantasies about having sex *as* a pokémon. Weird, but harmless since he wasn’t doing anything to anyone without consent.

“Ah. I helped him improve his storage system algorithms quite a lot.”

She held up her storage bracer. Humans could always use visual aids, she'd found.

"That's where the new Spatial Storage Bracer product line came from. The improved algorithms allowed the two of us to create a storage unit small enough to be worn. It isn't suitable for anything living, as we couldn't get enough processing power into something portable for that. But the storage capacity is far superior to the compressed space backpacks that were the previous standard for Trainers."

Zoey blinked, expression slowly shifting to incredulous.

"You...no, I'm not even going to question it."

The redhead shook her head, visibly put whatever she'd been thinking on the subject aside, and blatantly changed the topic.

"Next topic! It should only take us two days to reach Bill's Cottage, at most, even with stops for a few hours of training. Then the same back, unless some new disaster pops up. That will put us in Cerulean right before the first Sensational Series contest. Since you promised Daisy you'd give them a try, I took the liberty of picking up an entry form...which you can submit by pokégear! So how about it, 2B? Ready for your first Contest?"

Blinking, 2B considered that...and shrugged.

"I do not see why not. I'm unsure why Daisy believed I'd be good at them. I did say I would try, however. Will you help me create a routine on the way to Bill's?"

Zoey's beaming smile told 2B that it had apparently been the right question to ask, and produced a fluttery feeling in her chest? How odd.

"Girlfriend of mine, I would love *nothing more* than to help you create a show that will knock the judges socks off!"

While 2B wasn't at all sure why knocking socks off of someone was a suitable goal, Zoey was clearly pleased with the idea. So she would give it her best. Even if she still wasn't sure why both her girlfriend and Daisy thought she'd be amazing at it...

... ..

It was their second day of walking to Bill's residence when something disrupted the planning Zoey had been doing about possible routines for 2B's upcoming Contest. Frankly, given that 2B's head felt like it was spinning a bit as she tried to keep up with all of Zoey's *many* thoughts on the subject, the 'alert' buzz coming from both of their pokégears was a bit of a relief to her. Zoey fumbled to pull hers out, even as 2B merely made an eye gesture

that would bring up the alert on the tactical visor. Thankfully, it was only a 'yellow' alert, warning trainers to be *cautious*, rather than some new sort of emergency.

Far more interesting to 2B was what it was warning them *about*.

"A swarm of Buneary? That may have potential..."

Zoey, who was only just now reading the alert, blinked and looked curiously at 2B.

"...Okay, given your team sort of has a 'cute but badass' vibe going, I could see a Buneary fitting in. Knowing you, though, I suspect you have better reasoning than that. I'm not quite seeing it, though?"

2B nodded. Cute was nice, but even with Daisy listing it as a good quality for any pokémon, it wasn't at the top of 2B's list of priorities for her partners.

"We got derailed in Mt. Moon and never looked for a Makuhita. Despite being a Normal type, Buneary can learn most of the tricks I wanted in that line, if only via TM or move tutoring. Most importantly, the various elemental punches for breath of type coverage in a single pokémon."

Zoey's brow furrowed as she considered that, slowly nodding as she did so. Obviously mentally considering what she knew about the line of pokémon in question.

"That's not a bad point, actually. Buneary are pretty common in my home region, so I've seen a lot of them used for both Battles and Contests. They *do* have a pretty impressive move pool, if you're willing and able to shell out for TMs. Lopunny can get pretty powerful too, with the right Trainer. You want to head *into* the swarm and see if we can catch you one?"

There was a reason that the Ranger alert had only been a 'yellow.' While swarms of pokémon *could* be dangerous, it tended to vary from 'observe mild caution' all the way to 'holy shit run and don't stop running until you're in the next region.' The latter, of course, being when more volatile pokémon like Gyarados decided to swarm. A swarm of Oddish would barely deserve a warning, as the grass type were notoriously skittish. Even in a swarm, you'd have to do something *fantastically stupid* to have a problem with them.

Buneary were somewhere on the lower-middle of that equation. Individually, they were unlikely to bother a Trainer. Enough of them *did* share a bit of 'fighting type attitude' though that, in a swarm situation, you could expect at least a little bit of a fight. For Trainers of 2B and Zoey's level, however, the threat was extremely minimal. Meanwhile, those very Buneary that *did* steer toward fighting Trainers were the ones most likely to interest 2B, making the question a casual one, rather than any sort of shock.

“Yes. More accurately, I wish to get near it and use an Aura Lure with my intent on it. While it does risk getting *too many* responses, I believe it will weed those willing to become a companion out of the swarm.”

Zoey considered the idea for a moment, then shrugged. There *was* some risk that too many of the Buneary would be ‘interested,’ given that pokémon seemed to almost universally *adore* 2B. But that was something she felt they could deal with.

“Well, we aren’t that far from the intersection with Route 25, where the swarm was reported. Let’s pick up the pace and find a good spot nearby for you to give it a try.”

Nodding, no more words needing to be said, 2B sped up. Though she thankfully kept it within limits that Zoey could keep up with...

... ..

Zoey watched on in fascination as 2B crafted an Aura Lure. This one wasn’t in the shape of a fishing rod for obvious reasons, instead being a sort of diamond floating in midair, that let off steady pulses of aura. She’d already been able to feel the one 2B used back when they first met from a fair distance off, but hadn’t gotten anything more than the general feel of aura-in-use at the time.

Now, after a fair number of sessions where 2B had been teaching her about aura, Zoey was getting a *lot* more out of it. Less, she was sure, than a pokémon or 2B herself would, but *enough* to have a clearer idea of what the Lure *did*. The best way she could describe it was as a series of *emotions* that created a sort of subtle message. Challenge, desire for companionship, the charged feeling of adrenaline in your blood just before a fight, protectiveness, and quite a lot more. All of it woven together in such a way that Zoey *roughly* translated it as a conceptual-level message reading something like, ‘Group looking for more to grow stronger with.’

It was more complex than that, of course. There were hints of 2B’s own...self? A representation of what and who she was that Zoey vaguely recognized from their Aura Linking experiments. Assuming a pokémon got more out of it than she herself did, it likely read as a sort of compressed image of who 2B saw herself as, as a person. Good and bad both. She suspected that very few humans would be so comfortable *broadcasting* that self-image. Which might well explain why 2B was beloved by pokémon, who Zoey was abruptly sure likely did something similar in their own introductions. It certainly would explain a lot of little things she’d noticed over the years.

She was almost disappointed with how fast the Lure got a reaction. She strongly suspected studying the feeling of the thing for longer would have both helped her

understand her girlfriend better *and* helped her understand aura more completely. As it was, knowing what she did about 2B, she wasn't exactly shocked that *four* Buneary *and* a Lopunny appeared in the clearing after less than five minutes. She watched as 2B dropped the Lure and smiled at them.

"Hello. My name is 2B, and I'm looking for a new partner to join my team. Would you like to meet the rest of those who you'd be joining?"

Unlike Chinchou, who had immediately challenged 2B, these pokémon seemed to defer to the Lopunny, which cocked its head and nodded acceptance of 2B's idea. Still smiling, 2B released her team. One of the Buneary darted off as four pokémon formed, the presence of so many new auras apparently enough to scare it off. The other three and the Lopunny remained, curiously inspecting 2B's team, but not getting any closer.

Zoey hid a smirk as Vulpix imperiously marched toward them, only to get bopped on the head by Jigglypuff, even as Scyther bowed regally to the group of wild pokémon. Lanturn, still newly evolved, was a bit too busy focusing on its ability to levitate over ground to do much else. Not *all* Water types could do that, some truly being near-useless out of water environments. But Lanturn, as a Water/Electric type, could pull the trick off on instinct. Even if it was still *adjusting* to being able to do so.

"Jiggly, puf, Jig! Puff, jigg, 'ly!"

Seeming to take the lead as always, Jigglypuff...puffed itself up proudly and spoke to the wild Buneary. Zoey had been around the pokémon just long enough, or perhaps studied aura enough near it, to get some vague impression that she was talking up 2B and the team. Something that seemed to amuse the Lopunny, which stepped forward and made a very obvious 'come at me bro' gesture with one ear.

Jigglypuff didn't take that lying down, executing what Zoey now recognized as her and 2B's favorite opener. An Aqua Jet into the air, followed by a Fairy Gatling. The Lopunny was visibly surprised...but it also *moved* in a way that caused Zoey's eyes to instantly widen. The sheer speed told her instantly that *this* was not a typical member of the species. Something only made more obvious when it closed the range, tanking the last bit of the Fairy Gatling, and lashed out with an ear *coated in Steel Type energy*.

Jigglypuff *barely* reacted in time, but she *did* manage to dodge by simply letting all her air out in a rush and *dropping*. Not content with a mere dodge, she managed to lash out with a weak Brick Break, just *barely* grazing the Lopunny as it dashed right back to where it had started. The Lopunny blinked, looking down at where it had been tagged...then seemed to *smile*.

“Lop, pun, lopunny! Lopun?”

2B had settled a restraining hand on Jigglypuff and nodded at the pokémon.

“Yes, I trained Jigglypuff here from an Igglybuff. She’s been with me the longest of any of my team. Just barely over a year now.”

The Lopunny seemed to mull that over, before looking over at what Zoey abruptly realized might well be its kids. This was *obviously* a released Trainer pokémon, not a truly wild ‘mon. There was absolutely no way it would have known what must have been a version of Iron Tail any other way. That was the sort of move that required either dedicated move tutoring or, far more likely, a TM.

“Lop!”

Finally, the Lopunny pointed at one of the Buneary, which *squealed* happily and rushed forward. First to hug the Lopunny, then turning and rushing toward 2B instead. 2B knelt with a welcoming smile and a Luxury Ball in hand.

“Welcome aboard, Buneary, I promise you train you to be as strong as you desire.”

That, Zoey somehow knew, was directed almost as much at what Zoey was now *certain* was one of the Buneary’s parents, as it was at Buneary. The latter quickly tapped its nose to the center of the pokéball, turning to light as it was sucked in. Shaking her head and wondering if there would ever be a more ‘traditional’ captured with her girlfriend, Zoey watched as the Lopunny said goodbye and steered its other kids away.

Well, she supposed 2B had *technically* caught that one Abomasnow ‘normally.’ Given she’d handed it over to the Rangers, however, Zoey didn’t think that counted. Oh well, 2B’s ability to find pokémon that *wanted* to become partners was helping Zoey find good matches of her own, so she was hardly going to complain. In fact, being able to replicate the Aura Lure trick was one of several reasons Zoey was intent on learning aura for herself...

... ..

... ..

Buneary

Gender: Female

Type: Normal

Moves Known: Defense Curl, Foresight, Pound, Quick Attack, Jump Kick, Fire Punch

... ..

Zoey whistled lowly as 2B displayed her pokédex's first scan of Buneary. It was a very solid set of starting moves to know, including one that had most likely been an egg move in the form of Fire Punch. Combined with Jump Kick giving Buneary a Fighting Type move, and the rest being just a solid set of basic moves in general, the little pokémon was remarkably well rounded for a wild 'mon. Of course, given that at least one parent had likely been that immensely strong Lopunny that *had* to have been a released Trainer pokémon, it made sense.

"Well, looks like you've got a solid base to work on with her. Since we're making good time, I suggest...three hours of training? Is that enough or too much?"

2B shook her head.

"Three hours should be excellent. I will be giving her the usual demonstration for new pokémon, then working through her known moves to see how quickly and well she can use them. Three hours will be more than enough for her to both do that and have a bit of a snack to recover while I give a bit of one-on-one time to the others."

Zoey nodded, having had similar thoughts. As a newly caught pokémon, Buneary probably wouldn't have the stamina for a full three-hour session. But an hour or two, plus a recovery period while 2B worked with the rest of her team was about right. Zoey herself would spend the same time working with her own team one on one. They'd done excellent at their second gym, but that no reason to slack off. Teddiursa, in particular, was showing signs of being ready to evolve.

"Alright. I'll separate to the other side of the road. Given how close Teddi is to evolving, I might look for some wild battles in addition to training! We'll meet back up at eleven for lunch!"

2B nodded her head, even as Zoey threw a wave and trotted off to train with her own team...

... ..

Zoey cheered as Teddiursa...no *Ursaring* finished glowing, letting out a much more fearsome roar than it had managed as an adorable Teddiursa. A part of her would admittedly miss the cuddly and adorable factor, but her now not-so-little bear had wanted to be a fighter from the start. So she would celebrate his triumph with him! She'd even had some idea this might happen on their trip to Bill's or back, so she'd brought his favorite poképuff in an Extra Large size that would properly let his new form enjoy the treat.

Satisfied with the results of her own training, or rather battling, since they'd both found a single Trainer to battle and a few wild pokémon, Zoey decided it was probably past

time to be getting back. It was actually a bit beyond the three-hour mark, though she'd sent a message to 2B's pokégear to let her know they'd be a bit late. She'd had a good sense of just how *close* Teddiursa had been to evolving after that battle with a wandering Hiker, and decided for his sake to stick it out a little longer. Now, from the ecstatic look on his still beary-cute face, she was glad she had!

"Come on, Ursaring! Let's get back to the others to show off how much you've grown! I've got a special treat for you for evolving, too. You're favorite Extra Spicy Cherripuff...in Extra Large size!"

Perking up at both the idea of showing off his new evolution *and* the promise of his favorite poképuff, Ursaring happily darted off, back toward the road. Zoey laughed but followed after him at a more leisurely stroll. He'd burn out his extra evolution energy soon and crash hard. She could return him to his ball for a nap when he did...

Chapter 32 – Bill's Cottage

"2B! We meet in person, at last! I'd almost given into the temptation to go find you at Oak's! Would have, probably, if he hadn't let me in on the secret that he was intending to prod you into taking a Journey!"

2B smiled, letting the man in his mid-30s shake one of her hands enthusiastically with both of his. She'd 'met' him a number of times via videocall, so she wasn't surprised by his energy. He might be an introvert that liked living away from people for the most part, but if you were someone he'd decided he liked, he could be extremely lively.

"Hello, Bill. I am pleased we are finally meeting in person as well."

Bill practically towed her into the house, barely seeming to notice Zoey at all, though he *did* wave her along after them.

"Come, come! I've had *so many* ideas! That last set of algorithms you sent me before you left on your Journey was just *marvelous*! I think they might be useable to *evolve a Porygon2*, just like you thought! Without the...dubiousness...of the previous program that was known to pull that off, too!"

Following along with Bill's enthusiasm, 2B blinked as she was pulled into a lab nearly as sophisticated as Professor Oak's own. She'd known, just from reading up on the man, that Bill had done far more work than just inventing the Pokémon Storage System. While that was *by far* the thing he was best known for, he'd also worked heavily on teleportation technology, among other things. Both teleportation tech for moving pokémon

around, and even for limited human use. Though the latter had gotten slapped with some fairly hefty restrictions by the various Leagues. You needed licenses to own and operate even the most basic of them.

Honestly, it had been a sensible move as far as 2B was concerned. Teleporters would make it *much* too easy to do things like smuggle or reach restricted areas, if the technology was generally available. The only type of teleporters consumers could outright buy were only good for a few dozen meters. Useful in some places, like the massive shopping complex in Celadon City that had them on every floor now.

Any human-capable teleportation devices longer range than that were *heavily* restricted. Which didn't stop powerful enough psychics or people with Psychic-type pokémon from doing the same thing, obviously. But human psychics that could pull that off were vanishingly rare, and even Psychic pokémon becoming powerful enough to transfer themselves *and* their partners long-distance was fairly unusual.

"Right, right...where is it, where is it..."

Bill, having finally let go of 2B's hand, was busy rummaging around in a pile of discs. She, however, was more interested in what *else* was in the lab. Specifically...the Eevee. Quite a number of them, as well as several of their evolutions. Even Professor Oak's ranch didn't have a *complete* set of known 'Eeveelutions,' but 2B knew for a fact that *Bill* did have them all. They were his favorite pokémon and he *always* sought to add to his collection when new evolutions were discovered.

While the entire collection of their types wasn't present in the lab, there *were* several on hand. She even saw a Sylveon, which was *impressive*, given that it was the most recently discovered type. The condition of having to both know a Fairy-type move *and* have a strong bond with its Trainer had made their existence incredibly rare. So much so that the exact conditions by which one evolved had been unknown until quite recently.

"Ah, here it is! The Upgrade-2! I haven't actually gotten a chance to try it with a Porygon2, but I'm almost certain it will work! Here, let me show you the code I came up with, using the seed you gave me!"

2B let herself get sucked into Bill's enthusiasm, even as she saw Zoey carefully trying to tempt a few of the Eevee into playing with her...

... ..

It was well into the evening when Bill, who had invited them to stay in his guest room after realizing he'd kept 2B for several hours, finally ran out of things to excitedly ask 2B about. At least *for now*. Both girls got the impression he'd have a dozen more by morning,

and a hundred more within a few days at most. Thankfully, 2B had been at least somewhat interested in most of it, and Zoey hadn't exactly minded the chance to play with all the Eevee and their evolutions once they warmed up to her. It was as the three humans sat in Bill's living room, 2B and Zoey both having an Eevee in their lap, that Bill surprised them.

"Well now, those two seem to like both of you. How would you like to take them with you?"

Both Eevee perked up, eyes and ears twitching towards Bill, then back to the respective girl they'd settled on the lap of. Zoey meanwhile, blurted out her response while 2B was still processing the idea.

"Wait, what?! But Eevee are super rare!"

Bill chuckled at her expression, his own thoroughly amused as he rubbed his Sylveon's ears.

"In truth, that isn't actually the case. Eevee aren't rare at all, so much as they are artificially scarce. Admittedly, you rarely find them *in the wild*, but they are legitimately one of the most bred pokémon of any region. It's just that they are also so *popular* as companion pokémon that they are *artificially* scarce, due to people being willing to pay quite a lot for Eevee companions."

Gesturing to the two Eevee in their laps, his voice changed slightly. It had gained a bit of an annoyed edge when explaining the 'truth,' only for it to level out to something happier as he continued.

"I, as it happened, am considered one of the best Eevee breeders in the world. The truth is, though, that I got that title entirely by accident. You see, I *don't* breed my Eevee as companion pokémon. Not unless that is what they *want* to be. Instead, I encourage them to be whatever the dream of...which just so happens to mean that my Eevee are widely regarded as the foremost 'battler' Eevee."

His voice turned *annoyed* again, and his face scrunched into a bit of a scowl.

"Of course, that means Trainers are *constantly* bothering me for my Eevee. But I *refuse* to sell them. I don't need the money, and *each and every one of them* deserves to find a good Trainer. Not some pompous twit that thinks having too much money to throw around makes him a decent human being, let alone a good Trainer...."

Sylveon apparently didn't like the way her companion's emotions were swinging, as she captured the hand petting her and gently nipped it. Bill looked down in surprise, then

smiled and playfully wrestled with her for a few moments. Eventually, he shook himself and smiled back up at them, Sylveon now content with him returning to petting her.

“Anyway, enough about idiots that don’t deserve the awesomeness of Eevee! Those two that found you are both battlers at heart. In fact, I suspect the little rascals glommed onto you *hoping* I might take the hint! 2B is someone I trust completely with one of my Eevee, and I admit I looked into you when I saw you were traveling with her, Miss Zoey. Quite an impressive Contest career, even if you’ve switched the battling this year!”

He looked awkward for a moment as Zoey stared at him at that, coughing before shamelessly moving on.

“You don’t do that well in Contests unless you’re a *great* Trainer, of the right sort! You’ve also, from looking at your previous lineup, raised one before. A Leafeon, correct? Given both of those points, I feel completely comfortable in letting one of my Eevee go with you. 2B was always going to get such an offer anyway, if literally any of my current batch wanted to go with her. So, what do the two of you say?”

For Zoey, it was an *absolute no brainer*. Whatever Bill said about their rarity being *artificial*, the fact remained that it was *hard* to get your hands on an Eevee at all, let alone one that wanted to be *more* than just a companion. She was well aware how lucky she’d gotten with Leafeon, and Leafeon *wasn’t* a battler at heart.

“Yes! If you’re serious, I will absolutely take Eevee with me! And I promise I’ll help her become the best she can be! If that’s a certain eeveelution that she wants to shoot for, or even if she wants to *stay* an Eevee!”

Bill grinned, visibly delighted by her answer.

“Done! I’ll transfer her to you tonight! How about you, 2B?”

2B had paused to think much longer about the question that Zoey had. Admittedly, that was somewhat understandable. With the Buneary she’d just caught, she not only had a brand new pokémon *already*, but only a single remaining slot in her carry capacity. The fact that she had stabling access via the Oak Ranch didn’t change the fact that she could only have six teammates with her at any one time. Though it was an issue that would crop up for her *sooner or later*.

Serious battlers needed more than just the six pokémon for tournament use, if nothing else. Healing machines didn’t completely erase mental and Type Energy fatigue. Something which meant running the same exact team through multiple rounds of battling on multiple days was considered foolish at the higher levels. Both because your team would get weaker for each fight, *and* because it wasn’t good for the pokémon themselves.

It wasn't as much of an issue with smaller tournaments, where battles were often only 2 v 2 or 3 v 3. But at the League Conference level, swapping at least some of your team between rounds was considered best practice. The Nurse Joys even could and *would* deny your right to continue if you tried to use pokémon that they considered insufficiently recovered.

"I accept. I believe Eevee will make a fine addition to my team, whatever path she chooses to pursue."

Thankfully for Zoey's sanity, 2B's hesitation hadn't lasted *long*. Just long enough for her to run through the same thoughts Zoey had on the subject and weigh the pros and cons. As far as Zoey was concerned, the choice had still been obvious. Very few 'battle minded' Eevee refused to evolve. Since *all* of their evolutions were potent pokémon, *and* getting one this early in the season meant time to bond and train with them, it was still an easy calculation to Zoey's mind.

"Excellent! I'm quite sure you'll both do amazing with them! I'll transfer my notes for the twins when I transfer them too you!"

It was nice that they wouldn't be guessing, and...wait...did Bill just say these two Eevee were *TWINS*? Gaping as little as she processed that, Zoey looked back and forth and quickly realized the pair didn't look merely *close* to the same, but *identical*.

"It will be so nice that they found Trainers travelling together to go with! That way they don't have to part ways just yet!"

Abruptly feeling like the pair of them might just have been played by either Bill or the Eevee, who were now trying to look innocent, Zoey sighed and shook her head. Oh well, she'd be better off putting her energy into thinking up a nickname. She didn't normally indulge in that with her pokémon, but with two *identical twin* Eevee around, she suspected it might be necessary...

... ..

... ..

Eevee (2B's)

Gender: Female

Type: Normal

Moves Known: Tackle, Sand Attack, Growl, Baby Doll Eyes, Charm

... ..

2B hummed as she looked at the results of her first scan of Eevee, handing the pokédex over to Zoey a moment later so she could scan her own new pokémon with the higher-quality lab 'dex. Eevee's move pool was far more limited than 2B was used to, even for her captures, but such a thing made sense. It was, after all, quite young and *not* a wild pokémon. It did have an interesting extra in the move Charm that wasn't standard at all. Did having two Fairy Type moves attract it to 2B, who had begun using some limited amount of that type of aura?

Her pokédex 'dinged' again, something that made her face twitch as she *still* hadn't figured out how to make it stop doing that. She couldn't find a single line of code anywhere that was responsible for that thrice-accursed ding! Maybe she should have asked Bill about it? She shook the thought off as unimportant, as Zoey tilted the 'dex so that 2B could see the results. Interestingly, despite the two being identical twins, their move pool *wasn't* identical.

... ..

Eevee (Zoey's)

Gender: Female

Type: Normal

Moves Known: Tackle, Sand Attack, Growl, Bite, Curse

... ..

A Dark and Ghost type move? 2B knew that one member of Zoey's 'primary' team was a ghost type, and her Purugly had a predisposition to using some Dark type moves. Was there something to her earlier thought that their extra moves might have caused the two Eevee to target who they did? Or was that reading too much into things? Zoey handed her the 'dex back after a few more moments and dug her fingers into rub her Eevee's ears. 2B's own nudged her hand firmly until she smiled and did the same.

"A fair bit of work to do, with these two, but they have solid foundations at least. I'm thinking they might both need a bit of a ranged punch, after we get them up to snuff with basic conditioning and handling orders."

Zoey nodded in agreement as they settled into snuggle with both each other and their newest teammates...

Chapter 33 – Contest Training

They'd only stayed the one day at Bill's, before heading back toward the city. Zoey was a *slight bit* disappointed at that, since Bill had only had a single guest room, and she'd seen the return of 2B's glorious sleepwear because of it. Yet, at the same time, she'd been impatient for their plans on the way back. On the way up to Bill's Cottage, they'd scouted some good places to train, and now they'd camped out in one for an important step in 2B's career.

Training her and her pokémon for their first Contest!

Even if Zoey was taking a year off from the Contest circuit personally, being a Coordinator was still her first love. Which meant the chance to induct someone with 2B's raw potential into the ranks was a delight second only to competing herself! The fact that she *also* got a bit of a fashion show out of the various 'Contest' outfits that Daisy and her Coordinator friend had put together for 2B was just a bonus really.

She wasn't sure why one of those outfits was a Bunnygirl Costume and was bitterly disappointed that Buneary wasn't anywhere *close* to ready for a Contest event. It would have been the perfect outfit for a routine with one of 2B's newest pokémon, after all. Not to mention the eye candy delight it would have been for Zoey!

Not that her girlfriend wasn't *absolutely stunning* in the outfit that they'd actually chosen. It looked a bit out of place in an out-of-the-way clearing just off Route 24, but she knew it would dazzle on stage. The dark purple dress with pink starlight sparkles was a good match for Jigglypuff too, which was honestly the more important part. While the Coordinator *was* part of the show, one should *never, ever forget* that the point of a Contest was to show off the *pokémon*, not the trainer!

Though, a part of Zoey's mind noted that the Sensational Sisters in particular put just a *bit* more emphasis on the Trainer that she really liked. Which was actually why she'd settled on Jigglypuff and 2B in this getup. With any other Contest, she might have...eased 2B into things a bit more...by focusing on Scyther and a 'sword dance' show. Which 2B would have likely been more comfortable with and undoubtedly would knock out of the park.

Still, Jigglypuff *was*, by far, 2B's most experienced partner. How thoroughly they were bonded and the number of spectacular original moves they had would go a long way to helping a newbie on the Contest scene. The fact that the little pokémon was one of 2B's two that enjoyed the attention the most, with Vulpix being the other, didn't hurt either.

Shaking off her thoughts, Zoey concentrated on the lesson she was giving to 2B.

“Right, as I’ve mentioned, but bares repeating, Kanto’s current Contest climate is *weird*. Hoenn and Sinnoh both have *standardized* setups for every contest. In example, in Hoenn you always have to use the same pokémon for the Appeal and Battle rounds, whereas in Sinnoh you can swap pokémon between rounds. Kanto, however, is so new to Contests that they haven’t created a broad standard like that just yet.”

Starting to pace, hands moving animatedly as she got just a *bit* into it, Zoey continued.

“While this is a problem in some ways, it’s actually an *advantage* in others. One which, I have to admit, the Sensational Sisters have been clever enough to make use of. Instead of having each of their Contests be roughly the same, they *vary* them. The first Contest, which you’ll be competing in, deliberately keeps things simple. One pokémon for both rounds. The second Contest allows a swap system instead, and the *third* actually does a Doubles Performance. This is honestly a *really* clever system, as it allows newbie Coordinators to ramp up over the course of the season. I rather like it!”

Shaking herself as she realized she’d gotten derailed...again...she focused back on the topic at hand.

“Frankly, the way you battle is so visually spectacular that the only thing you’re going to have to remember for the Battle Round is to not be too brutal. Fight with style, even draw it out a bit, in order to match with the expectations of properly showing off your pokémon. Counter moves, rather than just dodging, as you’ll earn points and deny them points by doing so.”

Zoey stopped pacing to grin at her girlfriend.

“Frankly, this is the part where both Daisy and I consider you such a natural, almost an *accidental* natural, that we won’t need to spend a lot of time on it. Not for your first Contest, at least.”

2B looked *adorably confused*, which made Zoey want to laugh. Despite the announcers at the Cerulean Gym and the fact she’d been featured on Battlecast, 2B just didn’t seem able to properly wrap her head around how unusual she was. She created all the new moves and tactics for her pokémon in order to make them the most efficient *combatants* she could.

Yet, in doing so, she also trained them in the sort of non-traditional use of moves that had *incredibly high* skill entry requirements. Even a single one of her major moves showed off *insane* levels of skill by most standards, and most of them were visually spectacular just as a bonus. While just doing as she normally did wouldn’t win her truly

high-level Contests, facing mostly other rookies as she would be for her First Contest was almost *unfair* to her opponents.

But only almost. Because to even get there...

“Your real issue is going to be the Appeals Round. *That* is a pure show, which means you need to practice using some moves in a specific sequence that will be visually spectacular. Thankfully, Jigglypuff has an *excellent* move pool already that we can work with, as well as plenty of experience in modifying how moves express. Particularly important is going to be the fact she learned Ice Beam from an *Articuno* of all pokémon, alongside Vulpix. With a little creative tweaking, and some combination with Dazzling Gleam, I’m confident we can make something truly spectacular...”

At first, 2B still seemed to be trying to grasp the *point* of it all, as Zoey walked her through the combination of moves she thought would work. Thankfully, a light of understanding began to dawn on her as she realized that the entire display would take *extremely* good timing and pinpoint control. A display of raw *skill* that almost *couldn’t* happen in battles, as they moved too fast.

Happy to see 2B finally starting to *get it*, at least a little, Zoey enthusiastically poked and prodded both her and Jigglypuff for input. While she had a solid idea of a routine for them, as much as possible she wanted the pair to get there on their own. The planning and practice stage was just as much part of what being a Coordinator meant as the stage and cameras, after all...

... ..

2B was feeling surprisingly satisfied as she watched her partner pull off the combination move Zoey had first suggested smoothly. It was *complex*, required Jigglypuff to seamlessly transition between energy types in a way they’d only ever tried with Water and Fairy type energies before. Of course, Ice-Type was something they’d worked on heavily in Mt. Moon, not being stupid enough to pass up the resources there while they’d stayed. Articuno had taken a serious liking to Vulpix, and thankfully hadn’t minded at all that Jigglypuff learned alongside the little fox pokémon.

Now, that training was paying dividends as Jigglypuff had *far* better control than any non-Ice Type really ought to have in so little time. Something that was required to make the complex maneuver they were aiming for even *remotely* possible. The skill and complexity required was a fascinatingly new sort of training, that 2B believed Jigglypuff was going to benefit from amazingly!

Of course, it looked nice too. Which was the point, though a far lesser point as far as 2B was concerned. ‘Appeal’ still didn’t mean much to her, even if she could admit now that the idea of a *skill* display held far more merit than she’d really considered previously. She still rather doubted that she was ever going to be as enraptured by the idea of Contests as Daisy or Zoey were. But she *could* see the value in them now...or at least the value in the *preparation* for them. It was good training! Even if ‘showing off’ once they got it down still seemed a bit pointless.

Well, pointless in most ways.

Jigglypuff herself seemed pleased with the idea, which gave it some value, she supposed. For that matter, both Vulpix and Scyther seemed interested for their own reasons. Though, Buneary and Eevee both seemed as lost as 2B on the subject. At least those two were easy enough to get started on basic conditioning and move mastering while she worked with Jigglypuff on the fancy stuff...

Returning her attention to Jigglypuff as she tried to complete the final move and flubbed it a bit, 2B cocked her head and studied what had happened. Nodding, she addressed her pokémon.

“You’re not used to altering an existing move on the fly like that. I can see several uses for being able to disperse and reform it like this might be useful in the future, though. So we should work on getting it right. Let’s go back to basics and work with using Stockpile to gather Fairy Energy. When you first did that, you had trouble *keeping* it from dispersing. So let’s revisit how and why that happened and work from there.”

Pumping her fist cutely and crying her name, Jigglypuff launched into the new idea without fanfare. Smiling at how willing, even eager, her partner was to put effort into this, 2B joined her. By now, she could make her own energy Fairy-Type energy easily enough. So having 2B herself to compare against might help as well...

... ..

“Alright, Buneary, Eevee. I might be focused on getting Jigglypuff ready for our first Contest, but I still have training I want the two of you to work on. Vulpix had been handling helping you with conditioning, but that’s not enough! We need to start both of you working towards your first combos, which will lead in turn to making you some original moves!”

Both pokémon perked up at that, the pair having been awed from the start at the more advanced moves 2B’s other pokémon had developed. Satisfied as seeing that interest, she focused on Buneary first, as there was more to work with there.

“Buneary, you’re in better shape with the move pool you already have. Yet, you haven’t worked out the trick of properly stringing them together yet. So, your training for the moment is going to be focused on two moves, both of which you already have a good handle on. I want you to use Quick Attack for acceleration, then shift into Fire Punch once you have the speed poured on, using the extra momentum to make the attack land.”

Of course, that was going to mean needing to move from one Type Energy to the other in rapid succession. Which didn’t come easy to any pokémon that wasn’t a dual type. Thankfully, Lanturn was a dual type. Even more importantly, he had a gift for explaining it. So he could help Buneary get started on that process.

“Make what progress you can with Lanturn, then I’ll spend some one-on-one time with you to improve it. Got it?”

Buneary gave an eager nod, already having gotten thoroughly *sick* of the ‘conditioning’ training that 2B insisted on. Not that the little pokémon was going to be able to avoid more of that, but at least this new training aspect would give her something more interesting to work on as well.

“Right, Eevee. You’re a little bit of a different case. You know some great moves, with Baby Doll Eyes and Charm being *fantastic* for disrupting another pokémon’s pace. Yet they don’t lend themselves to combinations easily. Which is why our focus with you is going to be expanding your move pool. Once we get back somewhere we can acquire some more suitable TMs, I intend to acquire a one for you. Possibly Trailblaze, Hyper Voice, Shadow Ball, or Hidden Power. Whatever is available in Cerulean, really, as all of those have their own advantages.”

Eevee looked both excited *and* disappointed, given they didn’t have those options yet. 2B smiled and reached down to rub her ears.

“Don’t worry. Until then, you’ll be working with Scyther to learn Quick Attack. It’s a move you can learn naturally, so it should come easy for you, and it will really help you be able to reposition yourself on the battlefield. Something I consider a key element to the battle style of the team as a whole uses. So work hard, okay?”

Getting a happy nod from Eevee, 2B turned her newest pair over the Lanturn and Scyther. In truth, she wished she could oversee their training personally at this stage. Yet there was only so much time left before the Contest, and the routine they had come up with was quite complex. She would have to make sure to give them plenty of extra one-on-one time after the Contest was over...

... ..

They spent three days in the clearing they'd found on route 24, just north of the City. There they'd worked through the moves required for the contest routine until they had them down as well as they could in a short time, before heading back to Cerulean City. It had taken a total of five days to get to Bill's and back, plus those additional three for training, and they'd left just ten days before the Contest. Which meant by the time they'd made it back to the city, it was just two days before the Violet Sensation Contest was due to start. It would run multiple days, with the first day being Appeals and Round 1 of battles. Then the second day, after some recovery for the pokémon, would see the remaining battle rounds.

The city had filled up in the run up to the Contest, with both Coordinators and spectators trickling in. Something which delighted Zoey as, while the Pokécenter *did* have a room open, it only had been one. Which meant the return of 2B's nightwear and, careful to make sure she was comfortable with it, snuggles! Ah, the fact that it had been a room with only one bed might have gotten them *looks* from the Nurse Joy, but 2B snuggles were worth it!

Now, they just needed to spend tomorrow getting 2B and Jigglypuff both properly pampered for her appearance. Yes, Zoey's girlfriend was unfairly gorgeous for how little effort she put into her appearance. But a *proper* hair trim, a bit more of a schooling in makeup, and a full session of pampering for Jigglypuff was due! You had to go into Contests with both yourself and your pokémon looking at your absolute best, after all!

2B was confused where her shudder of horror came from, but quickly dismissed it. Snuggling with Zoey was too nice to worry about whatever phantom sensation that had been...

Chapter 34 – A Coordinator Debut!

2B has seen horrors walking this path, yet had reached this new arena intact, if perhaps not unscathed. She embraced that thought, mind shying away from all the things her girlfriend had put her through in the name of 'getting ready' yesterday. Daisy had even confirmed that some women apparently *enjoyed* the horrifying ordeals she'd gone through. Humans, 2B had to admit once again, were a little strange. Every time she thought she'd grasped something about them, it was later brought into question.

Who knew that some humans actually *liked* getting slathered in *mud*. Perhaps it was some sort of ancient primitive ritual of atonement and purification? Washing away the mud of their sins to become more innocently beautiful? Or something else equally odd might be at work, she supposed. Like some sort of pre-battle thing. Wasn't there an odd human

saying about swallowing a frog every morning so nothing else you did for the rest of the day would be as unpleasant?

2B didn't know what the logic behind the mud thing was and, for perhaps the first time ever, she wasn't entirely sure she *wanted* to know. Still, she had survived the grueling rituals, and Jigglypuff had enjoyed her own 'pampering,' for the most part. Sure, she *had* needed to pay for that entire wall of the beauty shop when they'd tried to put mud on *Jigglypuff* and she'd taken exception via Fairy Buster Sword. But, honestly, 2B both couldn't blame her little partner *and* could easily afford the damages. So that was fine.

Now, at least, they'd reached the waiting area before the Appeals round, surrounded by a handful of other Coordinators. Zoey was allowed in as 2B's plus one, and they were merely waiting for the announcement of 2B's turn. An announcement that came a few moments later.

"Miss 2B, are you ready? You're up next!"

2B nodded and moved to follow the man in the tux, who opened the door onto the backstage for her. She heard a quick 'good luck' coming from Zoey, but was already getting into the zone for his challenging new arena! She needed to be 'fabulous!'...whatever that meant. Thankfully, Zoey had seemed to think just doing a basic spin in her dress and using the smile she'd made 2B practice would be enough. Something about her looking exotic with her tactical visor on?

There was a quick countdown as she took her place on the stage, watching the man in the tux count down the numbers for her on his fingers. Then, the curtain was rising and she stepped out into the spotlight, spinning and flashing that smile as she tossed out Jigglypuff's pokéball. It landed center-stage, just as 2B had wanted, the seal on it covering Jigglypuff's entrance with a splash of pink stars.

"Jigglypuff, show off your Ice Parade!"

Just like in battle, 2B trusted her pokémon to handle complex orders without micromanaging, and Jigglypuff was her *best* at that sort of thing. Launching herself up with her natural buoyancy, she fired an Ice Beam in a spiral, creating a slide of *crystal clear* ice that ascended in a spiral around her. Making it so clear required an extra level of control, but the payoff when she reached the top and switched energy types was *spectacular*, for a carefully modified Dazzling Gleam touched the slide, shooting pink fairy light through the clear ice. The result was a *multicolor, glowing slide*.

Jigglypuff wasted no time in forming *ice skates* made of her Fairy Sword move, letting go of her buoyancy so she could ride down the slide amidst the glow. Just as she

reached the bottom, she bounced into the center and amplified the Fairy Sword energy, pulling it from her feet to her hand and altering it into Fairy Buster Sword. With an adorable cry of passion, she sprung upward, powering back through the center of the still-glowing slide in a spin as she diced it into tiny pieces that rained down over the stage. She landed a moment later, panting slightly from the intense combo as she bowed amidst the falling glitters of charge ice.

The applause, after a stunned audience got a chance to *process* all of what she'd done, was *deafening*.

Once more, much to her surprise, 2B found a sort of warm glow in her chest. She forced herself not to frown at that, smiling and waving to the crowd, spinning a bit as Zoey had directed her to do. The crowd continued to *roar* for a good five minutes, before the Master of Ceremonies managed to get them to quiet down. Lilian Meridian, said MC, quickly spoke up.

"With that *absolutely spectacular* debut performance from the mysterious 2B, let's hear what our Judges think!"

For this Contest, the first judge up was Violet, the first of Gym Leader Misty's older sisters and sponsor of the Contest. She practically had *sparkles in her eyes*, as she spoke up with enthusiasm.

"Like, that was *spectacular*! A show worthy of any stage! The use of not just Ice Beam and Dazzling Gleam, but your own original move Fairy Sword? Done so smoothly? A masterful first performance for both Trainer and pokémon! Not to mention that *adorable* dress!"

The two judges next to her winced at the last addition, but the first bits had been genuinely insightful, so no one was going to raise an issue over it. Particularly not when this was *Violet's* Contest in the first place. Mr. Sukizo, President of the Pokémon Fanclub, who did his best to judge as many Contests in as many regions as possible, was next up on the panel.

"Truly, a *remarkable* performance! A complex combination, *remarkably* well executed!"

The final judge was, as usual, a member of the Joy Clan. Likely the head nurse from one of the three Pokécenters in Cerulean.

"Not only do I support what my fellow judges have to say, but I also add that your Jigglypuff is clearly in top condition! Putting out so many moves, so quickly, and swapping

freely between energy types is no small feat! Truly, as Mr. Sukizo is so fond of saying, a *remarkable* showing of a *remarkable* pokémon!”

Far from being offended at his catchphrase being coopted, Mr. Sukizo beamed at Nurse Joy, even as Lilian Meridian took over again in her Master of Ceremonies role.

“There you have it, folks! Rave reviews from the judges! Hopefully, we’ll be seeing more of Miss 2B in the next round!”

There was more applause, though more controlled this time, as 2B recalled Jigglypuff, took a quick bow, and exited the stage. That hadn’t been as bad she’d thought it might be? Though the warm feeling in her chest from the applause was still a bit concerning. Perhaps she should talk to Zoey about it...

... ..

The Violet Sensation Contest wasn’t the *first* of the season, another large Contest having already happened in Vermillion City, and a few smaller ones in more rural areas. Yet, it was by far the largest and most prominent Contest of the season so far, and thus it wasn’t too much of a shock that there were quite a few Coordinators attending. 2B had been somewhere in the middle of the show for the Appeals round, and thus she and a practically vibrating Zoey had needed to wait through quite a few more displays.

Not, in truth, that 2B had minded. It had both given her time to mull over the strange sensations she’d experienced in her two Gym Battles and this Contest, as well as more seriously observe her potential competition. This early in the season most were...a bit lackluster. Yet there were a number of standouts, likely veteran Coordinators from previous years or other regions. Likewise, there were a few truly talented rookies as well.

Still, eventually, the time for the announcement of who would be moving on came. All those in the waiting area were riveted to the display as Lilian Meridan appeared on it.

“And now, ladies and gentlemen, it’s time to reveal who the judges have selected to move onto the next round! Without farther ado, those moving onto the Battle Round will be...these lucky eight!”

The screen shifted to show eight squares, each filled with snapshots of the Coordinators. 2B instantly spotted her own image in the set, spent a moment being relieved that she hadn’t messed up the hard part, then paid more attention to the others. Five were individuals she’d pegged as more experienced Coordinators, two of which were from out-of-region. The remaining two were rookies, though only one had debut in this Contest like 2B had, with the other having appeared in some small Contests previously.

“Congratulations, 2B! You’ve made it past the starting steps, now you just have to...not completely flatten everyone in a way that looks bad.”

2B cocked her head at the weird energy Zoey was giving off, even as she awaited the random shuffle that would reveal her first opponent.

... ..

There was a half-hour intermission between rounds, for the benefit of those who had done their appeals last. As the simplest of the three Cerulean Sensational Contests, the Violet Sensation didn’t allow pokémon swaps between rounds. Which meant giving a fair time for recovery in case a winner from a later appeal proved to be in the starting match of the Battle Round. Frankly, 2B was just annoyed that Zoey wouldn’t let her snack on anything, claiming it might get crumbs on her dress.

Despite that, the Battle Round came around soon enough, and 2B was lucky enough to feature in the first fight. She stepped out onto the smallish Battle Court even as Lilian Meridian once again started her announcing, beginning with the competitors.

“Here we are in the Battle Round, folks! First up, we have the stunning 2B and Jigglypuff, who really wowed the crowd and judges alike with her debut performance! Up against her, we have second year Coordinator and winner of last year’s Lily Sensation, Troubadour!”

The crowd cheered nearly equally at both introductions, which sent those warm flutters back through 2B’s chest. Zoey had looked at her oddly when she’d asked what those were, then smiled and said 2B was simply enjoying the praise. That...she didn’t quite know if that was right, or what to do with the information if it was. It would have to be something she would unpack later. For now, she needed to win a battle, one with some slightly odd rules.

“Alright Coordinators! Release your pokémon!”

2B complied, using a twisting spin throw that her opponent matched with a fancy flick. Both released their pokémon, showing Jigglypuff facing off against a Pikachu. Far from the worst matchup, frankly.

“Annndddd...Start!”

2B was far faster to snap an order, having thought a bit about how to use Jigglypuff’s moves in more indirect and visually spectacular ways. One of which would do a good job of crippling a Pikachu’s agility, while barely affecting Jigglypuff.

“Jump and Ice Beam the floor!”

The move seemed to take her opponent off guard, cutting off his order of a Quick Attack. He wasn't fast enough to change course, though, as the abrupt sheet of ice forming all over the floor met the speeding Pickachu and caused it to slip and slide. Above the arena, a projection showed a mild loss of Appeal Points for Troubadour. Before he could recover, 2B followed up.

"Hover and Fairy Gatling!"

Jigglypuff was at high advantage in this situation, as her species' natural ability to float was more than enough to keep her in the air just from the Fairy Gatling recoil. The move, easily their fastest at this point, lanced out at the slipping and sliding Pikachu. Troubadour proved her was at least no fool by giving his own order.

"Iron tail to destroy the floor, and dodge as best you can!"

To his and his pokémon's credit, the Iron Tail trick worked to break up the majority of the ice. Unfortunately, the change wasn't fast enough to save it from several brutal hits from Fairy Gatling, causing his points to drop again. Deciding she'd been gentle enough already, 2B simply ordered a finisher, though not a particularly vicious one.

"Lullaby!"

Jigglypuff knew what to do, using a brief pulse of Aqua Jet to build up speed, even as she Sang a few notes.

"Thunderbolt!"

On another pokémon, that might have worked, but Jigglypuff was *far* too mobile and used another Aqua Jet to get *under* the electric attack. Closing the last few meters, she gave out an adorable cry and punched the *very* surprised Pickachu in the face with Lullaby, which sent it out like a light. Their Appeal points dropped almost to nothing, and then *did* drop to nothing when Jigglypuff picked the poor sleeping Pickachu up and...started using her fingers to force it to make funny faces at the crowd. 2B saw even Nurse Joy snicker a bit at that, as Troubadour's points fell to zero.

"There you have it, everyone! The first Battle Round goes to 2B and Jigglypuff, give them a round of applause!"

The warm, fluttery feeling was back, and 2B still wasn't sure what to do with it...

<<End of Current Content>>