

Filler has once again been stuffed into the crevices between story beats, so it's time for another double feature!

Episode 127

Synopsis

Well it's random city time again, but at least this time it's one from the actual games!

I'm somewhat surprised that that line slipped through, I mean, there had to at least have been a conversation right?

"...a pretty little town called Cherrygrove city- Um, fellas? How can a town be a city?"

"Well, there's this place in Australia-"

"No, that's a city named Townsville, here you're literally calling a city a town, it's kind of weird."

Look, have you seen the size of this place in the games?"

"Oh, we're paying attention to those now?-"

"Narrators are REALLY easily replaced, Rodger-"

"Fine, shutting up..."

But anyway, now Ash is polishing his balls and he's all "Hey look, that thing! Guess I'd better draw attention to it so the payoff is even more disappointing!" and Misty's all "I'm proud of you, Ash! It's been five episodes since you've been overtly toxic and now you're even managing the macguffins!" and Brock is all "Hey! Let me use my frying pan as a crying pan - since I'm clearly not using to cook - to inform you guys that lunch is ready!" and Ash is like "Welp, better leave these balls here so a plot can happen!" Seriously, even pikachu seems to think this is a little contrived.

Then this dopey thing pops up out of the water and Ash is all "Aw shoot, not another Ditto!" "Ash, dittos don't have nostrils." "Ah. Well then how do they smell?" "like grape hubba bubba, you remember." "Oh, right! So what's this?"

So being a water pokemon, Misty of course wants to catch it, but of course Psyduck pops out, followed by the most delayed face-fault in anime history.

Then Quagsire makes the noise that a duck really SHOULD be making...

And then they just regard each other in a zen moment of mutual respect. Oh hey, butterfree, nice of you to visit.

THEN the GS ball apparently hears the call of it's master, the plot, and abandons the young trainer to be devoured. Luckily ash is able to get squirtle to retrieve the macguffin after some slippery shenanigans,

And just as Misty is about to catch it we get the almost literal fun police putting the kibosh on it.

handcuffs

"Well, I'm not normally into that but I can roll with this!"

No, apparently the quagsire are PROTECTED in this area! Oh well that explains it- WHERE'S THE BIG RACK-OFF SIGN TO LET PEOPLE KNOW THAT? At least the Safari zone had a psychopath at the entrance! Good grief, with this, the random spinarak traps and the completely unfenced training grounds I'm starting to believe the police in this world are just a little bit incompetent!

So the quagsire are super important as they act as a canary in a coal mine for the town's water supply, treatment plants and testing facilities apparently being a distant dream in this technologically backwards era of teleportation and energy transfer.

BLINK

Then Oak's all

"Pfft! Yeah, sure professor, I'll never bother a Jenny again!" "Riiight... just keep the GS ball safe, got it? You won't believe how amazing the pay off will be!" "the What ball?"
"Bye ash"

Then Ash is all "I wonder why the quagsire wanted to steal it in the first place? I mean aside from the fact that it's apparently sentient..." and apparently the quagsire just love round things so much that they freaking migrate to collect them for some bizarre ritual in the mountains. Continuing on this slightly sinister theme, the quagsire from before seems bent on retrieving the GS ball at any cost.

Jeepers, imagine seeing THAT in your bedroom window at night!

"Oookaaaay..." "Why do I not feel comforted?"

Yes, this solo salamander will not be perturbed and continues to bug Ash and the gang even after being hit by chikorita's Rayman attack. It grabs the GS ball, causing the others to give chase, while team rocket are also de-balled, causing them to follow as well.

They finally catch up to the group and Brock's all

Well, this is apparently a town named Cherrygrove city, so I wouldn't exactly trust the naming conventions of this area...

Unfortunately since they can't catch any Quagsire and apparently Bulbasaur still doesn't know sleep powder, there's nothing they can do but watch and watch and...

Oh thank heavens, something happened. So we get our usual rocket capture but in an effort to make the episode even more low maintenance, they are foiled without the Twerp's doing anything. Then after the mons are caught properly, they are properly foiled... again with minimal effort from the Twerp's. Okay, well at least NOW, after that big heaping helping of Jack Squat, we finally get to see what the Quagsire wanted with the round things. I'm actually kind of curious, what ancient secrets were they hiding? So the Twerp's follow the mons, Eric Stuart gives us the line reading of his career...

...and then we find out what the fuss was about: They wanted round things because they look like the moon. Well! I'm sure that's the last time a disappointing pay-off will be associated with the GS ball!

bad luck

Well, at least this guy's happy.

"yaay!"

Thoughts

I don't have many thoughts on this episode, mainly because none were really generated over the course of the episode. Man, this one was dull!

It's a real shame too, because it's one of the only times the GS ball played any kind of real significance in an episode, and it had to be in this utterly boring mishmash of loosely connected scenes that just felt like it didn't know where on earth it was really

going. I can do a synopsis all day long, but when the bare bones of your plot is “The GS Ball is stolen and the twerps do nothing of consequence until it’s returned to them.” t think you need a second pass at the draft.

Not only is this disappointing for misusing the GS ball, though, it also misuses a game location too! Yeah, Cherrygrove wasn’t the most exciting town in Gold and Silver, but it was where you first fought your rival who of course is MIA here, it was where you first got your town map which, I don’t know, COULD HAVE PLAYED A PART IN FINDING BLUE MOON FALLS, and they could have used pokemon that, I don’t know, you could have actually captured in the area! Yeah, Quagsire don’t appear in Cherrygrove in any of the gens. You know what does, though? Corsola, a pokemon so linked with clean water it got a depressing evolution in Sword and shield to reflect climate change! The choices here are just so dumb and bizarre, and all that couple with poor animation and a really clumsy dub...

Makes this a filler with no redeeming qualities. You know what that means? Yep, Rock me, by Arceus!

Trivia

Well first of all the fact that Cherrygrove is referred to as a town in the show and is so tiny in the games is doubly weird as it’s location is based on the real life japanese city of Nagoya, which is HUGE. Seriously, it’s the fourth largest city in Japan, did the developers have a grudge against Nagoya or something?

Now, though I may dunk on this episode, credit where it’s due, the premise of animals being used as an indicator of clean water is based on a real phenomenon called bioindicators, or in other words, “if this animal’s in the water, you don’t have to worry.” Even having it be quagsire is pretty clever too, as amphibians such as salamanders are often used as bioindicators in rivers just like in the episode.

Speaking of salamanders though, this fact freaked me out a little: did you know that Quagsire are probably the closest pokemon in design to their real life counterpart, aside from maybe Herdier later on? Apart from the blue color and being bipedal, Quagsire are pretty much literally Giant Salamanders, which are native to Japan and are believed to be one of the origins of the Kappa myth. But come on, Suede, you might say, look at when ash is holding one! There’s no way they’re that big in real life!

GIANT. SALAMANDERS. That should make all those Quagsire fans out there happy!

Woof, what a rocky filler that was! Let's hope the next one is smoother!

Episode 123

Synopsis

I guess we're giving a hearty "screw you" to Cherrygrove city and moving across the bridge of unimportance. Golly, it's an unbroken bridge, haven't seen many of those in the series...

I WAS JOKING, not praying to the plot gods! Well now the trio is suitably pickled, as Brock is all

"Well, we do have staryu and squirtle who have shown themselves to be more than capable of pulling us across-"

"Don't be silly, Misty! Where's the whimsy in that?"

"Did someone say whimsy?"

...O...Kay, so we've apparently spliced dimensions into one of those absurd british children's stories from the 60's, complete with this bootleg Ghibli protagonist. Jabs aside, I actually really like her design, and... sigh, Brock does too...

Luckily Arielle here is willing to share her loveseat and the gap is overcome. Then Ash is all "Gee, thanks for the ride but do you think you could stop those things from just staring at us like that? They're starting to freak me out!" Then misty's all

"Last I checked that's the definition of an orchard, so I'll let you decide for yourself, Misty."

Then to continue the connection to your standard Ghibli fare, we now observe Arielle's Arcadian lifestyle, beginning with her delightfully quirky pollination procedure.

"YA THINK?"

We then get a neat explanation of how cross-pollination works since Ash doesn't know how it works, lacking in education that he is. Though I don't know, I'm pretty sure I learned about pollination before age ten, mind you I also knew what a carnivore was...

So who knows with that boy. But yes, after Brock explains that we're basically witnessing floral intercourse (I guess he would be the one to know about that, being the prospective breeder and all) and Arielle explains that she controls the ledyba with this SUPER SPECIAL WHISTLE DO NOT STEAL HINT HINT, Team rocket swoop in with a

bit combining antiques roadshow and the price is right to attempt to snatch it. Man, I wish I knew who Jessie's impersonating here, and why is this not a thing in the west? A combination of those two powerful day-time TV staples could devour the airwaves!

But yes, they make off with the whistle but shockingly the ledyba don't listen to them! It's almost like pokemon only obey their trainers or something! Then Team Rocket actually make a decent call for once and use Lickitung's supersonic to confuse the group and grab pikachu. Too bad pikachu won the RNG and lands the move but then the ledyba hurt themselves in the confusion by running away. Of course Arielle then returns them safely OR cries in impotent despair.

I guess she never actually caught them...? Maybe? Oh well, so how will they recover the bugs? Why with another little used pokemon making itself useful again! Too bad even in the anime, you can't have just one bat and the plan fails. Then Ash brings out heracross but it's sidetracked by a freshly headbutted tree. Meanwhile we actually catch up with team rocket post blast-off and they discover the whistle has other properties.

Then the Ledyba show up and meowth gets Arbok to obey him by using the whistle. Not sure if that step is even necessary considering the rockets have shared pokemon in the past but whatever works. They string up the bugs only to get pepper sprayed by the swarm, and as they travel we find Arielle has concerns that the ledyba won't obey her. To this Ash responds with "Don't worry! You're the one who trained them, they'll always listen to you! Take it from me, a trainer who never once had a problem with pokemon that used to obey me suddenly getting stroppy! Er, well, even if they don't you could always trap them in ice for a day or so!"
"What?"

But after an admittedly adorable flashback reassures Arielle, they find Arbok continuing to make itself surprisingly useful, and a battle ensues.

Yes, I'll get to that, wait for the trivia. It looks like all is lost even though BROCK YOUR ONIX IS RIGHT THERE IN YOUR POCKET, sigh, I really need to stop expecting Onix to come out in these scenarios I'll just call it the Onix-ception. Whatever, the ledyba finally acknowledge their master's voice, Pikachu forces lickitung to forget supersonic as it never uses it again, that's pretty dark, and all is well. Arielle then vows to use the whistle less and less since they're obeying verbal orders now which MAKES NO SENSE A WHISTLE IS USED TO SAVE YOUR VOICE NOT OPPRESS YOUR ANIMALS HAVE THESE PEOPLE NEVER BEEN ON A FARM YOU USE A DOG WHISTLE SO YOU DON'T TEAR YOUR THROAT TO SHREDS YOU MORONS-

Thoughts

While this one had some good moments, the writing and pacing kept it from taking off.

Easily the best part of this episode was how they used several pokemon we hadn't seen in ages and utilised them in clever and surprising ways. Lickitung, Arbok... even Zubat got a neat moment even if it didn't go anywhere. I also liked the concept, but that won't be a surprise to anyone who's followed this series for a while, I freaking love Pokemon being used for everyday jobs. Also the character design was neat and the ledyba were adorable.

But unfortunately there wasn't much on offer aside from that. The plot meanders and seemed to grasp at straws for weak conflicts to pad out the time, the gags were pretty lame and skewed a lot younger than usual...

And as mentioned in the synopsis, there were a lot of really easy solutions to problems in the story that really should have been addressed. Overall I didn't hate it and it has value, but it just wasn't my cup of tea. That's a Poke ball.

Trivia

All right, let's get this one over with:

Here it is backwards.

That takes guts to put on a national broadcast, even if it was trickier to reverse audio back in the 90s. Apparently the reason for the venom towards the company is not for any of the reasons anime fans have a strained relationship with it, but rather because Eric Stuart, the voice of James, was no longer getting paid for the short commercials featuring his voice. I mean that does suck, but really? The devil? Well, at least they paid their VAs a higher wage in general.

Speaking of venom, though, I thought I'd quickly point out that arbok being "charmed" by the whistle was a reference to a very long-standing form of street performance known as snake charming, where a performer makes it seem like they're hypnotising a snake to dance to their whistle-like instrument known as a pungi, usually a cobra, hence the connection to Arbok. Funnily enough, it's not the song that makes the snake dance, it's actually the movement of the pungi itself that the cobra follows, so meowth's whistle really shouldn't have done anything. It's kind of like how everyone thinks the red color is what makes bulls mad when really it's the movement of the fabric.

Lastly, when the ladybugs seem to pepper spray Team Rocket and the twerps find them by following the smell, this is not Stun Spore or a similar Pokémon move but actually based on the real life defense mechanism of ladybugs, where when they're threatened they roll over and excrete a foul-smelling yellow poison to deter predators. I'd say you could try this yourselves on a lady bug you find, but that would be animal cruelty so just watch a video.

Patrons

And so, Suede leaves the water and the air, underwhelmed by amphibians and bugs. Will the next episode heal his wounds? Or will ignorance be bliss?