

The season is ending! ...on a double filler. Way to end on a whimper, guys...

## Synopsis

Well! I thought we had explored all the game mechanics in the show but I forgot about this one!

“Hey yeah, a trainer tip! There was always a ton around Pallet for some reason...”

The tip warns against ghost types in the area, recommending a psychic type for protection, and of course Ash is all “What a load of Trubbish! EVERYONE knows ghosts are super effective against psychic types!”

\*Sabrina\* “No they’re not.”

\*ash\* No they’re not. That’s right! Psychic types are the best against ghosts! If we had a psychic type we’d steamroll those ghosts!”

\*GNNNNRRRRR\*

“What was that?”

“I don’t know, I sense a deep frustration, far, far into the future...”

Okay, yeah, whatever, in the pocket universe of THIS ONE EPISODE, psychic types are super effective against ghost pokemon, and just to continue our journey into opposite land where James is straight and Charizard is competitive apparently Psyduck is reliable now!

Oh nope, just a mental block on the twerps’ part. But yeah, they enter the forest with psyduck even though HERACROSS MIGHT BE USEFUL at least as a tank since ghost wouldn’t be very effective, but that’s not important for now as we then meet Pac-man’s junkie cousin, who freaks everyone the heck out, including psyduck.

“Nope”

But no, the budget cuphead boss is actually this new pokemon’s tail, a new pokemon called...

Kirin, I guess.

Or a girafarig, sure... apparently the town nearby specialises in psychic types to combat the... the ghost types in the woods... ugh. But yeah, they have their traditional meal with the new blood, and she's all

"Yes, we have eaten sandwiches together, surely there can be no greater bond." but then Cherry brings THIS out...

"Wow, imagine if you could talk, pikachu? Wouldn't that be great?"

\*movie\*

"AAAAH! AHHH PUT IT BACK! PUT IT BACK INSIDE!"

So we get a battle with the new mon and ash is all "hey can we just lay a ground rule of no turning pikachu's thunderbolts into lightning dragons and violating his free will to make him dance for your amusement?"

"What?"

"Never mind!"

Then after showing off some nifty moves you at home could be using if you purchased this game, consume consume, Plkachu is able to nuke girafarig and... well, I guess everything's wrapped up! Yeah, we met the new trainer, ash fought it, there aren't any loose plot threads, so I guess we're kind of at a loss. Even the characters seem to think so, since Cherry is basically "so... you wanna visit my hometown?"

"Sure!"

"Why not?"

"Sounds pleasant!"

So we head to Len town, a place bustling with psychic pokemon that really should be more interesting than it is, before buckethead over here sounds the kaiju alarm.

"Yeah! There's no way a Gengar can get... that.. Big, Brock do you remember ANYTHING before professor Ivy, Oh Brock come on, pull it together!"

But without a giant Jigglypuff to bail them out this time how will they defeat it? Luckily it's just a rocket contraption of course with one of the funniest designs I've seen in awhile.

So they do their thing and GUH MEOWTH'S BEEN BISECTED wow that's an animation error and a half, and with their mirror eyes they're immune to psychic attacks.

"Couldn't they just... NOT attack their eyes?"

"Misty! We're not barabarians!"

But we know Cherry's getting REALLY serious as she pulls an Arthur fist and raises her power level! "Come on, Girafarig, now hit its eyes with a confusion attack, only MORE SO!"

"Again, maybe aim for team rocket or...?"

"No! Now it's personal! Girafarig, now aim a more powerful attack at the mirror eyes!"

"WHO COULD HAVE FORESEEN THIS? Well, no matter, you won't take me alive punks! Come and get- "

"Oh no you don't, that's my gimmick! COME AND GET ME!"

Then Cherry hits the next level and is able to see possible futures! With this insanely op ability at her command, she's all

"You think? What ELSE could it do?"

"Look, just dodge it!"

Then she actually uses Girfarig's psychic power to support pikachu rather than go for the eyes again "finally!" and they're blasted off by future sight. So all's well and Ash is all "Well, you can see the future, huh? Gonna rig the lottery?"

"Nah, but those GYM leaders better watch out!"

"Great! I guess I'll see you in the league then?...Cherry?"

"You really want me to answer that?"

"NO!"

## Thoughts

I know that the seasons are different in Japan, but man it's pretty bad luck that we're getting such stinkers this close to the end. Mind you most of the league episodes in Kanto were pretty dire so I guess it's not entirely unprecedented. Sorry, yeah this one SUCKS.

In much the same vein as the episode before last, this one is filler formula done wrong. It's slow, clunky, unengaging and overly interested in showing off the new mon to the detriment of nearly everything else. It particularly suffers from "well-now-what" syndrome, where you feel like the episode doesn't have anything else to say, but then it keeps going for ten minutes. This might have been overlooked if the second half was exciting or entertaining, but despite an awesomely pathetic design and a couple of decent gags this was one of the most pathetic and frustrating rocket mech fights, top 5 worst easy. I can overlook logic and plot holes for two reasons: if the action or story is

engaging enough for me to ignore them or if they're unintrusive enough for me to willingly ignore them. This fails on BOTH counts, with no real strategy beyond "hit it REALLY hard" and enough boneheaded moves on everyone's part to make me wanna pull my hair out. DON'T AIM FOR THE EYES!

Probably the most disappointing aspect though is that this episode was written by Atshiro tomioka, one of the better writers whom we all know for having a great memory of the series so far and a talent for exciting battles. So here, with the type advantages mixed up, a boring battle and Brock forgetting about pokemopolis Gengar when it was in an episode TOMIOKA HIMSELF WROTE, I guess I just hope he was okay and I'm glad he got better. No writer bats a thousand, but BOY did he strike out with this one. It's a rock.

#### Trivia

So why on earth can't the anime get type matching right when it comes to psychic and ghost types, huh? Well, it might actually come down to a glitch in the original games. In generation 1, psychic was MEANT to be weak to ghost but the problem was that Night shade wasn't affected by type and the only other offensive move, lick, was ineffective against psychic types due to a bug in the code. So maybe embarrassed by that mixup, tomioka-san tried to correct it in this episode, only for gen ii to fix the problem? Who even knows but the only bone I can throw is that technically, psychic was strong against MOST ghost type pokemon at the time since they were dual-typed with poison, but a) there was still Misdreavus and b) THEY STILL SAY PSYCHIC IS STRONG AGAINST GHOST TYPE!

Moving on the pokemon of the week, Girafarig is quite interesting as in Japanese it's known as Kirinriki, as you most likely heard as they kept it's japanese voice for some reason.

That name is a japanese palindrome, since it's spelled with the same hiragana backwards as forwards, but that's not the most interesting thing. See, Giraffes are kind of like tapirs in Japan, where they named them after the mythological beast that they most resemble. Kirin are known as the "asian unicorn", with tons of different designs, but all involve hooves, antlers and a dragon-like head. Giraffes may not be that impressive in the antler department but the otherworldly appearance reminded the japanese enough of the kirin that they named it after them. There's even records of giraffes being presented to the chinese emperor as kirin as early as the 1400s. I still reckon they should have made it psychic/Dark though, I mean, what else would you call that tail?

Oh and just to end on, look at the beta version of girafarig. Yeah, I can see why it got modified, I'm not sure I'd be comfortable with that thing staring at me the whole time...

Right, just the last episode of the US season left! Can they at least stick the landing!

### Synopsis

We continue our bizarre recent trend of opening on a weird pokemon centre, this one apparently designed by a kid using the weird leftover building paraphernalia at bottom of the toybox. So what awaits? Well, an adorable bronx accent for one thing...

"Ay, We're scryin' heah! Git lawst!"

But the real hook is this meatspace twitter birthday meme where it tells you what pokemon you represent based on when your mum squeezed you out. Since Misty's ethical standards dictate that she must purchase the entire volume before checking her birthday rather than just borrowing the kid's copy for 30 seconds, she heads over to the daycare where they sell it.

Then things start to feel a little shady as apparently if you own a pokemon that matches your type you get good luck, and GOOD HEAVENS this couple just happen to be overseeing a kind of prototype GTS where you give them your pokemon and they let you know if someone else is willing to trade! Boy, isn't that just coincidentally filling a need, huh? But let's put that aside for now as to be fair I am curious what the twerps get as their type. I do like how oblivious Misty is to Ash's aggression though...

"Tee-hee! I don't care!"

Well, it doesn't get off to a great start as Ash gets bellsprout which according to the book is the absolute opposite of his personality

"Yeah, sure, I'm easily cowed, that's why I constantly ignore battle advice and subsequently lose tons of battles! ... wait, that's not right..."

Also I wouldn't exactly call bellsprout submissive from what I'VE seen!

Then Brock gets Onix, which is actually a good match, not only for the personality type but also for the fact that he should be used more often than he is! \*rimshot\* also the uh, phallic overtones, while most likely unintentional, cannot be ignored.

So we've got one that doesn't fit and one that does, about standard for most fortune telling so far, so what's misty?

Fair, though I'm surprised she's so put out considering how much she loves grumpy water types. Then Pokemon once again does it's job for me...

\*only pokemon that's NOT like me\*

"Really? Like, krabby...?"

"It's called hyperbole, you comment section- WAH!"

Well here's team rocket, looking very on brand this time around...

Huh, guess the pokemon world had the apollo program, interesting... so they send out freaking adorable rocket drones with freaking disturbing severed hands but misty just has zero chill right now.

So now the rockets have the book and Jesse is... an eevee? Alright, so we've got two fails and two accurate calls. James, the tie-breaker?

Ho boy, that works. Unfortunately James isn't buying it, but then after the book seemingly predicts the next minute of his life he's suddenly fully on board. Oh and he officially makes the most adorable "face being hit by water" sound ever recorded.

Then the placebo hits HARD and he goes full megalomaniac on a dime! Even his cohorts are speechless!

\*actual pause\*

And though I love passive james, I have to say Flaming James is just a delight to watch.

So they storm in the front door and James is all

"Oh dearie me, I knew the world conquering fortune would bite us in the patoot. Oh well, time to lay the smackdown on this whippersnapper!" And then she does.

But, shockingly not perturbed by getting thrown like an enemy in a Yakuza game... BY A SENIOR CITIZEN, James persists and we find out the old man wasn't just eric stuart just re-using his butch voice... it was Eric Stuart CURRENTLY using his Butch voice!

Yes, it's the rocket B team! Or should that be the A team considering they have actually good plans... I guess I really should have twigged it was them since it's a scam involving a daycare but that doesn't matter now! Our rockets are subdued using the uncounterable technique known as the "cross-dissolve" and James continues to be hilarious.

Meanwhile, oh yeah, the twerps are still a thing. Misty's still down on her fortune, and then young Sheldon here exacerbates things by offering to trade his Gyarados for her poliwhirl. Taking this as the last straw, Misty's all "This fortune doesn't suit me! I demand to speak with the manager!"

"...God?"

"Yeah, I'll blunt his golden spikes with a hammer if I have to, I demand a re-do!"

So with that lofty goal in mind, Misty storms the daycare only to discover the evil scheme, which I reiterate is actually really good. At being bad. You know what I mean. So Misty confronts them and shows her priorities...

"Yeah, that too, but mainly the gyarados thing!"

"Uh, we just copied the book from an existing one in Goldenrod, we didn't write that fortune!"

"Oh. Well come on guys, let's head out!"

"MISTY!"

"Fine..."

So the fight begins and GAH!

Oh boy, here it comes...

YAAAAAY

Tempted as I am to leave the episode on that one glorious note, I am bound to finish it off. Unfortunately after some wonderful supreme confidence from Moltres over here...

after learning the book was a scam, Flaming James deflates, with wobuffet being very appropriate in japanese. After the other rockets blast them off, the twerps beat the remainder and send them off to the slammer. Then Jenny has a revelation!

Unfortunately we don't get to see the twerps' actual types, or even James' for that matter! What a freaking tease! Fine, I'LL do it! Brock stays an Onix, Jesse's a seviper,

Ash is a riolu (scrappy and gets way too much attention), James is a magikarp (lovable if not very powerful) and Misty stays a freaking Gyarados! Deal with it!

## Thoughts

Well I asked for the season to end on a high note and thank heavens, at least my prediction came true! This wasn't spectacular overall, but parts of it certainly were and overall it was incredibly entertaining.

It's amazing what good writing and character moments can do, isn't it? I could easily imagine this being dull as ditchwater if, say, it was focused entirely on misty being upset without any breaks, but like all the best episodes, they knew they hit a gold mine with Team Rocket and put the main focus squarely on them. I cannot stress enough just how delightful James was in this episode, and almost heartbreaking when you consider how effective he could be with the kind of confidence he has access to. It's an organic extension of team rocket's running gag of being better at everything except being team rocket, where it's shown if James could just step out of the oppressive environment of the organisation and his own self-loathing he could be a force of nature, honey!

That seems to be Yuki Yoshi Ohashi's specialty, for better or worse: running gags. He can be great and awful, but he seems most comfortable iterating on previous jokes. He's the one who came up with jigglypuff and snubbull (boo) but also Cassidy and Butch (yay). Here, all his strengths are on full display, supported by a fantastic dub performance and decent animation and pacing. It didn't rock my world, but it lit my fire. Let's give it an ultra ball.

## Trivia

As you may have suspected, the fortune telling technique used in the episode is based on a real astrological system originated in China called the Four Pillars Of Destiny or Ba-Zi. The idea at its most basic is that you can create a reading for an individual based on their birth year, month, day and hour. There's even a Japanese form of it called Doubutsu Uranai where you're assigned an animal based on your type! Unfortunately even despite some thorough google fu I couldn't find out if Doubutsu Uranai was around before Pokemon, as it's so little known outside of Japan English resources are scarce. I'm a green Pegasus, though! It's pretty accurate too, except STEADY AND CALM? I don't think so!



By the way, Ash's animal is a Red Monkey. How could I know that? Well, as I've mentioned Takeshi shudo, the showrunner for pokemon, wrote a light novel covering the beginning of ash's journey. In it, it's stated that kids get their starters the first April 1st after their 10th birthday. He then says Ash was 10 years, 10 months and 10 days old when he gets his starter. So since he got his starter in 1997, his birthday is May 22, 1986! He's older than me! HAHAHA... oof.

For a neat reference, when James has gone full moltres in japanese he says "The heavens call...the earth cries out..the wind roars." it's a reference to the catchphrase from the series Kamen Rider Stronger, in which the main character says "The heavens call...the earth cries out...the crowds roar". Of course James is a big nerd.

Lastly something that actually covers both of the episodes covered today: These are technically lost episodes! Yeah, for (at the time of writing) completely unknown reasons, these two were missing from the official vhs and dvd collections until 2015! I guess Flaming James was just too hot to handle.

Patrons

And so, Suede sits by the entrance to Goldenrod city, ready to tackle the next gym leader. But as the seasons change, so too does opinions, and it's time to take a look back at just how far we've come...