

Patrons

Star wars

Synopsis

We arrive at a quaint little town... again... seriously is this like the new woods for the gang, just finding a new town, saving it and moving on? Well anyway, Ash overhears the narrator expositing that the town has no gym and immediately disregards it.

Well of course Ash, how silly of me to think that you would stop at this little town when there are gym battles to be fought! It's not like you've stopped at and rescued at least four other non-gym towns by this point! You dip! Okay, well, maybe I'm not giving the kid enough credit, maybe he had an epiphany off screen and now wants to completely cut to the chase! How many more episodes until we reach the next gym? THIRTEEN? What in the name of Suicune's weird head thing could possibly be taking so long to jump on a boat!?

I digress, of course, much like the writers are apparently doing, as Brock reveals that they're out of potions. To be honest, this isn't surprising in the slightest as those who've been following my journey will know Ash seems to make a nasty habit of eschewing the pokemon centre for entire arcs at a time. Can't help but wonder if it isn't like juicing up the pokemon with painkillers in lieu of seeing a doctor, but they seem happy so I'll give the the benefit of the doubt. One pokemon that does seem to be in need of urgent Joy attention is meowth, who's been struck down with chronic Anime Red Smudge disease. James is all "Hey, it appears our teammate my well collapse from heat exhaustion." "eh." "you make a good argument, let's ditch him." then Dr. Quinn Medicine woman over here is all "What are you doing?! Do you want to get PETA involved this early in the franchise? Take care of your pokemon!" and team rocket are all "OUR pokemon? Silly girl, this isn't our servant, he's our business partner, therefore we're under no obligation to care about him or maintain his health!" and she's all "that's the dumbest thing I've ever heard!" "you make a good argument." "let's not ditch him."

So Green Chun Li fixes Meowth some decent looking pesto and he's all

And then he's all "oh no, am I a furry? Wait, I'm literally already a furry... er, a Skinny? No that ain't right..." and after that Miaka over here is all "I've just cured a common cold with rocket and capers! Now you take care of him properly you guys, I'm off to cure cancer with arugula! Lalalala la..." And meowth's all "I hate to see her go but I love to watch her leave..."

Meanwhile, oh hi ash! I'd almost forgotten about you fellas, you really need to stop being so boring in your own show! They've found a mysterious building in the middle of nowhere and ash is all "well, it ain't a mansion but it'll do. Hello? New pokemon? Incredibly quirky person with dubious intentions?" and granny here's all "you rang?" but before she can set up a contract with ash to save the world with the power of his internal demons the china doll comes home and is

all "Grandma, how many times? You can't sell medicine to healthy customers! On an a completely unrelated note, ash, how would you like to have a pokemon battle?" "What's that?"

So the girl, who's name is revealed to be Cassandra, brings out a paras, who seems to be under the impression that it's a Shedinja for how much fight it puts up. Cassandra's all "it's a shame really, I want it to evolve into a parasect, but for some reason it seems to resist the process." Gee, I wonder WHY...(dex entry)

She's also like "I wouldn't normally push it but I really need the nightmare crab's mushroom" and the gang are like *all three* "WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO EVOLVE A POKEMON JUST FOR IT'S MUSHROOM, WE ASK IN UNISON FOR APPARENTLY THE HUMAN HIVE MIND JUST SUDDENLY KICKS IN SOMETIMES?" and cassandra's all "so I can create a potion greater than any already made! I'll call it a... Super Potion!" "we've got that already." "uh... well then it's an HYPER PO-" "we got that too. Even one that heals them all the way, it's called a max potion" "Ah, but THIS one will also heal all of your-" "full restore." "son of a-!"

Geez, no pressure, Lady! So Ash gets his pokemon to basically throw the battles so that paras can lose it's free will (leading to some hilariously pathetic battles), but it's such a coward that even that doesn't help. Ash is all "well, we tried pulling back with pikachu, and we tried a pokemon that doesn't have an advantage. I know! The second stage fire type that burned me for no reason! That's our answer for sure!" so after THAT cunning plan goes about as well as you'd imagine...

"You what, Mate?"

No, not that bad, but paras is traumatised and runs away only to be met by team rocket. It seems meowth has convinced his team to train up the paras so they can profit from the huge amount of revenue the super special awesome potion will surely produce thanks to cassandra's gratitude (while secretly plotting to reenact shojo manga scenes with Cassandra). So the training begins, but how could they succeed where ash failed?

Ah. Well, I guess you can't argue with that! So after some MORE hilariously pathetic battles where meowth sabotages Arbok and weezing so they lose (this seems needlessly cruel, why couldn't meowth explain the situation to them), it seems like paras finally has it's confidence back! Hoping that that's enough, Team Rocket leave the rest to Ash and the gang which leads to even more (say it with me) hilariously pathetic battles. I'm not complaining though, these are a riot!

Finally ash is all "all right, now paras is willing to fight back, I can finally give it a decent fight with a pokemon it's strong against! Go squirt- Just kidding, burn in hell Crabshroom."

Yeah, after ash does what ash does best and makes the worst possible battling decision, it seems it finally clicks that Charmeleon has gone stropopy! Ash is all "But charmeleon was always

so obedient before this point! What happened?” and granny’s all “Ah, but this is one mechanic from the games we’re actually going to reference!” and Cassandra’s all “Just take your medicine, grandma” “oh, I don’t think I should take MY medicine...!”

Well, luckily, paras gained enough courage to at least stand it’s ground, and it seems it got in a lucky critical hit! So it evolves, Team Rocket are blasted off by charmeleon, revealing that he really was just faking it, that’s kind of a hollow victory of parasect, huh... well it’s not like it can appreciate it, it is now a husk manipulated by fungus. Despite that, parasect gets it’s revenge on Charmeleon, Ash makes an incredibly untrue statement,

And team rocket, it appears, were too nice for their plan to work, as Cassandra, while extremely grateful, can’t accept their business offer:

“Bye guys! Thanks for not asking me for some gratitude royalties from the finished potion! Now Grandma, we need to go bigger! Let’s make a whole pharmaceutical company out of parasect products! But what’ll we call a company based on the products of a zombie crab’s mushroom canopy?” “ How about Umbrella?” “Perfect!” *Verdant range

Thoughts

One of the reasons I keep going with this series is not just because I find interesting trends or to feel vindicated by good nostalgia or even to point and laugh at the stupid stuff. It’s also fascinating when I find out certain things about myself too. In this case It was pretty much cemented for me that my personal favorite episodes are well done ones about small events, where the battles feel more intimate if not more epic and the characters and world are given time to breathe. Now, don’t get me wrong, I LOVE gym battle episodes and I love the crazy cuckoo plots that leave you breathless with how insane they are, such as in Tentacool and Tentacruel as well as Island of the giant pokemon. But my favorite ones, the ones that stick and usually get As or Bs, are the ones like Ash Catches A Pokemon and Charmander - The Stray Pokemon where they take a simple premise, a small slice of ash’s life, and pump it full of enough humor, character and heart to make me want to stick with the series forever.

Now, does this episode qualify for such prestigious company? Hmm... well, the trappings are there, but that of course doesn’t mean anything. Wake Up Snorlax was set up much the same as my favorite episodes but that didn’t stop it from sucking hard. But there was something here that certainly sets it apart from the majority of all the episodes we’ve seen so far: Team Rocket are actively and intrinsically engaged in the plot! I’m sure I don’t need to tell you lot this, but the usual team rocket b-plot for a given episode goes somewhat like this: Team rocket are shown spying on the twerps, they hatch a half-baked scheme to grab pikachu OR the Poke-Guffin of the week (I’m actually surprised how often Team Rocket have actually ignored pikachu in a given episode), they interrupt the plot to enact their scheme (with a motto) and the A-plot is annoyed before brushing them away into the sunset. Now, I stress formula doesn’t have to mean bad. Phineas and Ferb built an entire series around how fun it can be to play with formula. Sometimes they do fun things with it, such as with Salon Roquet, and other times they’re just

completely disposable, like in Showdown in Pewter City where they literally just dug a hole and fell into it. But for the most part they are just their own separate entity from the twerps storyline. Not so here! The plot would not have moved forward without team rocket's involvement and to be honest the twerps are more the b-story here. We learn that meowth does have a shred of decency within him, and the dynamic of the three is more fleshed out. It was fun to see them figure out the maximum profit potential for themselves while still maintaining a bond of that common goal. It helps define them more fully as the yang to the twerp's yin, if you'll allow a trite phrasing. Both groups are working together to accomplish similar goals through different means, and it's always fascinating to see that explored a little deeper.

Now, all that aside, I must say that this episode is not perfect. I'll admit some of what grated a little couldn't be helped, such as meowth sounding a little weird thanks to the dub delay mentioned in the last episode causing him to have to get back into the vocal groove, but there were some jarring pauses in the dub and it seemed a little sub-par overall.

The other thing that rubs me the wrong way a little was how paras was trained. It's not usually a good idea to simply keep praising someone for doing nothing, as this can lead to a swelled head and a harmful attitude really fast. However, I won't mark it down to harshly for that as an argument can be made that the show acknowledges this, as ash's attempts did nothing and Team Rocket's only succeeded in making it arrogant. It's only when paras actually puts an effort in that growth begins. Meowth's jerkish behaviour towards Arbok and Koffing are a little harder to excuse as he really could have just explained the plan to them, but this you can just chalk up to him being selfish, meaning it's less likely kids will do the same.

Overall, this was a good episode. Despite the nitpicks and riffing potential, there was some awesome animation, fun and occasionally hilarious battles, a breezy pace despite how simple the plot was, some great heart and a welcome insight into Team rocket's character and dynamic. It's hard to think of much more to ask for in a character-of-the-week episode. I'll give it a B+.

Trivia

As briefly mentioned before, this was the first episode to appear on the kid's WB block after the series left syndication and a months-long hiatus ensued. It's most likely that because of this the Dub actors sound a little off, as they'd have to get back into the zone for each of the characters again.

I'm not normally too fussed that 4kids tried to remove Japanese culture in the dub. Don't get me wrong, I think it's stupid, but overall it just made them look bad rather than do any sort of lasting harm to those watching. However, to me it just goes to a different level when they replaced the crest on the door here with a white circle. The whole place is meant to be a Chinese medicine centre and Cassandra is dressed in traditional Chinese garb! They honestly just made more work for themselves when it would have just helped the aesthetic. Again, all it did was make

them look bad, but yeah, this was particularly dumb. Same with the fact that Grandma originally offered the gang Magikarp whiskers rather than “snakeroot”. The heck’s a snake?

There’s also an interesting reference here, when paras climbs a tree and team rocket comments on it.

First of all, I thought Tarzan had a copyright issue? That was the whole reason why you went with tomo rather than Tarzan in the kangaskhan episode! Did Warner brothers own Tarzan at this point? No they can’t have, as Disney’s Tarzan was out around the same time, weird... Well anyway, what they say in japanese is “Even a Paras can climb a tree if it’s flattered enough” which is a play on the saying “even a pig can climb a tree if it’s flattered enough.” What’s cool about this is that apparently that phrase was used a lot in the 70’s anime, Time Bokan, which had a bumbling trio of villains who were the inspiration for team rocket! Nice to call back to your inspirations, shame they couldn’t really do that in the dub.

Lastly, in case you didn’t know, Paras and parasect are based on a real life fungus that takes over it’s host’s functions and compels them to perform basic actions. The most commonly known species of this is called cordyceps, which was one of the main inspirations for the clickers in The Last of us. If there’s one thing that’ll never get old, it’s scratching just below the surface of a playful kid’s fantasy and finding real life horror.

Bulbapedia

“Okay, Suede, your word is Bulbapedia.”

Bulbapedia. Can I get a definition?

“A collaborative website used by people of no value to aggregate facts of no importance.”

Could you use it in a sentence?

“I, a mouth-breather, went onto bulbapedia to see if I got the facts right on my asinine video series. Dogasu’s backpack helped with it’s moronic episode comparisons.”

Ok. Bulbapedia. S-C-R-E-W, new word! Y-O-U. Bulbapedia.

“I guess I deserved that.”

And so, Suede bids a fond farewell to the budding potion empire and their pet encased in a living death, and moves eagerly toward his next adventure. Though this is hard work! Perhaps he should take a nap...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuopJYLBvrl>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pM6abmqYy8&feature=youtu.be&t=3m35s>