Synopsis
We're doing the nameless city shuffle again today, this time in one of those ARTSY metropolises (metropoli?) that has like, parks and sculptures and improv comedy and street food and stuff! Not to mention they can - what was that, brock?

Yeah, can't miss the centre, there are important gyms to ignore! But before that this happens and I'm not sure how to react to the tweps reaction…

On the one hand, this seems really dumb as those look nothing like actual eyes, but on the other hand this is the pokemon world where apparently Sableye can see through freaking GEMSTONES so who's to say what is or isn't an eye? On Aipom's third hand, those look more fish to me. To be honest, eyes wouldn't even be my third guess as to what they are. On Machamps frankly superfluous fourth hand, this is Ash we're talking about, as demonstrated by this line:

Boy, imagine if Ash ever saw an Atlas Moth. "Sweet Arceus mother of Mew, there are two ekans fused onto that bug type! I think I'm going to be sick!"

Tangents aside, it is in fact an adorable stantler, the reindeer pokemon with a budgie's beak for some bizarre reason. Brock, being the Man Who Cannot Resist A Lone Pokemon, begins a bizarre ritual to ingratiate himself with said mon.

"Ah, Brock, two things: One, apparently you just need to match your breathing and approach from downwind, at least that what we heard from a pro pokemon creeper-upper-onner, and two, in what eldritch nightmare reality is that a stantler impression? Remind me never to play charades with you!"

Seriously Brock? Now you're just kjy 9iuhiuphitrolling, unless reindeer really do groom themselves like cats… hold on *keyboard tapping* Yeah, that's dumb!

Then he does… this, and… this… this is seriously getting lynchian at this point, and after Stantler gasses the bunch they hallucinate a stantlerpede.

subtitle Their minds are broken. This is as it should be.

Then Jenny shows up and Brock… boy, Brock really got the idiot ball this episode, huh?

“Kid, I’m in uniform, I legally can’t go out with you right now. Also you’re like 12 so I also can’t legally go out with you for that reason. Also I’m about to report you so that would put a damper on any sort of lasting relationship. But mostly it’s the age thing.”
“...So you’re saying there’s a chance…”
“All right, where are those cuffs…”

Then Jenny explains the situation at the station and… oof…

Man, there hasn’t been a Jenny episode this dumb since Hypno’s nap time, huh? Hmm! A herd of pokemon KNOWN FOR CAUSING HALLUCINATIONS has been APPEARING OUT OF NOWHERE to terrorize the population? What a conundrum! Then Ash is all

And Brock’s like “Remember Maiden’s Peak?” “Oh yeah, shutting up now.”

Then the rockets do a decent impression of the boy from The Last Guardian while hurriedly rattling off the motto. After that the group still cling to this ‘mystery’ when YOU LITERALLY HEARD THE POKEDEX SAY-

BUT WHATEVER, then the stampede appears again, but Brock is all “Wait! Unless someone turned on noclip, something’s fishy here, and I don’t mean the shape of their antlers! I’ve got a plan! Alright Stantler, COME AND GET ME!”

“Brock, I know that worked for me but I’m pretty sure I was an outlier in that regard! Gah, at least let me get run over with you!” “Kid, what are you DOING? I don’t need TWO casualty reports on my desk!”

But of course Brock doesn’t get Mufasa’d as, you know, he ACTUALLY REMEMBERED THE POKEDEX ENTRY, and he spots the OG stantler. So he takes it back to the... police station? Not the centre? Okay, but yeah he patches it up and of course, as is tradition, the abandoned pokemon that brock forms an emotional connection with and nurses back to health is never seen by him again.

“Well officer Jenny, I’m apparently the only human in this episode with a functioning memory! That and stantler set off my eyelid piercing so I knew something was up.”
Then Jenny’s all

And Brock’s like, “Yep, nothing like pokemon breeding! I just love healing them and getting them the best nutrition they can and rescuing abandoned pokemon, that’s what

a breeder does, right?”
Why did it take him until Diamond and pearl to change his profession again?

Well, that wrapped up pretty quickly, there’s still a good ten minutes left!
...Oh no…

Yep, team rocket have to try and catch this relatively common pokemon for Giovanni and I don’t even need to do a gag this time as James pretty much acknowledges the eternal pain project outright!

Oh all right…
“It causes hallucinations if you breathe in it’s musk!”
“I… you know, I might actually have a use for that.”

So we switch to the blue filter as the cast struggle to pad out the time now that the cameras are still rolling…

Then it’s time to release Stantler into the wild why? Why are they trying to release Stantler? Why? WHY?

“I can’t do that, Misty! This is a wild pokemon! It belongs out amongst nature! What kind of heartless creature would try and keep a wild animal with them at all times? Next you’ll want me to use him in pit fighting!”

“Can’t you just… you know, catch it?” *GASP*
“Ash, How could you say that? I can’t catch Stantler, it’s weak and injured!”
“Brock’s right, Ash! Besides, it’s just a baby! It needs to be with it’s own kind to raise it! Isn’t that right, togepi?”

Then Brock does… UGH, he does this stupid old Chespin…

“We never wanted you, Stantler! Your IVs are sub-optimal and your Nature doesn’t compliment your moveset! Get out of here, scrub! I only wanted you for a one-night cuddle! Sentimental catches are for losers!”

So then after ANOTHER perfectly functional (If annoying) ending, Team rocket ONCE AGAIN extends it by attempting to kidnap the stantler. With a giant deer robot. Not a giant stantler robot. A giant REAL WORLD DEER robot. A DOE. A DEER. A FEMALE DEER. Still haven’t shaken off the real world completely yet, I see…

SEVENTH- You guys deserve the eternal pain project! Not to mention the whole thing is literally a glorified net gun, look at this!

THAT'S LITERALLY ONE OF ONLY TWO THINGS IT DOES. Net guns exist, Team rocket HAVE USED LONG RANGE NET GUNS IN THE PAST! I ALLOW A LOT FOR THESE GUYS BUT THIS IS JUST A STEP TOO FAR!

So what is the second thing the doe-bot does? Oh, you'll love this…

Then Meowth actually raises a good point…
I guess you can't take the conspicuous consumption completely out of the former trust fund brat…

The balloon is even out of zapping range so what could stop team rocket now?

I would ask where these guys were before, but I can't deny the satisfaction of this classic set up.

So Stanler goes back to the herd and the narrator's all

Yeah, it sure would suck if Brock became something else, right?

Thoughts

Hoo boy, this is a rough one. Not only was it pretty awful overall, but it adds injury to insult due to it being written by my favorite staff writer, Junki Takegami.

Takegami-san is usually great at character moments and neat story beats, but he was not on his a game here, or even his B game. For one thing, the story ends halfway through the episode, and that is never a good sign unless you have another self contained story to follow it up, such as in Pallet Party Panic. But here, it just felt like when you had to write an essay in a high school exam, you write all you want to but then you're WAY under the word count so you just repeat and stretch until it fits. Two rocket extensions is just excessive.

If that was the only complaint, though, that wouldn't be so bad. They'd just have to make up for it with good character moments, setpieces or excellent animation in general. Nope! The animation, while not awful is pretty bland, the gags didn't hit for me and as for character, I point you to this scene.

I HATE this bleeding trope, and what makes it worse is that pokemon itself has done it so much better in the past! Remember Pikachu's goodbye? They had a perfect opportunity for Ash to be all "Go away, Pikachu! I never liked you! Get out of here, Baka!" But instead they defied my expectations and had ash discuss his feelings and reasoning with pikachu like an actual human being! If ASH, the tackling wonder, could understand that, then Brock should definitely feel similar. But instead we get him scaring of an injured animal for no reason.

While we're here though, can we just talk about why he didn't freaking CATCH Stantler? Now before the comments come in, I understand that this is a baby stantler and it's mum was probably nearby and he didn't want to separate them. But for the first argument I once again point to togepi and for the second I point to Lapras! You can catch stantler and then quickly scan the forest for a herd,. If you find them, release it, if not, yay Brock finally gets a pokemon he connects with! You could even have stantler make a difficult choice as to whether to stay or not, in fact that almost definitely would have made a better second half than what we got!

But all this aside, this episode mostly fails because it doesn't do anything good or fun aside from a couple of heartwarming scenes that kind of fall flat for the above reasons. It's not all bad, but bland and frustrating do not a good filler make. I gotta give it a rock.

Trivia

Stantler is of course based on a reindeer but fun fact, it's japanese name, Odishishi, is a reference to a traditional japanese deer scarer called a Shishiodoshi, also known as those water pouring bamboo things in a japanese garden you always wondered what the point of it was. So it's kind of a pun: A deer that scares, named after a deer-scarer.

Another cool thing about stantler (since there really isn't much in the way of trivia for the episode itself) is that in Gen II you find them on route 36. In the real life Johto region in japan, it matches up to rough location the city of Nara, famous for its tame deer.

Lastly, and I know this could be a bit of a stretch but it's still interesting, the fact that Stantler's antlers cause people to became dizzy and prone to suggestion could be a reference to deer velvet, the skin that covers deer antlers while they grow and then sheds in the most metal manner possible, as seen here. In asian countries this is used as a medicine and in russia they made an alcoholic extract out of it known as Pantocrin. Believe it or not, the biggest exporter of deer velvet is actually my home country of New

Zealand, which would be awesome if the medicinal properties were actually backed up by science. Oh well...

Patrons

And so, Suede leaves kid venison behind and doesn't look back as he heads towards the greener pastures of story-rich episodes ahead. It'll be nice to see something a bit fresher this time, I mean they wouldn't do a rescue plot twice in a row, right?