

The New Test Subject

You lie in bed in your studio, your thoughts garbling your mind again. You've always wondered what it would be like to be a Pokémon... Especially a cute one. You grumble to yourself, looking down at your ordinary human body. You're fine with how your body is- what with the thumbs and all that- but sometimes you just want something new. Something different.

Something cute.

Whatever, you think, trying to get your mind off it, *I'll get used to it eventually*. You pull your sheets further towards you in a vain attempt to get a good night's rest. After about thirty minutes, however, you open your eyes again. "Screw it, I can't sleep," you mumble, groggily getting out of bed and over towards the fridge. Grabbing a yogurt and a soda, you walk towards the couch and turn on the television. Maybe the sounds of a decade-old sitcom will lull you back to sleep.

You browse through different channels, finding nothing that interests you. Giving up, you settle on watching the local news. *It's good to know what's going on around me, I suppose* you think, hoping a boring news day would be enough to push you into rest. However, as you slowly close your eyes, the reporter says something that catches your ears.

"Coming out of San Ignacio today," the news anchor states "a new innovation in transformation technology has been making headlines in a new, unexpected field of research." The word "transformation" jolts you awake as the story peaks your interest. "Tigress Incorporated, a new startup focused on the testing and manufacture of transformation serums, has reportedly found a way to change one's 'genetic makeup' into a new, different body. CEO of Tigress, Cameron Venegas, cla..."

You didn't bother listening to the rest of the story. After all, this could be exactly what you're looking for: the opportunity to finally have your dreams realized! You pull out your phone and look up Tigress. Finding their website, you scour every page to find if they are looking for people willing to test their products. To your surprise, they are! And they have a number you can contact. Typing it into your contacts, you turn off the T.V. and race back to your bed. Like before, you have trouble going to sleep, but now you're determined to get your rest, for tomorrow you have some *very* important things to do.

You wake up feeling rested, but above all you feel excited. More than you've felt in years. You pull out your phone again and open your contacts to see the company's number. You're somewhat reluctant; you're not used to making phone calls and you start thinking through whether or not you actually want this. However, as you hit the call button you force yourself towards a point of no return.

Dialing... dialing... dialing

"Hello," a voice says "you've reached Tigress Incorporated, Testing Department. How may I help you today?" You didn't expect anyone to pick up, really. You take a second to collect

your thoughts before responding “Um... h-hello. I... saw that news report last night about t-the experiments you’ve been doing. I uh... was wondering if your company is taking new t-test subjects?” You awkwardly wait for a response, feeling a little embarrassed by your nervousness. You hear the person clack away at their keyboard. “Why yes! We’re always looking for people willing to help test our latest products. Can I schedule you for an appointment?”

You breathe erratically as you process their answer. *Holy crap*, you think, *oh god oh god oh god this is actually happening*. You collect yourself quickly, worrying that you’re taking too long. “Yeah, I’m totally down for that. C-could I book a visit next saturday?” You get increasingly excited as the person helps schedule your appointment. This is actually happening, and you can barely contain your excitement. Your heart drops, however. There is a pressing question you need to ask them.

“*Hey so...*” you say in a very anxious tone. “If you don’t uh... mind me asking, but if I can make a special request... I’d like to become something... cute. Is... is that alright?”

The person on the other line doesn’t respond, and the only thing you hear is the stroking of a keyboard. Your face flushes red with embarrassment as you regret asking the question. Now, you’re having second thoughts about going through with the experiment in the first place. You wait for an answer, desperate for the call to end.

“...We won’t be able to book you next weekend if we do so, but we can get our lab boys to whip something up. How does the same day next month sound?”

Your eyes widen and an overjoyed smile grows on your face “Um- sure! That absolutely works. Thanks a bunch!” You can barely contain your excitement as the person finishes your schedule. As you hang up, you laugh joyously, punching the air with pure happiness. Breathing heavily, you calm yourself down, not wanting to risk a noise complaint. You look out your window, wondering what new body they would give. It’s all you can think about for the rest of the day.

You're not even sure if you could wait an entire month.

You walk through the doors of Tigress’ testing labs, butterflies bouncing around your stomach. You think and rethink about your desires, but onward you go, determined to get the changes you want. You walk up to the front desk and sign the necessary paperwork. As you sit down in a rather blank-looking waiting room, your mind races with ideas of which Pokémon they’ll turn you into. *What if they make me a rockruff? Or a snivy? Oh gosh, what if they made me a mew? Can they even do that? What do these people even consider “cute?” Man, I should’ve been more specific.* Minutes feel like hours and hours like days as you think too hard about what’s to come. Eventually, thankfully, someone calls you in.

As you are led through a sterile hallway, an older man in a lab coat catches up to you. “Hello” he says to you with a smile. “So you’re the new test subject, huh? It’s good to see another fresh face willing to test these new serums.” You look back at him and nod, giving an

awkward smile. Everything's happening so fast that the butterflies in your stomach are going haywire. *Am I even prepared for what happens next?*

"Well, we've got your identity on standby, so no one will assume you're dead or missing. I'll be prescribing your 'medicine' to you today." You think about what he had said for a hot moment. *I hadn't thought about that. Will my friends worry about me? My family? Maybe I shouldn't have acted on impulse. At least they have my info...* Moving ahead of you, you reach a door at the end of a hallway. He opens the door and ushers you in.

The doctor's office wasn't anything out of the ordinary: that large bed, cupboards full of god-knows-what, and posters about hygiene. The Doctor closes the door behind you. "Please, take a seat," he says, "we will get to the experiment shortly." You climb onto that large bed and look back at the doctor, anxious but excited for what happens next. "Now before we begin, are there any questions you have for me? Any concerns?"

You should have expected this; This is experimental stuff we're dealing with here. Of course there were gonna be questions needing answers. You have to think of something. Something to take the stress off your back. "Will... will this be painful?" you say meekly. It's the only thing you can think of. "Well, the serum will be injected into your arm, but there are numbing agents in this stuff. You'll just feel numb in the areas that're changing." You feel somewhat relieved at the fact, but you're still nervous about what's about to happen. You're still not sure if you're ready for what comes next. "T-that was all. Thanks."

"Very well. Now, you should know that this is the last chance you have to opt out. If you wish to decline this serum, please say so now." You stop for a moment. You didn't know there was an opt out. You kinda rushed through the paperwork in the excitement that you didn't actually read what was on the forms. You're lucky you didn't sign away your rights or something!

You think for a small bit. *Is this really what I want? To have some new body that I'm not even sure what it'll be?* You look down at your body and remember that night and all those nights before. How you've felt the need for something better. It feels weird to admit it, but this is a dream come true. You decide not to waste this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. You have to go through with this. If nothing else, you'll know for sure afterwards that this is what you want. You breathe deep. "No. I'm ready."

The doctor nods and reaches into one of the cupboards. He takes out a needle and a tiny bottle of liquid. You flinch at the sight of the needle, but you're willing to go through the pain to reap the rewards. The Doctor approaches you, filling the syringe with the serum. "Now," he says, "I want you to close your eyes and breathe in deep." You shut your eyes and inhale. "And out." As you breathe you, he injects you with the liquid, stinging as it pierces your skin.

You open your eyes as he pulls the needle out. The stinging is replaced by a lingering soreness. You wonder how long it'll take before it starts to numb. The doctor steps back and stands in a corner of the room. "Alright," he says, "The changes will start occurring any minute now. I'll be over here taking notes and helping you through your changes if necessary. For now just breathe deeply and keep yourself calm." You nod and look at your body, waiting for your transformation to begin.

At first, nothing. You don't feel anything changing in you. You think it's just the numbing agents doing their work, but now you start wondering if you've been duped and this startup was a scam this entire time. Then, as you consider walking out, your left hand starts to feel numb. Intrigued, you look down at it.

My fingers. Are they turning... blue? Why are they blue? What? What the Hell?? You stare deeply at your hand, your breath becoming frantic as the color spreads from your palm to your wrist. You start wondering if this is worth it, even if there's no turning back. "Breathe deeply, c'mon" The Doctor reminds you as he writes vigorously on a nearby clipboard. Glancing back, you listen to his advice, inhaling slowly as you look back down.

Golden yellow hair... fur?... starts growing rapidly from your wrist and up your arm. Your right hand also starts turning blue and fur grows around its wrist. Shock and fear subside in your mind and are replaced with awe and curiosity.

Your clothes feel loose around you. *Weird*, you think, *it fit me well a while ago*. You look around the office. The cupboards, the Doctor, the bed you sit on; it all seems... bigger. You see that your feet aren't sticking out of the cuffs of your baggy jeans. You're shrinking. You can see that now, and you savor every inch lost. *If it makes me look cuter*, you suppose. "Hey uh Doc," you say, "can I uh... take off some of my clothes? It looks like I won't be needing it soon." Looking up from his notes, he nods and continues writing down your changes. You kick away your jeans and throw off your shirt as you keep an eye out for the next changes.

Your fingers slowly fuse into pointy stubs as the fur moves from your arms to your torso. You reach up towards the light above you, admiring your new appendages. You feel them getting sticky, as if they're covered in syrup. It feels weird on your skin, and the sticky feeling was kind of uncomfortable. You think about the purpose of them, but eventually you come to a realization.

You can speculate no longer: you're becoming a Joltik! Your face, once dumbfounded, curves into a giddy grin. You finally have the chance to have cute form you once could only imagine. "Woah" you manage to say, the only word you can think.

You shrink even further to the size of a child. As you do, your feet start feeling numb as your toes turn blue. You wiggle your toes for the last time as the same fur grows around your ankles. You giggle a little under your breath, watching them move forward and back as they turn into sticky stubs as well. It's a strange experience to see your body change, but now you only want to see more of it.

As the fur crawls down your belly- the fur turning a light brown- your insides feel weird. You thank the serum for numbing it, but it's impossible to ignore the feeling in your stomach. You aren't able to see it, but you're growing a pouch under your skin that stores electricity.

Your limbs shift around you, forcing you to stand on all fours. The fur on your legs meets your torso as it crawls up your neck. You feel uncomfortable at the thought of the serum changing your face, but you anticipate it anyway. You made it this far, and you're ready for what's next. *Just keep yourself calm. Just like the Doc said.*

Eventually, you stop shrinking as your body becomes adorably small. You're tiny enough to fit in somebody's hand! As your face starts to numb, you feel a weird pulsing behind your eyes. Your vision starts to blur as the pulsing gets more intense. You need to close your eyes, it feels way too weird. Your eyelids close tightly as you awkwardly rub them with your stubs. You feel pins and needles inside your neck disappear as quickly as it appears. Eventually, the pulsing dies down as you open your eyes.

Everything looks... different. Everything looks panoramic and kinda far away, but you can still see fine. You think. Either way, you're probably gonna have to get used to seeing 180 degrees around you. You realize that you've probably grown an extra pair of smaller eyes. It makes sense if you're becoming a Joltik. Still, it's something you'll have to adjust to your new and improved(?) eyesight.

Your face feels fuzzy; fur spreads across your head as you adjust to your eyesight. While doing so, you see the Doctor reaching for something in a cupboard. "Well, your changes are almost complete and our appointment's about to end. I assume you want to see what you look like, yes?" Your eyes widen- or whatever the equivalent is in this body- as glee fills your body. You couldn't possibly say no.

"Jol! Joltik!" you squeak. You stop yourself, hearing your new voice. You giggle with high-pitched glee, happy that you have a cute voice to complement your new, cute body. Your mouth shifts into a pair of small, adorable mandibles to further complement your voice.

"Hehe. Yeah, I thought so," The Doctor chuckles, putting a mirror right in front of you. "Whaddaya think?"

You look at the creature that stares back at you: the rotund body, the spiky fur, those four large, blue eyes. You turn your body to see every angle, seeing more golden fur.

You blush with pure joy. Your dream has finally come true! You're a Joltik! A tiny, adorable Joltik! You jump from side to side, euphoric that your desires have become a reality. "Joltik! Jol Jol Joltik!" You squeak back at him, but no amount of squeaking could ever express how thankful you are to him.

"Well, I'm glad you like your new form," he says, scratching your head with his finger. "Now, I assume you know enough about Joltik to live as one, yeah?" You nod, trying to pay attention to him as you continue to admire your body. "Alright. Well, let's get all the formalities done and get you on your way." With great difficulty, you take my eyes off your reflection and listen to what he has to say. "Alright," he says, picking up a paper. "Now, you should know that there's a failsafe inside the serum so you are able to change back whenever you wish. You just

have to think about it hard enough, and your original form will return. Your identity is on standby, as stated, and people will know you're still alive, blah blah blah blah none of this really matters. Tigress Incorporated thanks you for your participation and helping push transformation technology into the future." You loudly yawn while listening to him, shaking yourself awake. "Yeah, I know. Well that's the rest of it. Here, I'll see you out the door" He gives out his hand and you jump on. As he carries out back down that sterile hallway, You think about what you're gonna do in your new, cute body and how long it'll be before you use that failsafe.

But that doesn't matter now. All you care about is how adorable you're gonna be for as long as you desire to be.

You wonder if their serums will be sold in stores.