

Team Enterprise Begins

Part 4

“Alright, start explaining,” Pepper demanded as soon as the trio returned to her small residence on the outskirts of Treasure Town. “I want to know where you learned those skills you used in that café. You were like freaking ninjas! What level are you two, anyway?”

“Well, last time I checked, I think Ben was around level forty, and from the fact that I apparently know Iron Tail, I can only guess I’m something over level thirty-six,” Ace shrugged.

“What do you mean ‘*you can only guess*’?! How can you not know what your own level is?! And Pikachu can’t learn Iron Tail by leveling up! They can only learn it by TM!” Pepper snapped. “Just where the heck did you guys come from, anyway?!”

Exchanging a brief glance with his Lucario comrade, Ace looked back at the Chikorita. “If it’s alright with you, Ben and I would like to step outside for a moment to talk things over in private.”

Pepper let out an exasperated sigh of conceit. “...Fine. But I swear, if you people are some sort of agents from the government sent to enlist volunteers for military experiments or some nonsense like that, you can just take your business somewhere else.”

“I don’t think you have to worry about that, Pepper,” Ace assured as he turned to leave. “Now, if you’ll excuse us.”

As soon as the two male Pokemon stepped outside of the abode and closed the door behind them, Ace turned to Ben and whispered, “So, should we tell her?”

“I don’t know...” Ben sighed. “We still don’t know exactly where the Dimensional Gate sent us after the wormhole imploded. We have no idea how the locals in this realm would react to hearing about interstellar-and-time travel. Not to mention we would likely be committing half a dozen infractions of the Temporal Prime Directive.”

“Well, I’m probably just as lost for answers as you are, but what I can tell you is that apparently humans have been extinct in this world for nearly three hundred years. In addition, even some of the laws of physics seem to function differently here. Which leads me to believe that not only are we in a different time, but in a parallel universe as well,” Ace theorized. “Nobody can really predict what can happen when a dimensional tunnel destabilizes. For all we know, it could also have been responsible for my sudden...*appearance change*. As for the mission, the Jedi Council’s orders weren’t exactly very specific. All we were told is that we were to investigate a disturbance in this world’s past. Perhaps the apparent extinction of the entire human race was the disturbance we were meant to investigate. Besides, without another Dimensional Gate or any other way of contacting the administrations back home, we could be stranded here for a *very* long time. So, we’d might as well try and make the best of it.”

Ace’s long pointy ear perked up, hearing a familiar voice mutter from somewhere nearby, “Aliens. Called it.”

Ace turned to see Pepper standing awkwardly just outside the now open entrance to her house and asked dryly, “How much did you hear?”

“Oh, not much...just some stuff about space travel, wormholes, Temporal Prime Directives, and some other techno-babble I didn’t understand...” the Chikorita replied sheepishly. “So...I take it you guys are from outer-space, then?”

“Well, we work in outer space. Or worked, rather,” Ace corrected.

“I’m from a planet called Coruscant. He was discovered in an escape pod on an uninhabited planet as an infant. Nobody really knows who his parents were,” Ben elaborated further.

“First contact...wow...” Pepper stammered. “My dad always told me stories about the stars and other life that could be out there, but I never thought I would be the first one to meet some of them...”

“Well, it’s technically not ‘first contact’, since our species are indigenous to this planet, anyway. Or at least used to be,” Ace corrected once again. “We’re just from a time where humans and Pokemon learned to travel to other worlds and cultivate them.”

“So, you are humans, after all...” Pepper surmised. “I suspected something was a little off about your reaction when I told you they were extinct.”

“I am. He’s not,” Ace corrected yet again. “Or at least, I was.”

“We’re from an organization called the Jedi Order. Our job is to maintain peace and justice throughout the galaxy,” Ben continued explaining. “That, you see, is where we acquired the skills you witnessed back at the café. Becoming a Jedi requires years of rigorous and devoted training.”

“That device you found next to me when I was unconscious on the beach is a lightsaber,” Ace added. “It’s every Jedi’s standby weapon. It’s basically a sword with a blade of pure energy, and it can be extremely dangerous in the wrong hands...er...paws...hooves...vines?”

Pepper let out a long sigh, turning away as she muttered to herself, “Great... The first real friends I’ve made in the city are a couple of nerds from outer space... Oh, Pepper... what have you gotten yourself into now?”

“Look, Pepper... I can see this must be very jarring for you...” Ace comforted, “And, if you don’t want to deal with us anymore, I’ll understand. Just say the word, and we’ll move on to another region of this planet. You’ll never have to hear from us again.”

A long moment of tense silence ensued until Pepper shook her head and spoke up, “...No. You guys are lost in this world. You’re stranded here with nowhere to go and no one else to turn to. What kind of Pokemon would I be if I just turned my backs on other Pokemon in need like that? And besides, how many Pokemon in this world honestly get the opportunity to meet real-life extra-terrestrials? There’s so much I could learn from you two. How could I pass that up? ...Just don’t...‘probe’ me please.”

“Um...‘probe’? What are you inferi-”

Ace interrupted his much taller partner with a grunt and paw-gesture. “Thank you, Pepper. Really. You couldn’t imagine how much that helps us out. I promise, we’ll make it more than worth your while. Also no ‘probing’ we swear. We’re not those kinds of ‘space-people.’”

After letting out a nervous sigh of relief, Pepper asked shyly, “There’s...one more thing I’d like to request of you. Ace...Ben...would you like to...form an exploration team with me?”

Raising an eyebrow in curiosity, Ben replied, “It might assist our decision if we knew exactly what an ‘*exploration team*’ is.”

“Well,” Pepper began, “An exploration team is a group of Pokemon who do missions in these places called ‘Mystery Dungeons’ to rescue stranded Pokemon, arrest outlaws, and, as the name suggests, explore uncharted territory. It’s actually probably not all that different than what you used to do in your ‘*Jedi order*’, or whatever you called it. I originally moved here so I could join the Wigglytuff Guild, which is basically a region-renowned school for training Pokemon to become exploration team members. But so far, I just haven’t quite worked up the courage to actually get myself enrolled there yet...”

“Have you researched it?” Ace asked.

“What do you mean? Researched what?” Pepper asked, puzzled.

“The guild,” Ace elaborated. “What the requirements are. The rules. Entry fees. Any other number of possible hidden contracts. One thing I’ve learned over the years is to always do all your research before you commit to anything like that.”

After pondering the human-turned-Pikachu’s words for a moment, Pepper agreed, “...That’s a really good point, actually... I never thought about it that way... I guess it would be wise to find out just what I’ll be getting into before I make such a big life decision... It’s not exactly something I’ve been doing very well lately, is it?”

“Tell you what,” Ace offered, “It’s starting to get late, so why don’t we call it a day for now, and tomorrow morning we’ll all walk over to this ‘*Wigglytuff Guild*’, and I’ll have a talk with whoever is in charge, just to clear up anything you might not have already known. And, since it doesn’t really appear as though Ben and I are going to have much better to do for a while, if we all agree to the terms and conditions they provide us, then we’ll form a team with you. Does that sound acceptable?”

“Yes, of course,” Pepper nodded gratefully. “Again, Ace, you have no idea what this means to me. I probably couldn’t do this without you.”

“Hey, the feeling’s mutual,” Ace replied with a smirk.

Pepper then suggested, “Since it doesn’t look like you two have anywhere else to stay for the night, you can stay here with me for now. I’m going to get something started for dinner for us. In the meantime, just make yourselves comfortable. I...guess I’ll have to lay down something over your bed, Ace...so we don’t have another incident like this morning...”

“Pardon my asking, but...what incident?” Ben inquired curiously, eyebrow raised.

“Well, let’s just say...I may have learned about a few...*sensitivities* I apparently have that I’d never really been tested for before...” Ace replied sheepishly, rubbing the back of his head with his paw. “I’d really rather not talk about it...”

“He had an allergic reaction to his straw bed,” Pepper let out bluntly, eliciting a paw to the face and a slow headshake from Ace.

“Ah,” Ben responded, barely managing to stifle a chortle at this.

“Anyway,” Ace began, changing the subject, “I think you’re in for a real treat tonight, Ben. Pepper’s cooking is some of the best I’ve ever tasted. It’s certainly a welcomed change of pace from the protein-cubes and energy-bars we often had to live off of on away-missions back home.”

“Then in that case, I look forward to it,” Ben remarked with a smile as he followed Pepper and Ace back inside the small wooden abode.