

Chapter 2 - The Way They Met

Samantha opened her eyes slowly, flinching as a ray of sunlight struck her directly in the face. She clenched her now burning eyes shut and rolled over onto her back, groaning as a painful, soft lump dug its way into the small of it. It wouldn't have been so bad, if not for the fact that her arms and legs also felt numb and tingly, as though she had been laying on all of them. The hard surface she was on didn't help matters, but despite her unpleasant awakening, she still didn't feel like getting up. It wasn't like there was anything important she had to do anyways...

Then suddenly, she shot up into a sitting position, looked at her alarm clock, and scowled as she saw that it read half past eight.

"Dang it mom, I told you to wake me up." she muttered, throwing her blanket off as she leapt out of bed. She rubbed her aching back, and turned to see her Squirtle plush toy on her tough mattress, slightly smushed from her having rolled onto it in the middle of night. Huffing in annoyance, she rushed over to her closet, practically ripping off her loose maroon pajamas, and grabbed a white sleeved shirt with a light blue vest off the rack. Then she snatched some dark green shorts out of her drawer and ran into the bathroom to take a quick shower.

After managing to remove her pants, she paused for a moment to examine herself in the mirror. Her disheveled mid-length brown hair hung down in frizzy strands in front of her tired eyes. Her light skin was practically glowing from the sweat she had gotten overnight; her mom had probably gotten home overnight and turned off the air conditioner.

Suddenly, loud taps on the bathroom window sounded through the bathroom. Samantha sighed and turned to open the window, shaking her head in irritation. She raised the blinds, and saw a Pidgery standing there, its brown eyes glaring fiercely at her.

"And you're still here." Samantha said, crossing her arms. The Pidgery shuffled a bit where it stood, but otherwise just continued to stand there expectantly.

A few months ago, that bird had landed in that exact same spot outside Samantha's bathroom window, and had been preening itself when Samantha came upon it in much the same way she had now. Excited to see a Pidgery this close, Samantha had run out, bought some Pokefood, and tried to give it to the Pokemon. Of course, it had flown away the moment she opened the window to give it to the bird, but she had left the food on the windowsill and left it at that. Later, though, when she came back, the food had been gone. The next day, Samantha found it in the same place, and fed it again. After that, she had found it yet again, but had been out of

food to give it. The bird had cawed incessantly, pecking at the window and making a lot of fuss. After a couple hours of this torture, the girl had given in, and fed the stupid bird again after another trip to the Pokemon center.

Ever since then, it had become a routine. Samantha would go to her bathroom window every morning, usually on her own or after having endured whatever amount of cawing her patience would let her sit through, and find the Pidgey sitting outside, waiting to be fed.

"The one day where your stupid cawing could have helped to wake me up, and now you decide to suddenly be a gentleman." she said, tapping her foot and raising an eyebrow at the Pokemon. The Pidgey cocked its head and let out a confused caw, before pecking impatiently at the window. Samantha opened the cabinet, pulled out a handful of Pokefood from the stash she kept inside, and opened the window. The bird fluttered back instinctively, waiting for her to leave it on the windowsill like she always did. Samantha huffed in exasperation; despite her feeding the bird almost every day since she had known it, it was still wary of her touching it.

"You know what?" Samantha said, feeling more annoyed at this than she should have been, mostly because of the shitty morning she had gone through so far. She closed the window, and put the food next to the glass pane, watching at the Pidgey's eyes bugged in shock. "No more food until you let me pet you." she said, closing the window blinds and turning on the shower quickly to drown out the furious cawing and scratching noises outside.

Eleven minutes later, Samantha turned off the shower to hear something strange; silence. She grabbed her towel and cleaned out her ears, wondering in all seriousness if she had gone deaf for a moment. Then she opened the window blinds again, to see a sulking Pidgey by the window pane, facing away from her. It turned, its brown eye looking both angry, yet defeated.

Samantha clasped the food she had left there in her hand and opened the window slowly, watching for any sudden moves by the bird. It stayed where it was, only shifting a bit when the human leaned out the window. Slowly, Samantha reached a hand out and stroked the bird's feathers lightly. Satisfied, she laid the food on the windowsill, watching as the bird ate while letting her, begrudgingly, pet it.

A few minutes later, Samantha came out of the bathroom feeling much more refreshed than before. She quickly brushed and tied her hair up into its usual ponytail, then headed out onto the stairs. Turning around into the kitchen, she huffed in annoyance as she met the sight of her mother in a bathrobe, drinking her coffee while looking out the window, her unkempt hair similar

to how her daughter's had looked when the latter had woken up herself. Samantha crossed her arms and tapped her foot against the floor loudly, but it still took a moment for her mom to notice her. When she finally did, her eyes widened and her cheeks blushed.

"Good morning, Samantha." her mother said. She took a long drink of her coffee, clearly trying to think of some way to calm the annoyed girl down. "I thought you were gone already." she eventually said, leaning against the kitchen counter.

"No, I wasn't." Samantha said, not believing her mom's excuse for one second. "You were supposed to wake me up this morning mom. Now I'm late to Professor Juniper's lab, and I probably won't get to pick my starter...if they even have any left!"

Samantha's mom nodded at this, taking another sip of her coffee. "Maybe you should've tried setting an alarm." she said, not looking at all sympathetic to her daughter's plight.

Samantha's eye twitched. "You know those don't work for me. That's why I asked you to do it!" she yelled, stamping her foot on the ground.

"Well, I'm sorry." her mother said, laying her now empty coffee mug on the counter. She smiled at her frustrated daughter, then suddenly stepped forward, reaching out to hug her. "I'm just so glad my growing girl still needs her mother every now and again." she said, looking slightly teary as she wrapped her arms around Samantha.

Samantha felt something pulsing in her head as she was enveloped by her mother's bathrobe. She accepted the hug, but didn't return it...not fully anyway. She raised one arm and patted her mom's back gently, wanting to get out of the house before things became any more awkward. "I love you too, mom." she said, in the sweetest voice she could muster at the moment; it ended up coming out a bit like a soft growl.

Samantha's mother chuckled, then released her. "You better hurry. I'll call ahead to the lab and see if the professor can hold one on reserve for you."

"Alright." Samantha said, a little disappointedly. She turned and ran out the door, grabbing her Poké Ball colored cap off its usual spot by the door. "Bye mom!" she called behind her.

Samantha had at least three stitches in her chest by the time she turned the corner to Professor Juniper's lab. She panted and wiped the sweat off her brow, stopping by the front door and trying to not look as exhausted as she was before she went in. "So much for that shower."

she mumbled to herself, reaching for the door handle...then the door suddenly flew open, and a familiar, bubbly about her age stood there, looking excited to see her. Samantha groaned.

"Hi Kathy." she said, waiting for the explosion.

"SAMANTHA!" the girl yelled, jumping forward and grabbing the latter by the shirt, dragging her inside. "I was waiting for you over at your house but you didn't come out in time so I headed over here instead to reserve a Pokemon for you but Juniper wouldn't let me so then I headed back to wake you up but your mom said you were still sleeping and not to disturb you and by the time I came back..." the girl said, all in a single breath.

She paused and gasped for air, but before she could start again, Samantha raised a hand to stop her, looking quite annoyed. "It's alright Kathy. Thanks for doing that."

"You're welcome." Kathy said, blushing. They began walking down down the hall together. "So what took you so long?" she asked, tilting her head at Samantha.

"Mom didn't wake me up in time." Samantha answered, brushing a strand of hair out of her face.

"Huh...that's funny." Kathy said, scratching her head. "She told me you were sleeping in today."

Samantha's fists clenched and she gritted her teeth. "I don't think she wanted me to get my starter today...or ever, if she had her way." Samantha said. "She was being all sentimental back home. Should've known she'd pull something like that."

"Oh well, at least you're here now." Kathy said, shrugging her shoulders. Then she suddenly turned sad. "I don't think you'll be able to get much of a choice with your starter Pokemon though."

Samantha held in the urge to grab her friend by the shirt and pin her against the wall as she asked "Which ones are left?"

"Just a Snivy and an Oshawott." Kathy said. Samantha perked up at her answer, feeling the her luck was beginning to turn, then began walking faster. Kathy laughed and followed next to her. "I take it you want one of those two?"

Samantha saw the door to Juniper's office ahead. "I want that Snivy." she said. "I mean, have you even seen it's evolved form?"

"Yeah, the snake right? Gross." Kathy said, squelching her eyes shut and shaking her head. "You can have him. I guess it works out though, I already called Oshawatt." she sighed,

hugging herself as she imagined the otter in her arms. "Such a cutie."

Samantha smiled as they reached the door. "Well, it looks like we might both be getting..." she started to say. But then she stopped as the door opened from the other end and revealed pale sad looking boy with long black curly hair standing there, a Snivy standing next to him with crossed arms and an arrogant smile.

"...what we want." Samantha finished, her thoughts having cursed Arceus in every way imaginable.

"Hi...Samantha." the boy said, his dull black eyes staring at the girl. His voice was dry and monotone, and not even Kathy jumping onto Samantha's shoulder and bouncing in excitement could stop the energy from slowly being sucked out of the room with every second he stood there. Kathy's mouth dropped open as she laid eyes on the Snivy. "I got a Pokemon." the boy said, confirming both of the girls worst fears.

Silence fell between the three for a second, with both Kathy and the boy waiting for Samantha to respond. Samantha bit her lip and looked down at the Snivy, which was examine its small paws for cleanliness. "A Snivy huh?" she eventually breathed, in an almost accusatory tone. "That was...that was a good choice, Adrian." she said, in a sigh of both defeat and disappointment. Behind her, Kathy rubbed her back, looking sympathetic.

"Yes." Adrian said. "She was their last one. Probably wouldn't have gotten her if I hadn't reserved her. Her kind are popular this year."

"Wait, you can reserve Pokemon?" Kathy said, surprised and indignant.

"Adrian, that was supposed to be between me and you." an official sounding voice suddenly called. Professor Juniper materialized from behind some book shelves, carrying some in her arms. "I don't need it getting around that I reserved one of our rarer starters."

"We could have reserved starters?!" Kathy suddenly ejaculated, looking upset.

The Professor bit her lip at the sight of Kathy and Samantha, clearly not liking the situation she was in. "No...I...it's against the rules to...erm..." she stammered, desperately trying to find a way out of this as everyone stared at her. Even the Snivy was watching, raising an eyebrow curiously at the Pokemon professor.

"She did it as a favor for me." Adrian said "I've been helping her around the lab for weeks now." Everyone turned to face him, his pale cheeks reddening slightly from the sudden attention, and he looked down at the ground, kicking his worn sneakers against the tile floor. "Right

professor?" he said, desperate to draw attention away from himself.

"Uh...yes, that what happened." Professor Juniper said, looking quite thankful for the explanation. "I figured it was the least I could do for such a nice young man."

Adrian blushed even harder than he already was, and he let a small "Thanks Professor."

"So, I take it you girls are here to pick up your starter?" Juniper said, setting the books down on her desk and clasping her hands in front of her.

"Yes and yes!" Kathy said, practically shoving the still disappointed looking Samantha into the room, Adrian moving aside for the two. "Do you still have Oshawatt?" she asked, looking around for said Pokemon.

Juniper smiled as she reached into her pocket, Kathy stepping forward and waiting excitedly. Then she frowned as the Professor found nothing and reached into her other pocket. "I could've sworn I had it around here somewhere..." she said, searching her lab coat.

"You lost him?" Kathy said, sounding a little scared.

"I...don't know." the Professor said, dropping her arms in exaggerated defeat. "But he was my last available starter. Sorry girls, I don't have any more."

Kathy's lip quivered, looking as though she was just about ready to burst into tears. Everyone took a step back from the girl, who was shaking dangerously, and Juniper looked off to the side, nodding frantically at something...or rather, someone.

Suddenly, something landed on top of Kathy's head. She screamed and pulled it off, holding it out in front of her. Then she let out a happy gasp of joy as she saw she was holding the missing Oshawatt in her hands.

"Oshy!" she cried, hugging the Pokemon tightly. A grunt of disgust sounded from behind Samantha, and she turned to see both Adrian and his Snivy rolling their eyes simultaneously at the sight, then turning to walk out of the lab.

"Oshawott! Oshawott!" the otter said, hugging the girl back.

"Were you hiding from me? Oh you little..." Kathy said, spinning around in place with her Pokemon held out in front of her. Juniper grinned happily at the girl, then paused as she saw Samantha looking at her friend with the most jealous green eyes she had ever seen. She cleared her throat and stood up straight, drawing Samantha's attention to her while Kathy and Oshawott continued to snuggle with one another.

"Your mom called, Samantha." Juniper said. "She said you were on your way."

Samantha said nothing, knowing what was coming, but not wanting to hear it nonetheless. She heard Oshawott let out a squeal of joy as Kathy tossed him into the air, and she flinched from the sound.

"Unfortunately, I don't have any more starters." Juniper said, looking apologetic. Kathy and Oshawott both gasped at the same time, pausing in their celebration.

Samantha bit her lip, and took a breath to calm herself down, despite feeling more upset than she been in quite a while. "Will you be getting any more soon?"

"No, not for awhile I'm afraid." Juniper said. "I'm terribly sorry."

Samantha felt her heart sink, but outwardly she just crossed her arms and nodded. "It's not your fault." she said, turning to head out the door.

"Samantha..." Kathy said, outing a hand on her friends shoulder. She held out Oshawott to her friend, who was confused at his newly gotten owners actions. "...do you want Oshy as your starter?"

Oshawott's eyes widened, and then in a flash he forced himself out of Kathy's hands and clutched onto her leg, digging his paws into her jeans. Kathy cried out and began trying to pull Oshawatt off, but he held on tightly, refusing to budge. "Oshawatt! Get off and go with Samantha!" Kathy said, gritting her teeth as he struggled to get her starter off herself.

"Oshawatt" the otter yelled back, shaking his head defiantly with his eyes shut tight.

"Uh...it's alright Kathy. I think he'd be better off with you anyways." Samantha said.

"Aww, but I don't wanna see my best friend without a Pokemon." Kathy explained, ceasing her pulling of the otter's ears. Oshawott looked up at Kathy with an angry expression, still upset at her attempt to give him away.

"Actually, girls, I might just have a solution to this." Juniper said, suddenly turning and heading towards her computer. Samantha and Kathy exchanged looks and followed her, Oshawott still hanging on to Kathy's leg. The Professor turned on the PC, then clicked on the Contacts link, where a long list of names popped up.

"Who are you calling, professor?" Kathy asked.

"An old friend." Juniper answered, clicking on a name from under the section labeled 'Kanto region'. The PC screen loaded for a moment, then an aging man with graying hair and wearing a lab coat similar to Juniper's appeared, smiling at the three.

"Wow Professor, when you say an old friend, you really mean it," Kathy said, chuckling a

little at her own joke. Then she froze as the man frowned at her, and she covered her mouth with her hand.

"I can hear you." the man said, clearly annoyed and narrowing his eyes at her.

"Sorry." Kathy squeaked, blushing profusely.

"Hello, Oak." Juniper said, deciding it was best to ignore this exchange.

"Oh, hello Juniper! What brings you here?" Oak said. "It's been awhile since we last talked."

"I just finished giving this year's young trainers their starters...and I have a problem I was hoping you could help with." Juniper said.

"Do explain." Oak said. "I'll be happy to help any way I can."

Samantha suddenly felt her heart do a leap as Juniper explained the situation to Professor Oak. Was this really happening? Was she really this close to not having to leave empty handed after all?

"Do you have any spare starters you could send over?" Juniper finally asked. Kathy squealed in excitement and jumped up and down while hanging on Samantha's shoulder, the latter holding her breath as she awaited Professor Oak's answer.

Oak looked over at Kathy, his eyes creasing again.

"No." he said rather bluntly, shaking his head in the girl's direction. Juniper nodded and turned to Samantha.

"Well, I'm sorry, girls. I tried." she said. Samantha sighed as she felt her hopes dashed yet again.

"It's alright Professor, I appreciate you trying anyways. At least Kathy got her starter." she said, sounding less disappointed than she felt.

"Aw, that sucks." Kathy said, picking up Oshawott from her leg and holding him in her arms, the latter finally having calmed down enough from his earlier feelings of abandonment and betrayal from his owner. He still kept his arms crossed defensively however.

"Wait, hold on, 'you' have a starter?" Oak asked, doing a double take at the Oshawott in Kathy arms.

"I do, but my friend doesn't." Kathy said, scratching the otter behind his ears. "Why?"

"Uhhh...in that case, I...might have a starter lying around here somewhere." he said.

"Give me a second."

Samantha and Kathy looked at one another, confused by Oak's sudden change in attitude. Juniper shook her head and crossed her arms. "So petty..." she whispered to herself.

A moment later, Oak came back onto the screen, holding something behind his back. "Here it is!" he said, holding up a Poké Ball. "I knew...I mean, I thought I had one lying around here somewhere."

"Yay!" Kathy said. "Which one is it?"

"Er...I don't quite know." Oak said, scratching his head and looking down at the ball. "It was returned to me a few days ago, under the explanation that the Pokemon was too...rowdy."

"Can't you scan it to see what's inside?" Kathy asked. Professor Oak blinked twice, then let out an annoyed huff at the girl's question.

"Of course, I was just about to do that!" he said, putting the ball on the computer stand.

"Sure you were." Kathy giggled.

"What was that?"

"Nothing."

A moment went by where no one talked, and Samantha crossed her finger's, hoping the Pokemon within would be something cool. The Kanto region starter's were well known throughout the world, and she could only hope she'd get one of the cool ones. A Charmander would be nice, although she'd settle for a Squirtle as well. As long as it wasn't that stupid, ugly, and fat dinosaur plant known as-

"Bulbasaur." Professor Oak chimed. "It's a Bulbasaur." Kathy and Juniper both turned to Samantha, and were alarmed at the scowl the girl had on her expression. Even Oshawott, who was still traumatized over Kathy trying give him away to her, looked a little concerned.

"Are you ok Samantha?" Juniper asked. Samantha wanted nothing more than to say no, she wasn't ok. In fact, this had been one of the most disappointing starts to her Pokemon trainer career she had ever had...so far. Getting her hopes up again and again only to be shot down each time, and now she was getting, at least in her eyes, the worst possible choice for a starter she could ever hope to have. But she knew it wasn't the professor's fault, nor Oak's, nor Kathy's; it was entirely hers...although her mother could hold some of the blame now that she was thinking about it...

"I'm fine professor. I'm just anxious to see how this works out." Samantha answered, settling for the most polite response she could muster. Juniper nodded, then turned back to the

PC screen.

"Alright, send him over Oak." she said, placing an empty Poké Ball on her own computer scanner. Oak nodded, then typed into his computer, beginning the process of transferring the Pokemon inside to her lab. It only took a minute before it completed, the ball blinking red the confirmation. Juniper picked up the ball, turning back to Oak again.

"Thank you Professor." Juniper said.

"Yeah, thanks Oldie Oak!" Kathy said, waving a hand at him. Professor Oak exhaled loudly, but simply waved the girl off and nodded. "You're entirely welcome professor." he responded, before cutting off the video feed.

"Here you are Samantha." Juniper said, holding the ball out to the girl, who reluctantly took it with a forced smile.

"Thanks professor." Samantha said, motioning for Kathy to follow her outside. "I really appreciate you doing that for me."

"You're very welcome." Juniper said. "Oh, I nearly forgot!" She turned and grabbed a couple of devices on her desk. "Here are your Pokedexes. You'll need them on your journey through the region."

"Do you have a spare Poké Ball too?" Kathy asked. "I wanna surprise my dad with Oshawott when I get home."

Juniper nodded and gave her one, Oshawott disappearing into it a second later.

"Thanks." Kathy said, taking both and giving the other to Samantha, who said nothing, although she did try to smile a bit. Kathy wasn't fooled however, and as soon as they were out of the lab, she moved in front of Samantha.

"Alright, what's up with you?" she said, with the most serious face she could muster, which considering her usual attitude really struck Samantha as out of place on her place.

"I'm fine." Samantha said, trying to move past Kathy, who sidestepped and blocked her again.

"Sam, I can tell when you're not happy. Is it the starter you got?" she asked. When Samantha cringed at her question, she knew she had guessed correctly. "Oh, come on, you can't be THAT upset about it." she said, rolling her eyes.

"I'm not upset." Samantha lied. Kathy raised an eyebrow and crossed her arms, not believing her friend for a second. "Ok, Maybe just a little disappointed." she admitted.

“Can't you at least pretend to be happy?” Kathy whined. “I mean, yeah, maybe things didn't work out the way you wanted it them today, but look on the bright side, we're trainer's now!” She pulled out her Poke ball and showed it to Samantha again. “I have one, you have one, so we're both on equal footing. You even have a Pokemon no one else has, probably in this entire region. Think of how cool that is!”

“The last trainer who owned this Pokemon gave it back.” Samantha said bluntly, studying her own Poke ball. “I doubt I'll have better luck than they did. I don't even like Bulbasaur’s.”

Kathy huffed. “You're impossible. Now if you'll excuse me, I am gonna head out and surprise my dad with my starter. See you later!” she said, heading off and leaving Samantha to stare at her ball.

“We'll see what happens.” Samantha muttered, shaking her head.