

Wish Upon a PokeStar

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Chapter 1

“Astronomers are advising residents of Little Root to keep an eye on the sky today! Those bright flashes aren’t planes or rocket ships, but shooting stars. These are the result of our planet passing through the debris field left by the Millennium Comet. So keep your wishes handy, because any made on these extra-terrestrial rocks will be extra potent.”

Nella bound down the stairs, heedless of the radio’s droning. She went right by her mother in the kitchen, acknowledging her only with a “Sorry, Mom!” as she ran out the front door. The thirteen year old met the mailman at the box, hopping between her legs until he handed her the post, most of which was magazine ads or bills. Ew. She dropped those and stared at the red box from The Hoenn PokeMon League.

That red box was what Nella had been dreaming of for years; everything a PokeMon trainer needed to begin their journey. A PokeMon League Uniform, six basic PokeBalls, five Potions, and her own officially registered League Passport. All that and a type matchup card, because no one could have enough of those.

The box came at the perfect time; the very last day before this year's tournament began. Nella was going to enter, and she was going to win. And no one was going to stop her.

Kendra was already so over this. She was over this stupid region and this stupid little town. Most of all, she was over everyone's stupid obsession with PokeMon. They were always on about their latest capture, the coolest move, the newest discoveries.

But she didn't *get* it. Ok, some PokeMon were cute. But that didn't mean they should be a personality trait. Plus, Kendra reasoned, if she could spit gouts of water or belch fire, hypnotize, or whatever weird thing PokeMon could do, she wouldn't be taking orders from a person. And definitely not a literal child. But since everyone else was obsessed, sometimes Kendra had to give in.

Which is why she trudged to the lake wearing a trenchcoat to hide a PokeMon costume underneath. It wasn't that it was risqué; nothing more than a bathing suit was. She just didn't want to be seen in it. She worked for and with a modeling agency, and while most of the time she had her choice of jobs, this had become a "rent before pride" situation. They had picked out the costume and sent it, she would model it.

Kendra just hoped the photographer would be here on time today.

"Absolutely not!" Mom shouted, and Nella was pretty sure their neighbors across the street heard her.

"Why not?"

Never one to say “just because,” Mom listed off all the reasons, “Because you’re barely thirteen, because we just moved and need some time to settle, because I don’t want you wandering around a new region alone, because you’ve never captured a Pokemon before, let alone battled one, and because I said so!”

“I wouldn’t be alone, I’d have my Pokemon! They’d take care of me!”

“*You’re* supposed to take care of *them*, Nella. Do you know the first thing about taking care of a Pokemon?”

“I would if you let me have one!”

“When we get fully moved in, I’ll let you get a Pokemon as a pet, and we can discuss entering the tournament next year.”

“What if I get a Pokemon today? I have the Pokeballs. I know how they work. I can...”

“*Next* year, Nella.” Mom wasn’t yelling anymore, and that wasn’t good. That meant she had made up her mind.

“Ugh, this is so unfair! Everyone else gets to start their PokeMon journey at thirteen.”

“Just because everyone else is doing something means I have to let you do it, young lady.”

“But Mom...”

“No. We’re done having this discussion. No PokeMon, no journey.”

The photographer was late. Of course he was late. So Kendra had no choice but to pace along the lake shore, clenching and unclenching her fists. No choice. Had to. How could he do this? Again? And the *way* he talked to her. So dismissive. So unprofessional. He sounded like he had just got out of bed. Unfortunately, he

had been doing this far longer than Kendra. And who's word would the agency take? His, or a model currently dressed in a blue bathing suit with the style and markings of some super popular water 'Mon.

"What kind of PokeMon are you?" A boy asked, stopping Kendra from rage walking, and she glared at him: maybe ten years old in shorts, holding a bug catcher net.

"I'm not a PokeMon, kid."

He shook his head, "You look like a Mudkip," and he pointed to the blue fin sticking out her blue wig.

"Well, I'm not. I'm just wearing a stupid costume."

"Yeah, Mudkip is kinda stupid. They're not as super cool as Dustox. Do you wanna see my Dustox? I named him Dusty."

"No, I don't want to see your PokeMon."

"Aww, I thought we could have a battle."

"I'm not a trainer, I don't 'battle.'"

"I meant, since you're a Mudkip."

"I'm not a PokeMon!" Kendra shouted, her voice echoing across the lake and into the nearby creepy crawly bug forest. The kid jumped back when she shouted, and she would have cared if he didn't call her a PokeMon. Twice. "Get outta here, kid." She growled at him, and he took the better idea and ran off.

Kendra watched him go, took a deep breath to collect herself. When she failed to do that, she threw her head back and shouted at the sky, *"I wish I understood why everyone is so obsessed with PokeMon!"*

She said it just as a shooting star raced overhead.

Nella leaned on the posts on her front porch, despondent, looking at the dirt. All her dreams had been dashed by one conversation with Mom. She wouldn't be wandering the Region alone; she would have her best friend, her PokeMon, by her side, and they would look out for one another. Everyone knew that, why didn't Mom? Why was she punishing Nella like this?

She would show her. She could be a trainer; she could be the best trainer the Region had ever seen. If Mom saw Nella with her own PokeMon, she would understand, and let her try out for the tournament. Right?

But Nella *didn't* have a PokeMon. She sighed and looked up as a falling star streaked across the sky. The girl jumped, closed her eyes, and made a wish.

"I wish I had an amazing PokeMon so I could enter the Tournament."

The star danced. It had been falling on a normal, arcing path and would land in the ocean. But when two voices, at the same time, rose up to its high place in the sky, it changed course and fell toward the lake.

Nella, watching the sky, saw the sudden reversal, and her eyes went wide;

Kendra, disgusted and tired, stalked to a bench.

Nella grabbed her backpack and leapt off the porch;

Kendra shouted when she saw the star's bright light racing toward her.

Nella ran toward the star;

Kendra ran away from it.

She was too young to die! Kendra tried to dive out of the path of the streaking ball of fire and light, but it juked toward her. Rolling over, she saw the last remnant of the interstellar rock burn away and turn to debris. Soot rained on her, strange, warm, and sparkling. Her body glowed with stardust and changed her.

“What?” She asked. Only, that’s not what came out of her mouth, which was “Mudkip?”

She had to catch this PokeMon! Nella turned the corner to the lake, where the light of the falling star was fading. Something moved, bathed in strange light. Something blue, with a fin on top. Nella already had a PokeBall in hand, her arm cocked, and throwing, before the light faded. It was her very first throw of a PokeBall. Guided by fate and magic, it didn’t miss.

Kendra looked up in time to see the red and white orb strike her chest. It bounced off her, and hovered in the air for a moment, opening up. She furrowed her brow, “Mudkip?” Enticing light erupted from within the ball, and Kendra’s body mimicked that light, glowing an ethereal radiance she had never seen, though many others had. Light called to light, and Kendra raced into the PokeBall, shouting “Mudkiiiiip!” the whole way in.

Nella watched the ball fall to the ground. It had been a star-fated throw. The PokeBall never even shook before it gave a sealing ‘click’ of the lock. And there, on the banks of the lightly lapping lake, Nella had a moment of perfect, shocked, stillness before she threw her arm in the air and shouted.

“I did it! I caught my first PokeMon!”

Chapter 2

Nella fell to her knees and stared at the small PokeBall. It looked every bit the same as it had before she threw it, but was so different. Now, there was a PokeMon inside. Her PokeMon. What kind did she get? She had barely seen it. Was it a useless Silcoon? An annoying Wingull? Maybe an adorable Aron, though they didn't live around here. She distinctly remembered a fin. Maybe it was a cute Ralts! And it was hers now. She captured it, and she would train it to be the best 'Mon it could be.

She picked up the ball, clicked the lock, and shouted.

"Mystery PokeMon, I chose you!"

Kendra was suspended in light, caught floating in a world she had never given a thought to; the world inside a PokeBall. She had the sensation of swimming in warm water, but without the water. Stroking her arms, kicking her legs didn't move her; she didn't get any closer to the edge or further from the center of her strange spherical world, only managing to spin herself in dizzying circles while wishing for something to grab onto.

She wanted to get to The Lock, an arm sized circle that glowed a soft light. The bottom of her spherical world was solid, infinite white but the top was a translucent red dome through which she could see a shadowy

realm. A huge world loomed over her beyond the sphere, tilted at an odd angle. She made out the silhouettes of a park bench and trees. And a person running to her. Night black fingers wrapped around Kendra's PokePrison. She recoiled, but there was nowhere to go, and no way to move.

A click reverberated through the ball and The Lock blazed white. Light consumed Kendra and she was yanked by technology and command back into the world, where she fell butt-first into the dirt.

In front of her stood a weird girl who looked at her with the same and equal shock. Kendra recognized the get-up of a Junior PokeMon trainer; leggings with matching jacket and shorts, plus a ballcap with a PokeBall on it.

"What kind of PokeMon are you?" The trainer asked, tilting her head.

"It's a costume!" Kendra shouted, "Does anyone know what a costume is?"

The girl's jaw dropped and she stared at Kendra, silent and stunned.

"What?" Kendra asked. And that's when she heard it, finally. She only thought she had said 'what.' She actually said, "Mudkip?"

"You can talk! Oh my gosh, You're the most amazing Mudkip in the world! I'm Nella, and I'm your new owner!" She said proudly.

Kendra flinched from the positively adoring look Nella gave her. "I am one hundred percent, positively, *not* a Mudkip. And no one owns me."

"Then how did I catch you, huh?" The girl asked with a grin, as if this was a game. "Can't catch a human in a PokeBall."

"I don't know! I made a wish and that stupid shooting star landed on me, and now nothing makes sense. I just need to go home, get out of this costume, and rest. For like a year."

The problem was what Nella said made sense, even though it was impossible. Kendra knew what she was saying, but also heard herself say variations of "Mudkip." She knew she had gone into that PokeBall, and she

also felt the strange orange whiskers on her cheeks, the wind blowing on the fin coming out of her head, and tail coming out of her rear. But she couldn't *be* a PokeMon!

"I'm your trainer, you can't just leave!"

That riled Kendra, and she glared at the girl. "I am not your PokeMon, kid." She stood to leave, until the trainer squeezed on the PokeBall.

"Mudkip, stay!"

The voice and command startled Kendra, and she wasn't sure why. Nella was a kid, but she reminded Kendra of her mother. Only more important. It felt wrong to disobey the girl.

"I'm not a..."

"Mudkip, sit!" The trainer said, pointing at the ground.

Kendra didn't sit, but got into a staring contest with Nella. This was so idiotic. She wasn't a PokeMon. She could do what she wanted when she...

"I. Said. Sit."

She had the feeling that she would be in so much trouble if she didn't do as she was told. Slowly, her neck burning with embarrassment, Kendra sat on the ground in front of her trainer. The moment she had, Nella smiled.

"That's a good girl."

Kendra gulped, but was too confused and too embarrassed to speak. Why was she so interested in obeying this kid?

Her thinking was broken when something crashed out of the underbrush and a boy shouted, "Aha! I knew it, you were a PokeMon this whole time!" It was the same kid who had been annoying Kendra before she got herself into this mess.

"Hey!" Nella shouted, turning to the Bug Catcher, "She's my PokeMon."

“I saw her first; she’s mine!”

“I caught her first; she’s mine!”

“I’m not anyone!” Kendra said, but no one cared what she thought. She scrambled to her feet and took slow steps away from the children’s standoff.

“Oh yeah, well if I win, she’s coming with me!” The boy threw out his arm and released his own PokeBall, “Dusty, get ready to fight!” Light flashed and a giant, purple moth almost the size of either kid appeared right in front of Kendra.

“Mudkip, use **Water Gun**!”

“Use what?!” KendraMon asked. This was so far beyond the realm of normal that she yearned for the safety of the PokeBall.

“Dusty, **Gust**!”

The moth’s wings tripled their speed and sent out a whirlwind of soil, twigs, and pebbles hurtling at Kendra. The wind shoved her to the ground and the debris lashed at her while she shouted. It was too much, all too much and all at once she felt half as strong, half as able to fight. And she wasn’t that strong to start with.

“Mudkip, what are you doing? **Water Gun**, now!”

“I don’t know what that is!” Kendra said.

“It’s when you blast someone with a forceful shot of water! **Water Gun**, do it!” The trainer said. She squeezed on the PokeBall, as if trying to compel her PokeMon to obey.

And Kendra wanted to, until she didn’t. This was all nuts. She wasn’t a real PokeMon, even if she was acting like one. She didn’t have to obey this *child*. But as mad as she was at her trainer, she was more furious with her opponent. Kendra fixed her eyes on the stupid moth, curled her lip, and **Growled**, “Buzz off, bug!”

Dusty recoiled; its antenna drooped, and it cowered. Now if only Kendra could do that to the stupid girl bossing her around.

“Don’t give up, Dusty. She’s not worth it. Use **Poison Sting!**”

The moth spun around and sent a thorn right at Kendra, hitting her in the thigh. Hot, painful jabs radiated from the wound, and Kendra gasped, trying to shout in pain, but her voice got swallowed up by the shock. Suddenly weak, she could only stand by holding herself up with her hands on her knees.

“Mudkip, **Water! Gun!**” The trainer tightened her hand around Kendra’s PokeBall, and her voice rang with more authority than Kendra’s mother. The PokeMon couldn’t ignore that command. **Water. Gun. Water. Gun.** Over and over in her mind...

“I don’t know how --- burglrglrg!” A gout of clean blue water erupted from Kendra’s mouth as she spoke. Like a fire hose, the water slammed into Dusty’s fuzzy head. Kendra’s eyes were wide in shock as she stared at the river of water coming out of her mouth. When it stopped, the drenched moth fell to the ground, too heavy and soaked to fly. It heaved a breath, then glowed, and returned to its PokeBall.

Kendra gave into the poison and fell to her knees, while Nella whooped beside her. “Ha! Now, give me your money and scram, butt catcher!”

The boy threw some coins at her and ran into the woods, crying.

Kendra tried to figure out just what happened.

“Wasn’t that awesome, Mudkip?” Nella asked, counting the coins the boy left before coming to her.

“No,” Kendra managed between her shortened breaths.

“Here, this’ll make you feel better.” She pulled out a purple spray bottle and spritzed it over Kendra. The Mon started to protest, until the weird liquid soothed her skin and healed her cuts. The poison still burned, but became much more tolerable. “We need to work on your listening skills.”

“Did we just beat up that kid’s PokeMon and take his lunch money?” Kendra asked. Everything was a struggle right now. Everything was impossible all the time.

“Trainer’s code. If you lose, you cough up the money.”

“I don’t have any money!”

“Oh, not you. You’re a PokeMon, so you would just faint and go back into your PokeBall until I could revive you.”

Kendra sputtered, her brain refusing to process that information.

Nella stood and looked down at her Mudkip, seeming so tall, so...important. Kendra gulped as she looked at her trainer. How could she make the girl understand that she was not a PokeMon when everything else screamed the opposite?

“I need to get you an antidote for this poison or get you healed at a PokeMon center. That would be free. But the nearest one is in Oldale Town.” She thought about it, and looked conflicted, looking between the nearby Route 101 and Little Root.

“My house!” Kendra said. If she could get Nella to see that she wasn’t a PokeMon, if she could see her house, her things, then the girl would let her go! “My house is back in Little Root. I also have an Antidote in my medicine cabinet.” A blatant lie, but what else could she do?

Except Nella looked back to Little Root and something in the way she did told Kendra she didn’t want to go back. “No. We need to get you to a PokeMon Center.”

“But...”

“No. We’re going to Oldale. And you can either walk, or,” Kendra’s trainer held up the PokeBall, “you daybed you’d like to go back inside?”

Chapter 3

Kendra chose to walk, and while she tromped behind Nella, wondered how often she would even get the choice. She was stuck in a blue bathing suit and matching water shoes, stuck being treated like a PokeMon, and worst of all, stuck *as* a PokeMon. There was no point in denying that any longer. Kendra had seen and done too many PokeThings. The air rushing across her head fin, and the wag of her leathery couldn't be ignored, either. But Kendra wasn't going to let herself remain some kid's pet.

She had the idea to Water Gun Nella, get the PokeBall, and run. But Kendra couldn't shake the feeling that it was wrong; that it wasn't right for PokeMon to attack their trainer. The girl had captured her, and she owed Nella her obedience. But despite that thought, Kendra readied an extra large Water Gun blast. It was wrong, but it was necessary. If she didn't get out now, Kendra wasn't sure if she ever would.

"So, what do you think?" Nella asked from ahead of her PokeMon. It was the first moment Kendra realized the girl had been talking this whole time.

"What? I didn't hear what you said," she asked. Nella's voice was enough to shake Kendra from her plan, and she relaxed her power.

"I'm going to name you Kippi."

The PokeMon looked at her trainer, dumbfounded. "But my name is Kendra," she said. She wasn't going to let this kid just take away her name. She had to fight for something.

But Nella didn't care. "Nope, your name is now Kippi."

"Nella, could you just, please, listen to me? I don't want to be named Kippi, and I don't want to keep being a PokeMon."

"But you are a PokeMon." Nella finally stopped walking and turned, and Kendra was thankful to be able to at least face her trainer.

"I'm not *just* a PokeMon and you know it. This happened because of a stupid wish. But I'm still me and still have a human mind." Though Kendra did wonder how long that would be the case.

"What did you wish for?" Nella asked. "Because I wished for the most amazing PokeMon, and I got you. What did you wish for that got you turned into a PokeMon?"

The question confused the Mudkip, since she hadn't given it a thought since she was struck by the dust from that shooting star. She had been too busy dealing with being captured. When she finally did think about it, she was more confused than she had been when making the wish.

"I wished to understand why everyone is so obsessed with PokeMon." Kendra said, looking cross. "So I don't know why your wish came true, and mine didn't."

Nella thought about it with a frown, really stretching her thirteen year old mind. "Well, maybe we're supposed to help each other's wishes come true. You help me in the tournament, and I'll teach you how to be the best PokeMon you can be. That way, you understand why they're so awesome."

Kendra sighed, frustrated by her trainer's logic. Nella was a stupid kid, what did she know?

"Now I just wish I was human again." Kendra said.

"Aww, don't worry, Mudkip, I'll be a great trainer. You're going to love being a PokeMon." The trainer beamed, and Kendra had no doubt she believed that.

"So, you get that I used to be human, and that I don't want to be your PokeMon, but you're still going to keep me?"

Nella didn't hesitate in her response, "Of course. I caught you to be mine."

Kendra threw her head back to the sky and groaned, resolving and readying herself once again to Water Gun Nella, even though it still felt wrong.

But the girl was saved when a 'Ping-ping! Ping-ping!' noise coming further up the trail interrupted the conversation, and a man wearing bottlecap glasses, a colander with antennas all over it, and white lab coat came running up.

"Oh no, is that another trainer?" Kendra asked, not ready for another battle, not now or ever.

"Let me handle this, Kippi."

"Stop calling me..."

"Shh." Nella squeezed the PokeBall, and Kendra choked up her reply. "Sit down," the girl said in her firmest Trainer voice.

Meekly, Kendra obeyed, more starkly feeling the humiliation of being a PokeMon than she had already. Sitting on her haunches, her trainer stood next to, and taller than, her. Clearly the one in charge.

The lanky man stopped short. His eyes were huge behind his glasses as he flicked from Kendra and Nella. "Oh, wow, um, hi." He gulped and held a blinking, pinging gobber toward the PokeMon, and the little machine burst with noise and light. "Whoa. Did you know your Mudkip is positively full of comet dust?"

Kendra's stomach twisted. How did everyone just *know* she was a PokeMon?

"I did, she made a wish to become a PokeMon, and I caught her just after that."

"That wasn't my wish!" Kendra balked, glaring up at her trainer. "Tell him what I really wished for."

"Mudkip, I said be quiet," Nella said, forcing her PokeMon back to a grumbling silence.

The scientist adjusted his glasses, "Uhm, can you understand her?"

"Yes! She's an amazing 'Mon!"

The scientist, meanwhile, stared like a laser at Kendra while he dug into his coat, and produced a red tablet device with a scanner on it.

“Hmm. The ‘Dex is having a hard time...ah, there it is!” He nodded and looked at the screen. “Interesting. While she may look like a human woman in a costume, she is 100% a Mudkip Pokémon. Incredible! I need to know more!”

Something in his stare and attention set off warnings in Kendra. She was a model, and knew leering gazes well enough, and the scientist looked at her like she was going to win him first prize at the science fair.

“Nella, I don’t trust this guy.”

“Hey, stop interrupting, or I’ll send you back into your ball.” Kendra’s trainer raised the white and red sphere for the Pokémon to think about, and the Mudkip’s eyes went wide. Turning to the scientist, though, Nella beamed; “Sorry about that, she’s my first Pokémon and we’re still new at this.”

“No, no, it’s fine. So, she was human, but you captured her. In a Pokémon, I assume?”

The hairs on Kendra’s neck began to stand on end as she heard the conversation about her which did not include her. But she was past the embarrassment of it, and was now just afraid.

“Nella, please...”

“Kippi, I said...” the girl raised the Pokémon, but Kendra didn’t back down. If her trainer wasn’t going to listen, then it was time for the Pokémon to take drastic action. And staring at the red and white ball, she didn’t have any more time.

Kendra blasted Nella with a full force **Water Gun**, sending the girl backward. And while a part of her was shocked and screaming that she had dared to attack her trainer, Kendra ran a second later, rushing to grab her Pokémon. She had no time to think about how *wrong* this was, how she was violating some deep and important law.

The PokeMon reached for the ball while Nella sputtered and spit water from her mouth. But the girl's finger twitched and hit the Lock on the PokeBall, flipping its lid up. She didn't even need to say a word.

"NOOOoooo!" Kendra shouted as her body suddenly glowed in sympathetic light. Then, she spiraled back inside her PokeBall, to be sealed away until her trainer decided to let her out.

She shouted the whole way in.

Nella fumed while she shook off the water Kippi had showered on her. She didn't even know PokeMon could do that, and knew she would have to talk to her later.

"Like I said, we're still figuring some things out," she said to the scientist.

"Oh, I see. Amazing! Did you know that there have been other cases of humans turned into PokeMon? But, as far as I am aware, none of them have been capturable. You have an amazing Mudkip, indeed."

Nella sighed and picked up Kippi's PokeBall, attaching it to her belt. "I know, but we're not going to get far in the tournament if she doesn't start to obey me."

The scientist thought about that, his big eyes moving rapidly. "I may have some items that could help you out, back at my lab. I can give them to you, if you let me run some more scans on your Mudkip." He said, with a kind smile.

The thought of some science tech to help her control Kippi sounded just right.

"Where to?" Nella asked.

Chapter 4

“Nella!” Kendra shouted from inside her PokeBall, spinning in place. She reached, over and over again, for the interior lock that held the two halves of her prison closed. But it was useless. PokeBalls kept PokeMon like her inside them.

“Nella, please let me out, I promise to be good!”

It wasn’t just that her human mind revolted at the idea of being trapped like she was; Kendra needed to get out and keep her trainer safe. She didn’t trust that scientist and his whiney voice or bug eyed glasses. Of course, Nella was a dumb kid and didn’t see what she saw.

But Kendra was helpless and trapped in her ball, watching as shadows warped through the red half of her vessel. It was useless to determine what was what since it was all so big and tilted at odd angles. At best she could figure out when she was moving, and when she wasn’t.

Until, that is, the ball was set in a cradle under an intense light that beamed into Kendra’s world, shining on her like a beacon and washing her out.

“What the...” she said. The light flashed on and off as a soothing phrase echoed into the PokeBall.

Do do do-do do!

The sting on her leg, which she had pushed out of her mind and almost forgotten about, was sucked out of her and healed right in front of her eyes. And she felt good as new -- better, in fact.

“What was that?!” Kendra shouted.

The light went away, replaced with shadow as a hand smothered across the red dome of Kendra’s prison. She knew what Nella’s hand looked like from inside her tiny prison, with her wide splay and small fingers. But this hand nearly covered the ball’s surface.

The lock clicked and yanked Kendra out of the ball, releasing her next to the scientist, and in his lab with its sterile walls, strange machines, and messes of papers and experiments. He looked at her with those telescopic glasses and poked at one of Kendra’s orange Mudkip whiskers.

“Hey!” She recoiled and batted his hand away, “Hands off!” Kendra had enough of that when she was a model. Is. She still is a model. This whole being a PokeMon thing was temporary.

“Oh! Challenging!” He said, more excited than deterred.

“Kip-pii,” Nella said from across the room, exasperated. She sat on a table and held a red device, what the scientist called a ‘Dex. “Let Mr. Carl examine you.”

“He should ask first!” Kendra said with a glare, first at the nerd, then at her trainer.

“He did ask me first, and I said it was okay.”

Kendra didn’t have time to dwell on *that* new humiliation.

“Fascinating. I didn’t understand any of that,” Carl said. “Whatever mechanism that allows you to understand Kippi doesn’t transfer with the PokeBall.”

A pang of worry went through Kendra and she glanced at the ball in the nerd’s hand. “Transfer?”

“Kippi, sit.” The scientist said. He held Kendra’s PokeBall, and squeezed on it. He...was...her trainer? But despite her confusion, she sat down in front of him, anyway. She wasn’t normally this obedient...was she?

“Kippi’s gotten good at sit,” the teenager chipped in.

Kendra glared at Nella. The scientist had her PokeBall, the scientist controlled her, and Nella didn't even see it. No way would she willingly just give Kendra away. Not her super special wishing star Pokemon. Which meant Carl had tricked Nella into giving her up.

"Nella, you know how sometimes Pokemon can sense things before humans?" Insisting to the girl that Kendra was still partly human wasn't going to work. So, to get what she wanted, Kendra had to put it in Pokemon terms. "I have a bad feeling about him."

That was enough to get Nella to look up from her weird little device. "What do you mean?"

"Does he *need* to hold my PokeBall?"

Nella frowned and turned to the scientist. "Mr. Carl, could I have Kippi's PokeBall back?"

It was the pause and the look that told Kendra all she needed to know. The way he searched his lab for a lie. Her heart sped up. He already had Kendra sitting for him, and she knew how her mind slowly accepted her status. The Pokemon's calculation was simple: Kendra thought it was more likely that she could convince Nella to help her be human again than Scientist Carl. At least the girl understood what Kendra said. Or maybe the Mudkip had simple loyalty to the girl who captured her, and not the man trying to steal her.

"Keeping the ball would help me with my research."

"I'm not research," Kendra **Growled**, and while it didn't have the wearying effect on the scientist that it did on Pokemon, his eyebrows shot up and he took a half-step back. But when his expression hardened, Kendra realized that she had made the mistake.

"Mudkip," her new owner said, "Use **Water Gun** on the girl."

The Pokemon didn't understand why she turned, why she readied the attack, or why she obeyed him at all. But she did all those things because her trainer told her to. She didn't even think, and it was only because Nella dove out of the way that she avoided the gout of water.

Kendra came to, half wondering why half the lab was soaked. She felt more lost than she ever had since becoming a PokeMon. She was used to obeying, not blindly acting. It made her shiver thinking about it.

Then, her owner commanded her: “Again! Wash her out of my lab!”

Mudkip aimed another shot on Nella, but just before she let loose, the girl looked her dead in the eye and wordlessly pleaded.

Kendra blinked. If she had to be a PokeMon, she wasn’t going to be one that attacked defenseless kids, no matter what her owner said. When Scientist Carl commanded her again, Kendra was ready. Who was he? Did he even have any badges? Kendra turned to him, glared, and unleashed her pent-up torrent, knocking him into his whiteboard theories, and sending her PokeBall sailing away.

Kendra rushed after the ball, fell on it, and cradled it like a precious artifact. Triumph and relief flooded into her. For the first time since that meteor, Kendra took a positive step for herself. Her fate was once again in her own hands. Now, she just needed a way to become human again.

Unfortunately, Nella was there just a second later. “Good job, Kippi,” she said, holding out her hand, “Can you give me your PokeBall?”

The Mudkip pulled it closer to herself, “No way!” It came out like she was a five year old kid trying to keep her mother’s wedding ring.

“Kip-pii,” Nella sighed, talking to her like...well, like a trainer to a disobedient PokeMon. Or a parent talking to a child who ought to know better. Which was stupid, since Kendra was older than her trainer.

“I don’t want to,” Kendra said, just as much to Nella as to herself. With the PokeBall, she was in control, she might still be a ‘Mon, but she only would need to listen to herself.

“Kippi, give me the ball.” Nella said with her Trainer Voice again. It wasn’t like when Scientist Douche controlled her. More like Kendra’s theater teacher giving her instructions. The PokeMon didn’t want to let down her trainer. But she wanted to be free! She wanted to be human, and not listen to whomever held her

stupid PokeBall. But she was a PokeMon, and a captured one, at that. The whole time she wrestled with herself, Nella held out a steady hand, and stared at her while waiting for her PokeMon to do the right thing.

After moments of agonizing, Kendra passed the ball over, before she realized she had decided. She gasped when her trainer closed her fingers around it, despite the world settling back into place.

Kendra was a PokeMon, and Nella was her trainer.

“That’s a good girl,” Nella said, petting Kendra’s blue PokeMon hair.

“Why did I do that?” Kendra despaired.

But Nella knew exactly why, “Because you’re a very good PokeMon. You just haven’t figured it out yet.” She threw the PokeBall up and caught it with a flourish and a smile, “Now, c’mon, we have a tournament to win.”

Synopsis

Pokefied

Kendra is a model forced to dress in a Mudkip costume for a photoshoot. She doesn't like, or understand, PokeMon. Nella is a young girl who wants to enter the regional PokeTournament. But her mother won't let her go, and she doesn't have any PokeMon of her own. A shooting star flies overhead both of them as they make wishes.

Kendra: *"I wish I understood why everyone was so obsessed with PokeMon!"*

Nella: *"I wish I had an amazing PokeMon so I could enter the Tournament."*

The star grants both wishes, and Kendra is turned into a human-like MudKip. She can only speak like a PokeMon, saying her name, her body changes slightly to have a tail and whiskers, and everyone recognizes her as a PokeMon. Nella captures her with a PokeBall.

They have a first, brief, fight with a Bugcatcher kid, Kendra in total shock as she's commanded to use PokeMon moves on her opponent, and that she has an innate desire to obey this strange girl. But she's poisoned in the battle, and Nella decides it's better to go to a nearby PokeCenter than back home.

Kendra tries to explain to the girl what happened, that she was human, and got turned into a PokeMon. But it's useless: Nella understands all of that, and doesn't care. In fact, she believes that they're meant to help each other with their wishes. Which means Kendra is supposed to accept that she is now *just* a Mudkip. She starts calling her Kippi.

They meet a strange scientist in the woods on the way to the PokeCenter, who is fascinated by Kendra. He offers to let them use his lab to heal the PokeMon, if he can run some tests. While Kendra is skeeved, Nella accepts. And when Kendra tries to run away, she's ordered back into her PokeBall.

At the lab, Nella receives a PokeDEX, which also recognizes Kippi as a PokeMon. Tests are run, but it turns out the scientist has no desire to give Kippi back to her trainer. He forces the Mudkip to attack, but Nella rebels. She doesn't want to be "that kind of PokeMon." She gets her PokeBall from the scientist and defeats him. But when Nella asks for the ball back, Kippi, against her own instincts, hands it over. She doesn't understand why. Why is she obeying this girl? Why, even when she doesn't want to, does she have a feeling that she should obey?

Early Routes

Nella returns home to prepare for the tourney, and shows her brand new PokeMon to her mother. Like everyone else, Ms. Leaf recognizes, and treats, Kendra as a Mudkip. But she also questions why a Mudkip looks so human. Nella admits, at Kendra's insistence, the wishes they both made. She lies, though, and says Kendra wished "to understand what being a PokeMon was like." When Kendra balks at that, she adds that "she didn't expect her wish to come true, but that it really is what she wants deep down."

Kendra goes into a rage, and is only stopped by her trainers' commands. Ms. Leaf has some words for Kippi, telling her that she will be turned back. But until she is, she is going to be the best 'Mon she can be.

"We can go to my dad, he's a PokeMon professor, and he..."

*"Kippi, that's enough!" Ms. Leaf boomed at her, ending the PokeTirade. "You wanted to understand PokeMon better, well, congratulations, you got your wish. I think you should be turned back, but we will be the ones to determine how best to do that. Until we do, you **are** a PokeMon. Nella is your **Owner**. You will do what you are told, when you are told. You will protect my daughter, and if you can't do that, then so help me, we'll leave you just the way you are."*

The next morning, the tournament begins and Nella and her PokeMon begin their journey. Because of her tirade, Kendra had to spend the night in her ball, but is allowed to stay out "if she behaves." She's forced to fight several other 'Mons to build up Nella's roster, all the sort of bugs, dogs, and birds found on the early routes. She's stubborn, willful, and only begrudgingly listens to her trainer. She doesn't understand other PokeMon, though feels like she should be able to.

The first gym battle, in Petalburg City, is a disaster. Kendra has gotten versed enough in fighting that she thinks she can win without her trainer. But she doesn't understand the strategy behind the moves, and definitely doesn't know enough about PokeMon to exploit type effectiveness. She faints in battle, but despite this, Nella wins the badge. Afterward, she confronts her 'Mon. Nella thinks she's been giving Kendra too much freedom, and because of that, she hasn't fully adjusted to PokeMon life.

“Oh, like you haven’t been treating me like a PokeMon since the moment you captured me.” Kendra said with a glower. She couldn’t believe this little brat.

“I’ve let you walk outside your ball, I always talk to you, I even went with you when you thought we should ‘take a shortcut.’ But not anymore. Kippi, until you learn to behave...” Nella said, holding out the small red and white prison.

“You can’t do this! I’m more than a PokeMon, and you know it!”

But Nella was stern, commanding. She shook her head. “You’re really not.” She flipped open the PokeBall and sent Kippi inside.

For the next routes, Nella only brings Kippi out for battles. She only gives her commands, and doesn’t respond to her talking. When the battle is over, the Mudkip is sent back. They go south to Dewford Town and the second gym. It goes better, but Nella is reluctant to use Kippi, almost keeping her out of the fight entirely. In the end, she brings her out and is very happy that KendraMon does what she’s told, even if she’s unhappy about it.

Meetings in Rustboro

When they go north to Rustboro City, Kendra is allowed out for the journey, and she’s increasingly nervous because that’s her hometown. Nella is also worried because Kippi hasn’t evolved yet. After two gyms and numerous other battles, she should be a Marshtomp. And, while Kendra does as she’s told, Nella doesn’t feel that she’s giving her all or her best. Her PokeMon has been captured, not tamed.

Things go bad for Kendra almost immediately when they run into Roxanne. Not only is she the town's gym leader, but they used to go to school together. While she's impressed at Nella's accomplishments, she's less impressed with Kendra, especially when Nella explains some of their problems.

"Kendra never did apply herself, especially in PokeMon class," Roxanne said, clutching her big, stupid geology book to her chest. She smirked at Kendra. She always looked sweet, but Kendra knew there was rudeness just beneath that unassuming surface. "If she had, she wouldn't live in a PokeBall now."

"I applied myself just fine," Kendra said, even if talking to a human other than Nella was useless.

Roxanne sized her up from tail to whiskers, "Use your words, Kendra, I can't speak Mudkip."

Her eyes flashing red, Kendra readied her Water Gun. It had been far too long since she got to use it on a stuck up, entitled, bossy...

Nella knew the look in her 'Mon's eyes and jumped between them, shooting a warning glance at Kippi. "Do you have any tips for getting the most out of her?"

"Just make sure she does what you need her to do, when you need her to do it. Kendra can be an absent minded PokeMon."

"Is this about that project we did in High School?!" Kendra shouted, "for the last time, I got the due dates mixed up!"

Roxanne listened and nodded as if she knew what Kendra said, "Such a talkative 'Mon." She remarked.

"Kippi thinks you're doing this to get back at her for something in High School."

“Of course not. I just want to see her become the best little PokeMon she can be.” She left with a smirk, and Kendra nursing a bruised ego.

“You should have let me blast her.”

“Aww, she seemed nice,” Nella said, petting Kippi’s blue hair. “Besides, attacking a gym leader before an official match might disqualify us.”

Kendra glowered at her old classmate, still dressing for school after all these years. It was, unfortunately, less embarrassing than the swim costume she had to wear. “We have to crush her,” Kendra said.

They train and strategize, Kendra throwing herself fully into the mode of being a PokeMon. Over lunch, Kendra tells her trainer all she remembered about Roxanne, about how she thought and acted in school. She’s certain that the gym leader will have a special surprise for her, and asks about type weaknesses. Nella listens to her ‘Mon and they prepare their own surprise.

On the way to a hotel for the night, Kendra meets another person she knew from before: her PokeMon scientist father, whom she didn’t know was in town. The reunion is bittersweet. He desperately wants to help Kendra, but can’t do much without stealing her PokeBall, and becoming a PokeThief himself. He’s willing to do it, but thinks there’s something to Nella’s theory that both wishes have to be fulfilled before Kendra can be restored. He urges Kendra to work on being a better PokeMon for Nella, and urges Nella to teach Kendra why PokeMon are so amazing.

The next day is the day of the match with Roxanne. She’s a rock type trainer, so Nella should be able to sweep the whole gym herself. Nella uses her other ‘Mons in the early battles, keeping her favorite fresh. They finally face off with Roxanne herself, and Kippi is ready. She defeats most of the roster with ease, until her former classmate brings out a Cradily, a fearsome prehistoric ‘Mon that should be able to defeat a Mudkip like

Kippi with ease. But then, Nella commands Kippi to use **Icy Wind** to freeze the enemy. With that, the last of Roxanne's 'Mons falls.

That should wipe that smug look off her face, Kendra thought, watching the fossil PokeMon collapse, glow, and retreat back to its ball. Roxanne stared for a moment at the battlefield. But her aloof gaze came back, stronger than ever. She held her chin up and congratulated Nella.

"Your bond with your PokeMon is Rock Solid, and I award you the Stone Badge. You've shown a fantastic ability to strategize and plan ahead. And Kendra --I mean, Kippi-- I'm glad to see you finally applying your PokeSelf."

"Thank you," Nella beamed.

Kendra kept quiet, trying to stare down the gym leader. It wasn't fair! Roxanne lost! Why was she all smiles and compliments now? A few years ago, she would have made some excuse and left in a huff. The worst part was, Kendra knew she meant the compliments.

While she glowered, her trainer nudged Kendra. "Say thank you, Kippi."

"Thank you," the PokeMon said, though she wasn't happy about it.

"The bond between a trainer and PokeMon is a special one, and I'm glad you're finally getting to know it." Roxanne smiled. "Being a tamed PokeMon suits you."

How Kendra wanted to blast her, encase her in ice and just leave her, but she glanced out of the corner of her eye for her trainer's approval. Even with the badge in hand, Nella shook her head no, and the urge to fight went out of Kendra.

Roxanne was all smiles because she would always win. If she won the match, she won. But if she lost, it just proved that Kendra was a fantastic PokeMon. It only took ten days, but she had

been successfully tamed, her wild human self subordinate to her Mudkip instincts and Nella's training.

Outside the gym, KendraMon finally admits that she needs Nella, and understands that she needs to listen to her. She won't be able to be a good PokeMon without her, and won't learn the lesson she needs to learn to be changed back. That's when she finally evolves into Marshtomp.

With that thought clutching her mind, Kendra glowed, her whole body shimmering and changing. She had a hope that this was it, that she had done enough to satisfy the wish. But PokeMon evolved, and now, so did Kippi.

Her head crest grew taller, blacker, and more leathery; her tail split in two. Webbing grew between Kippi's fingers, and her skin turned turquoise blue. She felt stronger, faster, and could feel a deeper connection to the well of elemental water inside her.

"Marrrrrshtomp?" She said, croaking her "r." She was terribly confused about all this. Why now? Why not after the battle, like happened with Nella's other 'Mons? But her trainer was elated, jumping and hugging Kippi.

"I knew you could evolve, now you're an even better PokeMon than before!"

Five to Go

Kippi has trouble adjusting to her new evolution. Marshtoms are like teenagers and awkward in their own way. She often croaks when speaking, sometimes her skin gets slimy for no reason, and she can get so

agitated even Nella can't understand her. On the other hand, Kippi can understand other Pokémon. Their barks and chirps sound like real language, if simple. Pokeblocks, a type of candy for 'Mons, taste good to her. Nella uses them like treats to train Kippi.

The Marshomp doesn't disobey anymore. She can grouch and grump at Nella, as awkward middle stage Pokémon are wont to do, but always does as she's told. They travel across Hoenn, collecting badges. Whether camping or in a hotel paid for by winnings, Nella has Kippi sleep in her PokéBall like all the others on the team, though she's usually allowed out during the day.

When they get home to regale Ms. Leaf of PokeExploits, Kippi is allowed inside the house, unlike the others, but not allowed on the furniture. Nella's mom is adamant that, for the time being (she's always sure to point that out), Kippi is a Pokémon. She worries that a too-human thinking Kippi will let her daughter down, so it's always best to keep her thinking like a Pokémon.

Nella feels on top of the world. She's making great progress, her Pokémon is behaving, and the Championship seems in her sights. Until, that is, Kippi's father arrives. He reminds the trainer of her duty to Kippi: to help fulfill the Marshomp's wish. He points out that Kippi is doing everything in her power to help her trainer. He takes readings from Kendra and discovers that she's become more fused with her Pokémon self, and thinks she shouldn't evolve again. If she does, she could be stuck. Nella, afraid that she will lose Kippi if she helps her, decides to make sure Kippi evolves.

While Kippi is, and admits to being, a Pokémon, she is standoffish with the others on Nella's team. She doesn't play with them often, and eats separately. She loves to hear stories about their lives before Nella, about growing up in the wild. But when Kippi tries to talk about her old life, they don't seem to understand. There's still a difference in attitude and demeanor between her and other 'Mons. For most of them, this is fine. But for Eggron the Aggron, it's a problem.

Kippi washed her arms and face in the cool river water, resisting the temptation of diving in. Nella hadn't liked that last time. "Wherrrrre," she Marshtomp croaked, "is this slime coming from, anyway?"

A shadow fell over her, cast by Eggron's hulking black and steel body. "You are PokeMon," he said, his rumbling voice shaking.

She looked at him, more than a little confused, "I know."

"Nella captured you," he continued.

*"I **know**. Eggron, what's this about?"*

"You should act more like PokeMon."

"I fight for Nella, and I live in a PokeBall, just like you. What more do you want?" She put her hands on her hips, sizing up the behemoth. She remembered him when he could fit in the palm of her hand when Nella first captured him. And while he was huge, type effectiveness worked against the Aggron. Kippi knew how to make earthquakes.

"Eat with us," he said, motioning with his whole arm to the others in a circle, all eating their food, even though about a quarter of it left their bowls and landed in the dirt. Not that that stopped them from eating it.

Kippi grimaced. "You guys have the worst table manners."

Eggron smiled in a way that should be impossible with a steelhead, "PokeMon have no tables, need no manners."

"I'll eat how I like, thanks." She tried to move past him, but Eggron pushed her back, almost stumbling Kippi into the stream.

"Hey!"

“Why don’t you evolve?” He asked. So this was the real reason he was here. “Trainer Nella wants you to evolve.”

“You know why.”

“So you can devolve,” he said. “PokeMon don’t want to devolve, become weaker, smaller.”

“Well, I do.”

“Then you are not real PokeMon. Not full member of team. Holding team back.”

Eggron snarled, flicking his steely tail.

Kippi narrowed her eyes and put one hand on the ground, making it rumble. “You wanna go?”

“What’s going on over there?” Nella called from the campsite, her voice getting the attention of both her ‘Mons. “No fighting outside of training.”

“Sorry, Nella,” they both said sheepishly.

While camping one night, Kippi asks Nella why she thinks PokeMon are so amazing. Nella believes that if Kippi understands why PokeMon are great, the wish will be fulfilled and she’ll become human again. So Nella lies. The trainer tells her Marshtomp that PokeMon are so great because they’re so obedient and trainable. Kippi asks the other members of the team, but Eggron makes them all stay quiet.

“Must learn on own, cannot be told.”

Kippi doesn’t evolve when she should, no matter how many battles she wins, or Rare Candies she’s fed. It starts to grate at Nella, and as they continue to collect badges, she fears the day Kippi’s wish is fulfilled. She

knows it's coming sooner and sooner. At the same time, it's more difficult for Kippi to compete. Nella's other PokeMon have surpassed her in strength because she isn't evolving, so she's fighting less.

After getting the eighth and final badge to qualify for the Elite Four, Kippi finds out Nella has been feeding her Rare Candies to force her to evolve. They get into an impassioned argument, the first in weeks, which ends with Nella declaring that Kippi has to evolve. But it's not something Kippi can just do, and so is sent back to her PokeBall before the dangerous Victory Road.

"Wait, why do you want me to evolve?" Kippi asked. The answer truly eluded her. She was Nella's, obviously, but she had been fighting with the assumption that she would become human again at the end of the tourney.

"Because you need to be stronger to face the Elite Four. I've been telling you that."

"But I can't be changed back if I evolve."

"We don't know that. Your dad could be wrong, you know."

"Do you think he is?"

"Yes," Nella said firmly, but she glanced away as she did so. There was a slight shift in her stance, and Kippi caught it.

"Don't lie to me," Kippi said, forcing her trainer to meet her eyes. "I know when people lie, you know."

"What do you know, you're just a stupid PokeMon."

"I'm a smart PokeMon, and you know it," Kippi said, but hearing her trainer say it stung her. She had gotten used to the way Nella admired and looked up to her. And, she had gotten used to the thrill of fighting for the trainer. There wasn't much she wouldn't do for the kid at this point. But she wasn't going to give up her hope, her chance, of being human again.

“Whatever you are, you’re mine, and I’m not letting you go,” Nella said with a bit of venom in her voice and unbinged glint in her eyes.

“Your mom already said I should be turned back,” Kippi said, feeling a bit like a child again. Sometimes that happened when talking with Nella, who had this annoying habit of being a brat, and making Kippi play the role of the goody-two-Mon.

“She also said I own you, and you have to do whatever I say, so evolve!” She commanded. But it didn’t work like that, they both knew it, and still Kippi felt defiant, crossing her arms and standing over her trainer.

“No,” she said simply. It had been a long time since she disobeyed a command. It used to be that she felt guilt or remorse for it, but not this time. Nella was crossing a line now, one that Kippi felt perfectly justified in defending. “I’m your PokeMon and I’ll fight for you, but I will not evolve.”

“Then go back to your PokeBall!”

There wasn’t any shouting, Kippi just rolled her eyes as she turned into light and swirled back into her home, wondering when Nella would come to her senses.

The Victory Road

Things go badly on Victory Road. Meant to challenge trainers, the Road is through a dark and treacherous cave filled with powerful PokeMon. Kippi isn’t released from her PokeBall for days, and she knows this isn’t normal. She wants to help her trainer, defend her, get her safely to the Elite Four. But Nella never lets her out, and so she can’t explain herself.

The team, except for Kippi, is worn down, low on health, or has fainted. While struggling to get out, Nella is ambushed. But her attacker uses his Pokémon to shove Nella into a pit. She loses her bag and PokéBalls in the fight. And Kippi's PokéBall is taken by the attacker: the scientist who tried to steal Kippi once before.

He takes the Marshomp out to gloat. He gives her a collar, one which allows him to understand her. He'd been trailing the team for weeks, and tells Kippi that he found her ball abandoned on the road. He swears he doesn't know what happened to Nella. Of course, Kippi doesn't believe him, and she won't fight for someone "who steals Pokémon." He laughs at how much she's accepted her fate, but admits he had a back up plan. He changes some settings on the collar and it weakens her strength, but makes her obedient to whoever holds her PokéBall.

Kendra's forced to fight for her new trainer, helping him get out of the Victory Road, hating herself with each step she's forced to take from Nella, the trainer she respects, and loves. But with each fight, each command, Kippi feels herself become accustomed to the scientist. She is a well trained and tamed Pokémon; it's only a matter of time before he won't need the collar to control her.

Just before they leave, they're challenged by another trainer: Roxanne. She recognizes Kippi, but doesn't say so. The fight begins, and Kippi knows what Pokémon she has, and what she can do. But since the scientist doesn't ask, she doesn't warn him. So it comes as a complete surprise when Roxanne uses a Cradily to KO Kippi, and the rest of the scientist's team. He tries to flee, but Roxanne won't let him go until he hands Kippi's PokéBall over. The gym leader revives Kippi and takes off the obedience collar. Together, they find and rescue Nella. When they do, they all rest and recuperate in the cavern.

Kippi sat next to Nella, guarding her, watching every nook and cranny for possible attackers. She hadn't been there earlier, she wouldn't let that happen again. It wasn't necessary.

The team was healed up, Nella was an eight badge trainer, and a Gym leader sat across from them. No one short of the Champion stood a chance. Still, Kippi guarded her trainer.

“Do you know why Kippi isn’t evolving?” Nella asked Roxanne. “She’s strong enough. She just...won’t.”

Roxanne thought for a long time, and everything but the crackling fire melted away. “I’ve talked to Kendra’s dad, so I think I have some idea what this is about.” Kippi’s eyebrows shot up, and Roxanne smirked. “Kippi doesn’t want to evolve so she can become human again. And you want her to evolve. The question is, why?”

“What do you mean why? I caught her, she’s mine, and I want to keep her.”

Kippi stayed quiet, not reacting, but watching. There was something on the tip of Nella’s tongue. Something she didn’t want to say.

“PokeMon don’t belong to their trainer. We’re partners and collaborators in this crazy and amazing world.”

“If she was your PokeMon, you wouldn’t just let her become human.”

“You’re right, I wouldn’t just let her. I would help her.”

Nella sputtered. “But you said you liked her as a PokeMon.”

Roxanne laughed, her eyes glinting, as she grinned at Kippi. “Oh, she is a better PokeMon than a human. But if she wanted to be human, more than anything in the world, I would help her. Nella, great trainers know what their PokeMon wants, and will help them get it. You know what Kippi wants, so why won’t you help her get it?”

Nella looked at her PokeMon, eye to eye, for the first time in days. Kippi saw that her trainer had an answer, she just couldn’t get herself to say it. And the PokeMon’s fate hung in that silence.

Elite Four

Having cleared the Victory Road, Nella, Kippi, and the team take a few days break before the final challenge: the Elite Four.

Everyone sat down with their PokeFood and vitamins sprinkled with Pokeblocks, just how everyone liked them. Even Kippi. She would miss the berry flavored food when she changed back, but for now, she eagerly dived in. Or was about to before Eggron rumbled to her.

“Eggron would like to apologize to Kippi.”

“For what?”

“Kippi is bosses favorite, and Eggron wanted to be bosses favorite. Eggron realizes he was jealous. Made me a bad teammate. I have compromise.”

“I’m listening,” Kippi said, genuinely curious.

“Kippi is bosses favorite, but Eggron is Team Captain. I am biggest, strongest, most evolved member of team.”

There was no chance Kippi could hold in her laugh, “I agree, you are team captain.”

The Aggron, impossibly, arched one eyebrow. “Even to Kippi.”

“Yes, you are my captain.”

“Excellent. First rule of team, team eats together,” he used his stumpy arms to motion to where everyone else sat patiently and waited for her. Kippi, chagrinned, rolled her eyes. She

walked right into that one, but fair was fair. So she got up and joined everyone else, sitting cross legged with the other PokeMon. Among them, one of them.

“Second rule of team, team eats with table manners.”

Just before passing the point of no return, Kippi’s dad meets them. He talks about his research, of ways to DePokefy her. It has happened in the past that such mergers happened. But, he says, it always ends up the way they were transformed was also the way to be returned. Kippi asks him why he thinks PokeMon are so amazing, and he tells her. To him, PokeMon are mysteries. No matter how deeply they’re understood, there is more there to them. The answer stirs something in her, but she can’t put her webbed finger on it. Then, Kippi has to get ready to fight for her trainer.

The team sails past the first fight, but on the second, Nella has to use numerous potions to keep her ‘Mons standing. The third match goes disastrously bad, but they come out on top. Nella realizes she doesn’t have enough potions and revives to complete the next fight, let alone face the Champion.

Nella slumped against the wall in the hallway, lowering herself to the ground. She was breathing as hard as her PokeMon. What ‘Mon hadn’t fainted. She kept checking her supply bag, counting their healing potions. Doing her combat calculus.

“It’s not enough,” she admitted. “I’m sorry, guys. I let you down.”

“Let down is team effort,” Eggron said. Nella didn’t understand him exactly, but understood enough

“Darn,” Kippi said, “I wanted to add ‘Hall of Fame PokeMon’ to my resume.”

That got a laugh from her trainer. “There’s always next year,” she said. “Plus, I heard about a tourney starting in Kanto this month. I could get a ticket.”

Kippi smiled. "I was hoping to be human before then."

The statement drew a silence, a long one. Nella chewed on her lip. She had never agreed that Kippi should be human again. Maybe she wouldn't allow it. Or maybe Roxanne had talked some sense into her. When she finally answered, Kippi breathed in relief. "What would you even do after you change back?"

"I dunno. Take a break, probably. Then, maybe back to modeling?"

"I didn't know you were a model."

Kippi rolled her eyes, "You never asked." Resentment lingered in her voice, though she tried to keep it at bay. Nella had done a fantastic job of training her, and everything Kippi knew about being a good PokeMon was because of her. Of course she could have done a better job, but so could Kippi have done a better job at being tamed.

"I'm sorry. I could have been nicer to you, especially in the beginning. I just...I wished for the most amazing PokeMon, and I found you."

"Sorry to disappoint," Kippi said as a joke. She knew how Nella thought of her, and always had. Still, the force in her trainer's voice took her aback.

*"I mean, you **are** the most amazing PokeMon in the world."*

And there, the way Nella looked at her, with a wide eyed look of wonder and awe, Kippi had a billow of insight into something important. But it was a peek, and vanished behind the clouds again before she could see it all.

"I feel bad," Nella said, "You've done so much to help with my wish. I haven't done enough to help with yours."

Kippi shrugged. Nella had done what she could. Besides, her trainer needed her more than the other way, as far as wishes came. Ever since she became a PokeMon, most of her thoughts

were about doing what Nella told her, or getting out of the PokeBall. “I was just so tired of everyone else being fascinated by Pokemon. It felt like I was missing something, and I made the wish in frustration. I didn’t really want to know why people are obsessed with PokeMon.”

“I don’t think your wish would have been granted if you didn’t want it badly.”

“But it wasn’t; I was just turned into a PokeMon. I’m not any closer to figuring things out.” She thought about something Eggron had said. That she couldn’t be told what it was, she had to learn it on her own. Or maybe feel it.

“You asked me why I thought PokeMon were amazing. I thought that if you learned it, you would turn back. And I wouldn’t have you anymore.”

When Nella laid it out for her like that, it didn’t take much for Kippi to realize. “You lied to me?”

Her trainer nodded and looked away. “We’re not obsessed with PokeMon because you’re obedient. We’re obsessed because you can do anything. And when you’re our friend, it’s like we can do anything, too.”

The clouds in Kippi’s mind fully cleared, and the insight that lay behind them was shown fully. Her eyes went wide as understanding filled her from crest to tail. PokeMon weren’t just cute, or strong, or fast. For every person, for every personality, for every interest, there was a PokeMon there to help. There were ‘Mons for painters to paint, for scientists to study, for gardeners to plant. Even trainers to compete. Nella was a girl longing to test herself, to do things on her own, to see the world. She got the ‘Mon that let her do that.

It was a truth only a true PokeMon could fully understand; that PokeMon were there to be there for humans. Kippi was here to be here for Nella.

“I understand,” she whispered as her whole body lit up sun bright, as Kippi evolved.

“No!” Nella jumped, shielding her eyes. “Don’t evolve! You can’t evolve!”

But this wasn’t up to Nella, or Kippi, even. The wish would have its say. Kippi glowed not just with the light of evolution, but the sparkling dust from the wishing star. When it faded, the PokeMon looked at the world with new orange eyes. Her skin deeper, truer blue, her tail and crest larger. And she was even stronger still.

“Swampert,” Kippi said.

Kippi goes through her third and final evolution. Not because she got stronger, but because she made a realization about PokeMon. About herself, and her place in the world. Her wish finally fulfilled, she becomes locked into her ‘Mon form. Her eyes and skin are different, and she can no longer understand any human but her trainer. They both have a lot of emotions. Kippi is sad she won’t be human again, but happy to continue to be there for Nella. And for the trainer, she’s glad Kippi is staying, but wanted to do right for her PokeMon.

Unfortunately, despite the team’s best efforts, they cannot defeat the powerful dragon trainer of the Elite Four. Nella resigns before Kippi falls. It’s the end of an amazing run, and the start of a new chapter of their journey.

Coming Home

Nella and Kippi return home, in Littleroot, where Ms. Leaf throws a consolation party. Before they arrive, Kippi does get scanned by her father, but it confirms what had worried him: the mixing of human and ‘Mon is too great. She can’t be changed back through science. But she’s determined to live the best life she can. It

won't be a bad life. Her dad comes to the party and talks with her. Even though she can't understand him, she likes to hear his voice.

Roxanne comes, and she has a present for Kippi. She used the scientist's collar and modified it, taking out the means by which it forced obedience, leaving only the parts to understand PokeMon. When Kippi wears it, she can understand humans again, and they can understand her. She starts to tell them about every facet of her PokeLife.

After the party, as night is falling, Nella and Kippi meet by the lakeshore where everything began. She apologizes again, feeling like it was what she said that triggered Kippi's final evolution. When evolved, Nella knew she had made a mistake. She would give anything **for** her PokeMon, not just to keep her. If she had known, she would have stayed quiet until after Kippi was Kendra again. But Kippi realized, too, that she did want her wish fulfilled, and is glad that it is now, even under these circumstances.

They fell into silence again, only the light lapping of water and rustle of leaves breaking the silence. Looking up, they see a light in the sky. Another shooting star! Without hesitation, PokeMon and Trainer make new wishes.

Kippi's body glows with strange, wishing light. But she remains a Swampert. She's confused as to what happened, when Nella tells her her wish:

"I wished you could become human again, whenever you want to." Then, a grin spread on her face, "does this mean you really do like being my PokeMon?"

"You're not that bad, for a brat," Kippi says.

"What did you wish for?"

"I really, really wanted to be a Hall of Fame PokeMon." she said, pulling out a ticket to the Kanto tournament. It starts in three days.