

POKÉMON
REBIRTH
ULTIMATUM
Endgame Edition



EPISODE THIRTY SIX
V-Create

Caley slowly opened his eyes. The last thing he remembered was a blinding sphere of light and a searing agony coupled with his and the Lati's helpless screams. Now the terrible pain that had once encompassed the young man's body had vanished, and the screams had given way to a silence so intense, one could have assumed every molecule of air had ceased to exist. Caley could feel his limbs bobbing aimlessly on invisible waves, seemingly beyond his control.

Am I...dead?

The young man pondered over the incomprehensibility of his current weightless circumstance. Death was an absence of life, so surely this was not his state of being. At least he hoped not – the concept of death had been stepped around repeatedly by Caley's parents during his childhood. Any possible suggestions were given by the elderly occupants of Prela Village, and their descriptions of wandering mournful spirits served only to make Caley feel like someone using the bathroom, knowing all the while that the lock on the door was broken.

This current train of thought was halted by a swift tug to the sleeve. Caley glanced down to see Jirachi staring back at him, looking none the worse for wear, save a confused and panicked expression in his eyes. At least the pokémon's presence confirmed one thing – they were both still alive. But *how*? And even more puzzlingly:

Wasn't Jirachi inside his cocoon a moment ago?

A shadow passed into the corner of Caley's vision, prompting the young man to look to his right. There, suspended calmly beside Jirachi and himself, was Luthor in his pokémon form. Hovering on the opposite side was Rosu, also in Lati shape. Both pokémon had their tiny arms raised as if grasping something. Caley reached out curiously and ended up flinching as his hand met a flat, strangely cold surface. No sooner had he touched this invisible barrier, it shimmered momentarily before spreading out over Caley and Jirachi's head, revealing that the two figures were encased in a protective bubble, preventing exposure to the unknown effects outside.

It was then that Caley saw them draw into view. Hundreds of floating winged beings surrounded the pair that held the bubble intact, heads turned and faces filled with reverential expectance. The young man concluded that this realm, wherever it was, must have been where the celestial Lati species lived. But what were they waiting for? It couldn't have been something from him, for every pair of eyes, even Jirachi's, were staring firmly into a distant part of the void.

As Caley directed his own gaze toward that same point, he saw four creatures hovering in perfect alignment. They bore a similar shape to the Latios and Latias that amassed in the void, yet their backs were wingless, and the parts of their body not covered in white feathers were instead enveloped in lavender ones, not red or blue. Their arms were decorated with lavender plated appendages which they held stiffly before

them like finned shields. Upon sight of this, the Lati were roused into chorus – their soft, haunting calls merging with one another to create a unified wave of sound. Caley attempted to use his abilities to decipher the song, but the sides of the shield that surrounded them also prevented his telepathy from reaching anyone outside.

"What are those pokémon?" he asked Luthor. "Who are they?"

[*These are the Gatekeepers,*] Luthor told him quietly. [*'Lati Prodigis'* - the highest form of Lati, those which have been given the duty of making the request.]

"The request?" Caley blinked, but the Latios did not reply. Caley had never seen illustrations of these 'Lati Prodigis' before, leading him to conclude that such variants of the pokémon had never made their presence known on Oci. If they were meant for such a specific role, he could understand why.

Silently, the four Lati Prodigis began to circle - their bodies shifting sideways as they did so. As their position altered, their arms were raised by their sides, allowing the fins protruding from their arm plates to face outward like wings. Faster and faster they spun, their skin beginning to shimmer with an ethereal blue light. The light trailed from the tips of their wing fins, gouging a circular frame amongst the empty infinity amassed with navy and crimson clouds. Within this frame, the blue light spread inward until it reached the centre - increasing its intensity until the circle looked almost like a star glimmering within the void. While Caley, Jirachi

and the other Lati watched, two shafts of light cast themselves forth from this star into the waiting audience, tearing the atmosphere, and prying it apart. The melodic utterances of hundreds of Latias and Latios grew with the approaching brilliance.

"What are they saying?" Caley inquired.

[*They are saying... 'The Original One draws near',*] Jirachi responded somewhat distantly.

"The Original- " Caley's remaining words were snatched from his throat and cast into the eerie glow that now bathed every figure present. The young man and the pokémon surrounding him were now audience to a window through space - a vision of an unknown location where glowing flickers tumbled and ricocheted from one another amongst a sea of green....

'A churning turmoil of chaos.'

Memories of long-forgotten lessons surfaced in Caley's mind. He recalled the many hours he had spent flicking through books in the Retyrrn Port School Library for no other reason than to keep out of the cold schoolyard. A sentence written within the 'Book of Sinnohan Legends' served as an accurate description of what he currently beheld. Caley couldn't help but wonder if the author had viewed such a scene also. But was an experience like that normally possible? Were he and Jirachi even supposed to be present in the void? Caley reached up a hand to massage

his head which had once again begun to ache as a result of thoughts too deep for comprehension and questions without answers. If only someone could provide him with enlightenment.

You were *not* meant to access this sector.

Caley didn't so much hear this thunderous voice as *feel* it. The sensation was most unlike anything he'd felt before, a far cry from the mental conversations he had grown so used to involving himself in. No, this voice from the chaotic space beyond was like a pulsing force that grasped every fibre of the young man's being and shook it into a state of distinct alertness. Suddenly, everyone else seemed oddly far away - as if only Caley and this new, unknown conversant existed in that point in time.

You were *not* meant to access this sector, the voice reiterated. **But circumstances intervened.**

"C-circumstances?" Caley struggled to keep his speech from wavering in his fearful apprehension. The voice was resonant, foreboding, worming its way into Caley's psyche, urging the young man to confess every mistake he'd ever made in his life, no matter how insignificant.

The one who commanded the tainted virtue, came the reply. **His actions have generated much instability in Oci. That instability - with your attempt to communicate - caused a temporary exception which transferred you here.**

"You..." Caley paused while his mind processed the vast amount of information. He knew all too well that 'the one who commanded the tainted virtue' was the leader of Team Rocket, who was so determined to have his plans succeed. Yet the identity of the one he spoke to seemed mere inches away, still impossibly out of reach. "Who are you?"

I am Tajigyama, came the simple response. Compiler of your world.

Caley fell silent. So this was the 'Original One' of which the Seers had spoken - the ethereal form which had been close to forgotten in the minds of Oci's inhabitants. The being's language was difficult to comprehend, alien to Caley's senses. But its presence, though unseen, was felt solidly throughout him. The young man's fear had given way to a sense of peace, awe and reassurance - as if whatever measure of similarities that united himself with Tajigyama had found each other and embraced.

This single man has attempted to corrupt what I have rendered, Tajigyama stated. I must reverse the effects of his misguided devotion, before the connection is lost.

Lost... the word sank like a rock in Caley's gut. He could see his father in his mind's eye, someone whose memory still caused the young man anger and yet, another part of him was well aware of the turmoil that had been endured by the one he'd looked up to for so long. Turmoil

that neither Caley's mother nor Caley himself could have taken away. "It must have been heartbreaking to know something bad had happened to your loved ones and yet not been able to help them," he murmured softly.

Yes... Tajigyama responded in saddened tones which Caley had not expected. **It is not always possible to restore all those who pass away.**

"You mean...my dad..." Caley could feel a lump beginning to form in his throat.

Sometimes data is beyond repair.

"D-Data?" Caley repeated brokenly. "I don't understand... surely...you made Oci...all the creatures on it...why can't you just...fix what you created?"

I am a creation, as you are, Caley, Tajigyama told him. I have given life, as has been my desire. And I have performed to my highest capacity to make life acceptable for all my children. But not everything lies within my control. There was a time I believed it did. But then-

"Mendarus?" Caley looked up, a little coldly.

Silence returned to the void for what seemed like an eternity. Caley felt a nasty heaviness culminate in his gut, a growing guilt, a feeling of having spoken out of turn.

Yes. Mendarus, Tajiyama said at last, its voice saturated with regret. **An unexpected error. Its residence upon my world, its corruption of the protocols which gave me access, these things have generated much unrest. The error lives just beyond my reach, using my own creations against me. Even now, the error has bound itself to a human's form. Unless it separates itself from this host, it will be impossible to erase without causing unnecessary suffering.**

"So what now?" Caley exclaimed upsetedly. "Surely we can't just leave Mendarus to do what it wants."

You are a remarkable one, Caley, Tajiyama told him. **Humble, respectful, strong. The Opus did well in selecting you. Mendarus shall be halted - you have my word. For now, your directive lies in granting me the means to release my treasured ones.**

"I am honoured to have been given this chance," Caley subconsciously bowed his head, prompting the Lati which surrounded the bubble to do the same. As the young man did so, Jirachi positioned himself in front of Caley's hands, holding them between his own. Then the portal before the bubble stretched out two luminescent tendrils, making contact with its shield-like surface.

It was like a door had been opened in his mind. Caley could now sense the presences of the other Nexi assembled across Oci, specifically

for this very moment. Though he was unable to see them, he could hear their thoughts and feel their anxiousness, hope and determination. The Lati's unearthly strains filled the air once again as a white aura spread from the bubble and cast shafts of light amongst the celestial pokémon. Caley lifted his head, eyes aflame with the very white glow that now surrounded him, Jirachi and their bated audience.

"*We are one,*" he stated in monotone, his voice taking on the eerie quality of many people speaking in unison. "*We are ready.*"

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Cassidy had expected herself to feel more afraid upon witnessing her rapidly approaching end, and yet, there was a strange - though not unwelcome - calm which had taken over.

The woman glanced to one side, her eyes meeting with those of her pokémon companion, Soluqua. It had been a long time since Cassidy had received such unwavering loyalty from a pokémon. The others she had worked with in Team Rocket had been obedient to her out of fear and shame, nothing else. But Soluqua had believed Cassidy was more than the austere, defensive persona Team Rocket had forced upon her. Amongst all the turmoil and self-rediscovery Cassidy had experienced over the past few days, Soluqua had never once lost faith in who she really was.

With a faint, resigned smile, Cassidy offered her left hand towards Soluqua, which the pokémon grasped tightly in her webbed paw. She then felt an upsurge in warmth, an increasing tightness about her body, and looked up to discover that Butch had surrounded her and Soluqua with his arms and wings – embracing them in an attempted measure of comfort. Levi clung tightly to Butch's shoulders, squinting at a point some distance in the air. It appeared that the roubat was not the only one fixated with this mysterious source of white light. An area above the tower's remains was aglow with a pulsating brilliance as a radiant orb pierced the darkness, causing those on the ground to shield their eyes from the glare.

Errol glanced over his shoulder and across the violet sky, just in time to see a massive beam of energy coursing towards the hovering orb from the east - a link from another Seer Repository overseas. Rose watched as a similar beam approached from the west with phenomenal speed. There was little time to react, as both shafts of energy made contact with the orb in a spectacular shower of phosphorescence. These ethereal sparks gathered together, merging into powerful bolts of lightning which streaked their way down Kemnon Tower's remaining outside walls, while the glow from the orb became ever brighter. No one saw the smile of triumph as it emerged on Merto's face.

"He made it," the man spoke elatedly to Tezura, who nodded. "It is time."

As he said this, the orb of light burst forth, sending a massive wave of energy sweeping down across the mountainside and the crowds that stood upon it. Trainers, gym leaders and their pokémon uttered gasps of astonishment as this brilliant lustre rippled past them - seeping into the cracks of the earth and engulfing the humanoid pokémon with whom they had recently been fighting.

From the outer observation deck of the crippled executive aircraft bobbing in the ocean, Giovanni clasped his hands to his paling face, observing a wall of energy sweeping across the churning water at speed. He'd played witness to Team Rocket's flying machines and his perfect army being torn out of the sky in streams of energy – moments before every one of the aircraft's systems collapsed. Struggling through the emergency exit, his secretary following close behind, the once-fearless authoritarian now found himself overcome with an unfamiliar panic.

He couldn't understand it. How had his plan failed?

Matori uttered a cry of alarm and shut her eyes tight, as the energy wave collided with the aircraft, immersing herself and Giovanni in a white blaze. Bracing herself for an intense heat, the woman was surprised to feel nothing but a curious tingling across her face and hands.

She opened her eyes slightly, squinting while the vivid light gradually faded to nothing. The violent gales had at last calmed, and the unsettling green glow Matori had watched across Tattō's landscape was

subsiding. So too, did Matori's pounding heart finally decide to resume a normal pace. Undoubtedly it was time to retreat, in order to re-assess just went wrong, to plan anew. Turning to inquire of her superior's next move, Matori's eyes widened as she found herself alone on the observation deck.

Giovanni had vanished.

Upon the field, further astonishing developments were unfolding. The hybrid soldiers had disappeared, and in their place stood large numbers of bewildered men and women dressed in robe-like outfits with patterns bearing resemblance to the outer skins of the pokémon they'd been a few minutes ago. After their return to humanity had dawned upon them, the reaction of these once-enslaved figures was of overwhelming joy and excitement. Some broke into dance with whoops and cries, while others embraced fellow operatives and even the trainers and Seers that had fought them so valiantly. Such euphoria proved to be contagious, as those left standing also erupted into cheers of exultation.

Glancing from Soluqua's stunned expression to her parents' happy ones, Cassidy brushed the dirt stains from her clothing and let out a breath of relief.

"Well done, Caley," she nodded respectfully in the direction of the tower's peak, before turning to Butch who was also back to being human

and now examining the new crimson and blue mottled gown he had recently acquired. "Hey Butch, nice fashion statement."

"I prefer it over being naked," the man retorted, while Soluqua chuckled. Despite it being the more modest option, Butch still happened to be blushing.

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Caley surfaced from the period of mental unity, to a feeling of warmth and accomplishment. He could no longer see the Lati, or the portal to the realm where Tajigyma resided. Instead, the young man found himself surrounded in a faint violet aura, face to face with Jirachi. It was the greatest feeling of peace Caley recalled experiencing since beginning his journey – that upbeat, free and undeniably hopeful state of mind he had started out with.

"Well, we did it," he murmured finally. Jirachi nodded, but said nothing. Caley noticed an uncomfortable reluctance in the pokémon's eyes. Something was bothering him and it provoked Caley to ask a question he'd longed to pose earlier. "Jirachi?"

[*Yes, Caley?*]

"How come you reacted the way you did when I mentioned Mendarus? I mean, I understand you being upset...but the look on your

face was so panicked, more intense than the other pokémon. Do you have particularly bad memories of Mendarus?"

[*You could say that,*] Jirachi glanced up with a sorrowful expression. [*It's not welcoming to know you're a child of the most evil being known to this world.*]

"You mean it created you?" Caley's astonished words trailed off into silence. Part of him wanted to know why something that dark would bring to life a pokémon who seemed so innocent, but another part scolded him for even wanting to ask a rather insensitive question. He turned to more sympathetic thoughts, while Jirachi nodded slowly.

[*There are many pokémon like myself that were destined for bad things,*] he elaborated. [*Since being freed from Mendarus' control, we have each tried to find ways to prove ourselves better than the one that made us. I am thankful for being chosen to carry out Arceus' duties – before then, I felt so torn up inside. I wanted to do good, but I thought it wouldn't be possible because of who had brought me here. At least not until I met Max.*]

Jirachi's eyes lit up as he continued to reminisce.

[*He was such a wonderful boy, full of carefree thoughts and dedication to his friends. By just being himself, he proved to me that I could do something beneficial with the power I had been given.*]

Caley flinched as Jirachi suddenly swung his gaze upon him, face overcome with realisation.

[Wait,] he blinked. [Something in the back of your mind...it's... it's him!]

"Wh-what?" Caley spluttered, a little taken aback by this sudden change of emotional pace. Jirachi squealed with excitement and threw himself at Caley before giving him a tight hug. Or at least Caley figured it was meant to be a tight hug. Despite the notable enthusiasm of the action, he hadn't felt a thing.

[Max! You've met my best friend Max!] Jirachi exclaimed. [I saw the memory you have of him! He may be a few years older, but he was Max nonetheless!] The tiny pokémon hesitated, before his happy grin dissolved into something more sombre. [...I wish I could see him for real again.]

"Well why can't you?" Caley asked, puzzled.

[I am still sleeping inside that crystal,] Jirachi explained. [What you see of me is just a projection made possible by Cyberspace.]

"Oh," came the awkward reply. "It's a pity Max couldn't see you in the same way I can right now."

Jirachi hovered there for a moment, brow furrowed in deep thought. A few seconds later, the grin returned.

[Caley, you're as smart as you are kind-hearted! Thank you!]

"Uh, no problem..." Caley scratched the back of his head, wondering how he'd managed to solve the issue. "So can we go back now? My friends must be worried sick about me."

[*No need to go back,*] Jirachi nodded. [*We are already here.*]

The young man blinked and lifted his head, only to realise he was now staring into the glassy violet surface of the crystal, once again clasped between his hands. From a short distance away, Denise uttered a loud cry of delight, running across the grass and hugging the somewhat dazed figure tightly. Mondo and Cory followed suit, while even Adam looked as if he wanted to do the same, had he not got his pride to think about.

"You had us worried there, Caley," Rose commented in relieved tones. "Where'd you disappear to at such short notice?"

"I...don't really know," Caley replied distantly. "So much has happened, it feels like my head is going to explode."

"Then lay off the thinking for a while, okay?" Rose chuckled. "You can tell us all about it after a long rest."

"After all that, I could sure use one," Caley agreed, stepping from the welcoming embraces to approach Merto and Tezura, holding out the crystal containing Jirachi. "So, did everything that need to happen actually happen?"

"Yes," Merto replied as Tezura accepted the crystal. The red-haired Elite Guard cast an arm outward to direct Caley's gaze toward the open grassland. "Take a look – Tajigyma's light has restored the people. Soon, the birth of a new generation will be upon us."

"A new generation?" Denise echoed from behind Merto's left shoulder.

"That is correct," he smiled. "Inspired by the thoughts of the Nexus collective, Tajigyma shall create further species of pokémon to grace our world with variety and wonder."

"Wow..." Adam blinked, noticeably impressed. Pokémons made of ideas from Caley's brain were going to be something worth seeing. He began to wonder what such new pokémon might look like, but his deliberation was cut short as Cyzel took to rubbing his head on the youth's shoulder.

"I wonder when we'll get to see them!" Denise exclaimed with her usual enthusiasm. "Only time will tell, huh Rilly?"

Rose looked on as this excited discussion continued, then turned her attentions to a familiar pink-purple figure standing not too far away. Cory glanced back at her with an inquisitive expression.

"You're thinking it too, huh?" the zecutynr commented, examining their paws. "All those hybrid soldiers got returned to normal, so how come I still look like...well...me? How come Cyzel, Rilly and Soluqua still look the way they do?"

"I'd imagine it has something to do with the way you were all created," Rose explained. "The bodies of those Team Rocket operatives were mutated using pokémon DNA. In the case of you genetic pokémon, you were all *born* looking the way you do. There's nothing else you could possibly revert to."

"I never thought of that," Cory pondered, beginning to grin. "Good thing too, I've grown to like being who I am!"

"Glad to hear it," Rose chuckled, before pausing and looking around. The chatter generated from their immediate surroundings lacked three distinctive voices. "Strange...I wonder where Jess, James and Errol went?"

As the clouds cleared and the sun peered out over the mountains once more, three old friends stood and watched the multitudes of luminescent beams spreading far and wide across the sky. They'd been through many experiences like this together, witnessing the return of some kind of normalcy to the world, but this time, things had been different. With the rising of the sun came the rise of a settled resolution in their hearts. Something they had known for so long, but had been kept from expressing until this very moment.

"We've found the truth in this galaxy," Jessie smiled.

"Fighting evil is our destiny!" James exclaimed, with poetic flair. This caused Errol to chuckle.

"Yeah, finally!" he smirked. There was a pause while the trio exchanged knowledgeable glances with each other. It appeared they all knew where this was going, and any chance for a motto recital, even a revised one, couldn't go overlooked. Jessie stepped forward, putting a hand on her chest as if uttering an oath.

"To promote the virtues of truth and love!"

"To extend real peace to the stars above!" James added, thrusting a hand towards the sky.

"To destroy the roots of a tortured past," Jessie continued dramatically.

"To bring a hope to this world, at last..." James bowed his head in response, a calm, knowledgeable smile upon his face.

"Jessie!"

"James!"

"Errol's da name!" the third member of the group joined in cheerfully.

"While darkness still threatens the universe," Jessie began.

"These heroes..." James slipped in, right on cue.

"Will be dere..." Errol agreed, prompting the final line to be spoken by all.

"To shatter the curse!"

"Woh-buh-feht!" a familiar blue rubbery shape exclaimed, after materializing seemingly from nowhere. Another moment of silence ensued, before the trio collapsed into fits of giggles. Once the laughter had subsided, Jessie patted Wobbuffet on the back and assessed the results of their spontaneous composition.

"Not bad," she grinned. "For an improv."

TO BE CONTINUED...

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