

Changed in a snap

The day started like any other, the professor enthusiastically assigned you a task: someone recently spotted a Zeraora in the Lental region. The professor therefore tasked you to find it and take the most exciting photo you can create. That would be a daunting task. They are incredibly rare, especially in the region.

You decide to ask around for a bit, but no one at camp could actually help you get started. You let the thought of asking around go, no one seemed to have any good leads. Nonetheless you were determined to find one, after all, there were a lot of Pokémon to find in the region, so how hard would it be to find one electrical cat?.

You make your way over to the garage housing the NEO-ONE, an exploration vehicle that can instantly teleport the rider to its chosen destination. It's almost spherical in shape with a glass upper dome, ideal for taking photographs while it travels its predetermined route. You jump into the NEO-ONE with gusto, determined to find your mark. After some consideration you decide to go to Durice Island, you have only been there a couple of times, which meant that there was a higher chance to find new Pokémon. You wait until the teleportation process starts: the exploration implement gets lifted off and begins to materialize at the other side.

Suddenly, you crash! You're rocked six ways 'till Sunday, until you are flung out of the faulty machine. Slowly you come to. It feels like you've been knocked out for a bit, stars fading from your view.

"Ugh, that was awful. Safe transport can kiss my behind, there's a lot of sharp edges in that thing," you comment. Luckily the glass was tempered, so you weren't bleeding like a maniac. Still, assessing the damage would be wise...

As you bring your hands into view, it's immediately apparent something is off: instead of your fleshy fingers and flat, rounded nails, yellow fur and sharp claws come into view. It doesn't stop there. "Zera!" you exclaim in exasperation, instantly clasping your 'hands' over your mouth. You immediately feel other things that are wrong: whiskers are irritated by the sudden contact, and your mouth and nose feel totally different. You quickly pull your hands off your face. Note to self: touching whiskers is incredibly uncomfortable.

You flex your fingers for a bit, they feel less dexterous, courtesy of them being paws. It feels weird, but you're definitely moving them. As you shift your view downwards, you can see that your clothes are partially ripped but still on you, otherwise you look fine. Through the tears in your clothing, you can see yellow, and some occasional black and blue fur poking through. Now that you've checked your body, you also notice blue bolt-shaped whiskers in your peripheral vision. There's no mistaking it: you're a Zeraora now.

Your head is whirling with questions. "Did the NEO-ONE do this?" "How could it crash in the first place?" "How did I turn into a Pokémon?" "Why specifically a Zeraora?" That last question gives you pause, as you start to rummage through the broken-down machine. "Where is it," you growl to yourself, "aha! Found it!"

You retrieve your seemingly unscathed camera. As you reach for the power button you pause, what if this thing's faulty as well? You deliberate a bit, but still sheepishly turn it on, your current situation couldn't get much worse. The lens whirs to life as it focuses on the landscape, it seems to be working.

It's a bit harder to manipulate the camera, but the controls are made with gloves in mind, making the shutter button easy to hit. You point the lens towards yourself with a grin and take a photo. It looks a bit goofy, and the framing is awkward, but it actually works! The camera does focus on you, recognizing you as a Zeraora.

This gives you another idea: you strip down to your fur, dumping your tattered clothing in a somewhat coherent pile near a tree. You then place the camera on a smooth rock and set a timer for 10 seconds. You walk in front of it, giving the most curious look you can give. After a lot of beeping the camera takes a photo. You immediately pounce on the camera, when you check back it looks incredible! The beautiful bokeh makes for a good out of focus background, drawing the eye to you. You're close to the camera that you can see the individual hairs on your furred face!

You readjust the timer and decide to go for something special. As the timer counts down you leap into the air, in a mock pounce. It would be so cool if it actually worked. You giddily look at the most recent shot, you're beside yourself, that action shot looks amazing! This inspires you to go at it for a while, running down a list of ideas: meowing on all fours, swatting the air while on your back, sharpening your nails on trees, you're having a ton of fun!

Your one-on-one photoshoot with a Zeraora came to an end when the camera reached its capacity. "That was fun, let's try to get home!" You put on your tattered clothes again for recognizability, swing the camera strap over your neck and saunter over to the NEO-ONE. You get inside the machine, insert your camera, and attempt to turn it on.

[USER NOT RECOGNIZED]

You try pushing some buttons, but the machine won't cooperate. It just isn't your day. You get out and kick a thruster in frustration, making a panel come loose. Upon further inspection, it seems to be the emergency control, this could be your way out of here! You read the instructions on the panel: you first need to press a hand on a panel before you can continue. You know exactly how this will go down but try anyways.

[HUMAN NOT FOUND]

With your frustration building, you feel a current flowing through you, and when you reach for the biometric panel a second time it gets shocked. Wait, did you do just that? You panic over potentially ruining your chance of going home, however the opposite was true: one way or another, you just bypassed the security device.

[PREPARING EMERGENCY TELEPORTER]

The machine whirs to life.

[NEO-ONE READY FOR EMERGENCY TELEPORTATION, PLEASE PRESS THE TELEPORTATION BUTTON TO CONTINUE]

Well, this is it: time to go back. You press the button as you are blinded by a bright flash. As your vision clears, you find yourself just outside of camp.

You didn't really consider how you would explain your current situation to the professor, and you don't know whether or not he would actually believe you.

However your thoughts are interrupted when you suddenly hear a scream filled with glee, it's Rita. "Oh my gosh! That's a Zeraora! I've got to catch it!" Immediately you see a pokéball heading towards you. With a speed that surprises even you, you punch it in two halves with an electrified fist.

"What kind of way is that to greet your friend?!" You angrily shout at her, "don't you recognize my clothes?" You're still high-strung, getting fed up with the multiple setbacks you had to deal with today. You almost didn't get back to camp and when you actually did, you nearly get crammed in a little ball for your efforts.

She seems to be taken aback, "but I... How? And how can you talk? Pokémon can't do that."

"I don't know..." you answer uncertainly. "The NEO-ONE broke down and I woke up like this. I just now used the NEO-ONE's emergency teleporter to get back here."

"Now I understand why you took so long to get back; the professor and I were getting worried"

You scratch the back of your head (ooh that feels so good) and laugh awkwardly, "I might have indulged myself a bit and took some photos of myself." You accidentally set off some sparks, so you quickly withdraw your hand...uh, paw.

"But still, can't you turn off the electrics? It's still kind of scary seeing you make those currents."

You were still on edge, the adrenaline keeping you on high alert. "Sorry, I kind of do this on accident, I don't really know how it works either, I think it's a mood thing." You take some deep breaths in and out to calm yourself. You feel the flow ebb, until it's totally gone, it feels a bit... Empty, you guess?

"There, is that better?" You ask her directly.

"I'm still a bit anxious, but you still seem to be yourself. I'd go to the professor immediately, he might know what we can do about this situation."

"Ok, I'll go straight to him, no detours!" You set off and just as you pass Rita you turn back to her: "Sorry for the commotion just now, this is a lot to process."

"Don't worry about it, I would've reacted the same if I got changed into a Pokémon and had to dodge pokéballs when coming home."

You go inside the lab; it seems like Todd and Phill aren't in at the moment. That might be for the better because that means there's a lot less explaining to do. The professor seems absorbed in his work, so you decide to greet him. "Hey professor, I had an accident during the last expedition." He turns around and when he sees you, he gives you a surprised look. He maintains his calm demeanor, at least you don't have to play dodgeball around him.

"I presume there's quite a story behind this, would you like to tell me?"

You explain to him that the NEO-ONE crashed and you woke up as a Zeraora. Then you tell him how you used the emergency teleporter to get back, leaving the vehicle behind. You also show him the photos you made on Durice island. His response is not what you expected.

"I've got to admit, these photos are incredible. But I can't make use of them." Your face immediately drops.

"But why? I'm an actual Zeraora now! Don't you see how real I look, just touch me! I can even make electricity!"

"I know that you're a Zeraora now, I won't deny it, but I can't archive these photos in good faith. You've only been a Zeraora for a few hours, I saw you leave as human after all."

Wait, it took you hours to get back?

Professor Mirror continues: "As far as I can tell your behavior is human as well. If I were to archive these photos, then it wouldn't be furthering my research. I wouldn't be documenting a Pokémon in its natural habitat, but a human emulating one."

You actually didn't think of that, you've let the professor down.

"Still these photos are very good, you should keep them in your own album." Your mood lifts a bit, but you still feel somewhat down. Suddenly you hear your stomach growl.

"Uh professor, I kind of forgot to eat this whole time, I also didn't know I was away for this long."

"Don't fret, I've got more than enough human and Pokémon food, so we'll see if your tastes are any different from before."

You race to the kitchenette in record speed and eagerly raid the fridge for any foodstuffs. Being a Zeraora still feels a bit weird, but you have the feeling it will be alright, at least the people around you are understanding.

As you pour a bag of nuts in your mouth you hear the crackling of electricity, next to your foot, you see Pikachu balling its fists, looking particularly displeased, its electricity is sparking on its red cheeks.

"Piii... kaaa..."

Seems like not everyone is as agreeable with the new you.