

## Destined Duo

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In the intense, glamorous world of Competitive Pokemon Eating Contests there were two names that had always stood high above the rest, two juggernauts with no possible equal but themselves: Milkbone and Rose. Milkbone the Mightyena, undisputed eating contest champ of the Hoenn Region, whose soft round belly inspired awe in lesser eaters far and wide. He could eat any and everything placed in front of him without breaking a sweat, even if he ended up the size of a mountain afterward. Then there was Rose the Leafeon. Cunning and strong willed, she was an expert at using her well-honed abilities to overcome competitors many times her bulk. Countless opponents had discounted the feline in haste, only to be left shocked as she rode her relentless hunger to absolute victory.

As individuals Milkbone and Rose had proved their dominance time and time again, but one individual dared to dream of what they could do as a team. Evanesce the Salazzle was a reserved pokemon with keen powers of observation and insight. She could sense the needs of others with a mere glance, a talent second only to her cooking prowess. Providing food for eating contests was her lifelong ambition, so of course Evanesce had treated the arrival in town of her two favorite competitive eaters as a dream come true, eying both closely as they went about their business in the expansive free-range pokemon plaza.

Evanesce's idols rarely crossed paths in the first few days, but when they did there was always tension, two rivals sizing each other up. There was something else, though, something only the salazzle was in-tune enough to notice: silent passion. While Evanesce had theorized Milkbone and Rose would be a perfect couple, seeing them in person confirmed her suspicions without a shadow of a doubt. Unfortunately the duo appeared too shy to act on their obvious feelings. The salazzle knew then it was her duty to get the champs together, not yet knowing they'd be forming the most powerful competitive eating team in history.

The set-up was simple enough. Evanesce spread word of a friendly eating contest to be held at noon, and sure enough Milkbone and Rose were unable to resist the lure of competition. Just as planned, everyone else was too intimidated by the professionals to join in, leading to a one-on-one showcase that would not only raise the stakes, but ensure the pair were only focused on each other.

Milkbone arrived at the venue first, his belly wobbling as he shook his tail in anticipation for the feast he was about to partake in. His twin manes rustled in the light breeze, a wide grin on his face that revealed his playful attitude while disguising just how fiercely he could eat when the pressure was on. He licked his lips as he eyed the bounty of fresh food awaiting him, eager to dig in as soon as possible. Shortly after Rose herself sauntered in. Her leaves were impeccably trimmed and she sported a confident look of someone who'd already won. To draw the attention of others for her entrance she'd extended her claws just enough to create a steady clacking on the pavement, a tactic that worked just as well now as ever.

For a brief moment Milkbone and Rose's eyes met, though both quickly averted their gazes. "Oh, Milkbone, I see you've come to watch me win," Rose said.

Milkbone responded with a smile. "I didn't get to be Hoenn Region Eating Contest Champ through moderation." The mightyena pat his gut with a paw. "I wonder if a small cat like you can keep up with me."

The pair's boastful banter continued for a few minutes longer, never truly becoming harsh. In a way it was more akin to teasing, though Evanesce knew neither had realized that yet. She was sure they would by the time the competition had ended. As the last plates of food arrived Milkbone and Rose readied themselves at their private tables, waiting for the signal to begin. With a hard slap of Evanesce's tail and a cheer from the crowd the eating battle began in earnest!

Milkbone and Rose held back at first, intent on conserving energy and scoping out each other's capabilities. Milkbone chomped the food down in big gulps, swiftly licking every plate clean before

moving onto the next, savoring his food even while gorging. Rose's bites were smaller but faster, and despite the difference in size she was still keeping pace with the hefty mightyena. Plate after plate was emptied and pushed aside, Milkbone and Rose's bellies swelling slightly from all the food they were scarfing down.

Admittedly impressed by her bulky opponent's skill, Rose decided it was time to take the competition to the next level. She called upon her Extreme Speed, and in a blinding flash she began tearing through the food before her. Rose's modest middle steadily stretched out as it filled with food, threatening to catch up with Milkbone's own sizable gut, servers rushing to replenish her plates. From across the way Milkbone caught a glimpse of Rose's belly and his jaws slowed. Her cream-colored tum was bloating before his very eyes, and he couldn't help but admire its roundness and imagine how soft it must be. To his surprise, he found himself wishing he could nuzzle the leafeon as she grew.

Milkbone shook himself from the daze, reminding himself Rose was his foe. He might not have been able to match Rose's burst of speed, but he could definitely turn such haste against her; some Swagger was in order.

“Ha! Is that really the best you've got?” Milkbone taunted in between bites. “I'm pretty sure I've seen half-asleep slowpoke guzzle down food faster than that!”

The sheer audacity of the mightyena's insult caused Rose's ears to twitch. A part of her knew Milkbone was merely trying to throw her off, but the leafeon still responded by pushing herself to her very limit. Vines sprouted from the small leaves on Rose's neck, each whipping around a full plate and lifting it above her open mouth, the contents dumped right in. Her belly soon reached the ground, it's squishy sides beginning to push against her legs. Rose's stunt put her in a noticeable lead over Milkbone, but the excessive gluttony caught up to her hard. After doubling up on a pair of huge platters she groaned in dismay, overcome by a wave of queasiness from eating too much too fast; her progress halted immediately.

Milkbone tried to take advantage of his successful ploy, but once again he found his eyes drawn to the wonderfully round middle of his opponent. Her stomach capacity was impressive, as was the fact she'd managed to endure the combination of her Extreme Speed and his Swagger for as long as she had. The mightyena had faced plenty of talented competitors over the years, from all over the world, but Rose...Rose seemed special.

While Rose recovered from her belly ache Milkbone stuffed himself silly, closing the plate gap as his own gut grounded him, too. He felt himself more determined to gorge than usual, spurred on both by his worthy adversary and the exceptional quality of the food itself. Pokechow at contests was usually fairly good—especially at regional championships—but something about Evanesce's fare was a cut above the rest. Milkbone would likely have gorged just as much on the stuff even if he *hadn't* been involved in an eating contest.

Rose rubbed her heavy belly with her vines, psyching herself up so she could jump back into the fray. Though she was frustrated she'd fallen for the mightyena's trick, she also couldn't help but respect Milkbone's swift response. So many others had simply panicked or eaten themselves into food comas when faced with Rose's speed, but Milkbone had remained calm under pressure and taken risks. He wasn't just all bark and no bite. Nonetheless, Rose wasn't about to give up so soon. Aggressive kneading with her vines finally forced an air bubble from her stomach, and Rose let out a thunderous Belch that struck Milkbone dead-on.

The mightyena's eyes went wide as his face was pelted with the poisonous fumes of Rose's attack. He yelped and swatted at his nostril with both paws, wobbling atop his massive gut as he tried not to be overcome. With Milkbone thoroughly distracted, Rose then stealthily unleashed her Sunny Day, basking in the warm rays of sun that soaked into her leaves. Belch freed up space in her stomach and the sunlight renewed her speed, allowing the Leafeon to jump back into the competition, speeding through plates once more.

The audience was a constant stream of cheers, chants for both competitors rising up with equal

intensity. Milkbone didn't let the Belch daze him for too long, downing most plates in only one or two gulps at most. Nothing seemed to slow the duo down anymore, their bellies rapidly expanding as they cleared an absolutely preposterous number of plates apiece, each practically rising above the tables in the process. All the while a bond was slowly growing, exactly as Evanesce had predicted. Rare glances that had originally been targeted at emptied dishes now wandered to full bellies, and stern looks of determination gradually shifted into something more akin to smiles. Even a few winks were shared on the occasions their eyes locked.

Neither had ever faced another pokemon that could match their gluttony or prowess. Every new tactic was either countered or endured, the pair exhausting their wide range of abilities without achieving a definitive lead. Rather than grow angry they grew inspired, excited. In a fated moment of clarity Milkbone and Rose simultaneously wondered if the true reason they'd been so passionate about eating competitions was simply to fill the bottomless void in their hearts with food. Suddenly the competition took a turn.

As Milkbone's paw swiped at a plate just out of reach, he found it pushed forwards by one of Rose's vines. The mightyena looked up at her, curious, and Rose stuck her tongue out at him and grinned, Milkbone smiling back in return. He gluttoned on the dish, along with the handful of others Rose conveniently nudged closer. When Rose ran into a similar problem herself Milkbone gladly returned the favor, using Heavy Slam to bump the tables with his enormous belly and slide fresh plates right up to the leafeon. Taunts turned into teasing into outright encouragement, the enthralled pair eager to see the other's potential.

The tables strained and cracked under the competitor's constantly expanding middles, Milkbone and Rose practically swelling towards one another as they continued eating non-stop. Servers had ceased specifically handing new food to any individual eater, instead piling up an ever-dwindling feast between them. The eating competition was now a romantic dinner, just as Evanesce had planned. Milkbone and Rose's feeding slowed down just enough for conversation to occur around bites. They shared stories of past contests, revealed training secrets, and laughed. So much laughter.

Inevitably the food stores ran dry long before the duo's appetites, a single plate of noodles precariously balanced on the splinters of what had been their tables. They started from opposite ends, eating causally rather than hastily, slurping the food down in joy. Milkbone and Rose had worked their way to the same last, delicious noodle, when they found themselves locking lips. At first surprised, the pair soon embraced the moment with an endearing kiss, to the joy of everyone watching. The Competitive Pokemon Eating Contest scene had just seen the birth of a power couple, one that was sure to thrive on the unbeatable power of love. Evanesce watched on, a single tear running down her cheek, her mission complete...