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**POKÉMON™**

**Talent  
Showdown**

**Adapted by Tracey West**

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## Gary, Again!

"This town sure is crowded," Ash Ketchum said. "I wonder what's going on?"

Ash and his friends Misty and Brock had wandered into the town to find food and a place to sleep. Together they were on a journey to capture and train Pokémon, creatures with amazing powers.

Orange-haired Misty hugged Togepi, a baby Pokémon, close to her. "This place is a little too noisy for me," Misty said. "Togepi could use a nap."

"*Togi! Togi!*" cooed the Pokémon. Togepi flapped its tiny arms. They stuck out of the colorful eggshell that covered its body.

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*"Pikachu!"* agreed Pikachu, Ash's Pokémon. The yellow lightning mouse always walked alongside its Trainer.

Brock scanned the crowded street. "I don't know if we'll find a quiet place in this town," said the older boy. "But maybe we can find out what's going on."

"Good idea," Ash said. A boy his age stood nearby. The boy had six red-and-white Poké Balls attached to a belt around his waist. Ash recognized him as a fellow Pokémon Trainer. He approached the boy.

"What's happening in this town?" Ash asked. "Some kind of Pokémon competition?" Ash hoped that was true. He never missed a chance to battle other Pokémon Trainers. It was the best way to get experience.

"Something like that," the boy replied. He pointed to a large building down the street. "That's where all the action is."

"Great!" Ash said. He turned to his friends. "Let's check it out!"

Misty sighed. "Okay, Ash. But we've got to rest soon. Togepi is getting cranky."

Ash didn't reply.



He was too busy charging down the street. Pikachu ran at his heels.

Ash skidded to a stop in front of the large, white building. It looked like some kind of theater. A wooden sign above the door read REHEARSAL HALL.

"This is an unusual place for a Pokémon battle," Ash told Pikachu.

*"Pika!"* Pikachu nodded.

Ash opened the doors, and he and Pikachu stepped inside. The room was crowded with Trainers and Pokémon.

But the Pokémon weren't battling.

In fact, Ash thought they were acting.