

When fate comes knocking

By: Syrup-Waffle

Fate, it's a funny thing. Some say you create your own, some say you are destined to it, and others say it's written down as an universal rule, unbendable in shape. When fate gives Latias another chance to finally see Ash again, she's the happiest dragoness alive. But where there's happiness, evil lurks, as fate has often two sides.

Status: complete

Published: 2015-04-07

Updated: 2017-11-16

Words: 135296

Chapters: 31

Rated: Fiction T - Language: English - Genre: Adventure/Romance - Characters: [Ash K./Satoshi, Latias] - Reviews: 341 - Favs: 484 - Follows: 437

Original source: <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/11169311/1/When-fate-comes-knocking>

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At the alley.

Mayhem: α

Mayhem: μ

Mayhem: ω

When fate comes knocking

A rough start is all it takes for fate

Finally! After 5 years of lurking I have decided to upload my very own story! And what better way to open up my very first story with possibly the cutest ship ever? Altoshipping! In case you didn't know, altoshipping is putting Ash and Latias in a romantic relationship. If you're offended with that kind of material, please turn away now. If not, enjoy ^^

Disclaimer: I do not own pokemon! If I did, Latias would've gone with Ash on his journey and won the silver conference for him.

"Latias!" Speech

'Latias!' Thoughts

'Latias!' Telepathy

The sun was shining brightly on the beautiful city of Alto Mare. Canals shimmered, reflecting the sunlight on the various gondolas and boats that were passing by. Tourists and locals alike were enjoying the view, chatting amiably while others relaxed, cooling off in the shades. A slight breeze completed the picture, giving the city an aura of peace.

Among them was a young teen, happily strolling through the various roads. She had brown hair, wore a white skirt and a green blouse. The content smile on her face indicated that the heat was not bothering her at all. In fact, it looked like she enjoyed it. she picked up her pace, all the while getting closer and closer to her destination.

Finally, she reached the square and looked up at the massive museum she was heading towards. The girl couldn't help but feel a twinge of excitement as she picked up the pace again. That was until

she accidentally bumped into someone who was not too pleased with her actions.

"Oi, can't you look where you're going, missy?" the man in question snapped at her angrily, his accent clear in his voice. The man's ice cream that he was enjoying had fallen to the ground below, only the cone silently remained in his hand. She gave him an apologetic smile and resumed her run to the museum.

"I'm not done with you yet, kiddo!" he screamed after her. The girl however, didn't seem to hear him anymore.

"Kids these days, can't even say a simple sorry before rushing off again. No respect at all," the man muttered.

Looking at his quickly melting ice cream on the ground, and the retracting form of the girl in the distance, he gave a low growl. He was supposed to stay on the square, and with good reasons.

Firstly, from what he'd heard, last time *she* was spotted was exactly where he was right now; on this very square. This was his best shot in maybe finding *her*. Secondly, catching *her* would be even more trouble, so he needed to be focused, but this girl that bumped into him just now desperately needed to be taught some manners in his opinion as well.

So, with his mind made up, he released a single pokeball in the air, and his only pokemon-a Frolass to be exact-appeared before him. The Frolass gave a happy cry and twirled in the air, relieved to be out of her pokeball again.

"Keep an eye out around the place; I have something else to take care of," he told her matter of factly.

The Frolass gave a happy nod, before disappearing into thin air. She knew what her master meant with keeping an eye out around the place, and she was not about to disappoint him. Meanwhile, the man silently followed the girl towards the museum.

To claim that the museum of Alto Mare was big, was an understatement. It was huge! Pillars rose at every corner to give the building structure, stained glass windows decorated with the finest art Alto Mare had to offer could be seen high in the walls, filtering light inside the building, and to top it all off, every room showed a different piece of the past about the city.

It was like taking a trip down the history of Alto Mare; from the old tales of the Latis bringing water to the city, until recent events of Annie and Oakley activating the DMA and wreaking havoc.

This is where we find a lone paintress staring out of one of the many windows. The girl sighed, trying her hardest to get inspiration for her next piece of art. The creative inspiration however, wouldn't come no matter how hard she tried.

Looking out over the square in boredom, she perked one of her eyebrows when she saw a girl who looked exactly like her bump into a man, before hastily resuming her run.

'Latias?' she thought questionably. The girl-who was actually a Latias in disguise and the only guardian left of Alto Mare-looked almost erratic with the way how she was approaching the museum.

"what's gotten into you?" the young paintress spoke silently to herself, wondering what was going on.

Her concern for the young dragoness turned into mild confusion when Latias had entered the museum, and was coming her way fast with a huge smile on her face.

'*Bianca!*' she practically screamed in her mind. The young girl-known as Bianca-gave her an even more confused look.

"Latias? What's goi-whhaa." Bianca couldn't end her sentence as Latias leapt at her and brought them both tumbling down.

"What is wrong with you, Latias?" Bianca asked her best friend bewildered, who was still grinning from ear to ear.

'I'm sorry, Bianca, but something amazing happened, I just had to get here as quickly as possible and tell you all about it.'

"Is this about Ash again?" the young paintress accused the legendary. Bianca gave Latias a smug grin when she saw her eyes widening at the suggestion.

'NO!' the dragoness immediately denied. She puffed up her cheeks in embarrassment at the young artist, who began to laugh at her reaction.

After the incident with Annie and Oakley two years ago, things had started to change drastically for the young psychic dragon. Now that her brother was gone, who had so heroically saved the city from certain destruction, she was the only one left who could guard Alto Mare.

Not wanting to be an useless guardian who was incapable of protecting the city of waters, she took up on the advice from the young boy who had helped her protect her hometown at that time. This boy's name was Ash Ketchum, a pokemon trainer who wanted to be the very best, like no one ever was.

So what was his advice you might ask? He'd told her to train, simple as that. Latias had never trained before, it wasn't necessary. She had always relied on her brother to save her when trouble might arise, with the lingering thought that something bad was never going to happen to her anyway.

Instead of taking up her responsibilities, she rather had fun and play all day. The dragoness had been so naive at that time. Now, things were different though. Nearly two years of training had taught her quite a lot. She even developed telepathy! Granted, it only worked with people she was close with, but it was a start.

With the passing of her brother, things also changed in the secret garden. Gone were the happy days where she could play tag with Latias without a care in the world. It was often very quiet around the place as a result. When Latias would return from patrolling the city, she usually felt very lonely. Bianca couldn't always be there for her and Lorenzo had a busy job as well.

She secretly hoped Ash would come back for a visit. She often talked about him with Bianca, beaming at her friend how proud Ash would be at her progress. Of course, life went on and two years passed. It was at this particular afternoon however, that Latias decided to watch some TV when she'd seen him.

'There he was, Bianca! At the Lily of the valley island, battling another trainer with a Dusknoir,' she gushed happily.

'It looked like he was about to lose; this trainer used a Trick Room set with his Dusknoir, but in the end Ash pulled through!'

Lately, Latias had started to watch pokemon battles to gain more experience around the subject. Bianca cared little about pokemon battling though, and had no experience on the subject whatsoever.

So, whenever she would have to listen to one of the young dragoness' rants, she would just bob her head up and down, agreeing with her as she often had no idea what she was talking about. This time however, was different, and she showed her enthusiasm.

"That's so cool," Bianca responded excitedly, genuinely happy for the young pokemon trainer.

"but," she added, "didn't you just say this wasn't about Ash?"

The legendary's smile turned into a frown as Bianca gave her another smug grin.

'Get out of here.'

Latias gave her a friendly push while Bianca blew a raspberry.

"Kidding, so did he win the tournament?"

'third round, he needs to win three more battles before he wins the tournament, then he gets a chance to battle the elite four and ultimately the champion.'

Bianca smiled at the young legendary while she continued to rant about how Ash was going to beat the tournament and become the champion. Meanwhile, a shadowy figure was hiding behind a wall not too far from their location, silently listening to their conversation.

"I can't believe my ears! They're having a conversation, yet that brat that bumped into me doesn't say a word. Moreover, the paintress called her Latias," the man mused to himself in disbelief. Was this girl really...? The gears in the man's head starting whirling and his smile turned into a wicked grin.

"I think I've just struck gold."

The man chuckled to himself, preparing to leave until-

"Fros!" The man's ice and ghost type suddenly appeared before him, scaring him to death.

"Froslax, you idiot, didn't I tell you not to scare me like that?" the man's anger got the better of him while the Froslax hugged him happily, oblivious to what she did wrong.

Before the man realized his mistake, it was already too late. Latias and Bianca had heard the shouting and it didn't take a genius to figure out what was going on.

'That's the same man that I bumped into at the square!'

Bianca looked at her friend, worrying for her safety. If this man knew of Latias' identity, things might become troublesome, regardless if he had ill intent or not. Seeing as she called Latias by her real name a

couple of times, chances were high he knew. she berated herself mentally for her carelessness.

Latias clearly sensed her friend's uneasiness. Putting a hand on her shoulder, the young legendary gave her a smile.

'Don't worry, I'll be alright. Don't beat yourself up over it,' she reassured the young paintress, focusing her attention on the man afterwards.

"Crap," the man swore as he went over his possibilities in this situation. He was ill prepared to take on a legendary, and it wouldn't be long for Latias to figure out his true intentions. he needed time and a plan to succeed if he wanted to catch her. So in a fight or flight situation like this, the man chose the latter.

'This might be low, but it's the only chance I got.'

"Frolass, shadow ball the girl with the beret!"

She happily obliged, shooting the dark orb at Bianca who shrieked and put her hands in front of her body to protect herself out of reflex. The orb exploded, smoke filled the room and the man saw his chance to escape. He ran as fast as he could, navigating his way through the smoke, before stubbing his toe along the way.

"Aah, Arceus, why does this always happen to me?!" the man cursed angrily.

The smoke detectors went off soon after, and the sprinkler system effectively got rid of the smoke. When the smoke cleared, Latias floated before Bianca in all her glory, the red and white dragoness putting up a protect just in time to defend Bianca against the shadow ball. Both the man and the Frolass were gone, and Latias gave an angry snarl.

'That scumbag had the guts to attack Bianca like that, if I ever see his face again...' she thought bitterly before attending to her best

friend.

Luckily, Bianca wasn't hurt. Quickly transforming back to her human disguise, she helped her back up. Bianca was still quivering however, and it took a couple of minutes to get the shakes out of her feet. It was then that Lorenzo arrived at the scene, looking at the two girls and the black spot on the floor.

"What on earth happened here?" he asked, stunned. After an explanation from both girls, he nodded, understanding the situation. He would inform officer Jenny immediately about this man, right after he'd erased some camera footage.

"It's getting late, officer Jenny has been informed, and she's having officers everywhere on the look out in the city for this man. Should he show up again, he would be busted in no time. Why don't you two get home and get some rest? I'll handle the rest."

Lorenzo's suggestion was met with a tired nod from the legendary, Bianca however, walked up to Lorenzo first.

"Granddad? After what happened today, are we still going with the original plan?" Bianca whispered in Lorenzo's ear, referring to the big surprise they had planned for Latias.

Lorenzo put a hand on his chin, contemplating his thoughts and looking at the disguised legendary. Even with this man still running loose, they couldn't cancel the surprise now.

"Absolutely! Nothing would make her more happier than this, especially after what has happened today. Besides, she would go through with it even if we decide to cancel it now," he whispered back.

Bianca nodded at that fact. She looked at her best friend who practically saved her life today, like a true guardian would. She gave her granddad a kiss on the cheek before walking home with the

disguised legendary, contemplating what would've happened if Latias didn't take up on Ash' advice.

'I guess I should thank you too, Ash Ketchum,' she thought, looking at the stars and walking on one of the roads right next to the canals in relative silence. After bidding Latias a goodnight, the young artist slumped in her bed, finally getting some rest before the busy day tomorrow.

One man wasn't sleeping yet though. Using his scuba diving gear, he got through the police's patrols rather easily, effectively following the disguised legendary. He hadn't seen his Froslass after the museum disaster yet, but being the little prankster that she was, he wasn't the least worried about her.

'This is almost too easy, I only have to follow her to know where she hides in the night. Then, I can think of a good strategy to capture her. Surprise is my friend.'

He could already picture it in his mind, he would finally face *him* for what he had done, and then he would-

"Froslass!" his pokemon exclaimed joyously, suddenly appearing before him again, interrupting his thinking.

How she could breathe underwater, he would never know. He could not though and sucked in a mouth full of water. Coughing on reflex, he quickly swam to the surface to breathe in oxygen.

Froslass actually looked concerned at her trainer when he kept on coughing, but finally after a minute or three, he had his lungs cleared out, and gave his pokemon a death glare.

However, when he looked around, he saw that Latias was nowhere to be found. She completely disappeared in the process he was 'drowning'. A vein started throbbing on his forehead, and he sucked in a big breath of air, before releasing it again.

'No big deal, I still know where the little artist lives, now I just need a plan,' he thought, effectively calming himself down.

Calling his pokemon back, who was hugging him teary eyed at what she'd done, he looked at the ball containing her.

'You cause me so much trouble,' he thought angrily, looking at the pokeball with disdain. 'But,' he softened his voice, 'you're the only one who really cares about me.' He held the pokemon close to him as he walked back to his home, thinking of a plan of action to get Latias. He'd show *him* what pain meant.

The next morning Bianca woke up earlier than usual. She and her granddad had a lot to prepare. After she'd dinner with Lorenzo, they got to work. About an hour later the whole room was decorated.

Balloons filled the room, streamers adorned the walls, and there was a big banner saying 'Happy birthday' in front of the door. A big whipped cream cake lied on top of the table, complete with candles and little edible Latias heads.

"You think she likes it?" Bianca asked her granddad, who gave an affirmative nod.

"Why don't you get her here, then I'll go get our presents."

Bianca nodded excitedly, already imagining the surprise on Latias' face. Hurriedly, she went to the secret garden and woke up her dragon friend.

'What's this surprise you got for me?'

Latias was almost giddy with the way how Bianca woke her up this morning. Always the one for surprises, she let her best friend lead her out of the secret garden, completely blindfolded and all.

"You've just have to wait and see, and no peeking using your psychic powers either," Bianca told her sternly.

Latias pouted, of course she could've easily read Bianca's mind to know what this was all about, but that would ruin the fun. Being the obedient legendary she was, she nodded her head.

After what felt like an eternity, they finally reached their destination.

' Can I put this blindfold off already? It's beginning to itch,' Latias complained, feeling uncomfortable wearing one for too long.

"You may on three okay? One, two, three! Happy birthday!"

Latias' reaction couldn't have been more priceless. The stunned legendary looked all around the decorated room. Taking notice of the big banner and the cake on the table, she gave a happy squeal before giving them both a hug.

'How did you guys know?' she asked amazed. They never celebrated her birthday before, it wasn't common at all to celebrate a pokemon's birthday.

"Did you really think we would forget? We had this planned out weeks ago, and after what happened yesterday, the timing couldn't have been more perfect," Lorenzo explained to the happy dragoness.

'But why now? It's so sudden.'

"We got a good reason for that," retorted the young artist.

"But," Lorenzo added, "that will be explained after a slice of cake, now who wants some?"

After they'd eaten the cake they all sat down on the couch, the young dragoness getting more impatient as the minutes passed. She

wanted her presents now! Finally, Lorenzo spoke up.

"Did you like your surprise, Latias?"

She nodded her head eagerly. She almost looked like a child. Lorenzo chuckled at her enthusiasm.

"Then you're going to like your presents even more, Bianca?"

Bianca nodded and produced a small wrapped up gift. She handed it over to the psychic dragon type who began shaking the contents.

"Now before you open it up, this was actually an idea of an old friend of ours," Lorenzo explained.

Latias looked quizzically at the older man. He quickly explained further.

"He called me about a month ago, asking how we were doing. We talked about what happened two years prior too."

Now Latias started to get interested, was he really talking about...?

Lorenzo went on. "We also talked about you, and how grateful you were, how much you wanted to see *him* again."

Latias' breath quickened, her heart rate went up as she processed the information given to her.

'You guys didn't,' she whispered, not believing her ears.

"Yes, Brock told me *he* would be competing in the Lily of the valley tourney in three weeks."

At this information, Latias's eyes went wide, there was no way this was happening right now.

"So, why not come over and watch Ash compete if she wants to see him again? he suggested to me."

The young dragoness' smile couldn't get any bigger as she finally unwrapped her present: two tickets all inclusive to the Lily of the valley tournament.

'You guys are the best friends ever! Thank you, thank you, thank you!' she exclaimed, overjoyed at the prospect of going to the tourney, and to finally see Ash again.

'But wait, there are only two tickets,' she noticed, looking at Lorenzo questionably.

Lorenzo nodded. "Someone has to look out for the secret garden while you're gone, besides, I'm too old to leave this city anyway. Yup, I'm not going anywhere. You should go with Bianca, maybe it will give her the inspiration she needs as well."

The dragoness understood, giggling to herself like a maddragon.

"You should thank Brock when you see him too, after all, it was his suggestion," Lorenzo added.

Latias responded by hopping up and down, nodding her head like crazy. Bianca smiled, happy for her friend. She walked up to her granddad to whisper in his ear.

"What if Ash wouldn't have made it that far in the tournament?" she asked him.

"It was Brocks intuition that said otherwise; even if he somehow didn't make it that far, she would've still been able to see him," Her granddad reasoned, to which Bianca agreed.

"Latias, I have also a present for you, but it's in my room. Would you come with me please?"

Getting the attention of the young dragoness, who wiped the stupid grin off her face, she beamed at Bianca before following her best friend upstairs.

A while later they came back downstairs, Latias happy with the present she got from Bianca. They looked at Lorenzo who stood at the frontdoor, backpacks ready.

"Well? What are you guys waiting for? Plane leaves in two hours. You better hurry or else you're going to be late."

They both shook their heads at the antics of the old man. Giving him both a hug and running out the door like two schoolgirls, they were on their way.

"I think I saw him go through here," he heard his pursuers yell. Just then a dozen officers ran past him while he hid behind a container. The man sighed internally. What he thought would be an easy walk back home after his failure turned into a complete manhunt. Growlithe and Pidgeotto alike were deployed to track him down. If it wasn't for the fact he knew all the streets forwards and backwards, and the help of his ice and ghost type he would've been toast by now.

"Why can't I ever catch a break? It's like Arceus is mocking me."

Ever since that fateful day, he'd been a miserable sack of bones. Someone who didn't belong in this world, didn't know what to do with his life anymore. He'd left his home place to live in Alto Mare, to get away and start over, but his past always came back to haunt him, like an ugly scar that wouldn't stay closed. It made him feel alive, gave him strenght to carry on and yet he hated it. He hated it with all his guts.

Looking at his left, he saw the last thing he thought he would see: the lassie with the Latias in her disguised form, heading straight for the small airport.

"Maybe I spoke to soon."

"Fros!" his pokemon agreed. Resisting the urge to scream at her for seemingly appearing out of nowhere again, he instead focused his attention at the two girls.

"Looks like they're going on a vacation," the man muttered to no one in particular.

"Well, I think it's time to give gramps a little visit of our own, wouldn't you agree?"

He cackled maniacally, already formulating a plan in his brain. This time, he would not fail!

Did you like it? Love it? Hate it? Let me know in a review, writers love reviews! Constructive criticism is greatly appreciated.

-Syrup-Waffle.

Life is like atherosclerosis

Woohoo! We're back baby, and what better way to be back than with chapter 2 of my story? Anyway, exams are over, failed my respiratory cardiovascular diseases test and my Musculoskeletal diseases test for the ones who were wondering. This also means I have a little more spare time on my hands. I always try to update within two weeks. If I don't, I've most likely lost interest or I'm dead.

Big shoutout to my first three reviewers: Thor94, Storylover Vodhr- Dux Ducis and Ayishere. You guys rock! On with the story.

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon, if I did Ash would actually remember all his life lessons and grow as a character.

"Ash!" Speech

'Ash!' Thoughts

'Ash!' Telepathy

"Dusknoir is unable to battle. That means all three pokemon of Conway are eliminated, and Ash will proceed to the quarter finals."

The referee rose his flag, signaling the defeat of the bulky ghost type pokemon. Ash couldn't believe his eyes as he ran up to his Gible, scooped him up, and began cheering loudly.

Said pokemon bit his head affectionately while the crowd cheered them on.

"We have a winner folks, looks like Ash from Pallet town will proceed to the quarter finals!" the announcer exclaimed loudly, booming his voice through the microphone.

Dawn and Brock were cheering for Ash in the stands, the former completely in cheerleader clothes, hopping up and down excitedly while the latter gave Ash a big thumbs up, impressed again by Ash's battling technique.

The young trainer himself couldn't believe that his plan worked either, but letting Gible bite down on Dusknoir, and then ordering him to shoot the ghost type in the sky with a draco meteor did the trick though, and now he was in the quarter finals.

"You did good, Dusknoir, take a nice and long rest," Conway muttered to his pokemon. He couldn't believe it; he calculated every single move, every single battle technique Ash ever used, and in the end it was all for naught. Ash was just too unpredictable. He readjusted his glasses and gave his trademark smirk.

"Ash!" he yelled, getting the attention of his opponent.

"That was a great match, the way how you come up with these unorthodox battling styles on the spot is amazing. Truly, you're destined to win this tournament," Conway praised Ash, who rubbed the backside of his head awkwardly.

"Thanks, Conway, but it's my pokemon that deserve the praise, without them I wouldn't even be standing here right now."

Conway nodded at that. They both shook hands and went their separate ways, leaving the battlefield.

"Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes the matches for today. Be sure to be here tomorrow afternoon for the drawings of the quarterfinals matches. Until then, enjoy your stay here on the Lily of the valley island!" the announcer told the crowd.

The stadium slowly dispersed, Dawn and Brock began leaving too and soon, the stadium was quiet. It was then that the quiet was pierced by a lone man who had stayed behind.

"So Ash made it to the quarter finals after all? Interesting," the man spoke, yet no one else was around. The man-known as Tobias-waited a couple seconds before speaking again, like he was listening to a response from somebody.

"You were right; I might be able to come into play after all."

He gave a smirk, his one eye hidden under his long blue-ish hair. The red jacket that he wore only contrasted his hair color even further. He stayed silent for the longest time before he began to contemplate.

"So Latias is under her way as well? That might be slightly troublesome," he spoke and quickly added, "but nothing I can't handle, I assure you."

Tobias' Darkrai was on the lookout, making sure every curious person who came too close to his trainer was going to have nightmares for at least the next three months. Tobias in the meantime, focused his attention on the middle of the battlefield.

"I don't doubt you, but Darkrai is just an extra precaution tha-WHAT?!" Tobias couldn't believe what he just heard. he felt like he just got sucker punched right in his gut. His eyes narrowed and his face turned into an angry snarl.

"That's impossible! He should be long dead after what I did to him three years ago. There's no way he could-"

The legendary trainer's breath quickened. So *he* was alive after all. Moreover, *he* was going to arrive tomorrow night and *he* knew about Latias as well. This was not good. Even if he defeated *him* once, even if he destroyed *his* will to live in that instant as well... Even now with all the legendary pokemon in the world, Tobias couldn't help but still feel a little intimidated. Intimidation that quickly turned into anger.

"I already took him on once, I can take him again!" he screamed to the heavens. He stayed silent as little droplets of rain began falling

from the sky, drenching him in an instant.

Soon it turned into a massive storm; lightning brightened the dark afternoon sky and thunderclaps shook the earth. Anyone who was outside would get an ominous feeling about this sudden mysterious weather pattern for sure.

Tobias felt only rage, however, and he gave a growl. "What do you mean I can't harm him? I-"

He stayed silent again. After a while he lowered his head and nodded solemnly.

"Alright... I won't harm him," he agreed and just like that, the storm was over. The wind stopped blowing and rain stopped falling. The sun shone brightly, making the clouds disappear in an instant. In just ten minutes, the storm came and went. The sky gave no indication whatsoever it ever occurred.

"But let me make one thing clear," he warned to whatever entity he was speaking to. "If he gets in my way, I'll do to him what I should've done three years ago."

With that, the legendary trainer ended the conversation and returned to the pokemon center. His Darkrai silently followed him while Tobias regained his composure.

'Whatever your plan is to catch Latias, it's going to fail. Fate has already made its decision and it will be the end of you no matter what you try,' he thought as images of three years ago came back to the surface.

The woman, the little girl and the ignorant man came to mind. The fire had burned down the house completely; the flames engulfing everything on its path. He watched with his Darkrai how everything burned to a crisp.

He could feel the heat radiating from where he was standing. The building creaked, and gave away, as it all collapsed down. With that final look, Tobias left, his work done.

He snapped back to reality as he approached the pokemon center.

'Enjoy the last week of your extended life, because after it, you'll be gone.'

"Ash! Congratulations, you were so great," Dawn told Ash, who smiled sheepishly. Brock nodded in agreement.

After the match they promised to meet up in the pokemon center. They were currently sitting in the restaurant, ordering their food. Pikachu was sitting contently on Ash's shoulder, already waiting for his bottle of ketchup while Piplup napped in Dawn's lap. The pokemon breeder spoke up.

"Ash, The way how you utilized your pokemon in battle today was extraordinary. I have no doubts in my mind that you can win this tournament."

Ash looked at his older traveling companion and friend, who put a hand on his shoulder after his praising words. He looked at Dawn as well, who gave a bright smile and a nod.

"I don't know what to say, thank you guys, for believing in me," he confessed them honestly. Ash made a promise right then, right there, that he would not fail his friends. His face turned into one of determination and he pumped his fist into the air.

"I'm going to win this tournament for sure! Right, Pikachu?"

"Pikaa," was Pikachu's response as his trainer slowly rubbed his head.

"I wouldn't be so sure, Ketchum," came a cold voice from the right. Ash didn't need to turn his head to know to who the voice belonged to, and yet his head was turned in an instant.

"Paul," he whispered. Pikachu took on a defensive stance, cheeks sparkling dangerously with electricity, ready to fire the moment Paul tried anything funny.

"I see you still know my name, that's a feat on its own, and could you tell your rat to back down? He's not intimidating in the slightest."

Ash's eyes narrowed at Paul's words.

"Pikachu is not a rat! He's my partner and friend. Why are you here anyways?"

Paul simply looked stoic at Ash's murderous glare and raised a brow.

"To get food? You're not the only one who needs to eat, Ketchum, although you eat more than a Snorlax does on a weekly basis. It wasn't even my intention to waste my time on such a loser like you, but your annoying voice could be heard all the way from the main hall."

Ash's eye twitched and he was about to do something he would've regretted weren't it for Brock. He looked at the pokemon breeder who held him back and who silently shook his head.

Ash turned back to Paul, annoyed. This guy was even worse than Gary in the old days. He knew exactly what to say to get under his skin.

A thunderclap pierced the silence while the two rivals continued to stare at each other, like they were in a Mexican stand off.

"Loser?" Ash responded finally, "I made it to the quarter finals by defeating Conway."

There was a hint of proudness in Ash's voice that did not go unnoticed by Paul. He snorted at Ash's response though.

"Don't flatter yourself; any moron could've won from him. His confidence clouded his judgments in that battle," Paul said, his voice solid like a rock. The way he spoke left no room for discussion, like it was a simple fact of life.

Dawn looked on worriedly between the two boys, if looks could murder, they were murdering each other right now. Rain continued to fall from the heavens, making this argument seem even more eerie. Brock had had enough though. He was not going to sit by idly waiting for something bad to happen, and he took this moment to jump in.

"Alright knock it off you two. Why don't you spare your energy for the battle in two days?" he stated imperatively. His voice sounded stern and the two boys reluctantly backed off from each other.

"Hmpf, why should I continue to waste my breath on you anyway? Even if fate decided you would win this tournament, you would still never win against me." With those words, Paul left the trio alone. Dawn sighed a breath of relief while Ash fumed silently.

'That Paul... Just you wait, I'll show him,' he thought darkly. Pikachu seemed to read his mind because his face was just as murderous as his trainer's.

"Ash, are you alright?" Dawn asked, concerned for her friend. Hearing Dawn speak made him a little less tense, and he relaxed before he responded.

"I'll be fine, just Paul getting on my nerves; it's getting tiring after a while."

Pikachu agreed with the young pokemon trainer. Dawn nodded; she hoped that that jerk would get what was coming to him. Soon, all

was forgotten when the food had arrived, and with that, the storm had disappeared as well.

That night Ash couldn't sleep. Parts of the conversation with Paul lingered on in his mind. He sighed and slowly crept out of bed, making sure not to wake Pikachu or his friends in the process.

The young trainer tiptoed out of the room to the balcony, his bare feet walking over the cold but smooth stone. There he stood, looking into the starry night. His thoughts immediately returned to Paul.

'What if he's right?' he began thinking to himself.

'What if I'm not cut out to win this tournament? To win against him?'

Ash had never won against Paul ever, so why should now be any different? Ash kept on looking to the sky when a second person joined him.

"Can't sleep?" Brock asked his friend who gave him a sideways shrug.

The pokemon breeder walked up to Ash and stayed silent for a moment.

"Is this about what happened this afternoon?" he asked finally.

"I guess so," the pokemon trainer responded, his attention still on the night sky.

Brock didn't press any further and instead joined Ash in stargazing.

"Beautiful isn't it? Sometimes, I wonder what's out there. Between the billions of stars."

He sighed.

"We always think we're so big, but when I look into the sky at night, I realize how tiny we actually are."

Brock went on. "Our world is nothing in the universe, a speck of sand in the endless sea, and yet everything works like it's supposed to be. It really reminds me of cells in a body, so tiny and yet so complex. Everything in a cell works together like a refined oil clock, just to make the organism its part of live."

Ash shifted his attention to Brock.

"But a cell can't do it alone, it needs nutrients to survive. So your bloodstream helps it, giving it fuel in the form of oxygen, building materials in the form of proteins and energy in the form of glucoses and fat."

Brock pointed a finger at Ash's heart region and went on. "Your heart pumps the blood around, to give nutrients to every cell and collect the waste the cells have produced. But sometimes a nasty substance can block the bloodstream. This substance is called LDL. Ash, what do you think will happen to cells when the bloodstream gets blocked?"

"They don't get their nutrients so they eventually starve?" Ash responded his friend unsurely. Honestly, Ash didn't have the slightest clue the human body was so complicated. Brock chuckled at Ash's choice of words.

"Correct, you could say they would starve and that's no good for the organism, so it's important that the bloodstream keeps on flowing. Luckily, there's also a substance called HDL that helps getting rid of this LDL."

Ash nodded, somewhat understanding what Brock was talking about.

"You Ash, are one of those cells, contributing in life like all the other cells. The bloodstream's nutrients are your dreams and the heart are

your friends. Your friends are always there to help you realize your dreams, but nasty substances like Paul block off the bloodstream and suddenly these dreams seem so far away..."

Ash listened intently as Brock continued his little life lesson.

"Know Ash, at that moment, your friends always have your back. The rest is up to yourself. Work away that LDL with the HDL your friends gave you."

Ash looked dumbfounded at Brock's wise words. He never knew the pokemon breeder was so smart. But Brock was right though, he shouldn't let Paul or anything else get into the way of his dreams. In that moment, Ash also realized what a great friend Brock was.

"You know what, Brock? You're right! It's my dream to be the very best, like no one ever was, and I'm going to realize that dream."

Ash enthusiastic response was met with a pat on the back. "That's the spirit! In two days you're going to show the world what you're really capable of."

Brock beckoned to Ash to follow him. "Come; let's get some rest first, future champ."

Ash smiled, before a question popped into his head. "Brock? If the heart pumps the blood, what controls the heart to do so?"

The former gym leader raised a brow at the question. It was uncommon for Ash to ask intelligent questions like that.

"It's a part of your autonomous nervous system called the thalamus. The thalamus is a part of your brain that works narrowly with your cerebral cortex and lets your heart rate go up or down depending on the situation."

"That means it's important, right?" Ash asked to Brock.

"Very important, even more important than everything else. So what or who do you think the thalamus is in my little story, Ash?"

Ash blankly stared at his friend before he gave a little whine. "C'mon, Brock, I was going ask you that, please tell me?"

Brock shook his head. "None can do, Ash, it's up to your own to figure that one out. Besides, I think you're going to find out soon enough."

Ash gave a frustrated huff at the pokemon breeder's adamant nature. No matter how he tried, Brock's lips stayed shut. He gave up after a couple of more tries and followed Brock back inside. Fortunately, he felt a lot better when he finally lied back in his bed again.

Soon, he was back in dreamland along with his Pikachu, who lied cuddled up around his chest. He dreamt about defeating Paul in the finals, about finally winning the tournament, and to finally let his dream come true.

The next morning Ash had awoken a lot better. He did his usual morning rituals before joining Brock and Dawn for breakfast.

"Well good morning, looks like you had a good nights rest," Dawn commented the unusual cheery Ash Ketchum.

Ash was definitely not a morning person, so seeing Ash in such high spirit after what had happened yesterday made Dawn feel happy for the young man.

"I got some good advice from a friend, so it doesn't matter if I'm going to face Paul tomorrow or in the finals. I'm going to defeat him no matter what," Ash stated the pokemon coordinator. He dug in his food while Dawn looked at Brock, who simply shrugged his shoulders with a grin on his face. Pikachu nodded at his trainer's words, sucking happily at a ketchup bottle.

"Say, did you guys notice that weird storm that occurred yesterday? I mean, it started so sudden and disappeared ten minutes later just as sudden," Dawn commented, beginning some idle conversation.

"Yeah, now that you mention it, it did seem odd. If it wasn't for Paul, I would've noticed it yesterday too probably," Ash responded to the group.

Brock hummed before sharing his side of the story. "I heard that it were the generators of the stadium that went haywire, as the eye of the storm was exactly above it. Luckily nobody was hurt."

"You don't actually believe that do you?" Ash asked incredulously to which Brock shrugged his shoulders.

"What else could it have been?" Dawn asked the group, to which she didn't need to wait long for a response.

"Why, pokemon of course, little lady," Conway responded who had materialized out of thin air besides Dawn. He had his trademark smirk on his face as he readjusted his glasses. Dawn gave a startled shriek as Conway leaned in and explained further.

"Some pokemon have the ability to make it rain, this ability is called drizzle. Only a select few pokemon can have this ability and certainly not on a scale as seen yesterday. The only pokemon who can do that is Kyogre in its primal form, but since we're all the way in Sinnoh and the Orbs are locked away safely, the only other explanation is a herd."

At the word herd he turned his attention to Dawn who began to back away awkwardly.

"Yes, a herd of pokemon all with the ability drizzle. The effects would augment the abilities of the pokemon, creating one giant super storm wherever they go."

The group nodded at Conway's logic thinking. This also would explain why the storm only lasted ten minutes.

"Now that I satisfied your needs to know, can I get anything for you, Dawn? Something to drink perhaps?" Conway offered smoothly. Well, in his mind it sounded smooth anyway.

"No thank you, I'm fine," the coordinator responded quickly, maybe a little too quickly for Conway's tastes. If he was disappointed, he didn't show it, as he kept his everlasting smirk on his face.

"Alrighty then, just so you know, the offer still stands if you change your mind. Ash... I'll be cheering for you." He pointed a finger to the young trainer and chuckled before slowly walking away.

The group sweat dropped at his antics and resumed their breakfast.

After they were all done eating, each member of the group went their separate way: Ash to do some training, Dawn to do some shopping and Brock had to run a few errands of his own. They promised to meet up at the stadium at 4pm sharp.

The pokemon breeder was currently in the main hall of the pokemon center. After making sure neither Ash nor Dawn were close by, he dialed a number he called just a month prior. It only took but a moment for Lorenzo's face to appear on screen, greeting the former gym leader warmly.

"Hello Brock, so nice of you to be calling again, congratulations with Ash's win by the way," the older man said, starting the conversation.

"Hey Lorenzo, nice to see you and thanks! Congratulations to you too with Tia's birthday. Speaking of, is she on her way?"

Brock didn't waste any time and got straight to the point. Who knew when Ash might be back in the center to heal his pokemon? The older man from Alto Mare didn't seem to mind as he explained the current situation.

"She left with the plane of 10 AM, so she should be there around 3 PM. Bianca's also with Tia, I hope that isn't too much of an issue."

"Of course not," Brock responded immediately. "I'm happy that she decided to join us as well. She can make the painting of the *history* when Ash wins the Lily of valley cup!" Brock joked happily.

Lorenzo laughed at Brock's exaggerated tone. "Well, if that's all you needed to know, this old man has got a lot of work left to do."

"Problems?"

"You could say that again, some lunatic attacking my granddaughters. He was lucky he was gone the moment I got there, otherwise they could scrape what was left from him off the floor."

Brock gave an awkward laugh at the older man's statement, before wishing him the best.

"I'll promise to return them both save and sound, you have my word."

"I believe you, Brock. I know I can trust you, Ash and Misty with my life. After all what you did for us, thanks again, and I'll see you around."

"Bye Lorenzo, take care," the former gym leader spoke before ending the conversation.

Lorenzo nodded his head when he'd hung up. This decision was right. Latias needed to see a little of the world and Bianca did so too. He couldn't keep them their whole lives in the city of water. Placing his trust in the heroes who saved Alto Mare two years ago seemed the best way to handle things.

"So that's where Latias and the little missy went."

Lorenzo's breath got stuck in his throat as he slowly turned around. Sure enough, there he was, the man from the camera footage who had attacked Latias and Bianca back at the museum.

They weren't at the museum however, but in Lorenzo's kitchen. Lorenzo's eyes narrowed as the man gave a wicked grin.

"Sorry grandpa, seems like I don't need you anymore as you gave me all the information I needed."

The words pierced through Lorenzo's skull like a hot knife through butter, the thick accent of the man emphasizing his threat even more.

Lorenzo began to fume. "You attack my granddaughter, try to capture our only guardian, break into my home, and *still* have the authority to threaten me in my own house?!" he screamed furiously at the man. "Who do you think you are?"

"Me? Well since you asked me nicely I suppose I could tell you."

He snapped his finger as a shadow ball attack was launched, and hit Lorenzo right in the chest. The old gondola maker screamed before the orb exploded on impact, launching him backwards and sending smoke and kitchen debris flying everywhere.

"They were going to scrape what was left of me from the floor right? Let's see about that, fatso!"

Lorenzo coughed as he recovered from the nasty blow. The man's Frosslass came into view, and she smiled mischievously.

The smoke cleared, most of the kitchen was damaged thanks to Frosslass' shadow ball. The man stood there, eyeing Lorenzo who lied in a pile of debris.

"Get up and fight, Super Mario," he taunted as Frosslass was twirling happily in the air.

Lorenzo chuckled, then began to laugh. His laughter soon turned into a calm smile as he stood up and faced the man.

"You really think you're getting away with this do you? Do you honestly think I would be so stupid not to have protection of my own?"

The man felt a little bit of fear creep in his system at this revelation. He didn't show it however, as he responded the older man.

"You're bluffing, you're just stalling the inevitable. Don't worry, I'll make it end quickly."

"Am I?"

The man's fear turned into horror as Lorenzo produced a pokeball from his pocket. A Houndoom appeared, who began to growl immediately when he saw the man. Smoke was already rising from his jaw and his very sharp claws were ready to tear through anything.

"Meet my old partner. We both retired training fourteen years ago, but after the attack two years ago, I decided to bring him back into shape. Looks like it wasn't for nothing after all."

The man lost his composure. Fear was evident on his face as he looked at the fire breathing hellhound.

'Why did it have to be a fire type of all things? Just my luck again,' the man thought sullenly. The man had one trick left up his sleeve though and used it immediately.

"You're going to use a fire type in your own home? Do you want to get homeless? Because that's how you get homeless."

Just for a moment, the man thought his trick would work. It would give him somewhat of an advantage, but his hopes were shattered in an instant.

"I saw that look on your face just a moment ago, and I've seen it before. Pure horror. You've had experience with fire before, haven't you? Fire burns everything, it's full of life and it's wild, consuming everything on its path. If it only takes my home to make your life a living hell again, I'll gladly accept that."

The fire in Lorenzo's eyes said enough as he took the initiative.

"Houndoom, flamethrower!"

The beast responded and shot a breath of fire at the Frosslass at amazing speed. The man could just respond in time as his eyes widened at Lorenzo's offense.

"Dodge and retaliate with ice beam."

The Frosslass disappeared just in time. The flamethrower shot past her and hit a wall. Embers flew everywhere as the curtains already started to catch fire. Panic gripped the man as all his senses screamed at him to escape.

'This man is digging his own grave and is content to take me with him,' he thought, terrified. Quickly, he changed his mind.

"Frosslass, use your ice beam on the curtains instead," he told her in panic.

The ice/ghost type complied and shot the frozen beam at the curtains, effectively putting out the fire and freezing them in an instant.

"Houndoom, use this opportunity to fire off a dark pulse."

The fire/dark type growled an affirmative and shot a dark beam of energy at the Frosslass. Said Frosslass had no time to dodge the incoming attack and got hit pretty hard.

The Frosslass gave a screech as the dark pulse connected. For a moment, it looked like the Frosslass was going to faint, but when she

opened her eyes, she showed no sign the attack even hit. In fact, it looked like the attack only managed to piss her off.

"Excellent, Frosslass, now use blizzard to freeze the room."

The man was going to make sure the room was not going to catch fire and burn them both alive.

"Counter it with fire blast," Lorenzo responded.

The attacks connected and canceled each other out. Mist was spread everywhere in the little kitchen room, making it difficult for both parties to see.

"Stay alert, Houndoom," Lorenzo whispered to his loyal quadruped.

Not a moment later, a shadow ball was shot straight at Lorenzo. Houndoom reacted as fast as lightning, and blocked the incoming attack for his trainer with his body, effectively protecting him.

Smoke filled the room again as Houndoom gave a yelp of pain when he got it, recoiling slightly from the not-very-effective attack. Lorenzo growled at the cheap tactic. Playtime was over.

"Houndoom, set up a nasty plot and then incinerate the other side of the kitchen with fire blast!" The gondola maker roared.

It took only an impressive ten seconds to grant Lorenzo's request. The hellhound shot the five pointed flame sea at the other side of the kitchen. The mist instantly vaporized, and the walls on either side of Lorenzo glowed with a red hue as his Houndoom kept on going with his onslaught. Thick dark smoke clouds began to form as the fire literally engulfed everything in its radius.

Lorenzo had to shield his face at some point as Houndoom finally stopped his attack, and the other side of the kitchen actually *exploded*, blasting Lorenzo off his feet.

Houndoom stood before him protectively, challenging anyone to mess with his trainer and face the consequences. Two challengers did approach though when the smoke cleared.

Chaos, everything was a mess. Half of Lorenzo's kitchen was literally gone, and the other half was burning with embers. Soot littered on the man's side of the field, turning everything into a black charcoal color, except the spot where the man was standing was unharmed. Somehow, the Froslass had taken the majority of the attack, and protected her trainer at the same time.

It took a big toll however, the ice/ghost type pokemon was breathing heavily. She looked utterly exhausted and it was a miracle she was still floating.

The man was certain he would've gotten incinerated right then and there. There was no time to escape and no way to dodge the attack. In that moment, he relived his biggest fear.

In his mind he saw his burning house, heard how the flames licked at the wooden interior. Screams echoed in his mind. The screams of his wife and daughter as they both got burned alive, trapped in what once was a cozy little home.

Soon the screams of agony died down to nothing and the fire still raged on. Why didn't nobody help him? Where were the firefighters? He could do nothing but watch as his whole life went up in flames.

Tears started to form on the man's face as he cried. He bawled like a baby and screamed to the heavens until his voice was raw and his lacrimal sacs were devoid of any fluids. He continued to lay there miserable and rotten, waiting for certain death to claim him.

That was three years ago. The man snapped back to reality as he felt the pressure and heard the sound of the explosion. His ears started to ring and all he could see was black smoke.

When he rubbed his eyes clear of the soot, he saw his Froslass. She stood before him looking absolutely pissed. It was clear she had taken the attack head on in an attempt to protect him. Gone was her happy-go-lucky attitude.

'She would sacrifice her life for me,' the man realized suddenly, and somehow, he knew he would do the same for her. This gave him the resolve to go on.

'I'm not ready to join you yet, Julia and Esmeralda. Please wait for me,' he prayed silently.

"Ready for our last trick, Froslass?" the man whispered to her. She nodded in acknowledgement, knowing exactly what he meant.

The smoke cleared and finally both parties could see. Lorenzo looked incredulously at the little ice/ghost type. Even the Houndoom looked somewhat surprised.

"I see you trained your Froslass well, however this is the end. Houndoom, finish it with a flamethrower."

The man smirked and saw his chance to *really* end it. "Destiny bond," were the simple words he said.

Lorenzo realized his mistake too late; the flamethrower made contact. The froslass screamed before giving a faint cry, and she fell out of the sky.

The man's anger quickly rose as he saw his beloved pokemon faint for him.

'I swear I'll make it up to you, I'm going to catch that Latias and have my revenge on *him*, no matter what.'

Of course he could heal his pokemon, he just didn't like seeing her get hurt. Especially when she had to take a flamethrower to the face. It made his blood boil.

The houndoom began to whine as the curse sapped his life strength and soon, he fell over, fainted as well. Lorenzo was flabbergasted. How could he have fallen for something so stupid? He had the experience of a veteran. Even this man's well trained Frosslass stood no chance to him in the long run.

Of course Lorenzo had the type advantage, but strategic skill was just as important. Something the man just showed the gondola maker.

"You're going to pay for what I had to do to my Frosslass," the man raged suddenly, a crazy look in his eyes.

Lorenzo was taken back by his statement, was this guy for real?

"Are you even hearing yourself?" Lorenzo asked him as the man gave a crazed laugh.

"Shut up, you Mamoswine! You wanted to make my life a living hell again? *Congratulations*, you passed with flying colors! Now I'll make sure to make your life one too!"

The man's fist connected with Lorenzo as the older man slumped to the ground.

"After I've caught the Latias, I will kill your granddaughter slowly and painfully. There will be no mercy from me."

"Who... Who are you?" Lorenzo asked, fear etching in his voice.

"... They call me Malice."

His fist connected with Lorenzo again as everything went black.

**Did you like it, love it, hate it? Let me know in a review!
Constructive criticism is highly appreciated! Till next time.**

What is love?

Guess who's back? Back again? Syrup's back, tell a friend! Woo, chapter three people. I sure am excited. Anyway, I have to thank you guys for all the reviews you left me last chapter.

To answer my reviewer Altoshippingwin who I can't PM: Yes, Tobias will definitely have his Latios and your second question will be explained along the way.

Also quick question for you guys, should Ash use Latias in the quarterfinals or nah? Lemme know in a review!

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, Ash would rotate his pokemon and use them all evenly.

"Brock!" Speech

'Brock!' Thoughts

'Brock!' Telepathy

'Wow, have a look at this, Latias,' the young artist thought to her best friend, amazed by the view. She was looking out of one of the many plane windows of the aircraft they were currently flying on, and soon the legendary switched places with her best friend to get a better view herself.

Sure enough, the Lati was looking her eyes out as well. The endless blue sea was currently greeting her; hundreds of little islands could be spotted. and if one could squint their eyes well, they would see the beginning of a bigger island come into view over the vast horizon, known as the Lily of the valley.

'Beautiful, isn't it? So different from Alto Mare,' Bianca commented. Latias had to agree. The young legendary was obviously getting

more excited the closer they came to the Lily of the valley island and in turn, Ash Ketchum.

In her head, she'd already thought out hundreds of scenarios how their reunion would go. How should she react when she was finally eye to eye with the young man again? She couldn't exactly use her telepathy to communicate with him, at least, not yet, for that required a strong bond with the user and receiver.

Should she kiss him on the cheek like she did last time, or should she wait for him to make the first move? Maybe she should've made an entire new disguise to impress Ash. Would he even like that? So many questions and so many uncertainties swam through the dragoness' mind, it was making her head spin.

In short, it wasn't helping her nervousness at all.

Bianca didn't seem to notice as she was already trying her hardest to remember the spectacular view she'd just witnessed. That would make for one memorable painting for sure.

Meanwhile, Latias was fiddling with her thumbs, unsure how to get rid of this uneasy feeling she had in her stomach. The young psychic dragon couldn't focus, nor could she think of anything else to get rid of it.

Despite this, she couldn't help but smile as she pictured Ash's face in her mind. That kind smile and his playful laugh sent butterflies through her tummy. A feeling that was only increased when the plane began its descent.

The loudspeaker came to life and a deep voice was heard throughout the plane.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. As you may have noticed we've begun our descent to the Lily of the valley island and we'll be landing there shortly. Please fasten your seatbelts for your own safety. Temperature is a nice twenty five degrees Celsius

around the island, and wind is little to non-existent. We thank you for choosing Eon Airlines and we hope you enjoyed your stay. Until next time."

'Getting a little bit nervous, aren't we?' Bianca finally noticed, as Latias nodded her head at the young artist's statement.

'Don't be, you haven't seen Ash in two years. You should try to enjoy this moment at its fullest instead,' the paintress suggested her best friend.

'But what if he doesn't remember me at all?' Latias told her in panic. Bianca gave her a blank stare before she silently started to snicker.

Latias pouted as her cheeks turned red. *'Don't laugh! This is serious, Bianca.'*

'Don't be ridiculous, Tia, of course he remembers you. Who wouldn't remember such a cute dragoness as yourself?' she responded, getting a smirk on her face.

The young legendary's cheeks turned even redder. Luckily, they were communicating through telepathy so nobody could hear them. Otherwise the Lati probably would've died of shame.

'Will you knock it off?' Latias hissed at her best friend. Of course, said friend didn't listen.

'Why? Those adorable red cheeks of yours only make you cuter. No chance Ash wouldn't remember you now,' Bianca teased, which got her an embarrassed squeak from the young legendary.

'I'm so going to murder you when we're from this plane,' Latias tried to respond in a cold voice. Naturally, she failed, as she sounded more like a kid who didn't get a cookie.

'I know you like it,' the paintress winked at the legendary pokemon.

The plane finally hit solid earth and started lowering speed. Soon, the plane stopped and the doors were opened. One by one, the passengers left the plane. This was Bianca's and Latias' cue to leave as well.

The airport didn't look much bigger than the one from Alto Mare. Then again, both were relatively small islands. The two girls stepped into the afternoon sun, one happy and the other almost ecstatic.

'We're here, we're finally here!' Latias said excitedly. Bianca chuckled at Latias' enthusiasm. She looked like she was ready to drop her disguise and search the whole island herself to find Ash if it took any longer.

'Hold on a minute, Latias. I know you're excited but we first have to get our bags. Then, we have to look for Brock who promised to pick us up and *then* we can go see Ash,' the artist told her matter of factly.

'Aawww but that's boring! I want to see Ash now,' Latias whined and then added, *'Why don't you get our bags and look for Brock, and I'll look for Ash. Pleeeaaasse?'* the young legendary pleaded. She put on her best sad face and puppy eyes as she clasped her hands together.

'You know that doesn't work on me. Besides, you have plenty of time you can spend with Ash after you've helped me with the bags.'

Bianca gave her a stern look, leaving no room for argument.

'Oh alright.' Latias sighed. *'You're no fun at all.'*

Bianca gave her a knowing glance. 'Don't act all victimized. Look, the faster we're done here, the more time you can spend with Ash.'

The psychic/dragon type immediately perked up.

'Unless he doesn't remember you of course,' Bianca added, shrugging her shoulders nonchalantly. The faintest of grins could be seen stretching on her face.

Latias went from giddy to sour in an instant. *'Do you want me to help you with the bags or...?'*

'Alright, alright joking.' Bianca responded. The dragoness took that as an apology.

'Besides, if Ash really doesn't remember you, you can always try to refresh his memories, hmmm?' Bianca said, wagging her eyebrows suggestively. Latias knew exactly what she meant and blushed furiously.

'get back here, Bianca!' Latias shouted after her, who was already running away, giggling like a schoolgirl.

After chasing Bianca down for another ten minutes, they finally had their bags and were walking towards the exit where Brock was already waiting.

"Brock, over here!" the artist shouted at the pokemon breeder as she waved her hands. Brock gave them a smile as he approached the two girls.

"There you guys are. I was wondering what took you so long, the other passengers already left ten minutes ago," he stated with a hint of worry. As the only grown up of the group, they were kind of his responsibility after all. Even if he knew the legendary was capable enough to defend both Bianca and herself.

"Sorry. Tia and I got carried away a little," the paintress apologized. "Anyway, it's great to see you again, Brock."

Latias nodded her head at her best friend's statement as they both gave him a hug.

"It's great to see you girls again too. Oh and happy birthday, Tia. Better late than never," the former gym leader responded. He shook her hand and she gave him a bright smile, delighted and surprised Brock remembered her birthday as well. This day could only get better in Latias' opinion.

The trio walked out of the airport to the car Brock had rented. It was a blue and white cabrio and it reminded the dragoness of her brother a little. A sad smile crept up her face as she reminisced about times she didn't have to worry, and when her brother was still with her.

'Please watch over Lorenzo and Alto Mare for me, big brother. I don't want anything to happen to them,' she prayed silently to the deceased Latios.

Snapping out of her sad thoughts, the trio stepped into the car and drove off to the pokemon center.

"I hope it wasn't too much trouble to pick us up," Bianca said to Brock as she enjoyed the slight breeze the car produced.

The young legendary too, was enjoying the slight breeze, as well as the scenery. The landscape had a very rocky feeling to it with greenery growing everywhere. Lush tall trees scattered the surroundings, while cute little farms broke up the otherwise monotonous view.

"Not at all, don't worry about it, Bianca," the pokemon breeder retorted. "Besides, I can finally ask the question that has been on my mind ever since we left Alto Mare."

Brock gave a sideways glance and smirked at the paintress. Bianca smirked back instantaneously, already guessing what Brock was getting at.

Of course, Latias wasn't an idiot either. She began to sweat at Bianca's smirk, and she realized what her best friend was about to do.

'Don't you dare, Bianca Vernice!' the psychic dragon warned her. Bianca's grin turned even wider at Latias' remark and quickly responded.

"It was Tia who kissed Ash, of course. She had a thing for Ash ever since he first saved her from Annie and Oakley. Granted, it was my painting, but Tia that requested it."

The dragoness turned red in an instant as Brock gave a victorious smile.

"I knew it! Ash always had a thing for attracting legendary pokemon, so it shouldn't come as a surprise if one got a crush on him. Ah, young love."

Bianca giggled at the pokemon breeder's remark while Latias put her hands on her head, too ashamed to even think. Luckily, the two shut up after that.

'I hate you, Bianca,' the psychic/dragon type finally stuttered as Bianca blew her a playful raspberry.

After a while, they reached the pokemon center. Latias' heart rate started to go up as she prepared herself. This was it, she was finally going to see Ash again.

"Here we are," Brock spoke matter of factly. The building looked exactly the same as the one in Alto Mare. The red roof and white exterior contrasted severely with the surrounding buildings.

"Wow," Bianca commented sarcastically. "It certainly is something else."

Brock chuckled. "It's mandatory for the buildings to look like this. It's done specifically for rookie trainers who just started their journey," the pokemon breeder explained.

Bianca understood. If something terrible happened to the trainer's pokemon because of his or her inexperience, the building would be found in a matter of seconds.

The young psychic didn't listen however, her mind was somewhere else entirely. The more she looked at the building, the more nervous she got.

'So, *how's Ash?*' she asked to Brock when she realized she forgot he couldn't hear her.

Stupid.

'Okay focus, Latias, I know you're nervous but you're freaking out for no apparent reason. It's going to be okay,' she reassured herself.

Luckily, Bianca caught her question in her mind as well, albeit vague. It was directed to Brock after all. She sympathized with the nervous dragoness and decided to help her out.

"Tia asks how Ash's doing," the young artist reiterated to Brock.

He raised a brow. Lorenzo did mention something about Latias learning telepathy, but he hadn't heard her 'speak' yet. He assumed only Bianca and Lorenzo could hear her at the moment.

Latias gave Bianca a grateful look as Brock responded.

"It surprises me you would ask about Ash just now," he commented.

"But assuming you think he's in the pokemon center, I can understand. You can relax though; he's outside, training in the woods for tomorrow."

Brock went on. "We promised to meet up at the main stadium at 4pm. So that's where you're going to see him. Remember, this is going to be a surprise for Ash as well," he explained to the disguised legendary.

Latias instantly relaxed but also felt extremely disappointed. She'd hoped to meet Ash right now. She almost couldn't wait any longer and she showed it.

"Don't worry, tell you what. I'll let you on in a little secret okay?" Brock comforted her. The young legendary nodded her head sullenly.

"Ash has spoken about you, on multiple occasions actually," Brock revealed as Latias perked up her eyes.

Brock nodded at her hopeful expression and he continued. "He told me once that he really wanted to return to Alto Mare. He felt guilty for leaving so suddenly and wanted to know how you were doing. We never had the time though, so it just never happened. But just because it didn't happen doesn't mean he doesn't care about you. You'll see," he told her.

'Ash wanted to know how I was doing?' Latias thought, her eyes beaming.

She only found sincerity in Brock's mind when he told her this little revelation. The psychic dragoness immediately became excited again at the possibility of Ash actually reciprocating her feelings.

"First, let's put your bags away and then slowly make our way to the main stadium. How does that sound?" the pokemon breeder suggested.

Latias nodded her head excitedly, her disappointment completely forgotten.

"Excellent, but first. Nurse Joy!" Brock screamed lovingly as he sprinted into the pokemon center. The two girls gave him blank stares as they followed him into the red and white building.

They entered the main hall and found Brock already on his knees, exclaiming his love to the nurse.

"Oh Nurse Joy, I'm back from my quest to find the key to your heart. Now please let me in and we coul-AUGHHHH!" he screamed as his Croagunk poison jabbed him right in his side, effectively paralyzing him. He slowly began dragging him away to who knows where.

The two girls apologized to the nurse as they sweat dropped at Brock's behaviour.

True, Brock may have been the only grown up of the group, but sometimes, he was also the most immature.

When Brock had recovered from his pokemon's attack, he showed the two girls the room. It was big enough to hold up to six people, with two bathrooms attached to it, plenty of space to put away clothes and even a table to play board games at night.

Overall, a really nice room.

"I didn't know pokemon center rooms were so luxury and big," the paintress commented, looking around in awe.

"Also mandatory, pokemon centers have to provide the best quality for the pokemon trainers. It's free as long as one trainer is competing in the Lily of the valley tourney. A little fee is required if you're just a trainer coming to watch, and it's actually pretty pricey for non-pokemon trainers. This way, more people get stimulated to become trainers," the pokemon breeder explained.

Both girls understood; actually a pretty effective way to stimulate the youth to get off their ass and explore the world.

After they had packed away their belongings, the trio slowly walked to the main stadium, the dragoness anticipating herself to finally see her beloved pokemon trainer again.

"Alright guys, that's enough training for today, let's call it quits and head to the main stadium," the young trainer suggested to his

hardworking pokemon who all agreed with a cry of approval.

Ash didn't only want to be there in time for the drawings, but also because Brock had a surprise for him. Normally, he wouldn't be that curious what the former gym leader had planned, but the way how he had spoken so mischievously about it had piqued Ash's interest.

The fact that Brock didn't want to tell who or what the thalawhatus was in his story, and this surprise didn't go unnoticed by the young trainer either.

'Maybe they're related?' Delia's son thought. 'Only one way to find out.'

After he had healed his pokemon, he hurried himself to the main stadium to meet his friends who were already waiting for him.

Dawn had arrived a little after Brock and the two girls had. When she saw the twins she sweat dropped, assuming the worst.

'He hasn't,' was her first thought. The coordinator's Piplup gave a confused look.

"Ah, there you are, Dawn, I want you to meet Bianca and Tia. Bianca and Tia, this is Dawn, a coordinator who has been travelling with us through Sinnoh," he introduced, acquainting the girls with each other.

"It's certainly nice to meet you, Bianca and Tia, but Brock, aren't they a little young for you?" Dawn questioned the pokemon breeder. This time it was Bianca's turn to blush as the disguised legendary gave a blank stare.

"No, no, no! It's not what you think it is," Brock tried to explain, waving his hands in denial. "These girls are just old friends; they decided to meet us and root for Ash as well. But it has to be a surprise for him. So keep quiet about them for a little while, okay?"

After explaining the whole plan to Dawn, the two girls hid themselves nearby. Just in time as the young trainer came into view, his Pikachu on his shoulder as he waved to his friends.

"Sup guys? Hope you didn't have to wait long for us."

"Pika," the yellow rodent added, agreeing with his trainer to which Brock and Dawn shook their head no.

"Awesome! Let's not waste anymore time then. The drawings are about to begin," the pokemon trainer exclaimed. He was about to run away when Brock grabbed his arm.

"Hold on, champ. Remember the surprise I promised? Well, close your eyes."

Ash immediately complied. He expectantly closed them, waiting for his surprise to appear.

When Ash came into Latias' eye sight, she felt oddly calm. All this time she felt so nervous, but when she saw his face and bright smile, it melted away like snow for the sun.

Only warmth remained inside her. She knew at that moment she didn't have just a silly crush on him, she really loved the trainer. She didn't care at that moment what others thought, didn't care he was neither a Latios nor a pokemon. These feelings for him were true and that was all she cared about.

Ash closed his eyes. This was her cue. She walked up to the young trainer; all eyes were pointed at the dragoness, but she didn't register them. All that mattered was Ash. Dawn instantly recognized her expression, her composure, her look; it just oozed love and care.

'This isn't just a mindless crush, this is so much more,' she noticed. Never had she felt so much love from just an expression. 'I just hope Ash notices it too.'

Brock was speechless for a second, he too couldn't believe what he felt. 'So this is what it feels to be really in love. Sure beats what I feel for nurse Joy or officer Jenny...'

Bianca couldn't produce a single sentence either. 'Must be part of her ability to feel emotions. It's... unbelievable,' she breathed, stunned at the seemingly simpleness yet the effectiveness of it.

Pikachu, who hadn't closed his eyes was about to exclaim a happy "pika" when the disguised legendary came into view, but immediately shut up.

The way she looked at Ash and thus partly at him, felt like he was hit by an attract attack, only hundred times stronger.

This didn't go unnoticed by Ash either; even if he had his eyes closed he could feel the raw emotion radiating from the person who stood before him. His heart rate went up as he became extremely nervous. A good way of nervous, mind you. His breathing went erratic as he waited for Brock's signal.

Silence. Utter silence. There was not a single sound heard in the entire area. Local pokemon had stopped their chirping and even the wind didn't dare to ruin this moment.

"Uh... You... Uhm, you can open your eyes now, Ash," the pokemon breeder finally stuttered. Never had Ash felt so nervous to do such a simple request. When he finally did though, he felt like his heart was about to stop in his chest.

The girl who was staring back at him was making him go numb. His legs felt heavy as he looked at the disguised legendary. It took but a moment for him to realize that it was Latias. *The* Latias who he'd met in Alto Mare two years ago.

He tried to call her name, but no words came out of his mouth, instead only his lips were moving up and down, like a Magikarp who was just reeled out of the water and couldn't breathe.

So, the psychic/dragon type took this moment to finally pierce the silence herself.

'Hi,' was all she said. This time, everybody who was present could hear her simple greeting in their minds, but it felt like the angels rejoiced. Her voice was sweet as honey and the sound of it was like a choir.

The power behind that single word made Ash's knees buckle and his nose bleed as Pikachu actually *fell* from Ash's shoulder to the ground, unable to move. The others were gaping at the scene, slack jawed at what they were feeling from just *standing* there.

The love struck legendary wouldn't have liked anything more than to run up to Ash, hold him close, kiss him with fiery passion and confess her love to him right then and there. Of course, she knew she couldn't rush things. So she instead chose her second option.

'*I've missed you, Ash,*' she spoke with sincerity. This time, only the young trainer could hear her. She gave him a tender hug and breathed in his scent. Ash in return, took in a sharp breath when she made contact and automatically put his arms around her.

He finally found his voice again as the haze in his mind started to dissipate. He hugged her close, like she was fragile and made of porcelain, and he tried to even his breathing.

"I'm so sorry, Latias," he began, his voice raspy. "I should've visited you sooner. I was planning to honestly, but things kept getting in the way. I'm going to make it up to you I promise," he told her as he broke the hug. "I've missed you too," he added silently.

'*Oh Ash, you wouldn't know how happy I am to finally see you again,*' she exclaimed as she nuzzled his cheek, content in staying close to him. Her telepathy was not heard anymore by Ash as the effect of her ability wore off.

The young trainer didn't mind the nuzzling as everybody regained their senses. Pikachu got up as well, finally able to move all his limbs again and rubbed the sore spot on his head.

"Ash? Bianca is here too," Brock spoke awkwardly. He felt like he was interrupting a sweet moment between the trainer and the dragoness.

The young trainer turned his attention to the artist who gave a little wave.

"Bianca, it's nice to see you too," he said. Ash was about to walk up to her but the stubborn legendary wouldn't let go of his arm.

"Uhm... Latias? Could you let go of my arm please?" the young man asked her. The young legendary got out of her stupor and let go of him.

'*Sorry, sorry,*' she apologized quickly. She gave a frown when Ash didn't respond.

'I don't think he can hear you anymore, Tia,' her best friend informed the psychic dragoness.

It took a moment to realize she'd actually spoken telepathically to him. Not only him, but everyone who was present. The surprised faces of the others only confirmed her suspicion.

'I gave off such a strong aura of positive emotions, that it affected everybody close in the vicinity. So much even that they all had a telepathic connection with me for a while,' the disguised legendary thought to herself, amazed.

"Okay, I'm not the only one who heard her speak in my mind, right? And why are you calling her Latias, Ash? I thought her name was Tia," Dawn commented, bewildered. Her surprise quickly turned into confusion. What was going on?

Brock tried to calm her down. "I'll explain everything, Dawn, but now's not the right time."

He turned his attention to the two girls. "Don't worry, she's a good friend," he reassured them, referring to revealing Latias' true identity to Dawn, of course.

The two girls nodded, if Brock told them so. They trusted the pokemon breeder, so they had no doubts he was lying.

"I can't believe you girls actually flew all the way from Alto Mare to here just to cheer me on. This is so awesome!" Delia's son cheered happily. Pikachu had returned on Ash's shoulder and agreed wholeheartedly.

"It was Brock's idea actually," the artist told him. "In fact, Tia didn't know about it either until earlier this morning."

"Tia, huh?" Ash hummed, letting the name roll over his tongue. "I like it, it suits you well," Ash commented. She gave him another nuzzle, appreciating the compliment.

"Guys? I hate to be the party pooper here, but aren't the drawings about to begin?" the pokemon coordinator stated.

"The drawings!" Ash shouted suddenly.

He immediately began to stress. "Hurry, otherwise we're going to be late. Gotta go fast!" Ash exclaimed, before sprinting away like a madman.

"Some things never change," Bianca noted, bemused by the boy's behaviour. The whole group nodded their heads and followed him inside.

The stadium was packed to the brink. Everybody was chatting amiably with each other, predicting who was going to be victorious

and have a shot at challenging the elite four, and maybe even the champion.

In the middle of the battlefield stood the quarter finalists, Ash joining them just in time. Amongst them was of course Paul, standing coolly with his arm crossed, not a care in the world.

He glared at the young hero when he finally joined the other seven. Ash didn't seem to mind, he was too happy to let this day be ruined by the likes of Paul.

The Lati and the others were in the stands, cheering Ash on. Bianca had already picked up her sketch book and began drawing the scene that was before her.

Dawn and Piplup were back in their cheerleaders outfit, forming Ash's personal little cheerleader squad. The psychic dragoness was looking lovingly at the young trainer while Brock was trying to hit on a girl next to him.

"Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, I thank you for your patience. It's time for the drawings of the quarter finals!" Charles Goodshow, the president of the pokemon league boomed through the mic as the crowd cheered loudly.

"Before us are the last eight contestants, and what great trainers they are. All have worked hard to get where they're standing right now, give them a warm applause, people!" Mr. Goodshow exclaimed. The eight trainers got a standing ovation, even the elite four and the champion, Cynthia, clapped their hands approvingly.

"Without further ado, let me explain how this is going to work. The computer on the giant screen is going to shuffle the remaining eight trainers and pick two names randomly. Each pair of names is going to be a quarter finals match, people!"

The crowd roared, showing their excitement and approval.

"Are you ready?" he practically screamed through the microphone. The response was ear deafening.

"Then, let the drawing commence!"

The computer began to shuffle the names. The trainers waited nervously for their names to appear. Finally, the computer stopped and showed four pairs.

"That's it people, we have our matches. Don't forget to join us tomorrow for these exciting battles, here on the Lily of the valley island!"

Ash looked with determination at the giant screen. Somehow, he already expected this to happen. The feeling in his gut told him so. His rival looked with indifference at the screen, as he saw his name paired with the raven haired trainer.

"Hey Paul, it looks like it's you and me tomorrow. Anyway, I just wanted to wish you good luck."

He held out his hand for Paul to shake, who looked at it like it was poison. He snorted once before turning his back to him, leaving the stadium.

Meanwhile in the stands, Latias couldn't believe what happened. Now she understood the grimaces on Brock and Dawn's face when they saw the conclusion on the giant screen.

Granted, part of Brock's grimace was because of the red handprint on his right cheek after his failed attempt to flirt with the girl next to him, but he tensed even more when he saw the screen.

"Wow, what a jerk," Bianca commented offhandedly. The dragoness immediately felt malice towards the purple haired trainer.

"Yeah, Paul and Ash have been rivals ever since the beginning of his journey through Sinnoh," Brock explained. "Mostly because Paul's

way of training is exactly the opposite of Ash's."

'He better not mess with Ash again, otherwise the rest of his stay on the island won't be so pleasurable,' the young legendary spoke darkly. Bianca looked at her, concerned.

'Don't do anything irrational, please,' she said worriedly. The psychic/dragon type calmed down.

'Don't worry, I won't,' she promised. Right now, she only wanted to comfort the young trainer who looked so forlorn on the middle of the battle field.

It was then that her attention was drawn to another contestant. A man with long blue-ish hair. She felt an icy chill run down her spine as the man suddenly turned his head and looked her right in the eyes. Quickly looking at the big screen, she saw the name of the man; Tobias. He'd only used one pokemon so far, a Darkrai to get all the way to the quarter finals.

'Impossible,' she thought. Tobias smirked, like he knew what she was thinking. The dragoness started to get uncomfortable. She got the feeling he knew her real identity, just like the man with the funny accent back in Alto Mare.

She hoped the police had dealt with him. Otherwise she had no other choice but to do it herself. She didn't particularly like it, but it had to be done either way.

Luckily, the group snapped her attention back to them as they were all leaving the stadium.

'Let's meet up with your boyfriend, Latias,' the artist teased, hoping to get a reaction out of her. However, she was dumbfounded when the dragoness responded normally.

'Sure, then I can give this Paul person a piece of my mind as well.'

Tia smirked at the dumbfounded look the artist was giving her. *'Didn't your mom teach you it's rude to stare like that?'*

Now the artist began to smirk too.

'Touché.'

They both giggled as they caught up to the group, meeting the young man with his Pikachu just outside of the stadium.

Did you like it, love it, hate it? Let me know in a review. All feedback is highly appreciated. You guys ever played AoE II? Well, the car in this chapter is exactly based off of the blue and white cabrio you can cheat in in that game. The good ol' days! Anyway, next chapter is going to be Ash vs Paul. It's going to be extra long so suspect the next update in two weeks. Until then, Syrup-Waffle out!

Poison kills a man

Holy Miltank, 10k words? I almost can't believe it myself. Anyway, I'll be going on a vacation in two days to Turkey. So, while you enjoy this chapter, I'm going to enjoy the weather and work on my tan :3 This also means I'll be unable to write, so expect the next update in two weeks or so. Also, one of you lovely reviewers requested a way for Tia to talk to the rest of the group. I liked it, and gave my own spin to it.

Huge shoutout to all my reviewers, I love you all! on with the story.

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, Ash would never release Goodra. Like seriously, I just completely lost hope for the anime. Again!

"Pikachu" Speech

'Pikachu' Thoughts

'Pikachu' Telepathy

"Pikachu" Whiteboard marker

"Ash!" his group of friends yelled at the trainer as they approached him. The young man looked up at them, getting a smile on his face. It was just after the drawings, and he was exhausted.

Having spent most of the afternoon training his pokemon, and then dealing with Paul yet again took a heavy toll on the trainer to say the least. Nonetheless, he kept his spirit high. His smile couldn't be any brighter. Pikachu was on his usual spot, his sensitive ears perking up at the sound of his trainer being called.

"Are you ok?" Dawn began, concern etching in her voice. Even though Ash looked fine, she couldn't help but ask.

He sighed once. "Don't worry; I should've known Paul would react like that. Yet it surprised me for some reason. I guess he really doesn't like me."

"Pi," Pikachu added as he let his ears drop. Latias had the biggest urge to console the young trainer, so it was no surprise when she hugged him.

'Don't worry Ash, if he tries anything funny I'll make sure he regrets it,' the young dragoness spoke to him. Of course he couldn't hear her yet, but the Lati's expression said enough.

"Heh, thank you, Tia. I guess I shouldn't be so concerned about Paul now that I've got you with me. huh?" Ash spoke half jokingly, half sincere. The pokemon trainer felt content holding her, yet didn't quite know why.

Latias however, knew exactly why and she was in heaven. The young legendary felt her cheeks light up at what the young trainer said. She nodded enthusiastically and smiled brightly, feeling happy at the trust the trainer already was putting into her.

Bianca gave her a wink, mesmerizing the scene in her head for an art piece later. Brock chuckled silently, actually feeling a little jealous. The ladies just seemed to fall in Ash's lap, while he failed time and time again. In this instant, it looked like Ash was actually reciprocating Latias' feelings as well, albeit slowly. The former gym leader didn't show his jealousy however and was of course genuinely happy for his best friend.

Dawn simply looked on with a smile on her face as she held her Piplup close.

'she is so hopelessly in love, even a Slowpoke would notice it,' the coordinator thought, hoping she would experience the same thing

once in her life.

The pokemon breeder coughed once, effectively getting the attention of the group.

"Alright guys, let's all forget about this Paul fiasco and have some dinner, how does that sound?" he suggested to them.

"That sounds awesome, I'm starving!" Ash responded.

The group snickered at his response.

"What's so funny?" he asked them, while they continued to snicker at him.

"When are you not starving, Ash?" Dawn giggled.

The pokemon trainer gave a sheepish look while rubbing his head. The whole group laughed at Ash's antics as he responded, "I need to keep my cells healthy and running somehow. They need the nutrients after all."

Ash gave a cheery smile, part proud he remembered Brock's little lesson, who nodded his head in approval, and part happy he made the group laugh.

"Let's go then, I heard the food here is very good. I'm not going to believe anything until I tried it myself," Bianca said stubbornly.

"You're going to be surprised then," Brock quipped.

"We'll see about that," the artist retorted, not budging in the slightest.

The former gym leader chuckled.

The group started to leave the stadium area and went towards the pokemon center. The young dragoness was holding Ash's hand as they went. He didn't seem to mind; in fact, he looked like he enjoyed it, giving the legendary sideway glances and the occasional smile.

The young psychic and dragon type felt all fuzzy inside whenever he looked at her like that, and she did her best to give him her brightest smile in return.

Soon, they reached the pokemon center and entered the main hall. It was relatively empty; most trainers were either in the restaurant or away, training.

One soul besides Nurse Joy was occupying it though. The purple haired trainer was just done healing his pokemon and he'd turned around, spotting Ash's group. The raven haired boy grimaced immediately when he saw Paul standing there, and it didn't look like his rival was about to walk away without making a scene.

Ash's assumptions were correct as Paul instead approached the group, his stoic face focused on Ash the entire time. The psychic dragoness immediately glared at him, holding the young man's hand just a little tighter.

Pikachu got in a defensive stance as the two rivals stood face to face with each other. Latias was ready too, sure to defend Ash if this guy tried anything funny.

"Ketchum." The purple haired trainer finally spoke up, emotionless.

"Paul," Ash replied, a little bit annoyed.

"You're blocking the way, are you going to move or are you going to stand there like a dimwitted Sudowoodo?"

Latias narrowed her eyes dangerously. This guy was walking on some mighty thin ice here. Ash too, was losing his patience rather quickly. Bianca however, was more surprised than anything, and she gave Paul a frown.

"That's how you're going to talk to your upcoming opponent? You're not even going to apologize for your rude behaviour earlier at the drawings?" she asked incredulously.

Paul turned his attention to the paintress and his face turned into a scowl.

"Who are you?" he asked her rhetorically and with that, turned his attention back to Ash, completely ignoring Bianca's question.

Bianca looked like she just got slapped in the face, too stunned to even give a reaction. Latias was seething. This guy had the nerve to talk down on Ash and Bianca like he was superior. She hated people like that.

Ash-who didn't want to make the situation escalate-already moved out of the way. The psychic/dragon type however, wasn't moving an inch.

"I'm not going to ask again, get out of my way, girl," Paul ordered sternly. The dragoness' features turned into a snarl; she got right up in his face instead. She was giving off an aura of pure hatred. This didn't go unnoticed by the purple haired trainer; he actually felt a little intimidated. He tried to hide it, but it was a losing battle.

His scowling face turned into a mixture of fear and anger. Trying to mask this and bluff that he still had the upperhand, he said the most stupidest thing to Latias that he could've said in that instance, and he would immediately regret it afterwards.

"Get your stinking breath right out of my fa-" That was the last straw for the legendary. Her eyes widened, Paul couldn't even end his sentence as he felt a very sharp pain across his right cheek.

Latias slapped him so hard he actually fell on the ground. The sound was like the popping of a balloon and as such, Dawn actually gave a shriek at the suddenness of it. The rest of the group watched in stunned silence.

Paul never saw it coming. One moment he was standing, and the other he was lying on the ground. His cheek stung like hell and he grunted. That day, the purple haired trainer learned a valuable

lesson to never piss off a woman, especially if said woman was in love with your rival and a legendary pokemon in disguise.

The noise attracted several bystanders; it didn't take long for them to put two and two together.

Paul got up; his right cheek had a very red handprint on it and he had his right eye closed. Tears started to pour from it as he held his hand on the stinging cheek.

'Looks like I hit his eye too, good,' Latias thought with malice in her voice.

She simply pointed at the door with a very angry expression, ordering Paul to leave. He didn't say anything and obediently complied, leaving the pokemon center immediately. Nurse Joy watched the scene unfold with shock written on her face. She was rooted on the spot. Never had she seen a girl hit a man so hard.

"Remind me never to get on Tia's bad side," Brock whispered to Ash. He gulped and nodded. Tia was a special attacker, if a physical attack in her disguise hit as hard as it did, a special one in her true form would be devastating.

'She's so powerful... she hasn't been idle since I left for sure,' the young trainer breathed out.

Dawn had no words. How? What? Where? The coordinator was completely lost. No human could possibly be that strong, especially a teen girl. *Who* was she?

'Uhm, Latias? Don't you think you overdid it a little?' her best friend asked her. Sure, the way Paul had responded was mind boggling, but Tia had almost slapped his head clean off of his body.

'That jerk had what was coming to him, he continued to bully Ash and was extremely rude towards you. Not to mention, he provoked

me, he shouldn't have done that. Next time, he won't have such a big mouth,' the disguised legendary responded.

The artist couldn't argue with that. Some of the bystanders went back to whatever they were doing prior, while others kept on looking in amazement. That changed the second the young psychic looked them in the eyes. Startled, they stopped their staring immediately.

'Great, now they're all afraid of me.' Latias thought sullenly. She turned her attention to her right where she heard someone chuckling.

That someone, namely Ash, who had come over his initial shock, was now almost breaking out in laughter. Pikachu looked on with concern. Did something hit his trainer's head?

"Tia? That was awesome!" he suddenly exclaimed, shocking the whole group yet again. Latias looked at him with surprise stretching on her face.

"Did you see his face when he left the pokemon center?" He laughed happily. "I've never seen Paul so afraid in my life!"

"Ash? Don't you think this is going a little far?" Brock inquired. He too agreed Paul got what was coming to him. Still, that didn't mean they should approve of violence.

"Don't worry, that was just my thalamus cleaning up some LDL," he retorted. The trainer looked at the psychic/dragon type when he said this.

Latias didn't know what a thalamus was, but she felt butterflies in her stomach when he said it nonetheless. She cooed and gave him a nuzzle.

'So he already figured it out?' Brock thought, surprised. 'Ash is maturing.' He smiled at the giggling trainer and the affectionate dragoness in disguise.

"Am I the only one who doesn't know what is going on?" Dawn asked, bewildered. The group gave her a sympathetic look.

"I have an idea, let's order room service instead, then I'll explain everything as best as I can," the former gym leader said. Dawn agreed, it was time she knew who this Tia really was.

The group passed the stunned Nurse Joy. Brock didn't even attempt to *flirt* with her. Was the whole world going crazy?

"Is... is everything alright?" she finally spoke to the group. Brock addressed her.

"We're fine Nurse Joy, nothing to worry about. We would like to order some room service in a minute though."

The nurse came out of her stupor. "Sure, just give me a call from your room whenever you feel like it."

With that, the pokemon breeder turned around and followed the others to their room.

Room service was ordered, and the group gathered in the middle, sitting in a circle. Brock sat up straight before addressing the coordinator.

"You must have a lot of questions regarding Tia," the pokemon breeder began. Dawn stayed silent, ushering for Brock to go on.

"I'll explain everything, but only if you can keep it a secret, understood?"

Dawn looked at her friends and nodded.

"For starters, Tia is not human, but actually a pokemon in disguise."

The bluenette gave Tia a look of doubt.

"So she can transform into a human, Just like Zorua right? Then why have you guys been so secret about it? It's not like I haven't seen it before."

"I was actually getting to that. Instead of explaining we'll show you; Tia?"

Making sure the door was locked and nobody else could see her, the young legendary transformed back to her true form. The shower of light died down and the red and white dragoness appeared. Dawn looked on in awe at the legendary pokemon.

"I've never seen such a pokemon before, what kind of pokemon is she?" the coordinator wondered, before grabbing her pokedex.

The device beeped once before answering in a robotic voice.
"Latias, the eon pokemon. Latias has the ability to reflect light in such a way that she can become completely invisible. When her arms are tucked in her body, she can fly faster than a jet plane. Latias is highly intelligent and can learn telepathy, as well as read emotions. Sometimes, when latias feels threatened, she produces fake images in her opponent's mind to turn the battle in her favor, or take it as an opportunity to escape. this pokemon, along with her male counterpart Latios, are legendary psychic/dragon type pokemon. As such, they're very rare to see."

Dawn needed a minute to process everything she just heard. A legendary pokemon? Sure, she'd seen a couple of those too, but now she understood the secrecy. Latias was probably not caught; trainers wouldn't give her a break if they found out. Not to mention, if a crime organization knew.

"Wow, now everything starts to make sense. That's also the reason I heard you speak in my mind, right?"

The dragoness gave a happy coo, while she nuzzled Ash affectionately, who was rubbing her behind her ear in return.

"Come to think of it, I haven't heard you speak telepathically anymore since our little reunion this afternoon. What gives?" Ash inquired.

The others in the group nodded as well, Bianca took this moment to speak up.

"I can explain that one. Tia needs a close bond with the receiver for her telepathy to work. As of now, only my grandpa and I can hear her. But I can assure you, that's probably going to change very soon."

The artist gave a smirk at the dragoness, who puffed up her cheeks at Bianca's remark. Dawn and Brock giggled at Latias' reaction. Ash gave her a reassuring smile, which fortunately for her, made her instantly feel better.

"In the meantime, I ordered something along with the room service to make communicating with Latias a little easier for you guys," Bianca told the group. They didn't have the time to inquire what Bianca meant, when three knocks were heard outside the room.

"Room service for room 402," came a man's voice from the hall. The young legendary went invisible as the room was unlocked by Brock.

"Thank you very much, sir, here's a tip for you."

The man thanked the former gym leader with a small smile as the group all got their food. With the food came the item the paintress was talking about earlier; a whiteboard with a marker.

"This'll have to do for now, until Latias has made a connection with all of you," she explained simply.

"Alright then, let's eat!" the young pokemon trainer exclaimed, handing over the whiteboard and marker to Tia who'd become visible again. Dawn had needed a moment to figure out where Latias went, when she remembered she could turn invisible too.

'Is there no end to what she can do?' the coordinator thought in amazement. She petted her Piplup who was already eating his pokefood.

The rest of the group didn't waste any time to dig in as well. Soon, everybody was enjoying their meal. To Bianca's dismay and Brock's delight, she had to admit the food was indeed very good.

"So Latias, I have been wondering. You obviously haven't been doing nothing the last two years. What kind of new attacks did you learn?" the raven haired boy asked her curiously.

The dragoness picked up her handy dandy black marker, and began to write out a response for her love interest.

"I couldn't exactly fight a lot of wild pokemon, but I managed to learn a lot by just meditating. As of now, I know calm mind, protect, psychic and dragon pulse. My speed and agility have improved too."

The way she wrote it radiated proudness. Ash was indeed very proud of her. If anyone wanted to try to steal the souldew now, they were going to have a bad time indeed.

"That's so awesome; you have to show me tomorrow when we're going to train for the match against Paul. Maybe you could even spar with Pikachu," Ash suggested. The Lati gave another happy coo, already looking forward to tomorrow. Pikachu agreed instantly as well, determined to take down another legendary.

"Do you already know who you're going to use against Paul tomorrow?" the dragoness asked. Ash nodded, he already had a team in mind.

"I'm going to use the same team I used in lake Acuity against Paul. Which consist of Pikachu, Infernape, Buizel, Staraptor, Torterra and Gliscor," he responded.

"Don't do it," was the immediate response from the legendary.

Ash looked confused. "What? Why not, Tia?" he asked her. The others too, were intrigued by Latias' response.

"Paul is going to use an Aggron, Gastrodon, Ninjask, Drapion, Electrivire and Frosslass." The lati couldn't help but pause a second when she wrote Frosslass. Her thoughts went back to what had happened yesterday in the museum.

Maybe she should tell Ash about this man. But then again, it wasn't his problem. Big chance the man was dealt with already too. She and Bianca should give Lorenzo a call tomorrow to check up on things. Right now, she decided the help out Ash a little.

"His team gets destroyed by fire and ground types. His only counter is the Gastrodon, who should be easy to knock out with a grass type. Furthermore, he's planning to sacrifice the Aggron and Gastrodon to see your game plan and predict you from there. Therefore, it's not wise to use the same team you used last time," the legendary concluded. Ash and the rest looked incredulous at the young Latias.

"How do you know all of that?" the young trainer asked with disbelief.

"I read his mind when we saw him some hours ago. If he's going to be all rude and act like a stuck up brat, I'm not going to sympathize with him. Let's see his face if you completely counter his team and blow him back," she simply stated.

Ash wanted to object but knew he couldn't do much about it. It's not like he could find Paul and say, "Hey, the girl who slapped you also happen to be a legendary pokemon and she told me your whole strategy. You better use a different team now."

He sighed before he addressed the dragon/psychic type. "Tia, I appreciate you want to help me, but I don't want you to invade someone's privacy, even if it is someone like Paul."

Tia immediately rebutted. *"But Ash, he's been nothing but a nuisance to you and your friends. This guy deserves to get destroyed epically,"*

Latias reasoned with him. She had done nothing wrong in her book; she only helped him a little.

"I agree with you wholeheartedly, but it's still extremely rude to invade someone's privacy. Let's not get on Paul's level. I just don't want you to do it again, alright?"

Seeing that the young man was not about to relent, the dragoness gave a sideways look at Bianca for support. The artist however, gave her only a look that said: 'Ash is right, you know?'

Latias, now defeated, gave in and lowered her head. *"I'm sorry; I just wanted to help you."*

Ash, feeling pity with the legendary, consoled her with a hug.

"It's ok. Let bygones be bygones, don't beat yourself up over it."

he broke the tender hug he was giving her. He didn't know why, but Ash had this aura of calmness and piece over him whenever he was in Latias' presence, it just felt natural being so close to her.

'Ash is definitely maturing,' Brock thought, again surprised by his friend's decision. The raven haired boy gave the young legendary a cheeky smile.

"Alright, it seems I have to make some readjustments in my team to counter Paul's team like you said!" he exclaimed, grinning from ear to ear.

Brock sweat dropped in an instant.

'Ok, maybe not as fast as I thought.'

He watched as Ash began to smile deviously. "I also need to call a certain valley for one of my pokemon," he stated. Brock now gave a smile.

"You're bringing *him* ? That's a long time ago. I almost was afraid you forgot about him," Brock spoke. Ash snorted, before responding.

"How could I forget? He's one of my strongest pokemon, perfect for a match against Paul."

The rest of the group was curious too about whom Ash and Brock were talking about. Their lips stayed shut however. After the meal, the rest of the evening was spent playing some board games and further socializing. It was soon time to head to bed. The day Ash had to face Paul was about to approach.

"Good morning Dawn, did you sleep well?" Bianca greeted her. The coordinator just woke up and joined the rest at the breakfast table.

"Fantastic! Me and Piplup are all ready and fired up for today. What about you?" she asked the artist who gave her a smile.

"Me too, I can already see all the battle scenes just waiting to be drawn out," the paintress sighed happily.

"*Is Ash still sleeping?*" the disguised legendary asked. True to her word, Ash was nowhere to be seen. Now that she looked around, Pikachu was missing too.

"You know how Ash is," Brock chimed in. "That boy values his sleep more than his food."

The group chuckled. Typical Ash.

"Guys!"

Speak of the devil. The group turned their attention to the young man who was running towards them. The moment they saw him however, their faces turned dead serious. Something was definitely up, Ash's face had a look of horror plastered on it. He looked as pale as a

ghost and he was sweating profusely, clearly distressed about something.

"Ash? What's going on?" Brock spoke, concerned about his friend. Ash looked almost in tears, his breath was erratic and his arms were shaking.

"Pi-pika... He is... Oh Arceus," Ash hiccupped, completely in shock. Nothing else had to be said as Brock rushed back to their room. There he found Pikachu; the poor mouse pokemon was writhing in agony.

The pokemon breeder put a hand on the electric type's face. It was not good, his temperature was way too high and he looked very dehydrated.

"Don't worry buddy, we're going to help you." He carefully scooped him up and rushed back to the main hall.

"Nurse Joy!" he screamed. The Nurse was at attention in an eye blink, her eyes widening at the condition the Pikachu was in. "Chansey!"

Pikachu was quickly handed over to the Nurse, who brought him to the back of the healing room as fast as she could.

"Brock. Is... Is he going to make it?" Ash asked, stressed out. The trainer was in tears, finding comfort by the three girls who were consoling him.

"I... I don't know. His condition was very severe. All we can do now is hope, and wait." He put a comforting hand on his friend's shoulder. The trainer in question placed his own hands on his face.

If he lost Pikachu, he wouldn't know what to do. The group hugged him close, letting him know they were there for him. Minutes passed, but for Ash it felt like hours. Finally, after an agonizing thirty five minutes, Nurse Joy came back out of the room.

Ash stood up and was in Nurse Joy's face in a second. "Is he ok? Is Pikachu ok?" he asked her desperately. The nurse gave him a sad look.

"We got him stabilized, but his condition is falling rapidly. He's not responding to our treatment and needs to see a doctor immediately."

The pokemon trainer felt nausea hit him like a ton of bricks. He felt dizziness overtake him and he threatened to fall down.

"What's wrong with him, Nurse Joy?" Brock asked for his friend as the girls took care of Ash.

"Severe abdominal pain, very high fever, dehydration and he's vomiting blood."

She looked him dead serious in the eyes. "Somebody poisoned Pikachu."

"Is there any chance for him at all?" the former gym leader asked. Sweat dripped from his face as the Nurse responded.

"He's not holding down any liquids, we had to put him on an IV. A pokemon doctor needs to look at what kind of poison is travelling in his system and use the specific anti venom."

She stopped for a second before going on. "But we can't transport him; he's never going to make it in time."

The pokemon breeder's breath stopped, so this was it? There was no hope left for Pikachu? Who would ever try to poison the electric type and when did it happen?

"Fortunately, a pokemon doctor just checked in last night. We transported Pikachu to his room and he's being treated as we speak. Why don't you take your friend to him and look how he's doing? Room 411."

Brock breathed out a sigh of relief. Pikachu was being treated, now they just had to hope the doctor could find the right anti venom in time. Quickly telling the group, they all rushed to room 411.

Latias was silently contemplating as Ash knocked on the door the doctor was staying in. She was extremely worried about Pikachu, but more so about Ash. She knew how much the electric mouse meant for him. So who poisoned Pikachu?

Was it Paul for revenge because she slapped him? Would he even go so far as to poison Pikachu? Her thoughts were interrupted when the door was opened. A middle aged man greeted the group.

"Welcome, you must be Ash, right? I'm doctor Earl, but you can call me Thomas. Come in, make yourself at home." The doctor politely let them in. The room was remodeled as a hospital room. The beds and tables were gone and replaced with all kinds of machinery.

In the middle of the room was Pikachu. He had his eyes closed and a couple of machines were attached to him. The heart monitor showed a steady heart rate as it beeped occasionally.

"How's Pikachu doing, doctor?" the raven haired trainer said. He looked with pity at his fallen starter. Tears started to form in his eyes again as he saw his Pikachu in such a state.

"You were Lucky, young man. It didn't have to be much longer or your Pikachu was a goner. It seems your Pikachu's food was poisoned. He's doing ok, but he needs a lot of rest. He'll be all better in a week."

Ash, who was relieved beyond comprehension, wiped his tears away before thanking the doctor profusely.

"Thank you so much doctor, you won't believe how happy I am to hear this." A relieved smile was plastered on the young trainer's

face. "Did you hear that, buddy? You're going to be fine," he told his starter. The doctor retorted politely.

"Please, it was nothing. I'm happy to hear I can help. I do need to ask some specific questions though if you don't mind?"

The boy sat down as doctor Earl fired away.

"Taking into consideration the earth of the poison, it must have happened last evening. What did your Pikachu eat?"

"Pokepuffs and a bottle of ketchup," the trainer answered. The doc raised a brow.

"A whole bottle? Or just a little?" doctor Earl asked to specify.

"Uhm... A whole bottle. Is that bad?"

The doc shook his head. "It doesn't have to be as long as your Pikachu exercises enough, which I'm sure he does. How did you get the food?"

"Room service, a staff member of the restaurant brought us the food."

Thomas noted it down. "Final question, do you have any idea who might have poisoned your buddy?"

Ash didn't want to say it, but it was the only explanation. All the other people in the room were thinking the same thing.

"My rival Paul, he's attending the tourney just as I am, but we're not the best of friends," the trainer admitted.

The doctor nodded solemnly. "I have noted it down, I'll report my findings to officer Jenny who's going to look further into the case. In the meantime, worry about your upcoming battle, have some fresh air. I'll take care of Pikachu," Thomas promised.

The group thanked the doctor once again as they all left. Back in their room, Dawn asked the question which was on everybody's mind.

"Do you guys really think it was Paul who did it? I mean, he's rude and all, but he's definitely not someone who would poison a pokemon." The coordinator looked at the young man who rubbed his head.

"To be completely honest with you, I think you're right. But it's the only person I could think of at the moment."

The trainer took a seat. "Maybe I should've said nothing, now they're obviously going to question Paul." He looked at his friends as Brock took a seat next to him.

"You did the right thing, Ash. If it is Paul, he's going to get disqualified for poisoning Pikachu and be in a lot of trouble. If it isn't him, nothing happens, simple as that."

Ash gave him a sad smile. "I guess you're right." His expression turned into a frown. "I obviously can't use Pikachu against Paul now and the match starts in four hours." He widened his eyes as realization hit him.

"And I still need to make a call to the Charicific Valley." The young trainer began to stress as the group tried to calm him down.

"Ash, don't worry. Charizard is going to make it, he's a pretty fast flier after all." Brock reassured. The others looked at Ash. He had a Charizard? So that was the pokemon Ash and Brock were talking about yesterday.

"But still, I need another pokemon in my team for Pikachu."

Bianca tapped his shoulder.

"What is your current team, Ash?" the paintress asked. After all, He did change his team after Tia's suggestion.

"My current team is Infernape, Torterra, Donphan, Bayleef, Charizard and Pikachu. But Pikachu is out of the question," the young man responded. He'd chosen Pikachu simply because it was his starter. The dragoness stood up, grabbed her marker and wrote on her whiteboard.

' *I'll go.*' Was written in big letters. The room went silent for a minute. Ash swallowed as he stared at the legendary.

"Tia? What are you saying?" he retorted, not sure if he'd read it correctly. Was Latias saying what he thought she was?

"I'm saying I want you to be my trainer. Let me substitute for Pikachu," she wrote. It was clear. Ash couldn't believe it, Bianca couldn't either.

'Are you sure about this, Latias?' she asked her best friend. If this was a spur of the moment decision because she felt pity for Pikachu, she needed to know.

'I'm sure, Bianca. I was sure two years ago. I should've left with Ash at that time. Now I can rectify my mistake and show him how much I've grown as a pokemon.'

Her response was solid and final. Deep down Bianca knew this was going to happen. Maybe Lorenzo knew too. This meant she would probably go back to Alto Mare alone.

'Alright, I see you've made your decision. I'll support you in it. But you have to promise me to visit Alto Mare every once in a while, alright?' she responded sadly.

'Of course I will, I promise you, Bianca,' she assured the artist. Bianca, content with her answer, watched how Ash finally regained his voice again.

"Tia, if you're certain about this, I still need to catch you in order for me to be able to use you legally," he explained. The dragoness nodded her head in understanding.

"I don't care, Ash, I want to be your pokemon. If that means you have to catch me, so be it," she wrote confidently. After so many years, and after meeting so many different legendaries, now was the moment Ash would finally catch one. And it was his most favorite too. He couldn't help but feel excited.

"Alright, I'll be right back," the trainer spoke enthusiastically as he went to look for a spare pokeball. The other two occupants in the room, minus Bianca, looked at the legendary like she grew an extra head.

"Are legendary pokemon even allowed?" the coordinator wondered. The psychic type nodded. *"There's this man who has only used a Darkrai to get to the quarter finals. He gave off a pretty scary vibe when our eyes met. I don't like him."*

"Creepy," Dawn agreed. Brock had noticed it too, but made no comment about it. He instead was still looking for an explanation as to whom would poison Pikachu.

The next five minutes were spent in relative silence as Ash finally returned, holding one hand behind his back. His face had somewhat cleared and he was now grinning.

"I couldn't find an empty pokeball, so I rushed down to the market next to the pokemon center and bought you this," Ash stated, very excited. He showed the item he was holding. In his hand was a reddish pokeball with a pink hue. In the middle of the pokeball was Latias' blue triangle and to the sides were little sparkles to finish off the design.

In short, it was a Latias themed loveball.

Ash grew a little embarrassed as the dragoness instantaneously hugged him. She eyed the loveball like a piece of cake, taking in every contour; this was Ash's gift to her.

"So I guess you like it?"

"Like it? I love it! Thank you so much!" She practically squealed and hopped up and down like an excited puppy.

Ash chuckled, feeling funny. He loved seeing her smile, especially if he was the cause. Taking the loveball, he pointed it at the disguised legendary, who transformed back to her dragon form.

"Ready, Latias?" he asked her. She gave a happy coo and nuzzled him, wishing this feeling would never end. The young man softly touched her head with the ball, sucking her inside. The loveball gave no struggle; just a ping to indicate the catch was a success.

"Yeah! I caught a Latias!" the pokemon trainer exclaimed happily, doing a victory pose. Bianca sweat dropped at the ridiculousness. "Does he always do that when he catches a new pokemon?" she asked the group.

The others chuckled, confirming her suspicions. Ash may have matured over the years, but old habits would always die hard. Ash quickly released his newly caught legendary, who did a happy barrel roll before disguising herself yet again.

"Alright, I only need to make a quick call and the team is set. We still got a couple of hours to train before facing off against Paul. Let's do this!" The trainer pumped a fist in the air as he and Tia began to run off, the others following closely behind. The moment Ash had to face Paul was almost about to start.

Thomas sighed, bringing a cool drink to his thirsty lips. Pikachu was stable, no new complications. The electric type was resting, his breath a steady rhythm as it went up and down.

'That was way too close,' he thought. 'Five minutes later and Pikachu would not have made it.' He put a hand to his chin. The poison was way stronger than he'd anticipated. The doc had almost lost Pikachu when he went into cardiac arrest.

Luckily, Ash and his friends were not present at that time. They'd just left when the complications started and it took the doc an aggravating long time to bring him back. He cursed himself for being so imprudent.

A knock on the door brought the doc out of his thoughts. "Door's open, come in," he called. 'Probably the nurse checking in on things.'

Doctor Earl raised a brow when it was not the nurse, but a completely unknown man, clad in all black.

"Hello? Can I help you?" the doc asked unsurely. The man only grinned as he moved closer. The doctor's eyes widened and he dropped his glass. "No-" A whack on the head silenced the doctor as the man looked at the hooked up Pikachu like a trophy.

Not all according to plan, but he still had the Pikachu. Now he only needed to wait for his real price to appear.

Some say time flies when you're having fun. This was exactly the case with Ash and his pokemon. Two hours of training went by in an instant. It was almost time to head back to the pokemon center for the final preparations.

The young trainer had called the Charicific valey and spoken to Liza. She was very excited to hear that Ash was going to use Charizard in his quarter finals match. The caretaker promised he would not be disappointed with the fire/flying type's progress and had sent him on his away immediately after. He would join his team at the stadium.

The other pokemon on his team were in awe that Ash had finally caught a legendary. After the initial greeting and Ash explaining why

she substituted for Pikachu, they all went to work.

The young man was very impressed with Latias' skills. She was easily capable to keep up with his pretty tough training schedule. One would expect that from a legendary, but if one was going to compare her skills from now, with her skills from two years ago, they would be very impressed indeed.

"You got this one in the pocket, Ash," the artist said matter of factly. The group was traveling back to the pokemon center. Ash wanted to do a final check on Pikachu before his match, and Bianca and Tia wanted to give Lorenzo a call.

"Don't underestimate Paul. He's a tricky opponent, there's a reason why I've never won from him," Ash retorted. Still, he knew this was going to be a lot easier than his other encounters with the purple haired trainer.

The group reached the center and split off. Bianca and Tia to the phone booth, Ash, Dawn and Brock upstairs to Pikachu. The artist dialed the number and waited.

'I can't wait to tell Lorenzo I'm going to be battling in a real pokemon battle. In a quarter finals match for Ash no less,' The legendary gushed. Bianca couldn't wait either to tell her granddad all about the artistic scenes she'd drafted and which ones she would work out once she was back.

'I hope Pikachu is still doing ok. Ash looked devastated this morning. Whoever did this is a sick person and deserves to be locked up for good,' the artist stated. The disguised dragoness said nothing as the girls waited for the phone to be picked up.

'That's weird. Granddad usually always picks up the phone immediately,' the paintress noted as the screen stayed black.

'Did you dial the right number?' the dragoness asked her best friend.

'Yes, I just checked. It's the right number.' The artist began to grow worried. 'You don't think something happened to him, do you?'

Latias raised a brow. *'No, I don't think so. He's more than capable to defend himself. He's probably back in the workshop and doesn't hear the phone.'*

While the words calmed Bianca down, there was this nagging at the back of Latias' brain that said otherwise. 'What if that man from two days ago somehow managed to get Lorenzo?'

She didn't really have to wait long for an answer as Brock stormed down the stairs.

"Oh no," was all what Bianca said as she saw Brock's face. The girls followed the former gym leader without a word. Back at the doc's room they saw the wreckage.

The machines that once held Pikachu were now unplugged. A glass with water was shattered on the floor and the carpet had burn marks on it. Both the doctor and Pikachu were nowhere to be found.

Ash sat there, stunningly reading a note that was left behind. The sloppy letters were just comprehensible enough to read.

"What happened here?" Bianca spoke, bewildered. Ash wordlessly handed her the note as she began to read it out loud.

"Ash Ketchum. You don't know me, but you're about to. Before you wonder, yes I have your Pikachu. He's with me and you're never going to see him again unless you do as I say."

"You have something I want; the little artist knows what I mean. Bring it to me; don't even think about telling the cops. I'll be gone before you know it. I have to wonder though, how dear is your little Pikachu to you? Signed, Malice."

The shock on the faces of Bianca and Tia was palpable. This man from Alto mare, Malice, had followed them all the way here? How?

"Who's Malice?" Dawn said, disgusted. This was the guy who'd poisoned Pikachu most likely and now he had him hostage too.

"Doesn't matter," was Ash's response, completely emotionless. "All that matters is that he has Pikachu and I'm getting him back."

"What about your match against Paul? You'll be disqualified if you don't show up," Brock stated. The trainer gave an angry growl.

"Do you really think I care about a stupid tourney more than one of my best friends? If it means I have to give up this tourney to get Pikachu back, so be it," Ash screamed at him. He didn't mean to raise his voice at Brock, but he couldn't help it.

"You can't go, Ash," Bianca spoke softly. The trainer turned his attention to the young paintress.

"Has this to do with what he wants? Do you know this guy?" he spat, venom clear in his voice. Bianca nodded sullenly.

"Two days ago, Tia and I were attacked by him at the museum. He overheard us talking, and I, in my carelessness, stupidly said Tia's real name a couple of times. It didn't take long for him to put two and two together. He wants Tia, Ash, he knows her true identity." The group went completely silent at this new information. After a while, Ash gave an angry snarl.

"No, no! This can't be happening!" he yelled angrily and he punched the wall in frustration. Bianca's eyes started to sting as tears rolled over her cheeks.

"It's all my fault. If I hadn't been so careless none of this would've happened." She wept and fell on her knees, realizing in the process how he was able to track Latias and her down. "He has my granddad

too, Lorenzo... I..." She couldn't find the words as she cried her eyes out. The group watched with sadness as the Lati comforted her.

"Don't cry, Bianca. It's not your fault at all and you know it. This Malice person is the whole cause of the situation," the dragoness wrote on her whiteboard, hugging her best friend close. *"Ash, if you really want to have Pikachu back... I'll do it. For you."*

Ash didn't believe his eyes at what the dragoness proposed. "Tia, no. Even if you'd agree, I wouldn't do it. I'm not giving you up. Not like this." Ash was resolute in his answer as he held her hand.

She shook her head. "I have to, Ash. He didn't leave a location. He's banking on the fact that I can locate Pikachu with my psychic abilities, which I can. He's not stupid and probably has made extra precautions against psychic types in order to catch me."

The group was silent yet again. Until Brock spoke up, a plan forming in his head.

"But Tia's not the only one who's good at locating Pikachu," the pokemon breeder brought in. Ash looked at him incredulously.

"Wait, let me get this clear. You want to ask for *Team Rocket's* help? How do you know they're even going to help?"

The Alto Mare girls shuddered at the mention of the criminal organization. What was Brock thinking?

"It's our best shot. They've been tracking us successfully for four years. If anyone could find Pikachu, it's these three. Besides, they've helped us in the past. If they hear you're about to lose Pikachu, they agree instantly."

He put a soothing hand on the young man's shoulder. "Let your friends handle this. Go to the tourney, take Bianca and Tia with you, Dawn and I will get Pikachu back for you."

Was Brock for real right now?

"I can't ask something like that from you guys. What if something goes wrong? I would never forgive myself," Ash responded. How was he supposed to battle Paul while his friends were risking their lives for him?

"We've been in tighter spots before, we'll pull through. We promise," Dawn nodded, determined to show this Malice a piece of her mind too.

Ash looked at both of them, unsure. He saw he couldn't talk them out of it though, and gave them sad smiles, agreeing with their decision in the end. The young man couldn't have asked for better friends.

"Please take care of yourself," he told them, persuaded. Bianca and Tia too gave them their goodbyes as they all hugged each other close. With that, they went their separate ways.

"Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the Lily of the valley island's quarter finals!" the announcer boomed through his mic. The crowd cheered loudly, excited for another battle.

"It's a beautiful sunny afternoon and what better way to celebrate that than with an exciting match? And boy do we got a good one for you in store. At the left side we got Paul Shinji from Veilstone city."

The crowd roared at one of their natives. Paul looked absolutely pissed though. Not only was his dignity heavily damaged, he was taken in custody as well; apparently he was a main suspect in poisoning Ash's rodent.

'His rat *is* missing though. Maybe it is more serious than I thought,' the purple haired trainer contemplated. Luckily for him, his cheek was almost healed. You could only see the print now if one squinted their eyes.

"And at the right side, we got Ash Ketchum all the way from Kanto, Pallet town. These guys definitely know what they are doing, are you guys ready?" The crowd gave another roar, certainly ready to see some action.

"Go Ash!" Bianca cheered. The disguised legendary gave him a loving smile as Ash focused on his rival. 'This is it. Focus, Ash. You've got this,' he thought. Forcing himself not to think about Pikachu.

"This will be a full six on six battle, substitutions are allowed. The match is over when one side's pokemon are all unable to battle. Trainers, show your first pokemon!" the referee shouted.

"Aggron, standby for battle." Paul threw his pokeball on the field and the steel/rock type appeared. It gave a mighty roar to show who was in charge. 'Just like Latias predicted,' Ash noted.

"Infernape, I choose you." The fire/fighting type appeared, ready for battle.

'So Ash opts to begin with Infernape? If my assumptions about Ash's team are correct, this is going to be a walk in the park,' Paul thought.

"It looks like Paul has chosen Aggron to battle with, while Ash has chosen Infernape. Who will be victorious?" the announcer questioned.

Bianca was already drawing the scene before her like crazy, while the dragoness nervously waited for the referee to give the signal.

"Aggron versus infernape, begin!" The referee raised both his flags, signaling the start of this battle. The purple haired trainer wasted no time and gave out his first command.

"Aggron, use heavy slam." The Hoenn pokemon grunted and began to charge towards Ash's Infernape.

"Counter it with your flare blitz," the raven haired trainer retorted.

Infernape coated itself in a flame sea before charging headfirst to the incoming Aggron. The attacks collided and resulted in a huge explosion as smoke filled the battle arena.

"What a start to this match ladies and gentlemen, both took the attacks head on." The smoke dissipated, the Aggron was still standing strong while Infernape looked a bit more battered.

"It looks like the recoil from Infernape's flare blitz has left Paul with the slight advantage, how is he going to use this opportunity?" the announcer boomed yet again as the crowd cheered loudly.

"Metal sound," were Paul's simple words. The beast complied and shot an ear deafening sound towards Infernape who grunted in pain. The attack was so powerful that even Tia was affected by it.

"Hang on Infernape, use dig to escape." The fire monkey dug a tunnel to escape the onslaught, effectively countering the attack.

"Ow, that metal sound looked like it hurt, lowering Infernape's special defense by two stages. But great countering by Ash, who used Infernape's dig to escape."

Tia sighed when Aggron finally stopped the attack, she could imagine the fire starter was in a worse position than her though.

"Keep your eyes open, Aggron." The beast grunted. Just then, the fire and fighting type appeared right behind Aggron, fist ready.

"Intercept!" Paul commanded. To everybody's surprise, the beast was a lot faster than it looked, and blocked the incoming punch with his hands.

Ash sputtered in disbelief. The Aggron had Infernape's hand in a tight grip and wasn't about to let go. "It looks like Infernape is in a bad situation folks, what is Ash going to do about it?"

"Did you see his speed?" the artist said to Tia with disbelief. She nodded; it was unheard of that Aggron moved as fast as this one did. That just showed how well Paul's pokemon were trained.

"Now use brick break." Aggron's other arm started to glow white as it prepared the attack.

'Not good, I need to think of something and fast.'

An idea popped into Ash's mind.

"Infernape, use mach punch to free yourself." The fire starter nodded, and his hand too began to glow white, only difference was that Infernape was way faster and hit the Aggron square on the head, sending him flying. The heavy pokemon hit a wall with a loud thud, sending dust everywhere.

"What a great reaction from Ash towards Paul's strategy! Using the superior speed of mach punch to deliver a devastating blow to Aggron."

True to the announcer's words, the Aggron did not get up after that attack.

"Aggron is unable to battle, Infernape wins." The crowd went wild with excitement as Paul recalled his fallen pokemon.

"Yay, he did it." Bianca clapped her hands together gleefully. The legendary in disguise agreed with her best friend.

'The best part is about to come, when Paul realizes Ash is not using the same team as in lake Acuity, and when he chooses me to battle.' The legendary grew more nervous. It would be her first official battle after all. *'Next is Gastrodon.'*

"It looks like Ash is taking the first win, how's Paul going to respond?" the announcer exclaimed.

"Gastrodon standby for battle." The sea slug like pokemon appeared on the field, eyeing its opponent up and down.

"Paul's second pokemon is going to be a Gastrodon. A huge advantage over Ash's fire and fighting type."

Ash's face stayed neutral, but inside he was smirking. 'This is so unfair, I almost feel bad for Paul. Almost.'

"Infernape come back." He recalled his hard working fire and fighting type. "Why don't you take a nice rest?"

He unclipped another pokeball from his belt and threw it in the air. "Torterra, I choose you!"

The grass/ground type landed with a heavy thud on the battlefield. Paul raised a brow. 'Is he really doing what I think he's doing? He's pathetic *and* predictable,' the purple haired trainer thought.

Ash knew this matchup was a double edged sword. A grass type attack would be devastating for Gastrodon whereas an ice type attack would be just as devastating for Torterra. He could've used Bayleef, but right now he wanted to give Paul the illusion he was using the same six as in lake Acuity.

"Ash is substituting his Infernape for Torterra, this is certainly going to be an interesting matchup," the announcer spoke. The crowd cheered and roared.

"Gastrodon versus Torterra, begin!" The referee raised his flags.

This time it was Ash who took the initiative. "Torterra, use energy ball." The massive pokemon began charging the green orb in his mouth before releasing it towards the water/ground type.

"Dodge, and retaliate with water pulse." Gastrodon was just able to dodge the incoming attack and fired the pressurized orb of water

straight at Torterra's face. The grass and ground type was unable to react fast enough, and he got hit pretty heavily.

"And a bulls-eye hit from Paul's Gastrodon, who just was able to dodge the energy ball from Ash's Torterra," the announcer roared.

'Paul's using Torterra's slow speed to his advantage, even though Gastrodon isn't all that fast either,' the disguised legendary noted.

Back on the battlefield, Ash tried to stay cool. "Are you okay, Torterra?"

The beast responded with a deafening roar and stomped his feet on the ground. "Alright then, use rock climb!" he commanded his pokemon. Once again the beast stomped his feet on the ground, but this time the ground moved, and Gastrodon was pushed into the air on a rock pillar.

"Now charge and use leaf storm!"

The beast complied and stormed towards the Gastrodon while the tree on his back glowed a light green.

"Counter it with ice beam!"

The mud pokemon gave a nod and shot an icy, teal colored beam at the incoming leaf storm attack.

The two attacks collided as the two pokemons fought for dominance, neither giving in. Slowly, the ice beam was eaten up by the leaf storm attack, which was heading straight towards Paul's pokemon.

"It looks like Ash's offense is about to work. The leaf storm is slowly battering down Gastrodon's ice beam. How will Paul react?" the announcer wondered. The crowd was on the edge of their seat, watching intently.

"Jump down the rock pillar," the purple haired trainer commanded.

Ash looked confused. 'There's no way Gastrodon is about to dodge that leaf storm, what is Paul thinking?' Tia was contemplating the same thing.

Would you imagine the shock on everyone's face as Gastrodon actually *barrel rolled* to the side off of the rock, dodging most of the incoming leaf storm effectively.

"Wow, in a display of very high maneuverability, Paul's Gastrodon manages to escape with only minimal damage. Would you look at that people." The crowd roared once again.

"Now use water pulse again!"

The Gastrodon, who was still in mid air, turned upside down and shot the attack at Ash's pokemon. The grass starter was hit once again and grunted in pain.

"And again, Torterra is hit with one of Gastrodon's water pulses; this is not looking good for Ash," the announcer exclaimed.

'C'mon Ash, you can do this, keep your head cool,' Tia thought to herself. Honestly, Latias knew Ash was going to win, but the fact remained that Paul had a lot of trained pokemon who she had a disadvantage over if it ever came down to her.

"Torterra, use synthesis," Ash yelled to his pokemon. However, Torterra only looked around in confusion. "Torterra, what's wrong?"

Paul snorted at Ash's remark. Seriously? It was pretty clear to him.

"It looks like water pulse's secondary effect has demanded its toll on Ash's Torterra, making it confused," the announcer clarified.

"Take this opportunity and fire off an ice beam!" the purple haired trainer commanded.

The mud pokemon shot the icy beam yet again at the confused grass starter.

"Torterra, get out of the way!" Ash yelled at his pokemon, alarmed. The grass and ground type didn't register it and got hit square in the face by the beam.

"A solid super effective hit from Paul's pokemon. Is this the end for Torterra?" The crowd went silent while they looked at the result.

"No, Torterra!" Ash exclaimed. He should've switched him out when he still got the chance.

"Did Torterra faint?" the artist whispered to her best friend.

Tia only smirked. *'You'll see,'* was her only response. Just as the referee was about to make the call, the grass starter let out a mighty roar and glowed light green.

"Incredible, Torterra's ability overgrow just activated, saving the pokemon from fainting, and it looks like he got rid of the confusion as well!" The crowd's response was immediate as they roared and went wild.

"What?" was Paul's response, bewildered and shock written on his face. How was this Torterra still standing?

"It's time to show the world your real power. Torterra, use leaf storm!" The quadruped shot the powerful attack immediately, much faster than last time.

Paul could only blink as the attack hit Gastrodon right on, he wasn't even fast enough to react and give his pokemon a command. The mud pokemon gave a loud cry as it got hit by the attack. It slumped down, face first to the ground, defeated. Torterra gave another might roar as it stood there victoriously.

"Gastrodon is unable to battle, Torterra wins." The referee rose his flag.

"Unbelievable! Torterra managed to take down Gastrodon in one clean hit, even with the special attack drop from the first leaf storm, and now Paul is down to four pokemon while Ash still has six pokemon left." The crowd chanted Torterra's name loudly at the display of pure power from the pokemon.

"Wow, Torterra is so cool! Did you see how fast his attack was? Amazing!" Bianca was already drafting the scene where the grass starter hit the mud pokemon straight on with the leaf storm attack.

'Ash certainly has the advantage,' Latias agreed, and she looked lovingly at the trainer in question. *'Even though this was part of Paul's plan, let's see his reaction when he realizes he's chasing ghost pokemon,'* the dragoness added.

Paul gave a stoic look at the young man. He recalled his Gastrodon and opened his mouth.

"Your Torterra certainly surprised me, however, this is the part where you realize you won't stand a chance against me," the purple haired trainer taunted.

Ash gave him a grin. "Don't you worry Paul, I'm just getting started."

Paul simply closed his eyes. "We'll see about that," he retorted, picking his next pokemon. "Drapion, standby for battle!"

Did you like it, love it, hate it? Leave me review with your opinion! Next chapter the conclusion as well as Dawn and Brock vs Malice. See you in two weeks! Syrup-Waffle

Ash vs Paul: Drapion the destroyer

Thank you, thank you, far too kind! It's time for your breakfast people. Today, we have syrup waffles with a dash of chapter 5! Now I know I promised you all the conclusion, but the chapter would get so long, I rather split it up. Hope you can understand. Turkey was nice by the way! Without further ado, let's hop into this battle!

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, Ash's journey would've ended in Sinnoh and Unova would be about the games.

"Bianca!" Speech

'Bianca!' Thoughts

'Bianca!' Telepathy

"Bianca!" Whiteboard marker

"Drapion, standby for battle!" the purple haired trainer shouted. He threw his pokeball on the field and out came the poison and dark type. It gave a menacing shout as it clashed its claws against each other.

The sound of the clangs rang through the stadium, showing its domination. Torterra, who was still in overgrow mode, simply roared back at it, not fazed at all.

"Paul's third pokemon is Drapion folks and it looks like it's not playing around. This is going to be a clash of titans," the announcer spoke excitedly. The crowd was pumped, ready to see more action.

'It's a Drapion all right, but something is different, you can almost feel the power difference between this pokemon and Paul's last two,' Ash

thought, looking the beast up and down. 'This is where the real battle starts. Should I leave in Torterra though? One hit and he's done for. Then again, overgrow gives me a slight advantage and I still got my Donphan in the back,' Ash silently debated.

Paul in the meantime was looking as stoic as possible, but he was smiling on the inside.

'You don't know what's going to hit you Ketchum,' he sneered, confident he was going to have the upper hand from here on out.

'That Drapion looks strong. What kind of pokemon is a Drapion Tia?' the artist asked her best friend. She was already sketching the dark and poison type as her best friend answered her question.

'It's a poison and dark type pokemon who originated from here in Sinnoh. It is said its claws can give off a deadly poison and are strong enough to turn cars into scrap.'

Bianca gave the dragoness a look of disbelief and dropped her pencil at that statement. 'That's... pretty terrifying,' she whispered to the young legendary. Tia in turn stayed silent. She knew this was going to be a tough match for Ash.

The two beasts continued to stare each other down, waiting nervously for the signal of the referee. Meanwhile, Ash had made up his mind; he was going to keep on battling with Torterra.

"Drapion vs Torterra, begin!" the referee shouted.

Ash's rival wasted no time. He knew he had to take out this Torterra quickly. "Drapion use pin missile!" The beast complied immediately and shot a dozen of energized needles at the grass and ground type.

"Torterra, try to dodge and then use earth power," the raven haired boy countered.

Paul actually gasped at the command and even more when the grass starter actually dodged the attack. 'Such speed. So Ash's Torterra does know ground type attacks? This can be bad,' Paul thought and gritted his teeth.

"An amazing display of speed on Torterra's side, evading the pin missile attack with ease. This next attack can be very bad for Paul's Drapion!" the announcer roared, the crowd following in turn.

"Wait for my signal Drapion!" Paul shouted, a little bit nervous. He didn't know if this was going to work, but he had to try.

Torterra, who was now preparing the attack, stomped his feet on the ground. The earth shook; beneath the poison and dark type the ground started to crack and open up.

"Now, use your claws on the ground to jump up in the air," the Sinnoh trainer commanded. True to his hypothesis, the scorpion like pokemon gained a significant boost due to his strong claws, evading the earth power attack just in time.

Now it was Ash's turn to gasp as the crowd ooh'ed at the display of improvisation. "Would you look at that! Paul's quick thinking has left his opponent stunned, how's he going to use this to his advantage?" the announcer wondered.

'Wait, did... Did Paul just pull an Ash?' Tia spoke in disbelief. Bianca couldn't believe it either. Usually it was Ash who did these unorthodox things on the spot.

Paul grinned, he dare not say it out loud, but battling so many times with Ash has earned him quite some experience how to deal with situations like these.

'I guess I did learn something from Ketchum after all,' he thought. Focusing on the battle at hand, he ushered his next attack. "Drapion, cross poison, go!"

The poison and dark type, who was still high in the air, crossed his two fangs to form an X and shot the poisonous attack straight at the Torterra beneath him.

Coming out of his stupor, Ash retaliated. "Use energy ball to stop the attack! Torterra roared and shot the green orb at the incoming cross poison. The two attacks collided and exploded in mid air. The resulting smoke made both trainers unable to see.

"Ash counters nicely, canceling the cross poison with energy ball! Who of these two behemoths is going to remain victorious?" the announcer yelled ever so excitedly.

Ash balled his fists. 'That move caught me completely off guard; I can't let that happen again.'

Bianca and Tia stared at the smoke filled battlefield. *'This is positive for Ash, giving him a couple of seconds to get his head back in the game,'* the dragoness spoke matter of factly.

Bianca nodded. 'This Paul is full of surprises, isn't he?'

'He definitely is,' the young legendary responded. *'He's not holding back. Then again, if it happens to come down to me, I will not hold back either.'* The determination in her voice was all it took to get the point across.

"Ketchum!" Paul yelled through the smoke. "This will be a losing battle for you and I'll tell you why!"

Paul's Drapion joined his trainer on his side of the battlefield and waited for the smoke to clear.

"Humor me, Paul," Ash responded.

Paul growled at the taunt and the overconfidence in his voice. "You're predictable! You may be good at improvising, I'll give you

that, but they way how you prepare for battle is pathetic," he insulted the young trainer.

"Why's that Paul? Last time I looked I still got all of my pokemon and you already lost two," Ash retorted, keeping his cool. Paul grew annoyed; even though this was his plan all along, it was still a fact. He was down two pokemon.

This fact was only augmented by the fact that Ash stayed so cool. "You'll see in due time Ketchum! Don't be so cool about it!" he yelled back, losing his temper for a split second. The raven haired boy didn't respond back.

'Indeed we shall see, Paul,' he thought, not worrying about his rival's threat at all. The smoke was still covering most of the field, making the battle unable to go on for the moment, or, that was what Ash thought.

"Drapion, use toxic spikes!" the purple haired trainer commanded. The scorpion like pokemon now shot a dozen of purple energized beams in the sky. These beams quickly began to spread in the air and landed everywhere on the stage, disappearing in the ground.

"Paul used the confusion of the smoke as an opportunity to set up his toxic spikes. Clever thinking from the Sinnoh resident," the announcer praised the purple haired trainer. Torterra gave Ash a questionable look that he immediately understood.

'Crap, I could've used the smoke as an opportunity as well, healing Torterra up. C'mon Ash, focus!' he berated himself. Truth be told, the whole Pikachu fiasco was still weighing heavily on the young trainer. Yet here he was, letting his friends do the job. It wasn't in his nature to sit by idly and thus, he had not his entire head in the game.

Many thoughts had swirled in the young trainer's head. Was Pikachu alright? How where his friends doing? Will Team Rocket actually help them? What if this Malice captures them all, what then? He tried to focus, but failed, only getting a portion of his mind to the task at

hand. Ash mentally slapped himself; he needed his full attention to win.

'What is Ash doing? He could've healed Torterra up, couldn't he?' the artist stated to the disguised legendary.

Said legendary shook her head sadly. *'He can't focus; he's too worried about Pikachu and his friends. Poor Ash,'* the dragoness responded. A quick read of Ash's aura had confirmed her suspicion.

It pained her to see him in such a state, even though he looked fine from the outside. Latias' face turned into an angry snarl. Malice was going to pay for this, dearly. First, she would exploit his weaknesses by forcefully invading his mind and then... The man next to her started to shiver as he looked fearfully at the disguised legendary.

'Please Latias, tone it down. You're giving off such an icy aura it's even scaring me,' Bianca spoke to her best friend.

She quickly apologized. *'Sorry, it's just...'* She sighed as she gave Bianca a look of hurt. *'I'm afraid if something happens to Pikachu Ash will never be the same again. I want him to be happy. It'll be my entire fault if something happens; he's after me after all.'*

Latias paused.

'I can look for Malice right now, Bianca. Yet I'm still sitting here, being completely useless to Ash and his friends. What kind of guardian am I if I can't even defend my own friends?' she questioned. The dragoness felt so useless. She wanted to be there for Ash, to be his guardian. And here she was, her opportunity to do so!

then why didn't she act?

'You're not useless to Ash, Tia. You're special to him,' Bianca spoke reassuringly. She grabbed the legendary's hand and slowly rubbed it. 'The sole reason why you're here is because Ash doesn't want to lose you as well. Don't you see it? He needs you right now, and you

need him. Being here makes the difference for Ash, not being out there.'

The dragon and psychic type didn't know what to say. *'I... You're right. It's true I need to be here for Ash, and I will!'* s he retorted confidently. She stood up and began to cheer. *'Go Ash, you can do it!'* While Tia was cheering, the smoke finally disappeared and the two opponents could see again.

Torterra was panting and on his last breath, the sole reason he was still standing was because of his ability. Drapion however, seemed like he could go on for another ten hours. 'It's now or never, I need to heal Torterra,' the raven haired trainer thought.

"Torterra, use synthesis!"

"Oh no you don't. Drapion, use taunt!" Paul countered.

The poison and dark type smirked as it began to talk to Torterra in poke speech. "Wow, you're seriously trying to heal yourself and get rid of your ability? You're pretty stupid," it began as the grass starter growled, annoyed. He stopped his synthesis and answered back.

"Watch your mouth punk, or I'm forced to shut it for you."

The Drapion laughed in return. "Seriously? You couldn't even hurt a Magikarp if you tried. You obviously can't hurt me now, how are you supposed to win without your ability then? Useless, that's what you are." It blew a raspberry and Ash's Torterra gave a roar, clearly pissed off.

"Don't listen to him Torterra, use synthesis, c'mon!" Ash said desperately.

Paul chuckled at Ash's desperation; the grass starter however didn't listen. "Put that stupid tongue back in your mouth, Drapion!" he roared to Paul's pokemon.

It gave him a wide smirk. "Oh? That's not what your mom said last night!"

Something snapped in the grass and ground type's mind. He charged headfirst at the Drapion, putting all his energy in his attack.

"No Torterra, stop!" Ash shouted. The pokemon didn't hear Ash, nor did he care. This Drapion was going down and that's what mattered.

"Paul's taunt has worked as Torterra is unable to use synthesis and is now blindly charging Drapion, not listening to his trainer's commands," the announcer spoke, sitting on the edge of his seat. Many people were watching with bated breath, eyeing the massive pokemon charging the other one.

'That Drapion... Knows how to use taunt very effectively,' Tia spoke, somewhat impressed but also disgusted.

'What did he say?' the ever so curious artist asked.

Tia sweat dropped. *'You don't want to know.'* Focusing back at the battle, she saw the grass starter charging the scorpion like pokemon. *'Ash needs to do something or Torterra is done for,'* she stood up again, cheering him on.

"You're gonna regret the day you ever hatched, you little poisonous prick!" Torterra snarled. Drapion made a yawn gesture for extra measure before readying himself, waiting for his trainer's command.

"Intercept, now!" the purple haired trainer ushered, feeling confident. Paul's pokemon extended his claws, effectively stopping Torterra dead in his tracks.

The grass and ground type's eyes widened and Drapion gave another smirk. How was this possible? He was trapped, ran straight in his opponent's arms.

"Game over lil' Flip," The poison and dark type stated. Ash looked on, unable to usher a command fast enough.

"Finish this with cross poison," Paul said, stretching his arm.

Drapion nodded and shot the poisonous attack straight at Torterra's face, who gave a loud scream as the attack hit. The explosion blasted Ash's pokemon a couple feet away, finishing the grass and ground type off.

"Torterra no!" Ash yelled, worried about his pokemon, who was unable to even hit the Drapion. His pokemon didn't get up and the referee raised his flag.

"Torterra is unable to battle, Drapion wins!" he stated. The crowd erupted in cheers and roars as Ash's first pokemon was defeated.

"Drapion takes this win with not even being hit at all, unbelievable! Ash is now down to five pokemon, does he have what it takes to take down this Drapion?" the announcer questioned and boomed in his mic to get over the sound of the crowd.

"Poor Torterra, he was doing such a good job too," Bianca said to know one in particular. Latias looked at Ash, who wordlessly returned his pokemon, not hearing Bianca at all.

'Ash,' was all she said. A single word, yet so powerful. It was filled with hope, kindness, reassurance and love. The young trainer stopped what he was doing and looked around.

'What am I doing wrong? I couldn't hit that Drapion a single time even with the type advantage and Torterra's ability,' Ash thought sadly, returning his fallen pokemon wordlessly. 'Maybe I am predictable.'

He put a hand in his pocket and thought about his starter and partner for life. 'Pikachu, please be ok. I don't know if I can do this without

you. I wish you were here.'

Ash started to lose faith. He should've gone after Malice himself, he could always enter this tournament another year.

So why did he feel so compelled to stay here?

His answer came in the form of a sweet voice.

'Ash.'

The young trainer's breath caught in his throat. That was the same voice he heard yesterday afternoon. Where did it come from?

The young trainer started to look around when he spotted her. There she was, along with Bianca in the stands. She gave him a loving gaze. Ash's heart rate was quickening and he felt warm inside as he looked at her.

'Don't give up now Ash, you can do it. I know you can,' she spoke to him telepathically. Her voice was still as sweet as honey and filled with so much compassion, it made Ash smile.

'Tia, you're speaking to me,' he thought back excitedly and then silently added, 'I like your voice a lot.'

The dragoness grew red at the compliment. And she was afraid he might dislike her voice too.

Truth be told, she herself didn't like her voice at all, but hearing Ash being so positive about it made her very happy.

*'Well, I like **you** a lot Ash,'* she responded happily. She wanted to say love but hold that thought. She had plenty of time, no need to rush things.

Ash's embarrassment was clear as he rubbed the back of his head. 'Thanks Tia, I would give you a hug, but you know...'

The dragoness giggled at Ash's response. She liked that about the raven haired boy. He was so compassionate and kind it made her heart flutter.

Ash's smile couldn't be brighter as he heard her giggle. Now he understood, it was her why he was so compelled to stay here.

'I could help you if you'd like?' the dragoness offered.

The young trainer agreed immediately, for only to hear her voice. It made him happy and confident. Moreover, she would be able to keep his head in the game, no doubt.

Paul in the meantime was sweat dropping.

'What's he doing? First it looked like I broke him and then suddenly he gave a creepy bright smile and started to rub his head. What's happening?' he thought.

The purple haired trainer shook his head. "Hey weirdo! Are you done? Throw out your next pokemon!" he stated.

The now happy Ash gave him a confident look. "Sorry Paul, let's continue!" He threw his next pokemon at the field. Paul, who was convinced it was going to be Gliscor or even Buizel, opened his mouth to sneer at Ash.

"I was able to predict every single move your Torterra made. You didn't land a single hit on him. Now show me your obvious coun..." He stopped his sentence as Ash threw a Donphan on the field and not Gliscor.

"What!?"

The young hero gave a smirk at Paul's disbelief. "Surprised? I thought to mix things up a little, use some of my old pokemon," Ash taunted.

Paul growled, Ketchum continued to surprise him.

"Alright, have it your way then. Let's see how well you trained these old pokemon of yours," he retaliated. Donphan gritted his teeth as he hit the field. The one layer of toxic spikes activating and poisoning him.

"Ash has decided to go with Donphan, a great choice in type matchup. But it looks like Paul's toxic spikes already come into play," the announcer stated. Ash didn't hear the announcer though, he was solely concentrated on the honey sweet voice in his head.

'This is a perfect counter for Drapion. Not only do you have the type advantage here, but you're also very defensive. Perfect against a physical attacker. Not to mention, you can use rapid spin to get rid of the spikes,' the dragoness explained sweetly to Ash.

She was standing on her seat, concentrating to get the message across.

The raven haired trainer was surprised at her knowledge. 'Are you really sure you weren't a trainer in your previous life?' he joked at her. She gave another cute giggle which made Ash smile like an idiot.

Paul meanwhile, was contemplating. 'This is not in my favor, luckily, I got something for this Donphan in the back,' he thought.

"Drapion return now!" he called his pokemon back and grabbed another one from his belt. "Froslax, standby for battle!" he yelled. Out came the ice and ghost type, the pokemon Tia got acquainted with the past few days.

"Paul decided to switch things up and use Froslax instead. Now he's got the huge advantage people," the announcer spoke.

'Froslax, right. I completely forgot about that.' Tia responded embarrassed.

Ash chuckled, 'no matter, I've come back from even bigger disadvantages. Let's rock!' Seeing as both sides were ready, the referee raised his flag again.

"Frolass vs Donphan begin!"

The purple haired trainer moved first. "Frolass, use ice beam now!" Paul spoke. The pokemon prepared the icy beam as Ash countered.

"Donphan, use rollout, full speed!" the young trainer told his ground type. Said ground type acknowledged his trainer and curled up in a ball, rolling at high speed to the ice and ghost type, as well as the incoming ice beam attack.

Paul raised a brow. 'Is it going to take the attack head on? There's no way such a weak specially defensive pokemon is able to take an ice beam to the face.'

Paul however, was surprised yet again when the ice beam bounced harmlessly off the hard exterior of the elephant like pokemon, not slowing him down in the slightest.

The purple haired trainer was not the only one who was surprised. The Frolass widened her eyes as Donphan was still coming at her at full speed, hitting her right in the chest. She gave a cry of pain as Paul grumbled. Donphan bounced off her and charged at her again, this time with even more speed.

"This match continues to surprise me people, the rollout completely negated the ice beam attack and hit Paul's Frolass pretty hard. How's Paul going to react to this?" the announcer wondered. The crowd was on the edge of their seat again. This battle was getting better and better.

'Told you it would work,' Latias said smartly. Ash pouted, true to her advice, he completely countered Paul's attack. *'Let's see how Paul's going to deal with this,'* she added.

Paul stayed cool however, adapting quickly to Ash's new play style. "Use hail." His pokemon complied and set up the attack. Dark clouds began to form above the stadium as hail started to fall.

Donphan, who was about to ram the Frosllass for a second time, now completely missed as he went straight through her. The ghostly figure of Paul's pokemon giggled at Donphan and disappeared, reappearing again in a different location.

"Paul adapted quickly and used the hail to confuse his opponent. What will Ash do now?" Curiosity dripped from the announcer's voice.

Ash was slightly panicking while his Donphan was back at his side again. The ground type grunted as the effects of the poison took place. The rough weather afflicted even more damage as Ash was thinking of a solution.

'Ash, don't worry. I know where the real one is, just wait for my signal,' The dragoness reassured him.

Bianca was looking strangely at her friend, who was still standing and had her eyes closed in concentration. 'What are you doing Tia?' she asked her.

'Helping Ash out a little, I'm his pokemon after all,' she responded immediately.

Bianca stared at her. 'You made a connection with him, didn't you?' She gave the dragoness a sly smile as she nodded her head happily.

'Yup, and now it's time for this Frosllass to be revealed.'

Ash, who told Donphan to stand down, waited for the signal of his legendary pokemon. The Frosllass was still making fake images of herself, trying to confuse her opponent and scare him off.

Paul knew what was coming; Froslass would appear before Donphan as bait, quickly disappear and then attack from the left. This always worked; coupled with the poison and hail this Donphan would be done for.

Just on cue, the Froslass appeared before the ground type pokemon, giving off a scary face. Ash acted. "Donphan use stone edge to your left!" he shouted, determined.

Paul actually gasped. "What!?" he yelled in disbelief.

Donphan, who trusted his trainer completely, obeyed and fired the stones to his left, even though he saw the Froslass right before him. Would you imagine his surprise when he heard the icy shriek from Paul's pokemon.

Froslass was too slow to dodge the incoming rock barrage and gave a shriek of pain. The second time she was surprised. She panted as she took most of the attack before floating back to Paul's side of the battle field.

The hail dissipated and the announcer shook with excitement. "I can't believe it! Somehow, Ash managed to hit Paul's Froslass through her facade. Unbelievable!"

The crowd roared with excitement. This was the best match so far.

Paul's left eye twitched, which also still stung quite a bit from a certain slap he received. "How did you know Froslass would appear to your left?" he stated incredulously. There was no way in the distortion world Ash would've seen that one coming. Not in a million years.

The trainer in question gave a smug grin. "A good trainer never reveals his methods."

Paul actually growled at that. This was not going according to plan at all.

'I owe you one for that Tia,' the trainer told her happily. '

Anytime, Ash,' she responded lovingly. Things were looking bright for the raven haired trainer.

Paul looked absolutely pissed. This was not a mere coincidence; it was if Arceus was on Ash's side. Frosllass looked pretty drained too. Still, although Donphan managed to evade all of Frosllass' attacks, the poison was slowly racking up damage. So Paul closed his eyes and mentally counted.

'What's Paul doing? Has he given up like that one time in Hearthome?' Ash questioned.

Tia responded. *'I don't know, I could read his mind if you'd like?'*

Ash mentally shook his head. 'Let's just attack while Paul's occupied,' Ash decided. "Donphan, use stone edge one more time." The ground type pokemon complied and shot dozen of rocks at the panting Frosllass.

"Dodge for five seconds and then retaliate with blizzard!" The purple haired trainer shouted.

'What's he trying to do?' Ash thought to no one in particular. Paul's ghost pokemon evaded the attack quite nicely and after five seconds shot the strong ice type attack.

"Dodge it Donphan and then use roll out to close the distance," Ash commanded. The ground type pokemon gave a nod, but just as he was about to dodge however, the poison kicked in, making him unable to move.

"No, not now! Quick, get out of the way!" Ash shouted to his pokemon. It was too late however; Donphan got hit by the super effective blizzard and gave a loud cry. He slumped down on the ground and his eyes turned to swirls.

"Donphan is unable to battle, Froslass wins!" the referee stated. The crowd cheered loudly at the display of Paul's cleverness.

"Again I'm surprised! This time, Paul used the exact timing of the poison to make sure Donphan was unable to evade his most powerful attack. This is a tie game people, both sides having lost two pokemon," The announcer explained.

The crowd went wild and Ash returned his second pokemon. "You did great Donphan, take a long rest alongside Torterra," he praised his ground type pokemon.

'I'm sorry Ash; I should've seen that one coming,' the young legendary apologized.

Ash snorted. 'Don't be, of course you couldn't have seen that one coming. Paul is just very good at adapting. It's a tie game right now, but I still got both of my aces left.' Ash smiled at her mentally. 'His biggest shock is yet about to come.'

Did you like it, love it, hate it? Leave me a review please, waffles love reviews! Next chapter in a day or three! In addition, I'd like to give a shoutout to Storylover Vodhr- Dux Ducis, who I am now a beta for. Check him out guys, he's definitely 20% cooler than me.

Syrup-Waffle

Ash vs Paul: Bayleef takes charge

Back already? You betcha! Call me the Flash, Quicksilver, Sonic the hedgehog, Superman, Speedy Gonzalez, Roadrunner, Dash, *Rainbow* Dash, whatever! Enjoy this chapter, hope I do it justice.

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, I would have made a full pokemon game for the TV consoles years ago!

"Dawn" Speech

'Dawn' Thoughts

'Dawn' Telepathy

"Dawn" Whiteboard Marker

"Ladies and gentlemen, let's see who Ash is going to use next."

The announcer was ready, so was the crowd. Paul looked on skeptically. 'He's probably going to use Infernape again, this is going to get rough.'

'You're going to use Infernape again? Charizard is still on his way after all,' Tia asked her love interest curiously.

'No, I'm going to use Bayleef. I rather save my strongest three pokemon for last. Besides, she can hold her own pretty nicely,' Ash responded her.

Latias nodded mentally but also pouted a little. The positive emotions she read when Ash was talking about Bayleef made her feel uneasy. The dragoness was no bloke. She'd seen how Bayleef had looked at her with training earlier today; the way how she'd shown affection towards Ash.

It was obvious. The grass pokemon had a crush on Ash just like her. The legendary knew the Johto pokemon was going to give it her all to win Ash over.

Fat chance she ever let that happen, if a little competition is what she wanted, she could get it.

The raven haired boy readjusted his hat, grabbed Bayleef's pokeball and threw it in the air. "Bayleef, I choose you!" Ash shouted. The ball opened and the Johto grass starter materialized on the field. She gave a happy "bay" before readying herself.

Normally, she would've tackled Ash out of affection, but she knew this was a serious moment. Not only did Ash trust her to take part in a quarter finals match for him, but there was also the fact that Latias was trying to take *her* Ash away from her. How dare she? She would show just how strong she was, even if she neither was a legendary nor fully evolved.

She was so determined, the grass pokemon didn't even feel the toxic spikes taking effect on her.

"An interesting choice from the Kanto resident. Ash opts to still have the type disadvantage, yet it looked like the toxic didn't affect Bayleef in the slightest. This should be a match to remember," the announcer boomed in his mike.

Paul's confusion was evident. 'I give up. Why's he not using Infernape? Why take unnecessary damage with Bayleef? Even if my Froslass is hurt pretty badly, one blizzard and this Bayleef is not getting up.' He mentally shook his head. 'Whatever, easier time for me.'

'Why's Ash using Bayleef?' Bianca wondered. Her lap was full of sketches and she tapped her chin with her pencil. Tia didn't respond, too focused on the battle that was about to take place.

"Frolass vs Bayleef, begin!" the referee shouted and raised his flags.

"Frolass, use ice beam, go!" the purple haired trainer began. The kimono wearing ghost type shot the icy beam at breakneck pace, straight at the determined Bayleef, who still was standing idly.

"Bayleef, counter it with your razor leaf!" Ash spoke in turn. The grass starter gave a might cry of her name before turning her head and sending a dozen of sharp spinning leaves into the incoming ice beam attack.

The razor leaf was not only able to cancel out Frolass's attack, but managed to get through it as well, much to the shock of the icy ghost pokemon.

Frolass had enough.

First, this Donphan that continued to surprise her and now this Bayleef too?

She was too stunned to even hear her trainer shout at her to dodge. Even if she had heard it, she was too exhausted to comply. So the leftover leaves hit her dead on and she gave a shout of pain.

"Much power from Ash's Bayleef. This might be it for Paul's Frolass," the announcer speculated.

Paul said nothing. He had his hands in his pockets as Ash praised his Bayleef.

"Way to go!" he said happily. She gave a cry of approval in return. To everybody's amazement, the Frolass was still floating, albeit barely.

"It's not over yet folks. Frolass is still floating, incredible!" the announcer exclaimed.

The raven haired boy looked on with disbelief. 'Just how strong is this thing?' Ash thought to himself. The artist and the dragoness

were wondering the same thing.

While Tia did grow a sense of dread, she was also impressed at the power Ash's grass type possessed.

Paul again, closed his eyes, while Frosslass waited. Ash gritted his teeth. Was he going to try the same thing like last time?

"Bayleef, use light screen," Ash commanded. 'That way,' he thought, 'she could at least take one hit and retaliate afterwards.'

The grass starter nodded and coated herself in a gold like hue, buffing up her special defense considerably.

"It looks like Paul's banking on the poison again while Ash takes measurements this time, using light screen to take the super effective hit if he needs it," the announcer explained.

The dragoness decided to help. *'Ash, buff up Bayleef's special attack as well. That way, her attacks will charge faster and do more damage.'*

While she did see Bayleef as competition, she rather helped Ash out. The young trainer agreed. 'Good idea, Paul's still doing nothing so why not?'

He returned his attention back to his Johto pokemon. "Bayleef, use growth in the meantime, until Frosslass decides to attack!" he stated.

The grass starter obeyed. She glowed a bright white, raising her attack and special attack.

"Ash is setting up while Paul is still waiting patiently. I wonder, how is this going to end?"

Not only the announcer but also the crowd was thinking the same thing. Finally, the poison started to kick in. This time, Bayleef did feel it and gave a little shout of pain, but Paul still did nothing.

'What? Why is he not doing anything?' Ash asked in confusion. Bianca and Latias were just as lost.

"It seems Paul lets his opponent set up. What is he thinking ladies and gentlemen?" the announcer questioned. The dragoness didn't mind it and happily gave Ash her advice. *'Keep on setting up, this way; you'll sweep his entire team with Bayleef.'*

Ash nodded mentally. "Keep it coming Bayleef," he shouted at her. She gave a happy cry and kept on growing.

"Paul is still doing nothing while Bayleef is still setting up," the announcer told the crowd.

Finally, Ash's patience ran thin. "Bayleef, finish this with an energy ball."

The instant he said this, Paul's emotions changed. It was such a huge difference, Tia couldn't help but notice.

He was waiting for Ash to attack, but why?

Suddenly, Tia realized. *'Ash stop, he's going to use destiny bond!'* she warned the trainer. Ash was too late to cancel the attack though as Bayleef fired it.

Paul gave a smirk. "Destiny bond."

The grass starter's eyes grew wide. She was going to get eliminated if that attack hit!

No, not like this!

She refused to go down without a win. With a reflex a Deoxys-speed would be envious of, she extended her vines to intercept the energy ball. As quick as lightning the vines shot towards her grass attack and blocked it before it could hit the Frolass.

She grunted in pain as her own attack exploded on her vines, but she kept on standing strong.

Paul, Frosslass, Tia and even Ash's jaw dropped at this act of sudden speed.

"This is unheard of people! Paul tried to take Bayleef down with Frosslass' destiny bond all along, but the speedy reflex of Ash's pokemon prevented that, as she blocked her own attack with her vines!" the announcer exclaimed just as flabbergasted.

The crowd roared wildly. Frosslass felt as if she got hit with a brick. She couldn't comprehend it anymore. The surprise left her wild open, paralyzed in mid air.

"Impossible!" Paul screamed, his face full of surprise and rage. There was no way any Bayleef could be that fast.

Ash too was looking on mouth agape. It took a nudge from one of Bayleef's vines to get him out of his stupor.

'How?' the dragoness sputtered. Even if she went full speed, the disguised legendary questioned if she could catch that energy ball in time.

'I don't know,' Ash replied, just as amazed. 'But I'm not one to complain.'

Quickly thinking of a strategy, Ash ushered his next attack. "Bayleef, grab Frosslass with your vines!"

She obeyed and the vines shot forward once again, quickly wrapping the Frosslass up.

"Don't look like a Stunfisk! Do something! Escape those vines with Blizzard now!" the purple haired trainer raged. The ice and ghost type wasn't listening; she couldn't, even if she tried. The shock was too much and Paul roared in frustration.

"Now! Throw Frosslass on the ground!" Ash yelled, his fist pumped in the air. Bayleef smirked. This was it, her first win for Ash.

Paul's pokemon was thrown like a rag doll and hit the ground head first. The toxic spikes activated and the Frosslass gave one last icy shriek before slumping down.

"Frosslass is unable to battle, Bayleef wins!" the referee stated. The crowd went wild as Ash happily praised his pokemon.

"Alright, Bayleef!" the raven haired trainer shouted. This time, the grass starter couldn't help herself as she tackled her trainer to the ground and nuzzled his cheek affectionately.

"What a strategy from Ash! Using Paul's own toxic spikes against him to finish off his Frosslass and nullify the effect of destiny bond at the same time. I don't know if I can handle much more of this folks!" the announcer shouted once again, surprise clear in his voice.

'That was indeed very clever,' the artist agreed. She gave a smug grin as she saw her best friend look at the scene before her. 'They look cute together, don't you think?' she teased the disguised legendary.

This time, she definitely got a reaction out of her best friend. The young psychic puffed up her cheeks as she gave an angry look at Bianca. ' ***Don't***, even *joke about that*,' she answered back, obviously envious of Bayleef.

Yes, she was jealous, that was no secret. Instead, it should have been *her* that Ash would be surprised about, *her* who would give him the win and most importantly, *her* who would tackle Ash to the ground happily and nuzzle him.

Definitely not some midget dinosaur where junkies would get high around.

'And it was me that suggested Bayleef to set up. Now she's probably going to sweep Paul's entire team with all the boosts she's gotten,' she sulked to herself.

While she would be extremely happy for Ash if he would win, she couldn't help but feel she dug her own grave. This Bayleef was going to strike with all the honor and Ash would be so impressed, he would forget about her like dust in the wind.

As if some higher entity whispered this in Bayleef's ears, the grass starter eyed the disguised legendary and gave her a confident grin, just to rub salt into the wound.

'Did she just really do what I think she did!?' Latias snarled, giving the grass pokemon a dark look. 'Alright you mewling quim, you asked for it. No more misses nice dragoness. Ash is *mine!* '

While this was going on, Paul was having an inner conundrum. Sweat dripped from his head and his fists were balled. 'This Bayleef is going to sweep me if I don't play very clever, but I need to keep my Electrivire for his Infernape,' the purple haired trainer thought.

With not much of an option, he grabbed his Drapion again. Said pokemon materialized on the field and just as before, it gave a menacing shout.

"Paul is choosing Drapion again! Surely, this beast of a pokemon can stop the rampaging bull known as Bayleef!" the announcer spoke confidently. The crowd however wasn't so sure. Mixed reactions were evident, some cheering for Drapion, others hoping for a sweep and cheering for Bayleef instead.

The Johto pokemon was once again ready, having gotten off of her trainer who now had not an inch of worry on his face.

Paul looked thoughtful. 'I need to stall this Bayleef, let the poison rack up the damage. Moreover, I can't let her get anymore boosts,'

with these thoughts in mind, the purple haired trainer readied himself.

For Bayleef this was just the beginning. 'So far one down, if I manage to win this match for Ash, I win *him* for sure.'

She was already on cloud nine. This 'legendary' pokemon stood no chance in her mind. Together, Ash and Bayleef were unstoppable, the grass starter was sure.

"Bayleef vs Drapion, begin!" the referee shouted.

"Use growth again!" the raven haired boy spoke. He wanted to knock out Paul's remaining pokemon in one hit. The purple haired trainer couldn't believe what he'd heard.

'That greedy idiot. Do you really think I will let you set up even more?' He sighed inwardly. "Taunt."

Drapion smirked, taunt was his favorite move. Now it was the turn for this little Bayleef to be his next victim.

"Excuse me miss, you seem lost. The kitchen is over there." He pointed a claw to the exit of the stadium.

The grass starter harrumphed.

"Shut up, jerk," she responded back.

The Drapion feigned surprise. "Such language for such a little girl, I bet you still cry yourself to sleep every night," the poison and dark type stated obnoxiously.

"Unlike you, I got an awesome trainer who actually cares about me. No need to cry with him at my side," she countered back.

The Drapion saw his opening. "Oh? You like your trainer don't you? I saw how much affection you showed him when you knocked out

Froslax earlier. Do you really think a human would ever love such a wimpy pokemon as yourself?"

Bayleef growled, she would show him.

Ash meanwhile, looked on owlshly. 'Forgot about the taunt. Crap, need to think of something else and fast.'

Seeing as Bayleef was unable to use growth, the young trainer opted to attack instead.

"Use vine whip instead Bayleef!"

The pokemon complied more than happily. Her vines extended again, intending to whip the poison and dark type as hard as possible.

"Paul counters Ash's growth nicely with taunt. Will this vine whip finally hit the Drapion?" the announcer questioned as he rubbed his chin. His question was answered shortly after.

"Dodge now, then use cross poison," Paul retaliated. The incoming vines were either dodged, or blocked by Drapion's massive claws. The poison and dark type couldn't help but take another jab at this Bayleef for extra measure.

"Hey, you're pretty good with those vines of yours!" he exclaimed honestly.

The grass pokemon looked on confused. *Now* he was praising her? Figures.

Her thoughts were immediately shattered however when he added, "did you learn that in the kitchen?" The smug grin on his face was enough to sent Bayleef in a fury.

Paul's pokemon prepared his cross poison attack, while Bayleef charged him for a body slam.

Tia was looking on wordlessly. Deep in her thoughts, she was smiling evilly. 'That's what you get, Bayleef!' she sneered at the grass starter, obviously the only other one who could hear Drapion's taunt.

Her happy attitude was completely swallowed up by jealousy. She didn't even bother giving Ash advice anymore, silently hoping he would make a mistake that would cost him his Bayleef. Deep down, she knew what she was thinking was very wrong. But she didn't care at the moment. This Bayleef needed to get out of the way and fast.

Bianca didn't notice, she was too busy sketching Bayleef attacking Drapion. Ash too, didn't notice Latias' absent at the moment. He was way too focused on the battle at hand.

The raven haired boy already had a plan to bait the Drapion. "Keep on charging Bayleef, but wait for my signal," the young trainer shouted to his now pissed off pokemon.

In the back of her mind, she heard her trainer shout. She grinned; he had a plan.

Drapion finally fired his poisonous attack, the purple X heading straight to the incoming grass type. "Now! Use your vines to jump over the attack and then fire off an energy ball!" Ash shouted. Paul was taken aback; Ash just used his own improvisation against him.

'Ketchum, why are you so innovative?'

"What a clever way not to lose any momentum for Ash, there's no way Drapion is going to dodge this attack!" the announcer boomed and he was right.

Bayleef jumped over the attack rather effortlessly and prepared the green energy orb.

"Intercept!" Paul shouted out in panic, out of other options. Drapion, equally surprised, put his claws for his body, waiting for the inevitable

hit.

The energy ball hit his claws. Confident he could stop it there; he was horrified when the orb actually pushed his claws back and exploded in his face. The blast had so much power; the Drapion was forced against the wall behind him where he hid it with a loud thud. Paul had to shut his eyes; it was almost powerful enough to blast him off his feet as well.

The crowd went silent. Even Tia didn't say a letter.

It was a miracle the Drapion got up after that. He weakly stood on his feet, looking fearfully at his opponent. Said opponent was still rather pissed off.

She grunted however when the poison took effect on her. This gave the Drapion some hope but he knew he couldn't afford to get hit again.

"An amazing display of power from Bayleef. The result of all those special attack raises from growth. Paul's in a tricky situation," the announcer spoke honestly and the purple haired trainer knew it was true.

Ash was grinning from ear to ear. He felt confident and already had another plan. Bayleef started to pant a little but gave the Drapion an angry look nonetheless.

"How'd you like that, you wanna be scorpion king!" she taunted back at Paul's pokemon.

He grunted but said nothing back in return. He knew better than to piss off this girl even more.

"Bayleef body slam Drapion, let's go!" Ash commanded. The grass starter started to charge the behemoth again. Paul, who learned from his last mistake, now had another plan.

'You don't really think I'm going to fall for that again, right? Sometimes Ketchum, you make no sense at all.' He closed his eyes and shouted his command.

"Drapion, intercept Bayleef!"

Paul smirked, once he had her, he would finish her off with a pin missile attack. Ash was expecting this however.

'You're saying I am predictable Paul, but it's you who's going to lose another pokemon.'

Bianca watched intently, drawing furiously. The young dragoness was actually curious what Ash was thinking. *'What have you planned Ash?'*

She finally broke the silence. It took a couple of seconds for the raven haired boy to reply. 'You'll see in due time. Paul is going to recognize just how capable of a trainer I really am,' he responded finally. Tia stayed silent after that.

'This Bayleef needs to faint,' Tia thought darkly. She sensed the surprise when she spoke with Ash. He didn't expect her to talk telepathically to him, he forgot about her. It hurt the dragoness and she blamed the grass starter entirely.

In the meantime, the claws of the Drapion shot out, content in trapping the Bayleef like he did with Torterra. "No hard feelings, little baby girl," he insulted her.

"Now *intercept* Drapion's interception with your vines Bayleef," Ash commanded.

He loved when he could use his opponent's words and strategies against them. The grass starter smirked and caught the incoming claws. The boosts actually making her strong enough to push them away, leaving him wide open.

The look on Drapion's face was even funnier than the look on Paul's face. "Tell me, how does it feel to get defeated by a little baby girl?" Bayleef mocked the scorpion like pokemon.

"This looks like it people, Paul walked straight into Ash's trap," the announcer exclaimed. The crowd was in awe at the strength of the grass starter, of course, thanks to her boosts. Nonetheless, they cheered her on when Ash ushered the finishing move.

"Obliterate him with solar beam!"

The rings on Bayleef's neck started to glow as Drapion gave her a look of desperation. He knew this was going to hurt.

"Have mercy!" he pleaded, actually afraid she would blow his head off of his body.

"Sorry sweetie, you need to be punished, badly," she spoke in a sultry, sing-song voice. The Drapion accepted his fate, his dignity faltering, waiting for the inevitable attack.

Finally, Bayleef was finished charging and shot the purified beam point blank at Drapion's face. The resulting explosion turned the whole stadium into a cloud of smoke.

"What power!" the announcer yelled over the smoke. "There's no way Drapion could've survived that attack!"

Everybody agreed with him, even the referee raised his flag already, signaling the defeat of Paul's pokemon.

"Drapion is unable to battle, Bayleef wi-HUH?" he exclaimed loudly.

Ash and Paul, who still couldn't see the result both reacted confused.

What was the referee so surprised about? They both had their mouth agape when they saw their pokemon; Drapion still intact like nothing happened and Bayleef with a look of stunned shock.

Drapion finally opened his eyes and felt... Nothing. What had happened? His claws were still intertwined with Bayleef's vines, who looked like she could faint from mere shock alone.

"H-How?" she questioned, she didn't believe it. Nothing had happened.

Both the trainers on the field were surprised beyond comprehension. Ash's head started to throb, this was impossible! The crowd was dead silent when they saw the result, even the announcer couldn't find his voice.

"I... Uh... How... What?!" he exclaimed stupidly. After a couple of seconds, Paul was the first to react.

"Drapion, pin missile, now!" The Drapion needed a moment to acknowledge his trainer's voice before complying.

"Sorry," he muttered apologetically to the stunned grass pokemon, who clearly had him beat, but somehow had not inflicted any damage on him whatsoever.

The energized needles hit Bayleef straight in her chest. There wasn't even a cry of pain, just a thud as she fell on the ground, knocked out.

"Uhm... Uh... Bayleef is unable to battle, Drapion wins?" the referee said unsurely.

The silence was ear deafening. Ash returned her without a word. His head hurt, he needed a minute... Or ten.

"Referee, time-out please," the young trainer asked him. He acknowledged it immediately.

"We're going in a time-out people, it seems Ash needs some time to comprehend just what happened. We all do! Both trainers get fifteen minutes to reorganize themselves. In addition, both trainers have three pokemon remaining. Be sure to check in after the break." The

announcer went silent as various people began walking away, either to get food, drinks, to use the restroom or just to stretch their legs.

The young trainer grabbed a chair and drank some water, not bothering to go inside. 'What happened? It's impossible. The attack connected yet Drapion took no damage at all.'

He rubbed his throbbing head. 'Ash?' A sweet voice spoke up. The trainer immediately felt a little better when he heard that voice. Not much, but a little.

'Tia. What's up?' he thought back in a bittersweet tone. He couldn't sulk when he was talking to her.

'Are... Are you alright?' She sounded unsure. Why?

He gave her a mental shrug. 'I don't know, stuff keeps happening. I'm getting a little sick of it,' he admitted and then added with a sad tone, 'I miss Pikachu, so badly. I want him back, hold him in my arms, and tell him everything is going to be alright.'

The trainer looked forlorn as he told her this fact. The dragoness bit her lip. She wanted to cheer him up, but no words came out of her mouth. She could only watch as her love interest put his hands on his head.

'He looks so devastated. Say something. Anything!' the disguised legendary mentally berated herself. Nothing came. It was as if she was paralyzed on the spot.

Ash's body language didn't go unnoticed by Bianca. The artist gave him a sad look. "Poor Ash," she pitied the young trainer.

Even Paul gave him a somewhat sympathetic look. 'He's obviously hurting about what happened to his Pikachu.' He sighed to himself. 'I can't believe I'm about to do this.'

He actually went over to the trainer and put a reassuring hand on his shoulder. Ash looked up; of all people he would expect, Paul was the last one.

"Hey..." He began. He let the silence hang there for a second and looked for words. "I heard about Pikachu. It must suck. A lot,"hHe awkwardly said. Silence reigned again. Paul sighed, he was so bad at this. "Listen, whatever happened, I know for a fact he is ok."

The raven haired boy looked at his rival with hope in his eyes. "How?" he asked.

"I'm going to say this only once Ketchum. You're strong, stronger than me. The way how you train your pokemon is incredible..." He stopped once more and closed his eyes. "Therefore, there's no way Pikachu is going to give up and you should neither." Paul gave him a grin. "Now stop being all mopey and let's finish this match!"

Ash couldn't help but chuckle at that response. He gave him a single nod as he took Paul's outstretched hand, helping him up.

The crowd applauded at the sportsmanship.

Paul grumbled, embarrassment clear on his face.

"Of course they would applaud for me, that's the last time I do something nice," He muttered as he walked back to his side of the field.

Halfway through, Ash called him. "Hey Paul!"

the purple haired trainer turned his head.

"Hmm?"

Ash gave him a sad smile. "Thanks for that, I needed it."

Paul grinned once more. "I have know idea what you're talking about Ketchum," he stated before he began to walk back again.

The young trainer shook his head at Paul's antics. He was still a little sad, but felt a lot better.

'Tia?' he said.

The surprised dragoness spoke up immediately. 'Y-yes Ash?' Sse answered, having found her voice again.

'I'll be inside for a little while, ok?' She gave him a mental nod.

He still had a minute or ten left anyway. He walked inside while Bianca praised the veilstone resident. 'Paul is not as cold as he looks, right Tia?' Bianca said happily, clasping her hands together.

'*Maybe not,*' she answered, actually very happy with Paul.

The happiness didn't last very long, it turned in dread right after a certain someone sat down beside her. The calm voice in which he talked didn't help to soothe her nerves at all.

'But you are, aren't you, *Latias?* '

The dragoness' heart was about to stop. She looked on with fear as Tobias was sitting next to her, holding a cup of coffee in his hand. How did he know about her? There was no way.

'Y-You!' She answered back fearfully. This man gave off such *wrongness* it made her terrified beyond end.

'Yes me, but you can just call me Tobias if you prefer,' he answered back calmly.

She gave him a fearful look. '*What do you want? How did you know I was a Latias? How are we even having this conversation?*'

As the seconds passed, more questions popped up in Latias' mind.

The legendary trainer chuckled. 'Me? I just want to talk, that's all. As for your other two questions, you could say I have a special

connection to every legendary pokemon.'

She gave him a questionable look.

He went on. 'I can see through your disguise like people see through you when you turn invisible. My ability, if that's what you want to call it, is also the reason we have an immediate connection with each other,' he explained her, sipping some of his hot beverage.

The dragoness gave him an angry look. *'Are you here to catch me, or hurt Ash? Don't even think about it! I won't let you catch me nor hurt Ash!'* she warned him.

Tobias began to laugh. 'You're so naive *Tia* . Do you think so low of me? You hurt my feelings,' he mocked her. 'No, none of that whatsoever. I'm not like Malice if that's what you're thinking.'

The disguised legendary grew annoyed but was also surprised by that last statement. *'Wait... You know Malice?'* she asked, surprised. He gave her a smile.

'I had a run in with him once. Yes, it was three years ago in Snowpoint city; annoying little man. Just like a Zubat in a cave, it keeps coming back. And here we are! He's still running loose and being a nuisance.' He gave a low growl. 'Not for long though.'

Latias raised a brow. *'What do you mean by that?'*

Tobias gave her a stern look. 'Don't you know it's rude to pry? Don't you worry your pretty little face about it,' he said as he gave her a mocking rub over her head.

That stern look sent shivers through her spine. She was too afraid to rebut after that.

' **Who** are you ?' the young legendary asked incredulously. This was not normal. He was not normal. Not normal at all.

Tobias gave her another smirk.

'The better question could be, *what* am I?' He slowly rubbed his hand over hers, causing Latias to be rooted to the spot, paralyzed with fear. He drank the rest of his coffee silently, Bianca seemingly not bothered by him at all.

The dragoness finally found her voice again. '*W-wait! What did you mean by your first statement, why did you call me cold? I care!*'

Tobias, who was about to leave, shook his head in disappointment.

'That's what you care about, what you want to know? Not how Ash is doing? After all, it was your fault what happened to him just now,' he told her simply.

Latias denied this immediately. '*Not true. He was sad about Pikachu!*' she rebutted.

'Open your eyes woman!' Tobias shouted suddenly, causing her to flinch. 'Your jealousy clouded your judgments! It was *you* who blocked the solar beam with your psychic. You can't hide it from me. You were selfish! Not thinking about Bayleef or even Ash's feelings, just your own!' he screamed at her accusingly.

'I wonder how Ash is going to react when he finds out...' He added.

Fear caught Latias by her throat. '*No please! Don't tell him, I'm begging you!*' she pleaded desperately, already in tears. If Ash knew she blocked Bayleef's solar beam, her chances of winning him over would plunge drastically.

'*I couldn't help it, it just... Happened,*' she added silently.

Tobias only gave her an angry snarl. 'Look at you, crying and miserable. Pathetic! Do you see what love brings? Only agony. You're better off without it!' he responded coldly. 'I don't have time for your stupid little love troubles. I couldn't care less. Right now, I have to do something more important.' With those words, he left the dragoness alone.

When she couldn't sense him anymore she breathed a sigh of relief. Her hands were shaking like a leaf. Just now, Bianca saw what a wreck Latias was at the moment.

'Tia? What happened!? You look like you've seen a ghost!' the artist asked her worriedly.

She swallowed once. *'Don't worry about it, I'm fine now.'*

That was a lie. She felt very guilty, not only what she'd done to Ash but Bayleef as well. Her envy just took over.

In an instant, she'd done it. She actually gasped herself a little when it had happened. And now, the guilt was eating her up from the inside. She knew she had to apologize and hope for forgiveness, but now was not the time. Right now, she needed to support Ash as best as she could to help him win.

Speaking of, the trainer just returned. The ten remaining minutes were done. The crowd gave him a standing ovation; the referee too, gave him an applause as well as the elite four, who were present at that time. Only the champion was missing.

He looked a lot better and gave a little wave to the crowd.

'Tia, are you ready for this?' he literally yelled in his mind.

Her response was just as strong. *'Ready when you are Ash.'*

The sun darkened as a shadow blocked the sunrays. Ash gave a huge smirk at the descending pokemon. 'The gang is all here. Let's do this!'

Did you like it? Love it? Hate it? Review please. For those who are wondering, Bayleef won't return as rival or anything like that. It was an one time thing. Next week the conclusion and this time I promise it!

Syrup-Waffle out!

Ash vs Paul: The double reveal

Welcome back people, to the conclusion of Ash vs Paul. Finally, it is done, but however I look at it, I feel like it misses something. I don't know, this is the first chapter I'm not really happy with. Whatever, I hope you guys enjoy it anyway. On another note, it's my birthday today! Yes, I turned twenty years of age. So consider this a gift from me to you :)

Special thanks to my reviewer Uranium235, for the constructive criticism he left last chapter. I love all your reviews, but I definitely crave constructive criticism the most. It helps me make this story even better for your own reading pleasure! For those who hadn't seen it yet, I changed a certain scene in the last chapter because of his review. Now on with the story!

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, somebody would've hooked up with Ash ages ago!

"Charizard" Speech

'Charizard' Thoughts

'Charizard' Telepathy

"Charizard" Whiteboard marker

Chills.

That's what went through Ash's body when he saw the silhouette of the pokemon who was descending rapidly to the battlefield below; the sun rays blocking its appearance.

Its big wings flapped heavily on the wind, and when it spotted Ash, it dove towards him like a bullet. Just then, it gave a mighty roar, letting

the whole stadium know of its presence. Crowd and announcer alike watched with awe as the pokemon came closer and closer.

"We're just back from our intermission people, and it seems we have a mysterious pokemon crashing the battle who's heading straight to Ash Ketchum!" the announcer spoke with a hint of panic in his voice.

Some people in the crowd got restless as well. Murmurs could be heard; some of them even slightly dreadful, yet Ash only gave a wide smirk at the approaching form of the pokemon.

Paul's expression was unreadable; he didn't fear for Ash's life at all. Something just screamed at him that this was Ash's pokemon, and he was right.

The flaps grew louder and finally, Ash could see the face of his loyal fire and flying type.

"Charizard! You made it!" the boy exclaimed happily.

The pokemon in question gave one mighty flap of his wings to stop his descent, sending dust flying everywhere, and greeted his trainer with a growl of acknowledgement.

'I knew it,' Paul thought to himself, slightly agitated, and gritted his teeth. Sweat started to form on his face, as he desperately sought for a solution to this obvious ace of Ash Ketchum.

'This Charizard is probably Ash's strongest pokemon and I should treat it as such,' the Veilstone resident reasoned.

In the crowd, Bianca looked on with excitement, her pencil almost smoking with how fast she was drawing. 'Charizard looks so awesome, don't you agree, Tia?' she stated to her best friend, who was seizing Charizard up and down, obviously seeing a match in the Kanto fire starter.

'Definitely,' the dragoness agreed, her eyes locked on the monster that was now standing before Ash. He was growling at the purple haired trainer, who looked slightly fazed.

"What!?" the announcer exclaimed, unable to hide his surprise. "I don't believe it! The mysterious pokemon was Ash's Charizard all along, talk about an entrance!"

The crowd now gave a deafening roar, their worry ebbing away. If this Charizard was just as strong as he looked, they would be in for an enjoyable match for sure.

"Hey Paul! How'd you like my Charizard? I let him come over here all for you, so he expects a tough match!" Ash yelled at his opponent, who didn't respond.

Paul was in a tough spot: his Drapion was damaged pretty badly, his Ninjask was obviously no match, and he had to keep his Electivire for last. That Infernape was still in the back as well and Ash had still one slot unrevealed. He couldn't let his ace take unnecessary damage, so his options were limited.

'If I want to win this, I have to play really smart,' he added mentally; he couldn't afford to make a mistake.

'Ash! Are you going to use Charizard right now?' the dragoness asked him, unable to keep a twinge of happiness out of her sweet voice. Even after all what'd happened, she still felt strongly around the boy, and couldn't help but show it a little.

The young man responded her in an instant; quite happy when he heard her voice, despite what just had occurred.

'Of course I will! And I already got a plan how I'm going to use him. If I know Paul well enough, he's going to save his Electivire for last, even if he would have the type advantage against Charizard. He needs it for my Infernape and he knows it. That's what I'm going to exploit!'

The disguised legendary nodded mentally. *'Alright Ash, I'll be here to cheer you on!'* she responded, seeing as Ash didn't need her help anymore. The trainer finally looked content, probably because he was about to battle with one of his oldest friends. Nostalgia had that effect on you.

"The match will now be resumed. Trainers, please show your pokemon!" the referee stated, both boys getting ready.

"Drapion, standby for battle!" the purple haired trainer shouted, throwing his poison and dark type back on the field, who looked slightly bruised but ready to fight nonetheless.

Just like before, it was about to shout menacingly, but immediately shut up at the sight of the Charizard. Fear started to creep in its system instantly. The Kanto starter looked not amused at all, his powerful claws shining in the bright sunlight.

"I'll be using Charizard!" the Kanto resident brought in.

The Charizard grinned, and puffed out a cloud of smoke. He would show Ash just how much he'd progressed after the last time they battled together.

The crowd was pumped; these two beasts were about to battle against each other in the class of ages. The referee raised his flags as both pokemon got ready, one fearful and one filled with determination.

"Drapion versus Charizard, begin!" he shouted, and lowered his flags in signal of the start of this battle.

"Drapion, cross poison, go!" the purple haired trainer started off, extending an arm for emphasis.

His pokemon hesitated slightly; Charizard had that look on his face that screamed: 'I dare you to fire off that attack, I double dare you!'

Not wanting to disobey his trainer, but not wanting to turn into a shish kebab by Charizard's claws either, he fired the poisonous X towards Ash's pokemon, though it missed a lot of raw power.

The fire and flying type saw this; he loved seeing pokemon tremble before him, and opened his wings to look even more intimidating. The fear on the Drapion gave him a great advantage, even though he hadn't even fired off an attack of his own yet.

Charizard smirked as his trainer uttered his first attack, "Charizard, use flamethrower to block the cross poison."

The pokemon opened his maw and fired a sea of flames at the incoming attack.

The purple X turned hot red at the contact, and exploded in mid-air soon afterwards, not stopping the flames at all, which were traveling towards Paul's pokemon with high speed and not a care in the world.

"Use your claws again to escape!" Paul yelled, desperation lingering in his voice.

The pokemon complied and used his claws on the ground, getting that extra boost he needed to evade the flamethrower just in time.

"Ash starts off strongly as that cross poison from Paul's Drapion missed a lot of power. Are we sure that Charizard's ability is not intimidate?" the announcer questioned jokingly.

Paul couldn't appreciate the joke; even he was slightly intimidated as the flamethrower whizzed past him. He could feel the destructive power and heat it packed, his face turning to a red hue for a moment when it traveled past his line of sight.

He swallowed audibly.

This was not just an ordinary Charizard, this was a *powerful* Charizard.

The dragoness was amazed; that was certainly one powerful flamethrower. *'Ash, did you train Charizard all by yourself?'* Latias asked him excitedly. If this was the case, she couldn't wait what Ash had in store for her.

'Unfortunately, no. Charizard has had some very special training, which I'm sure I could've managed to accomplish myself, given me enough time, but definitely not as quick as now,' the boy explained to his legendary, who understood.

'Aww, I was hoping you could make me a powerful pokemon too.' She pouted, half teasing and half sincere.

Ash chuckled in response. *'But you already are, Tia, and trust me, I promise to make you the strongest Latias in the whole world!'* the boy exclaimed happily.

The disguised legendary felt warmth invade her body. She gave the boy a very happy smile and cooed in response. Ash never failed to make her happy; she loved the young man, and so, she was reminded of what she'd done just twenty minutes ago.

She sighed inwardly; the dragoness knew this was going to be tough to admit, and called Ash softly. *'There's something I need you to tell, Ash...'*

She hesitated for a moment, trying to find her words. Latias was about to postpone this chat until after the match, but Ash beat her to it.

'Let me guess, you were the one that blocked Bayleef's attack, weren't you?'

Tia gasped; her heartbeat started to rise, and shame hit her like a ton of bricks. Ash knew; how did he figure it out so fast? She felt so ashamed, and was at a loss for words as the trainer patiently waited for a response.

Finally, she admitted it hesitantly, slowly nodding her head up and down like she just got caught doing something terrible, and in her mind, she did.

The young trainer sighed and pinched his nose. He'd never expect something like this from Tia, but it was the only logical explanation. He'd thought about it very deeply in the break and he was right about his assumption.

The only reason is why? Why did she do it? Ash had a vague idea, but that could wait after the match. Latias was already apologizing profusely as Ash put her at ease.

'I'm so sorry, Ash. I don't know what came over me. Please forgive me!' she mentally pleaded, sadness filled in her voice. The Kanto resident stayed silent for a moment before he responded.

'... I forgive you,' Ash told her finally, his voice neutral. 'But! We're going to have a long talk with Bayleef after this match as to why you did it,' Ash added, with a hint of tiredness in his voice.

Latias nodded immediately; already more than happy her trainer had forgiven her so easily. *'Yes of course, thank you, Ash!'* she spoke to him with happiness. Appreciation filled her being and Ash smiled slightly, he couldn't stay mad for long at her.

'Now that we got the cleared out of the way, I have a scorpion to fry.' Ash now gave a full smile as he saw how Paul reacted to his flamethrower attack. He used the same strategy that caught him so off guard earlier in the match. Not this time though.

'Got you,' Ash thought triumphantly. He predicted-no, he *knew* Paul was going to use that strategy to evade his Charizard's flamethrower, and punished him accordingly.

Drapion, who was high up in the air, felt some confidence return now that he evaded that attack, and looked down on the battlefield below, only to see that Charizard was nowhere in sight.

Dread filled the pokemon immediately when he looked up, and saw the Kanto fire starter hovering above him, grinning widely.

Paul gawked, yet again he fell into Ash's trap and there was nothing he could do about it.

The boy in question smiled contently, yelling his finishing blow victoriously, as he pumped a fist in the air. "Now! Use fire blast on Drapion!"

Charizard shot the five-star pointed beam of fire point blank at the Drapion, who gave a mighty cry of pain. It was pushed back to the ground below, and the impact left a crater where he landed. The ground shook as the poison and dark type hit it, not ever getting up after that massacre. Its eyes were replaced with swirls, signaling its defeat and the referee raised his flag.

"Drapion is unable to battle, Charizard wins!" he stated as the crowd yet again exploded in cheers and roars.

Charizard too, gave a dominant roar, winning his first battle for Ash.

"Way to go Charizard!" Ash praised his pokemon loudly. His strategy had worked; Paul had only two pokemons left while Ash still had his strongest three.

"Somebody please hand me my nitrates! I don't think my heart is able to take any more surprises! Ash managed to catch Paul completely off guard with that flamethrower lure, finishing Drapion swiftly with a fire blast straight to the face. Paul now only has two unrevealed pokemon remaining while Ash has three left; one unrevealed," the announcer boomed through his mike.

The giant screen gave a ping sound as Drapion's picture turned dark, and all eyes were back on the Veilstone resident, curious how he was going to counter this Charizard.

Paul began to grow nervous; this was not in his favor at all. He had to rely on Ninjask's speed to damage that Charizard as best as he could, and then finish it off with his Electivire, hoping his electric type wouldn't take too much damage, so that he still could battle Infernape and possibly win.

'If only I knew Ash's last pokemon,' He thought, grimacing. He had the poison on his side for the Infernape, but he had no idea who Ash's last pokemon was. It either was a bad matchup against his Drapion, or even stronger than his Charizard.

Paul chose to believe the former. This Charizard clearly was Ash's best pokemon. He silently withdrew his Drapion, who had done so much in this match for him, and picked his second to last pokeball.

"Ninjask, standby for battle!" he shouted, and the speedy bug type materialized on the field. It buzzed, and seemed to teleport all over the field, a normal eye not able to register its movements.

Bianca, who couldn't take her eyes off of the dragon-look-alike, was paying no mind to Paul's Ninjask; instead, she cheered loudly for Ash while drawing furiously at the same time, still managing to make sketches that looked stunning.

Latias grew uncomfortable at the buzzing sound, though. She didn't like bug pokemon at all. Partly because they were super effective against her, but mostly because she was terrified of them.

She always had this reoccurring dream where she got caught by a bunch of Ariados, who in turn, began to eat her whole. She visibly shuddered at that thought; it was a little trauma she'd gotten after the Annie and Oakley incident. Ever since, she was scared of all sorts of bug types.

She was drowning so much in those thoughts that she didn't even notice that she was sending them to her telepathic connections, namely, Bianca and Ash. The artist paid it no mind, she knew about

Tia's phobia of bug types, and also knew she would do this often, almost every time she encountered a bug type.

Ash however, reacted worriedly at the images presented in his head. 'Tia, are you ok?' he asked, concerned for the dragoness.

'I-It's ok, Ash. Just a little phobia for bug types, that's all,' she tried to respond coolly but failed horribly.

The raven haired trainer didn't have to think long as to why she had this phobia. That stupid Ariados from two years ago was likely the cause, he reasoned, and grew pissed just thinking about it.

'Don't worry, I'll never let you battle a bug type then, I promise. Besides, if a bug type ever wants to hurt you, it has to go through me first,' the boy tried to soothe the disguised legendary.

It worked.

Yet again, the dragoness felt warmth spread through her body. She blushed as she responded shyly. *'Thank you, Ash... But if I have to, I'll battle bug types for you.'*

She would face her fears if that meant pleasing Ash. Hell, she would give her life for him in a heartbeat.

'No way!' Ash rebutted. 'I'm not letting you face a bug type and that's final. Let Infernape or Charizard handle that, you can clean up the rest,' Ash reassured, giving the psychic and dragon type a bright smile.

She knew, at that moment, there was no one in this world than Ash for her. He would look out for her, like she would for him. She gave a bright and loving smile in return, just enjoying Ash's presence and cool voice.

The pokemon trainer faced his opponent, the Ninjask still zooming all over the stage, while Charizard looked bored, not impressed with the

bug type at all.

"The interesting choice of match-up comes from Paul this time, opting to go with Ninjask for his superior speed! But don't underestimate Charizard, who's not a slugger either. Let's see how this is going to work out people!" the announcer boomed in his mic yet again, the crowd agreeing with him instantly.

The referee raised both of his flags again, as this match was about to start. "Ninjask versus Charizard, begin!" he shouted and just like that, they were on.

"Ninjask, use your speed to get in close and start off with an X-scissor!" the purple haired trainer commanded. He needed to make sure this Charizard wouldn't hit his pokemon. That way, he could rack up the damage, slowly but surely.

X-scissor wouldn't do a lot, but that was part of his plan. While his bug was trying to confuse Charizard, who still looked bored as hell, Ash was thinking about the best way to approach this obnoxious little buzzer.

'I need the full attention of Charizard if I want to hit that thing, but the longer I wait, the faster it gets, thanks to its ability,' the trainer contemplated. He didn't get long to think as the bug and flying type prepared its X-scissor attack.

One of its claws glowed a menacing red, and struck the Charizard right on his face.

The fire and flying type, who was bored just a moment ago, now was actually surprised. The attack, while not very painful, had stung. It was this annoying pain that would bother you all day, and before he could contemplate what just happened, the Ninjask struck again, this time, at the back of his head.

Charizard let out a grunt of irritation and slashed with his claws at Ninjask's general direction, who was long gone the moment the

Kanto fire starter tried to hit it, and he grew more annoyed as time passed.

"Charizard, don't let it annoy you, use fire spin to protect yourself!" the voice of his trainer rung out.

He obeyed, although with a little hesitation, and created a fiery tornado around himself, making the bug type unable to come in close.

"It seems like Paul's offense surprised Ash's Charizard! But the Kanto trainer remained calm, and reacted accordingly, protecting his pokemon in the process!"

While the announcer explained, Ninjask only increased his speed, waiting patiently for the fire spin to wear off. The buzzing grew more erratic, and Tia couldn't help but start to sweat a little. She hated the sound, and would have wished for nothing more than a couple of ear buds right now to drown it out.

She actually let out a mental shriek when the bug whizzed by very closely, stopped for a moment, not even five feet away, before resuming its destination to elsewhere.

'S-sorry,' she stuttered out to Bianca and Ash, who both reacted startled, the artist dropping her pencil while Ash gave a sudden jerk of his head in her direction.

'You ok?' Ash asked her mentally, concern clear in his voice.

The dragoness sighed a breath of relief, *'I'm ok, just startled,'* she responded to Ash. Bianca gave her a reassuring squeeze with her hand, while Ash chuckled weakly.

'Can you warn me the next time you do that? You startled me just as bad,' he replied back jokingly.

'Sorry,' she apologized again, rubbing her head awkwardly. Honestly, she was just happy *she* didn't have to fight that thing... Hopefully. Because there was no way Charizard *and* Infernape would lose to this bug... Right?

While Tia was thinking of this worst case scenario, the Ninjask was still running loose, just being the annoying little pokemon it was.

Charizard had stopped his fire spin, and just like last time, the bug started to attack the fire and flying type from every angle.

The fire starter, at this point, was pissed off, and was firing flamethrowers at it randomly, missing his target every single time.

"Ash's defense didn't work for long, as now, his Charizard is ticked off and firing attacks at Paul's Ninjask like crazy without any coordination," the announcer told the crowd, surprised this Ninjask was able to keep up so well with Charizard.

The crowd too, had never suspected any of this. Then again, both trainers were full of surprises, and they were sure this certainly wouldn't be the last one.

Paul smirked; this was exactly what he was planning. Get Charizard pissed off so it can't attack accordingly, and then keep racking up the damage. Maybe, if he got lucky, he would even take it out with his Ninjask!

Ash, who was trying to get his Charizard to listen, got more annoyed as time passed. His patience was running thin; all the crap that had happened recently, including Charizard's past with Ash, were he'd disobeyed him constantly, was reaching a breaking point.

Not this time! Charizard would obey him, right here, right now! So, with those thoughts in his mind, he let loose his little tirade.

"Charizard! Stop attacking that pesky little wannabe Vespiquen blindly and *listen to me!* " he screamed at the top of his lungs.

Charizard, who heard his trainer scream at him so angrily, gave Ash an angry look of his own, and was about to rebut with a growl, but the young man had had enough.

"No! *Shut it!* I'm done with all this crap! I'm your trainer so listen to me! You understand!?" The ticked off looking trainer commanded his fire starter.

Charizard immediately shut up after that. He'd seen his trainer mad plenty of times, but never so pissed off as now, and silently nodded his head. "Good! Now focus on that Ninjask, and strike when the time is right!"

The purple haired trainer gave a full fledged grin at Ash's little speech.

'Never knew Ketchum had it in him. Surprising,' he thought as Charizard listened, and was now waiting patiently for his opening.

Tia was blown back by the amount of pent up rage that came off of the young pokemon trainer, and silently called him while being a little bit scared. 'Ash?' she asked hesitantly.

The trainer had to pause a moment not snap at her, and took a deep breath.

'I'm fine, Latias, don't worry about me,' he reassured her. The pokemon trainer watched as Charizard finally saw his opening, and slapped his claws together, trying to splat the Ninjask like the bug it was.

"Protect!"

Just in time, the green force field stopped the Charizard's claws dead in its tracks. But, that is where the purple haired trainer gasped.

Normally, a protect would bounce off any attack it blocked, however, the Charizard was still holding on to it strongly, not wanting to fail his

trainer. If the protect would falter, Ninjask would as well.

"Another surprise from the kanto resident. Paul thought to outsmart him by using protect, but Charizard has the bug in a deadlock now instead. Bad times all around for Ninjask!"

Indeed bad times, Paul knew it too. There was nothing he could do, Ninjask struggled as best as it could, but it was no use.

Seeing as Paul had no options left, he ordered his pokemon one last time. "Use giga drain!" he yelled, trying to rack up a little bit more damage.

"Finish this with flamethrower, Charizard!" Ash countered.

The protect dropped, and Ninjask eyes grew red, its giga drain a lot faster than Charizard's flamethrower. Ash's pokemon grunted as he felt his life-force getting sapped away, but held one nonetheless, and fired the flamethrower straight at the bug type.

It stood no chance as the fiery beam engulfed it whole. It quickly dropped out of the sky afterwards, and was not getting up.

The referee raised his flag. "Ninjask is unable to battle, Charizard wins!" he stated.

"There you have it folks! Paul is down to his last pokemon while Ash still has three! Will he be able to make this comeback?" the announcer questioned as the crowd roared again.

Tia sighed. She luckily didn't have to deal with that bug herself. 'Thank you, Charizard,' she added mentally.

Bianca was clapping excitedly for Charizard and Ash, who were almost in the semi finals. 'I can't believe it; Ash is actually going to win!' she said mentally to her best friend, who nodded in return.

'There was nothing else I could do there. It's all up to Electivire now,' Paul thought, silently returning his fallen pokemon and grabbing his

last.

"Ash! You definitely know who my last pokemon is going to be," he addressed his opponent and showed him the pokeball in question. "He's going to give his all, and you know it."

Ash, who had now calmed down considerably, responded him, unable to keep a smug grin off his face. "You know Paul? You're right. But... Are you ready for *my* last pokemon?"

While he said this, he returned his Charizard back to his pokeball, making Paul quite confused.

"What do you mean, Ketchum?" the purple haired trainer asked for clarification, as he threw his last pokemon, Electivire, on the field. The pokemon appeared with his everlasting grin on his face, electricity flying from his body.

"You'll see in a moment, Paul," Ash replied, chuckling slightly.

'Latias?' he called to his legendary. 'It is time.'

The dragoness sputtered for a moment. She didn't expect Ash would use her, he had Charizard and Infernape left, after all. *'But Ash, I'm in the stands. Everybody would see me if I'd transform into my true form,'* she rebutted.

Ash was clear in his decision though.

'I don't care. I want you to battle for me. Besides, we'll make another disguise for you after this match is over.' Ash softened his voice. 'Please?'

The dragoness gave a loving smile at that. Honestly, if he had pleaded her for anything else, she would've done it too. Giving up her old disguise was not a big deal for her at all.

'Alright, Ash, I'll be down in a moment.' True to her word, she was down in a moment, simply climbing over the fence that separated the

front row with the battlefield.

The artist, at first, was about to hold her friend back, but when she saw the smile and determination on her face, let her go after that. The crowd gasped as this young girl walked over the battlefield towards Ash with not a care in the world.

"Ma'am, you can't be here! Please leave the field at once!" the referee addressed her, who she promptly ignored, her eyes set only on her trainer.

"What is happening people? First Charizard, and now this girl that interrupts the match? Is she one of Ash's pokemon too?' the announcer jokingly guessed. His mouth would grow numb the instant he found out how accurate that joke was though. For now, he was watching curiously how the young girl approached Ash.

'Here I am, Ash,' she told him matter of factly, heartbeat rising. She hugged him gently, which he returned, before she faced Electivire and Paul, hands behind her back and a cute smile on her face.

Paul's eyes widened, and automatically brought a hand to his cheek, which suddenly began to sting a lot more at the sight of the girl.

'That's the girl who almost deformed my head! What's she doing here?' he thought, afraid.

The referee was just thinking the same thing. "Ash Ketchum, you better have a good explanation as to what this girl is doing here!" he said to the quarter finalist.

"Certainly," he responded. "She's my final pokemon. I'd like to battle with her."

The referee and Paul looked at him like he grew an extra head.

" *What?!* " they both yelled at the same time.

The announcer saw the humor in it though. "It looks like I was right! Ladies and gentlemen, Ash's last unrevealed pokemon is going to be this girl! How's she going to do against Electivire?" he joked, some of the people in the crowd laughing.

Ash frowned. "What's the problem, referee?" he asked him innocently.

The referee was not amused in the slightest. "Get this girl off the battlefield or be disqualified immediately," he yelled at him.

The pokemon trainer rolled his eyes. 'Can't appreciate a joke, can he?'

Latias giggled cutely at him, and Ash gave her a mental nod. At this cue, she started to deactivate her disguise. She glowed brightly in a shower of sparkles; the referee and Paul watched slack jawed at the transformation, while the crowd and the announcer grew deadly silent.

The light died down, and before them, floated the cute, red and white dragoness in all her glory. She gave a soft coo at the referee, who was stunned into silence. You could hear a pinprick fall as Ash repeated his question.

"Well, what's the problem? I choose Latias as my final pokemon!" he said as stoic as possible, but from the inside, he was laughing like crazy.

'Did you see the look on their faces? Priceless!' he laughed mentally to Tia, who giggled sweetly in return.

"I... Uhm... Well..." the referee stuttered, before he was rudely interrupted by the announcer.

"I can't believe my eyes! For the second time, we're seeing a legendary pokemon in this tournament! And one that tricked us all! I

take my earlier statement back, this is going to be Paul's toughest match of his life!"

The purple haired trainer looked on fearfully. 'This *girl* is actually a legendary pokemon!?' He couldn't believe it. Ketchum had a legendary pokemon? How was this possible? How in the distortion world would he ever be able to beat a legendary with only his Electivire?

Said electric type was intimidated too, but also pumped. This was his first time facing a legendary, and he wouldn't go down without a fight.

"Don't worry, Paul! Latias will finish this quickly, isn't that right?"

The dragoness cooed happily at Ash in agreement and stared down her very first opponent.

Paul gritted his teeth, a snarl apparent on his face. "We'll see about that!" he retorted, though his statement didn't hold much power.

"Yeah, go Latias! Woohoo!" Bianca suddenly cheered from the crowd, other people quickly following in turn. Soon, the whole stadium was almost shaking; so much noise were all these people producing. This was it, the climax they've all been waiting for.

The referee cleared his throat and raised his flags again, signaling the start of this decisive match. "Electivire versus Latias, begin!" he yelled over the noise.

"Start this off with thunder!" the Veilstone resident shouted.

His pokemon obeyed and shot the lightning bolt at Latias, who narrowed her eyes.

"Latias, fly up high to dodge, and then use dragon pulse!" Ash countered. Much like the Ninjask, she seemed to teleport away, tugging her arms in her body to reduce air resistance and fly up high. She opened her maw and prepared the blue draconic beam.

"Speed that could rivals Paul's Ninjask! Expected from this legendary pokemon, let's see what Paul's going to do next!"

"Protect, and then thunder again!" Paul retaliated. Electivire put his hands before him, creating the green force field that blocked Latias' dragon attack with success, and fired his next thunder at the dragoness, who was still high in the sky.

"Evade that attack Latias, use psychic to block it!"

The young legendary's eyes glowed with psychic power and effectively changed the course of the thunder attack, sending it high up in the sky, where it disappeared harmlessly into the clouds.

"Amazing plays from both sides! We're at a stalemate at the moment folks!" the announcer, shaking with excitement, told the crowd.

'Not for long though, let's surprise Paul a little shall we? Turn invisible.' At the command, the psychic and dragon type activated her invisibility cloak, completely disappearing from the naked eye.

"What? What's happening?" Paul shouted out, growing more unnerved. The announcer was so kind as to answer Paul's question.

"Ash opts to go for one of Latias' abilities, invisibility. This has just become a very high mountain to climb for Paul."

'It can transform *and* turn invisible? This is not good. Not at all.' The nervous trainer thought. "Electivire, keep your ears open!" The electric type nodded at his trainer's command.

'If I can't see it, at least Electivire can hear where she's attacking from. Now, I only have to wait for Ash's comma-' He was baffled when the legendary fired off another dragon pulse, without waiting for Ash's command, completely catching Paul's pokemon off guard, who was unable to dodge.

The pokemon let out a loud cry and got knocked off his feet. He grunted and looked desperately at his trainer, who was just as stunned.

"Surprised? As a psychic pokemon, Latias has the ability to use telepathy. So I don't say my commands out loud. I just think them towards her," he explained to his opponent smugly.

Paul gasped again. 'Arceus, is there no end at what this pokemon can do?' he said mentally, grinding his teeth as his pokemon was levitated from the field in a psychic grip.

"This could very well be the end for Paul if he doesn't think of something fast," the announcer said.

"Try to break loose!" he shouted, but it was no use. The Electivire was thrown across the stage like a rag doll, before his mind was bombarded with psychic energy.

He cried out in pain as he gripped his head in agony, and fell to the ground with a loud thud afterwards.

"Electivire is down!" the announcer told the crowd matter of factly.

Was this the end for Paul?

Latias, seeing as her opponent was down, turned visible again, and cautiously floated to the large electric pokemon. '*Did I overdo it?*' she awkwardly asked her trainer, who gave her a mental shrug in return.

Paul said nothing; it was over in his mind... Until he saw a twinkle in the eyes of his pokemon, and quickly took advantage of Latias' guard drop.

"Ice punch, go!"

The downed pokemon stood up immediately, fist ready. The legendary never saw it coming and got the icy punch straight at her right cheek. She shrieked and fell out the sky, hitting the ground with

a thud, where the toxic spikes activated as well, poisoning her in the process. She let out a grunt of pain at the numbing venom that travelled through her system.

'Guess that makes us even,' Paul thought smartly to Latias.

Ash however, was more than angry with Paul. "That was a dirty trick!" he said to him.

The purple haired trainer laughed in disbelief. "Come on now, Ketchum, I'm only playing your own game right back at ya!" he stated smugly. He was, in some sense, right. But that didn't change the fact Ash felt anger rise in his system as he watched *his* Latias weakly get back off of the ground, looking pretty battered because of Paul's cheap shot.

"Oww! That had to hurt, even for a legendary pokemon," the announcer boomed, the crowd just as excited as ever.

'Come on Latias, I know you can do it!' Bianca mentally cheered her best friend on.

'Play time is over! Latias, use calm mind and then finish it with dragon pulse.' The legendary nodded and cleared her mind, glowing with a golden hue in the process.

Paul saw what Ash was trying to do and quickly reacted. "Get in close for another ice punch!"

Paul's pokemon complied, and darted to the legendary dragoness, who still had her eyes closed in concentration. Just as he was about to hit her for a second time, she opened her eyes, and fired the dragon pulse with such sudden speed at point blank range, the surprised electric type wouldn't have been able to dodge it even if his life depended on it.

The attack exploded on impact, and forced Paul's pokemon on his back, where it was blasted away several feet on the ground, sliding

to a stop just before Paul's feet.

He looked incredulous to his defeated Electivire, not expecting such a sudden attack at all, and the referee raised his flag for the final time.

"Electivire is unable to battle, Latias wins! All six pokemon of Paul have been eliminated, which means Ash will be progressing to the semi finals!" he stated as the crowd erupted in loud cheers and roars.

"It's over! Ash will be the one competing in the semi finals against Joey in three days. Congratulations Ash Ketchum from Pallet town!"

The big screen showed Paul's last slot going dark, and Ash's picture took center place, with the word 'winner' written in big letters under it.

"We did it! We did it Latias!" Ash cheered loudly. She cooed happily and tackled him to the ground, nuzzling his head affectionately while Ash giggled at the ticklish feeling.

"You were so great back there!" he praised Tia, who blushed at the compliment.

'It was because of you... Ash,' she shyly confessed. The trainer stopped his giggling and looked her straight in her eyes. That funny feeling returned tenfold when he saw her warm, amber orbs stare back at him, which made the trainer nervous as hell.

"How's your cheek doing?" he whispered back, forgetting the world around him. He gently touched her right cheek and slowly rubbed it. The dragoness winced a little under the boy's touch, but enjoyed it nonetheless.

'Now? So much better.'

Ash couldn't help but blush at how Latias spoke those words. They were filled with so much emotion and compassion, he felt at ease

just lying here. He swallowed once before responding. "I got a couple of potions and antidotes in my back, just a sec."

He grabbed his backpack from his left, producing two small bottles from it, one potion and one antidote. "This might sting just a little," he warned her and sprayed the content of the potion gently on her right cheek, dabbing it with a piece of cloth.

She let the boy do his work as she lowered her head, giving him better access to her stinging cheek. Heat radiated from the dragoness at the closeness of the young man, who was nervously moving his hand up and down her face.

"Can... Can you... Uhm... Get off of me please?" Ash asked her, embarrassed. Why was he so embarrassed? he was just tending to his pokemon's wounds.

The dragoness floated off of him gently and he stood up, moved to her back where the toxic spikes had infiltrated her body, and began to apply the antidote there.

'Sweet Cresselia don't let this feeling ever end,' Latias thought to herself, in heaven just by the closeness of the young man. She felt instantly better as the poison was leaving her body, and gave another grateful coo.

Bianca was squealing at the adorable scene, the sketch she was currently working on forgotten. 'They're so cute together!' she thought, and put her hands on her cheeks, sighing contently.

Paul, who had returned his Electivire and had muttered a couple of words of encouragement to the pokemon, was waiting patiently for Ash to finish treating his pokemon.

"Ash! You obviously care for your pokemon, by defeating me here at the Lily of the valley island... You've earned my respect."

Not waiting for a response, he put his hands in his pockets and left the scene, where Ash thanked him silently, before cuddling Tia again. Said dragoness nuzzled him back just as hard.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this was the last match for today! Be sure to check in tomorrow for the other quarter finals matches here, on the Lily of the valley island." The announcer went silent after that, most people leaving, some watching the heartwarming scene where Ash was cuddling with Latias with not a care in the world.

'We should go too, if we want to avoid all the media,' Tia said to her trainer who groaned in response. He reluctantly let go of Tia, not wanting to stop the cuddling at all. The dragoness saw this, and blushed a bright red as she made Ash a suggestion. *'We could... Uhm... You know... Always cuddle tonight, if you'd like?'*

The instant she said it she immediately regretted it, but Ash's response surprised her, even if he stuttered in response. 'Yeah... I'd like that,' he said, heat rising to his cheeks. The thought of just cuddling with Latias made him nervous but also very happy. She gave one last happy coo before he returned her to her custom loveball.

"Take a nice rest for now, you deserve it," he muttered to his loveball, which contained his special pokemon. Looking around, he saw the battlefield was relatively empty, except for a waving Bianca. He quickly walked over to her and she congratulated him happily.

"Hey there, semi finals boy! Congrats, you were great!" she spoke as Ash thanked her. His thoughts went immediately out to Brock and Dawn though.

He frowned and voiced his concern. "I just hope Brock and Dawn are ok." He sighed as Bianca reassured him that everything was going to be fine.

"They'll come back with Pikachu, don't worry, I just know it!"

Ash smiled at her, when their attention was redirected at the sky, a white blur getting closer and closer to their destination.

"Wait," Ash muttered. "Is that...?" Now Ash eyes widened fully as the blur became recognizable.

"That's Dawn's Togekiss!"

Did you like it, love it, hate it? Leave a review please! Next chapter is going to focus on the Brock and Dawn arc. However, because finals are almost around the door, expect updates to be a little slower. I try my best to deliver as quickly as possible though!

Syrup-Waffle

Three goons appear!

Whaaaaaat? A new chapter, so soon? Yes, I got some good news. A friend managed to reboot my old laptop :D So, all my files were still intact, and I backed them up immediately. This also means I have my chapter back, and to celebrate, I decided to finish it for you guys. I also went over all the earlier chapters, fixing some minor mistakes, and giving each chapter a title! As for finals, I'm trying my hardest, which means updates are still going to be slow, please bear with me. In addition, I have to thank you guys for all the kind reviews I received, they warmed my heart. Also, over 50 favourites on my first fic, you guys rock! Enjoy this chapter.

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon, if I did, I would teach kids the difference between physical attacking pokemon, and special attacking pokemon.

"Team Rocket!" Speech

'Team Rocket!' Thoughts

'Team Rocket!' Telepathy

"Team Rocket!" Whiteboard marker

Dawn Berlitz, rising coordinator from Twinleaf town, glared at former gym leader Brock Slate, as he rubbed his head awkwardly. It was just thirty minutes after Ash, Bianca and Tia had left towards the stadium for the quarter finals match, when Dawn had found a huge hole in Brock's plan, and frankly, she wasn't too happy about this revelation at all.

"How exactly are we going to find Malice and get Pikachu back if we don't even know where *team rocket* is!?" she asked him

exasperated, pinching her nose.

Honestly, sometimes Brock could be as dense as Ash. Piplup watched with mild interest from Dawn's shoulder, as the pokemon breeder tried to defend himself, and failed horribly at doing so.

"Alright, so I hadn't thought things that far through yet until this point," Brock admitted, a little bit sheepish at his carelessness. "But the fact remains that I got Ash to his match, and Bianca and Tia out of harm. We only need to find these three goons, and we're good," Brock reasoned to Dawn, to which she reluctantly agreed.

They were currently walking towards the market, where a big screen would display all the battles live for those who couldn't afford a ticket, or just were too slow in obtaining one, when Brock spoke up again.

"Look, we already know they're on this island. They can't have gone too far, and knowing these three, they're probably disguised and in a place where they can watch Ash at the same time. The market is the obvious choice," the pokemon breeder explained.

Dawn stayed silent, opting to trust the pokemon breeder on his intuition. She hoped he was right, otherwise Pikachu would be in a lot of trouble. They didn't have much time, if they wasted too much of it finding Team Rocket, Malice would disappear with the electric type, and probably devastate Ash in the process.

She wouldn't allow that, Dawn knew she wasn't strong like Ash, or steadfast like Brock, but like hell would she ever let something like that happen to one of her friends. She would be courageous, and defeat this Malice alongside Brock, for Ash and Pikachu's sake!

While the blunette was lost in her thoughts, Brock started to form a plan in his head about how to deal with Team Rocket. He knew getting them to help was no problem, but he had to make sure they didn't run off with Pikachu afterwards. It was going to be very tricky, but doable; he just had to predict Team Rocket's thinking patterns, and go from there.

The path they currently were walking on was empty, only their footsteps could be heard and the occasional local pokemon. The duo paid it no mind, and silently moved on, getting closer to their destination. The trees just gave enough shade from the sun, making it a surprisingly pleasant stroll. Finally, noise from various people could be heard, indicating they were almost there, and Brock took in a deep breath.

"Do you hear that?" the pokemon breeder questioned, smiling slightly.

Dawn nodded, hugging Piplup close to her body. She wouldn't admit it, but she was actually getting a little bit nervous, and they hadn't even found Team Rocket yet! She sighed once; they had found the market at least, now for step two.

The duo could now make out the first stalls, while people and pokemon alike were walking and buying items, chatting amiably with not a care in the world.

When they got closer, they finally saw how big this market was, and their eyes threatened to fall out of their skull.

Stalls everywhere, selling the most ridiculous items: pokeballs, chains, clothing, even pokemon! You name it, they probably had it. Brock and Dawn wouldn't have been surprised if half of these items were just rubbish, or maybe even stolen. Popcorn, hamburgers and ice cream were available at every corner, and bumping cars and a Ferris wheel completed the picture, making this a paradise for kids.

Loud music was played, and amidst the chaos, in the centre, was a big screen that displayed the battle that was about to start; a purple haired trainer who looked stoic, and a raven haired trainer, who looked pumped and ready for battle.

Suddenly, the announcer spoke up, his voice clearly heard over all the other noise in the market. "Good afternoon ladies and

gentlemen, and welcome to this Lily of the valley island quarter finals match," he yelled excitedly in his mike.

Most people stopped what they were doing, and started to watch the screen instead. Most of the hardcore fans had already found a spot to sit down, while the announcer continued his monologue. Brock and Dawn ignored it; while they were absolutely stoked about seeing Ash standing there, they had better things to do... Like Dawn scolding Brock for a second time that day.

"This place is huge! This isn't just an average market, it's a fair! How are we ever going to find them around here?" the blunette yelled over the announcer, stress clear in her voice.

The pokemon breeder gave a heavy frown, he hadn't suspected this either, but they had no other choice but to skim this whole place down.

"Listen, this is what we're going to do: release all of your pokemon, let them help you search this whole place, and meet me back here in fifteen minutes," Brock explained, pointing at a stall where they sold aquatic stones of all kind. "We'll split up, and if we're in luck, find these three Rockets in the process," he explained further to the coordinator.

"And what if we don't?" Dawn asked, sounding almost lost.

Brock shook his head, putting on a face of determination. "We'll find them, now hurry!"

The pokemon breeder had already released all of his pokemon, giving them directions, and explaining what they had to do. Soon after Dawn followed. The pokemon and the two friends nodded at each other, and went their separate ways.

"What an amazing display of power from Ash's Infernape! Paul just lost his first pokemon, Aggron, after that devastating mach punch!"

the announcer from the screen spoke up, most people cheering and clapping for Ash's wit. Dawn looked with a bittersweet smile at the spectacle, her nervousness growing to a sense of dread. It was well after fifteen minutes, and Brock hadn't returned yet.

Dawn began to fiddle with her thumbs; her search came back like she had expected: without result. She was back at the stall they promised to meet, all the pokemon present, except for Croagunk, who seemed to have disappeared just as suddenly as Brock, and Togekiss, who Dawn had sent to skim the sky again. She was walking in circles for the past five minutes, the pokemon who were present trying to calm her down, who failed horrendously.

'Brock where are you?'sShe thought desperately, almost biting her nails. Her breath got caught in her throat when she saw her flying and fairy type return, who shook its head somberly.

"No," she muttered, not believing it. Was everybody just disappearing mysteriously now? Just as she was about to panic, somebody tapped on her shoulder. Quickly turning around, she saw the last person she wanted to see.

Well well, Dawn, why are you here all alone? Need some company?" Conway spoke up smoothly, his glasses reflecting the sunlight.

Her cheeks puffed up considerably and she gave him a glare. "Conway, why are you- Never mind! I don't have time for you," she retorted, somewhat agitated with the super nerd. Honestly, he worked on her nerves, and she had enough of those at the moment.

"I see, by your erratic breathing, dilated pupils, and profusely sweating I can conclude something is very wrong. You want to talk about it? Maybe I can help."

The response was concerned, and Dawn had the huge urge to scream at him to just leave her alone, but she hesitated. He only wanted to help, and maybe, this would soothe her nerves a little after all.

"Everybody's gone missing! First Pikachu, and now Brock and Croagunk too. We had promised to meet here ten minutes ago, and they still haven't returned," she half yelled, half explained, her frantic movements only insinuating how stressed she was.

The strategist grunted once; he knew about Pikachu, he'd heard tiny tidbits when he was following Dawn and co. around. But now Brock and Croagunk were missing as well?

He didn't believe it, and that's exactly what he told the coordinator. "Brock's fine. He knows what he's doing... Whatever you guys were doing in the first place. He probably has a good reason why he is so late," he reassured his love interest.

Sure enough, he was right.

Finally, there he was, waving at Dawn behind a stall, whose eyes suddenly lit up with glee, a smile plastered on her face.

Conway chuckled, thinking his soothing words had worked, and readjusted his glasses. "That's better Dawn! Now, let's look for Brock toge-" He stopped his sentence when he realized he was talking to air.

Dawn was gone, he didn't even notice her leave, and chuckled once again. "Trying to play hard to get eh? Clever girl," he muttered, before looking around, trying to see a sign where Dawn might have gone. Seeing none, he didn't let his smile falter one bit, and walked off in a random direction, chuckling all the way.

Dawn and Brock both sweat dropped at the super nerd, but it was soon forgotten as Brock apologized. "I'm sorry I took so long, things got a little hectic," he stated, while Dawn shook her head.

"Do you honestly have any idea how worried I was?" she questioned him with relief in her voice.

Brock didn't answer, only offered her a soda pop. "Drink? It's pretty hot, very important to get enough fluids inside your system."

True to Brock's words, it certainly was hot, the shade they had from the trees earlier was long gone, and Dawn beamed before accepting the drink.

"So, what happened? Did you find Team Rocket?" she asked curiously, as she took a big gulp of the refreshing drink. Brock motioned her to follow, which she did. After a while, they entered a nearby forest, the noise from the fair died down through the thick foliage, only the announcer was still hearable, albeit very vague.

The coordinator raised a brow, but said nothing, only following the pokemon breeder further into the trees and bushes. Seeing Dawn's confusion, Brock elaborated. "Seeing your confused face, you must be wondering why we're in this forest, right? Well, just like you, I didn't find team rocket."

Dawn's confusion only grew. "Then what exactly are we doing here?" she asked the former gym leader.

He chuckled, pushing some bushes aside. "I was getting to that part. Anyway, I was about to call it quits, and meet up with you again, when I saw Croagunk beckoning me to follow him, so I did," Brock explained further, "and when we reached a clearing, he showed me exactly who we need."

The blunette's heart rate went up. Could he really mean what she thought he meant? Just as she was about to ask, the duo reached the aforementioned clearing... And there they were.

Dawn saw the three team Rocket goons, tightly bound against a tree. The coordinator's eyes lit up for a second time that day, and she squealed with happiness. Never was she so euphoric in seeing team Rocket again.

"Apparently, Croagunk had found them, and knocked them out with poison jab," Brock went on, praising his poison and fighting type. The Rockets were still out cold, as Dawn began to hop up and down in ecstasy.

"This is fantastic, now we really can find Pikachu!" Dawn said excitedly, Brock nodding in return.

Just then, the rockets began to stir, opening their eyes groggily.

"Ugh... What happened?" James began, looking at Jessie, only to widen his eyes in horror. "We're bound!"

he stated the obvious, and began to struggle in panic, which snapped Jessie and Meowth out of their daze as well.

"We're what? James, Meowth, what's going on?" Jessie now spoke up, clearly distressed. Meowth held his tongue, as he was the first to see who their captors were.

"It's... It's the breeder twerp and the new twerpette!" the cat pokemon stuttered, which caught the attention of both rocket grunts immediately. Jessie and James looked with disbelief in their eyes, the twerp's friends had captured them?

"What's the meaning of this?" Jessie now screamed enraged, *she* was supposed to bound the twerps, not the other way around. James and Meowth wondered the same, as Brock began to explain.

"Sorry for the rough treatment, but the truth is... We need your help," Brock stated, cutting to the chase immediately.

Meowth snorted, obviously not buying it. "And why exactly do you need our help? What made you think we're going to help you twerps anyway, especially after you knocked us out and bound us to a tree?" Meowth questioned; Jessie and James nodding. This request came out of nowhere, so it was understandable the rocket trio didn't believe anything of it.

The pokemon breeder wanted to elaborate further, when Dawn had enough, and interrupted him, explaining everything what had occurred: Malice, the poison, and the kidnap of Pikachu.

Once she was done, their reaction was immediate. "So you want to say that some random dude just waltzed in, and stole Pikachu right in front of our faces!?" James questioned agitatedly.

"We've spent years trying to catch Pikachu, that's just not fair," Meowth added somberly.

"So, does that mean you guys will help us retrieve Pikachu?" Brock asked hopefully.

They silently looked at him, and began to whisper among each other. Their choice was made in an instant though; they didn't have much of a choice anyway. "Alright twerps, we'll help you," Jessie stated in a neutral voice.

"Really?" Asked Dawn, almost not believing they would agree so fast. That went easier then expected!

"But," Meowth added, "on one condition."

Of course. she just had to Jinx it!

"What that might be?" Brock questioned, as the three goons looked at each other mischievously.

"What kind of pokemon does this Malice have?" James asked the duo; Brock and Dawn now getting what they wanted.

"We've only seen a Froslass so far. But maybe he has more pokemon," Dawn answered truthfully. Honestly, if the rockets wanted to have Malice's pokemon in exchange for their help, she would take it.

Brock wanted to object, but held his tongue. While he was against it, since it was Malice's fault, not his pokemon, getting Pikachu back

was more important.

"A Froslass? That's pretty exotic, not found very often. Just imagine how the boss would react if we brought him a Froslass," Meowth fantasized, Jessie and James liking where this was going.

"Imagine, the boss is working on a hot day in his office, and the A/C suddenly breaks down. Then, just as the boss is about to faint from the heat, Froslass pops in, and blows chilly air all around his room, making him all relaxed. And do you know what the boss is going to say next?" Meowth went on, completely ignoring Dawn and Brock, as he had the full attention of the other two rockets.

"What?" they both sang out in union, sparkles forming in their eyes.

Meowth answered, "I'm really liking this pokemon I got from Meowth and his friends. They deserve a big reward, hehehe!" the cat pokemon mimicked in Giovanni's voice.

The rockets beamed at the prospect, while Dawn and Brock sweat dropped at the scene. "Alright, if you let us catch Malice's pokemon, we're in!" they spoke up. The duo nodded at each other, and agreed with the condition.

"Just don't try anything funny, otherwise Croagunk might have to poison jab you again," Brock warned, as he *narrowed* his eyes.

The goons shuddered, nodding their heads that they understood. After finally being released, the trio stretched, before their smiles began to get mischievous again. "Alright," Meowth spoke up to the group, as they huddled close, "This is what we're going to do..."

In a secluded area, in the middle of nowhere, a single being grunted before opening the door to his make-shift cabin. Malice coughed as dust sprinkled in his nasal system, and he put a hand before his eyes to shield them. Once inside, he looked around; a single chair

and a bed occupied the room, and to his right was a single door that lead to a little cellar downstairs.

The man sat down, and brought a drink to his lips. The hardest part was done, in his mind, and now came the most boring part; he had to wait. He snorted once as he went over his entire plan again: knock out the guy who brought around room service, check. Take his place, and poison the Pikachu, even getting a tip in the process, check. Steal Pikachu, and then threaten Ash to get him Latias, check. Wait for him to appear, capture Latias down, and then go after the artist.

It sounded simple enough. In reality though, it wasn't. He'd almost messed it up from the beginning; for starters, Pikachu was poisoned way too severely. That was not his intention at all!

Granted, the rodent had survived, but he could've just as easily kicked the bucket. Malice scolded himself mentally, he was an expert on toxins, and he was certain he'd used the right doses. Was he losing his touch?

Then he had the problem in holding Latias down, how was he going to approach that? Luckily, he'd found something very quickly for that: an anti psychic net, durable enough to hold even a legendary in place, he was sure.

Now was the question, is Ash going to give up Latias in exchange for Pikachu? That was an easy question, he had a portable TV with him, he just had to look if the guy was battling or not, and that would be answer enough.

"If Froslass would hurry up with those spare batteries," he muttered angrily. He was still mad at her for something she'd done, because she had messed up too.

A while later, Malice's ice and ghost type finally returned, suddenly appearing before him with a happy grin.

"Fros!" she stated as she handed the spare batteries to him.

Malice sighed loudly. "Would you stop doing that? You always scare the crap out of me!" he yelled, annoyed at her antics as he grabbed the spare batteries and put them in the TV.

Seeing it as a compliment, she hugged her trainer happily as Malice rolled his eyes.

"Got it!" Malice exclaimed triumphantly, as he was finally able to get the TV up and running. However, that triumph quickly turned into rage as he squeezed his water bottle together, spilling the contents everywhere.

"He's competing!" He roared to no one in particular, scaring his Froslass for a change. All his planning, and his hard work, for nothing?

No, if they wanted to play hard, he could play hard as well.

The angry man stormed down the little cellar, where Pikachu was still hooked up to some machinery. While it was not as fancy looking as back in the pokecenter, it kept him alive.

"Listen you overgrown rat!" he seethed as Pikachu weakly looked in his direction. "Your trainer apparently doesn't give a crap about you, and I don't either, the only reason why you're still alive is because you're a pokemon," he raged on, kicking a bucket away.

"But, that doesn't mean I have trouble with killing humans," he said in a much softer voice, calming down a little. "I'll torture that fat grandpa, cutting a finger off each hour your trainer doesn't show up.

"And guess what? He's competing so he can't!" He raised his voice again as he smacked one of the walls with the palm of his hand, Pikachu flinching at the sudden hit.

"Then, I'll butcher all his toes, and if they still haven't come, I'll get that little artist, and torture her before his eyes, until she bloody dies!"

The crazy look in his eyes returned, and Pikachu trembled before him. In fact, now that Malice looked around, the whole room started to tremble. Something was approaching, and fast, as the trembles got louder and heavier.

"Frolass, what's going on?" he inquired as he stormed back up, only for his ice/ghost type to frantically point in the direction of the door. The ground shook again as he now opened the door.

What was happening?

The look on his face said it all. In the distance, there was a huge robotic Frolass approaching his general direction... Completely with two legs.

"What the hell?" he asked incredulous as the huge mechanical Frolass now began to sprint, the trembles from the robotic monstrosity almost knocking him off his feet.

He ran back inside again, heart racing; he had only but a moment to counter this robot. Questions started to flood his brain.

Who were they? What did they want?

He would get his answers soon enough, as he quickly formulated a plan in his head to get rid of this *little* problem.

Back in the robot's control centre, Dawn and Brock gasped at the size of the fake Frolass. While team rocket had no apparent problem in controlling the thing, pressing what looked like a million different buttons on the control panel, the duo was at a loss for words nonetheless.

"How'd you like it twerps? We call her, the Frolasszoid. Completely resistant against all kinds of attacks," Meowth spoke up proudly. The duo was certainly amazed.

"How'd you get all this stuff? For that matter, where do you even get all the money to buy it anyway?" Brock asked, not believing what he was seeing. This was a question that popped in his mind ever since Team Rocket used their first mecha.

Dawn too was wondering the same thing.

Team Rocket just chuckled at the stunned duo. "That was not part of the deal, was it? Now back at the task at hand, locating Pikachu will not be difficult at all," Jessie exclaimed, as she pointed to a radar on the control panel.

James elaborated further. "The twerp's Pikachu is extremely powerful, we should know." The three goons shuddered; they were hit by Pikachu's thunderbolt so much, they could still feel the electric tingle go through their spines.

"Anyway, that means Pikachu is like a heat source, only for electricity. This radar will scan for it, and it will lead us straight to Pikachu, and hopefully, this Malice as well." James finished his explanation.

The duo was silent, they wouldn't admit it, but Team Rocket was actually pretty clever. How were they not able to steal a Pikachu from a kid for over four years?

The question stayed unanswered as Jessie spoke up. "Found him," she said in a sing-song voice, as she pointed at a very large dot on the radar. No question about it, it was Pikachu alright. The robot sped up and soon, a little cabin was seen on the horizon in the middle of nowhere.

"That must be it," Dawn exclaimed happily.

The other's nodded, and true to her words, the door was opened shortly after and a middle aged man stood there, looking absolutely stunned.

Team Rocket grinned as they set the robot in full speed, the man disappearing again in his make-shift home.

"Do you think that little cabin is going to protect you?" James questioned mockingly, as the robot charged at it like a bull.

"James, wait, what about Pikachu!" Brock suddenly said in panic. If they would ram the whole thing down, they maybe could hit Pikachu as well.

Meowth snorted, and gave a reassuring glance. "Relax, the radar shows the heat spot is from under the ground, which means Pikachu is in the cellar. You guys know the plan, leave Malice to us, and you get Pikachu," he explained.

But just as they were about to ram the little cabin, shattering it like a box of matches, a Froslass appeared, and froze the whole ground in front of it solid.

"James, watch out!" Jessie screamed as he was just able to stop the robot in time.

Meowth grumbled as he extended one of the robot's arms, which was just long enough to reach the roof, and shattered it completely, leaving Malice standing there in his destroyed cabin, looking pretty pissed.

"Who are you? Show yourself!" he screamed at the robot.

A hatch in the Froslass' head opened, the three rocket grunts laughing maniacally, as they appeared before the raging man.

"Listen, is that a voice I hear?"

"It's speaking to me, loud and clear."

"On the wind!"

"past the stars!"

"In your ear!"

"Bringing chaos at a breakneck pace."

"Dashing hope, putting fear in its place."

"A rose by any other name is just as sweet."

"When everything's worse, our work is complete."

"Jessie!"

"And it's James!"

"And Meowth, now that's a name!"

"Putting *Malice* in his place."

"We're Team Rocket..."

"And we're in your face!" They all concluded their motto, as Wobbuffet appeared, agreeing with them and saluting his name.

Malice looked on with stupor; these three buffoons were from Team Rocket?

"What do you guys want? I'm just a deserter, I have nothing of importance!" he lied to them, hoping they would buy it. Honestly, fighting a giant robot was not on his to-do list, so avoiding trouble would be the best course of action, he reasoned.

"But you *do* have something of importance!" came a new voice from in the robot, and Malice gasped a little.

He recognized the voice; it was the same voice who gave him a tip for bringing their food.

"Brock!" he said angrily. "And Dawn too!" he added.

So this was their plan, siding with Team Rocket and bringing him down with a giant robot? He had to admit, he did not see that one coming.

The aforementioned duo now appeared alongside Team Rocket, glaring him down.

"So you're Malice? I can see why you call yourself that, you disgust me," Dawn said with venom in her voice. This was the guy that was after Tia, kidnapping Pikachu and poisoning him severely.

The man only chuckled, "And why do I disgust you Dawn? Is it because I nearly killed your friend's Pikachu? If so, I'm terribly sorry, that was not my intention," he mocked her as her face turned into a snarl.

"You liar! You tried to kill Pikachu, luckily we got him to a doctor just in time. By the way, we want him back too! You're just a miserable and lonely man who's a nuisance to everybody. You're just pathetic!"

The coordinator voiced her thoughts, not caring about Malice's feelings at all.

He now frowned, his face turning a little dark. "You don't know anything about me. But since you have angered me, let me tell you guys a story. This story is of a man, who is happily married and has a daughter. They all lived in a cozy little home in Snowpoint city."

The group was silent as Malice went on, "The woman was a guide for mountain climbers, while the man worked in a hospital. All was fine until one day, when the man came back from his work; he saw his house in flames. He could do nothing, but watch how his wife and child burned with the house. His only real family, gone. His wife and child were everything for him, and the man decided on ending it, right then and there."

He stayed silent for a while longer, his face now completely dark. "Until he saw it was no accident. *Somebody* put the place on fire,

and that *somebody* was the resolve for that man to go on, to get his vengeance on him."

His voice turned heavy as he balled his fist. " I was that man! I had to see my family suffer. After that, I moved away to Alto Mare, trying to start a new life, as I had no way of getting my vengeance on that man... Until I heard about *her* ."

Dawn and Brock watched with wide eyes at the man's story, Team Rocket too, was just as intrigued.

"The missy that bumped into me at the square, I was going to give her a piece of my mind when I overheard her talking... The guardian of Alto Mare, she is my *ticket* to my revenge." His voice was resolute, as Brock finally retorted.

"But why her? Why not someone else?"

After all, there were more pokemon in the world to get his so called revenge with.

"It's because of her attitude! Always happy and smiling, it disgusts me. But not as much as humans! Humans are the scum of the earth, everything that is wrong in this world. I would never hurt a pokemon, but humans, they deserve it all."

When Malice was done, the coordinator gave him an angry growl. "And what about Pikachu, huh? You tried to kill him! You're just making up a sad sob story to justify your actions! Well, it's not working!"

Malice gave her a look of disbelief. "Are you kidding? Haven't you figured it out already? I *saved* Pikachu, not the other way around! It was my intention to poison him just a little, not until the point where he would get kidney failure! Someone must've messed with the intensity of the poison!" he explained angrily as the duo gave him a frown.

"What are you talking about? Pikachu never had kidney failure."

The man lost it. "You imbeciles! I was the doctor. I disguised myself and put up another accent to throw you guys off. Didn't you guys find it ironic just as Pikachu got poisoned, a doctor checked in the other night? After you guys left, Pikachu went into cardiac arrest. His kidneys were failing, and his potassium levels were through the roof, resulting into ventricular fibrillation. Luckily, I could bring him back, otherwise he would've died!"

The duo stuttered, they couldn't believe it. This guy was doctor Earl!? The kind doctor who they had met earlier today?

"Why?" Brock finally stuttered out.

"Because, like I said, I don't kill pokemon! Besides, I don't have a use for a dead Pikachu. After that, I faked the kidnap with my Froslass, but she messed it up, hitting me way too hard, resulting in me being knocked out for real." he angrily admitted, his Froslass still beaming from ear to ear, oblivious as ever.

Malice went on. "After I finally came to, I quickly had to write that note, and get the hell out. Combine that with my already horrible writing, I was worried it would be incomprehensible, but apparently, it was not." He stated the obvious as he looked the robot up and down.

"I don't care if you saved Pikachu, messed up your poison's intensity, or even your past!" Dawn now screamed enraged. "You either hand over Pikachu now, or we will have to use violence."

The man sighed. He had to fight this robot after all. Luckily, his stalling gave him enough time to formulate a plan to take this thing down.

"Bring it!"

So did you guys like it, love it, hate it? review please. Next time will (probably) be the conclusion, until then!

Syrup-Waffle

Battle for Pikachu!

I'm *baaaaa* -aaaack! It's unbelievable, my first story, and it has over 50k words! Now, I speak for a lot of you when I say that writing is very hard. Whether you don't have experience, don't speak the language, have no idea how grammar and punctuation work or just have a lot of trouble getting your story on paper. I had all four when I came here about 5 years ago. And look at me now! I (mostly) managed to work away the first three items I just mentioned. Only the fourth remained, which for some reason, really started to kick in this chapter. I have the whole story planned out, and I can say we're about 2/5 done or so, but I really struggled this chapter. So, if the quality seems less than my other chapters, please point it out to me! Other than that, enjoy this chappie ^^

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon, if I did, the anime would probably even suck more than it already does.

"Malice" Speech

'Malice' Thoughts

'Malice' Telepathy

"Malice" Whiteboard marker

The Lily of the valley island, not only a famous place because every year, top players would compete in what is the biggest tourney in the whole Sinnoh region, but also because its peaceful scenery.

A lot of the island was unscathed by human hands, and as such, tall forests and rocky mountains were pretty common. Add the tropical weather that lingered around the island throughout the entire year,

and you got yourself a nice destination just to relax, and enjoy the quietness of nature.

BOOM!

The loud explosion pierced the silence in the gentle forest, which now was anything but gentle, as local pokemon scattered away from the onslaught that was happening.

Thick smoke clouds filled the air, and whatever was left from Malice's make shift cabin was blown away in the process. He coughed once, and shielded his eyes for anymore debris that was flying his way, as he looked at the sturdy Froslass robot which he was currently at an impasse with.

The battlefield had changed drastically, trees and foliage were destroyed, creating an open space for both combatants, and if one would look at the place from above, it would seem like an ugly scar had formed in the otherwise lush area.

Malice looked at the robot carefully, calculating its every move. While he had found out the robot was pretty much protected by a thick layer of steel against every single attack he threw at it, there was one major flaw: its agility.

It was a very clunky robot when it came to dodging and turning, and he knew he had to take that fact to his advantage. Apparently, the rocket goons Brock and Dawn decided to team up with were not the sharpest of nails, because the robot lacked an anti-slip mechanism as well.

Turning most of the battlefield in ice reduced the mobility of the fake Froslass enormously, and Jessie was currently scolding Meowth for not installing something so obvious.

"How could we not have an anti-slip mechanism in a *Froslass* robot Meowth?" she screamed at him agitated, while she scanned the area for Malice's ice and ghost type pokemon.

Honestly, she wasn't the only one who was slightly pissed off at the moment, James and Meowth too were both grumbling. They didn't expect to get so much resistance from a single man and his Froslass, and he reminded them of a certain twerp who managed to constantly thwart their plans and destroy their mechs in the past.

In the meantime, Dawn and Brock were both looking on with a critical eye from the back of the mech. The robot had failed in both catching the Froslass and to subdue Malice so far, as Dawn gave a slightly worried look to Brock; things weren't looking as bright as they were some time ago.

The original plan was to catch the Froslass, getting rid of the man's only form of defense, and then rescue Pikachu without a hitch. But the ice and ghost type was smart and not to mention, very agile. She had no problem in outmaneuvering the robot, constantly trying to find another weak spot to take it down.

As time went on, so did the duo's confidence falter with the Rockets; it was almost time for plan B.

Malice however, was still going with his original plan: take down this robot, and then disappear with Pikachu. He would get his chance to capture Latias another day. Right now, he had to make sure he would get out of this battle unscathed, and without losing his Froslass in the process.

One of the arms of the robot shot out again, trying to knock him off his feet, while a hatch opened in its stomach, shooting out a net to catch the ice and ghost type simultaneously.

The angry man raised a brow at the upfront approach, they were either getting sloppy or they were out of ideas. Either way, it worked out in his favor as he easily slid to the left, using the ice covered ground in his favor to avoid the robot's outstretched arm.

The man's Froslass however, just giggled at the poor attempt to catch her with a net, and let it go right through her body. She

became tangible again, wagging her finger mockingly at the robot.

Malice grunted, fatigue was starting to set in, and both parties had not covered any ground. It was just a matter of time before he would cave, while the robot obviously didn't have this problem.

The fake Froslass maybe very clunky, but it made up for it in durability. Everything he tried so far had failed. He originally thought the legs would have been the weak spot, since it didn't belong on a Froslass anyway and made the robot's agility utter crap, but that was quickly ruled out; the legs were even more durable than the frame it seemed.

'There's no way I'm going to defeat this thing from the outside, I need to destroy the robot from the inside, but how?' he thought to himself, grimacing slightly as he avoided another attack from the bulky mecha.

Letting his pokemon get caught was out of the question, and the exterior was completely resistant against every sort of attack, making it unable for his Froslass to go through it, even if she used her intangibility. He needed to formulate another plan and fast.

"Stand still old man and this will all be over in a heartbeat," James spoke over the build-in mike, as he extended an arm again to grab Malice this time.

"Indeed, this procedure won't hurt at all if you would just cooperate," Jessie added, to which the cat pokemon nodded in agreement.

"Just take your medicine like a good guy, and let Team Rocket take care of your pokemon," he said, moving the robot slightly forward to get a better angle at the obnoxious floating pokemon that still was giggling like crazy.

The doctor shook his head, rolling his eyes at their taunting; it was time for a different approach.

"What are you three idiots trying to accomplish anyway huh?" he taunted back, which immediately got him a response.

"Idiots?" they all yelled in sync. "You're talking to team rocket bub, and you've taken something that rightfully belongs to us!" Meowth clarified as he pressed a button on the dash board in rage.

Immediately, multiple hatches opened up, and shot a dozen small rockets straight at the doctor, who ordered his pokemon right after.

"Froslax, stop those rockets with blizzard!" he commanded, to which his pokemon obeyed.

As soon as she launched the attack, the rockets instantly froze, falling harmlessly out of the sky, sliding past Malice and his pokemon where they came to a stop.

"Is it Pikachu you want? Then why didn't you say so? I'll give you Pikachu, if you guys hand over Brock and Dawn."

Malice's grin turned wicked, it looked like his ploy was working: turn the rockets against Brock and Dawn, who would then destroy the robot for him from the inside.

"Don't listen to this guy. He's never going to give you Pikachu willingly, it's a trick!" Brock warned, getting a little bit nervous.

The trio now actually had stopped what they were doing, thinking over the man's offer and huddling close, while Dawn and Brock waited worriedly, their hands already finding their pokeballs if they needed to use them.

"You guys aren't seriously thinking about this, are you?" Dawn asked them, because if the goons would accept the offer, they had to improvise. The duo should've known something like this would happen, it was a risk they were willing to take, and a risk Malice was not afraid to exploit.

What felt like an eternity, they finally stopped whispering and gave Dawn and Brock wide grins. The duo grunted, both ready for a battle as they took a defensive stance, waiting for the inevitable.

"We've thought about your deal Malice." Meowth broke the silence through the intercom, as the man's smile turned even wider. Their absence of movement was a good sign, indicating they were considering his offer, and likely, accepted it.

"Well?" he asked almost rhetorically, thinking he already knew the answer.

"No."

In an instant, the arm of the robot shot out again, completely catching Malice off guard. The resulting punch knocked him off his feet, as he gave a loud yell at the sudden impact, sliding to a stop next to the frozen missiles. He wheezed as he gave the robot a death glare, he didn't have to be a doctor to know some of his ribs were broken. Frosslass was by his side immediately, obviously concerned as he spat out some blood, while the Rockets laughed obnoxiously.

"Do you honestly think you could bribe us in attacking our frenemies? We're not stupid! These guys have blasted us off more times than we can count!" James explained, cackling at the broken form of Malice and the rising anger of his Frosslass.

"No, we rather take your Frosslass now, and then get Pikachu another time," Jessie explained further as she pressed another button, opening a hatch that revealed something that looked suspiciously like a flamethrower.

Brock and Dawn eased up at the revelation, knowing they were safe for the time being, but Malice's eyes instantly widened, as he looked at the frozen missiles around him, and back at the flamethrower again.

"Now what would happen if I pressed this button?" Meowth wondered, tapping a finger to his chin. The man understood the implications; he would get incinerated and then blown to pieces, his biggest nightmare by far as he started to sweat profusely, heartbeat rising. Why did he always have to deal with fire?

"If you finish... Me right now, you'll... Never see Lorenzo again," he hacked as he tried to even his breathing, while his Frosslass looked on with absolute spitefulness.

"Who's Lorenzo?" James wondered, as Jessie and Meowth both shrugged their shoulders.

"A friend of ours, somebody who he still has with him," Brock suddenly spoke up, as the Rockets looked at him for further elaboration. "Just capture the Frosslass, we'll deal with Malice from here on out."

They nodded, but as they turned their attention back to Malice, the Frosslass was gone. Or, that's what they thought until an alarm went off on the dashboard.

"She's freezing the flamethrower," James warned, but it was already too late.

The gas had been frozen solid, rendering the flamethrower useless, as well as making the hatch unable to close. Malice chuckled as he stood up, grasping his chest slightly. "Seems like I found my way in."

The rockets gasped, while the hatch was small, a Frosslass could easily slide in, which is exactly what she did, and she was not very happy with the rockets.

Not one bit.

Both Dawn and Brock nodded at each other, this was getting out of hand, and sneaked out of the control room downwards. In the meantime, the Rockets were starting to shiver, not only because they

were getting afraid, but also because the temperature dropped a good twenty degrees.

"M-Meowth do something," Jessie said with chattered teeth, clearly terrified at facing the wrath of this pokemon. The floor started to turn into ice as well, slowly but surely.

"Me? You're the one who has pokemon!" he countered back quickly, heart racing.

"Well, you're the one who wounded her trainer, and almost burned him to a crisp," James brought in, just as terrified, and not sooner, the door slammed open, revealing a very pissed off ice and ghost type pokemon.

They all shrieked and hold each other close as the Froslass turned her attention to the Meowth.

"So it was *you* who almost killed my master!?" she spat with pure venom dripping from her mouth, her icy voice not helping at all.

The rockets were too terrified to move as Meowth tried to explain himself lamely. "N-no! Not at all miss. It's these two idiots you're looking for, I'm merely a pokemon working under their command."

Truthfully, Meowth hadn't been so terrified in a long time; her gaze was murderous, and he had no trouble believing she was capable in finishing him then and there.

The Froslass now turned her attention back to the humans, who both gave Meowth a slack jawed look.

"What?" they both howled, not believing the cat like pokemon was trying to save his sorry hide by putting the blame on them.

"Enough!" Sse roared, silencing all three rockets. "You're all going to pay severely."

She yelled her verdict and prepared a shadow ball attack as the three shrieked again. The Froslass shot the dark orb, and it exploded safely behind the three goons into the dashboard.

They still shivered as James finally opened one of his eyes, looking around warily.

"She missed," he exclaimed a little bit too happily, forgetting for a moment she was still there and could easily fire another shadow ball attack.

"No, I hit the bulls-eye." And with that, she disappeared into thin air.

"What, what did she say?" Jessie asked the cat like pokemon as he swallowed the lump in his throat, looking at the destroyed dashboard... As well as the self-destruct button that was activated.

"She hit the bulls-eye," he repeated for Jessie as he shakily pointed to the panel which indicated the robot was about to blow in less than ten seconds.

"Oh dear," James said as the whole robot began to light up and soon after, exploded into a million pieces.

"Team rocket's blasting off again!" they all shouted as they disappeared over the horizon with a twinkle. The resulting explosion turned the whole area in a black layer of smoke, as multiple trees were blown away, or began to catch fire in the process.

'She did it' Malice thought, somewhat impressed with his pokemon.

He managed to reach the cellar where Pikachu was lying while his Froslass dealt with the robot, until he heard the enormous explosion coming from the outside. That meant the problem was dealt with, most likely, and he took a moment to catch his breath.

Luckily, Pikachu wasn't the only thing that was downstairs; he also had a lot of meds littering the place. He gave a satisfied nod, the

cellar had survived the onslaught at least. Patching himself up as best as he could, he gave a glare to the yellow mouse pokemon.

"It seems you'll never see your trainer again. But don't worry; I'll take care of you... I'm a pokemon doctor after all." He gave him a crooked smile as Pikachu weakly closed his eyes again.

Quickly grabbing the weakened rodent, he opened the door outside, only to be greeted with thick smoke and the smell of burning wood, a smell that he was not unfamiliar with.

"Shit," he cursed as he looked around, the forest had caught fire, and it was spreading. He needed to get out of here, and fast.

"Froslax!" he screamed as he put his shirt for his mouth, getting as low as possible to the ground, avoiding inhaling too many toxins from the smoke.

His pokemon appeared, relieved to see her trainer ok, apparently not bothered by the smoke at all.

"We need to get out of here, let's go!" he told her. She nodded as he slowly crept away, trying to make his escape with Pikachu, when a flamethrower blocked his path.

He gave a startled yelp as he looked around. There, where the smoke cleared, were two people he rather didn't want to see.

"Not so fast Malice!" Dawn yelled as the smoke from the robot's explosion began to clear, her Quilava at her side, intimidation dripping from his growl.

Brock too, had his pokemon ready, Croagunk raising his poison jab in a silent threat.

Malice growled, partly because he thought he was done with this nonsense, and partly because he had to fight another fire type. "Did

you honestly think we would let you get away with Pikachu?" Brock continued, actually looking angry for once.

The man's Froslass floated before him, still looking absolutely mad. "You guys want a battle? A retired gym leader who wastes his time following a failure of a trainer and a coordinator who just has started her journey?" He cracked his neck. "A battle is what you get then!"

Both Dawn and Brock reacted unsure, how did this guy know so much info about them? Then again, it didn't seem impossible for a *doctor* to get his hands on the medical history of different people if he asked for them, which is most likely what he did.

Dawn opened up. "Quilava, flamethrower again!" The quadruped nodded and shot the attack at the Froslass.

Malice grumbled at her decision to use a fire move, as he ordered his pokemon to counter. "Froslass, dodge and then use shadow ball!"

She obeyed and managed to dodge the attack quite easy, but was caught off guard when Croagunk was suddenly in her face, knocking her to the ground with a poison jab where she landed with a thud.

"Great job Croagunk, now use x-scissor!" Brock ordered his poison and fighting type.

Malice's face darkened, he had to remember that it still was two against one. "Use blizzard on Croagunk!" he retaliated, trying to create some space for his pokemon.

His ice and ghost type complied, and shot the powerful ice attack straight at the poisonous frog pokemon, who couldn't dodge in time. Brock's pokemon let out a yell of pain, the x-scissor he was preparing wearing off.

"Oh no, assist Croagunk Quilava, use flame wheel!" the blunette ordered. Her pokemon began to run as fast it could, before engulfing

itself in fire, rolling at high speeds to his opponent in a flaming ball.

"Shadow ball that Quilava!" he commanded, alarmed at the approaching speed of the pokemon.

"Shield Quilava Croagunk!" Brock countered, as Malice gasped at the tactic.

"Get out of there Frolass!" he shouted, but he was too slow with his command. His Frolass had already fired the shadow ball, Croagunk jumping in to protect his team mate and taking the attack head on.

The attack blasted him away, but allowed Quilava to go on, who hit the Frolass straight in her chest as she gave a bewildered shriek. The attack resulted in an explosion that turned Malice's face into a snarl.

"Nice work Quilava," Dawn cheered, as Brock only gave thumbs up to his pokemon for a job well done.

"I'm done playing doctor nice! Frolass use ice beam on Dawn, now!" he roared, his pokemon obeying all too willingly.

Both Dawn and Brock gasped, as Quilava was still at the other side of the field, and croagunk still on the ground. There was no way they had time to throw another pokemon on the field, and the pokemon breeder could only watch as the ice beam soared towards Dawn with horror written on his face, his legs feeling like cement.

For Dawn, everything happened in slow motion, she knew this was going to hurt, a lot, and shielded her face on reflex.

"Now Slowking, protect the pretty girl please," a new voice spoke up out of nowhere.

Dawn had never been more relieved to hear this voice in her entire life, his Slowking blocking the ice beam's path, eating the attack up like it was breakfast and effectively protecting her.

"C-Conway?" she stuttered, the super nerd entering the scene.

"Now, now, Dawn, no need to get all shy, you know you can always count on me. And hey, it seems you've found Brock too," he said smoothly as he gave his trademark smirk, readjusting his glasses.

"What?" Malice now roared out bewildered. Where did this guy suddenly come from?

"I don't think I stuttered, but it seems you're the one who has caused trouble to my friends. Now hand over the Pikachu nice and quiet like, and we don't have to resort to anymore violence," Conway spoke up.

Malice was baffled, Conway even more so when Dawn suddenly leaped at him, hugging him tightly. "T-Thank you Conway, you saved me!" she spoke with sincerity in her voice, Conway losing his cool for a moment.

"Dawn? I appreciate it, but now is not the right time," he whispered, embarrassed.

She let go of him quickly, blushing slightly, as Brock gave him a pat on the back. "You don't know how relieved we are you showed up," he told him as they all faced Malice, whose eye began to twitch.

Three against one? How was he going to win now? "Whatever, I can take all three of you on!" he exclaimed, not backing off.

"Make that four!" spoke another voice. And again, Malice gasped as now a blonde guy entered the scene with his Empeon.

"You're going to give Ash's Pikachu back, or else I have to fine you one million pokedollars!" he screamed at Malice, as Brock and Dawn now watched with open mouth, Conway still smirking.

"Barry?" the duo said shocked.

"Who else? Did you guys honestly think I would let Conway strike with all the honor? Ash is mine friend too, and we'll get Pikachu

back, together."

The duo smiled as Malice gritted his teeth. He knew now he was never able to beat them all, there was no way. The two parties stayed silent for a second, as the forest around them still burned.

The doctor began to chuckle and then laugh crazily. "You want Pikachu? Come and get him then!" he challenged the group. He was not going down without a fight, if he lost Pikachu he had to start all over again, something Malice didn't want to happen in the slightest.

"Give up Thomas, you've lost," yet again a new voice spoke up, this one clearly feminine.

He snarled as he recognized the voice immediately.

"Cynthia..."

The beautiful blonde woman made her entrance, her face stern and her Garbomp at her side. Even Barry and Conway looked surprised this time; they didn't expect the champion either.

"What brings you here champ?" the doctor asked mockingly as Cynthia strolled forward.

"I'm here for an ailing friend," she clarified.

Malice grumbled. "Such a noble gesture towards Ketchum, I'm almost going to cry," he told her mockingly. "I suppose you're going to threaten me in releasing Pikachu too?"

She sighed at his response. "I wasn't talking about Ash. I was talking about you Thomas. What happened to you?" She softened her voice a little.

Malice in return, laughed loudly at her statement. "We're not *friends*, Cynthia," he spat at her. "Nothing has changed about me, this is who I am, my true nature!" he sneered at the champion.

"You and I both know that's not true. What you've done back then for me was something I will be grateful for my entire life."

The group was silent, as Malice began to laugh again. "That means nothing to me, you dumb broad!" he yelled at her as he calculated his options, which were almost non-existent. He sighed internally, he had no other choice.

"I'm done. I know when I'm beaten. You got me. A doctor surrenders with honor," Malice stated as he put his hands above his head, putting Pikachu down on the ground.

The group watched him skeptically, as Frosslass raised her hands with him in mock surrender. Cynthia's gaze stayed stern as he flashed her a cocky smile.

"Shadow ball!"

The response was immediate as everybody commanded their pokemon to attack, resulting in one giant explosion. It took some time for the smoke to clear, and when it did, Malice and Frosslass were gone.

"That's a pretty sneaky trick," Conway stated, as the group checked on Ash's downed Pikachu, who was now resting silently in Garchomp's claws.

"Is he ok?" Dawn asked worriedly.

Cynthia gave a weak nod. "He'll make it, but he needs to go to a pokemon center as soon as possible," she said urgently.

"What about Malice?" Brock asked the group. "He managed to escape, and he is clearly a bigger threat than team Rocket, not to mention, he still has Lorenzo."

The others looked at the Champion, waiting for her response.

"We'll track him down as quickly as humanly possible. But taking care of Pikachu takes top priority, we'll notify the police about Malice once we're back at the pokemon center, but first..." She spread her arms, turning the group's attention to the burning forest.

A while later, Brock, Dawn and Cynthia managed to put out the fire, with some help of Barry and Conway's pokemon. The two aforementioned trainers were currently carrying Pikachu to the pokemon center, while Dawn had sent her Togekiss on its way to Ash in the meantime, notifying him that they safely had recovered his pokemon.

The blunette and former gym leader that were left behind, now turned to the champion with a questioning gaze.

"I suppose you want to know how I know Malice, right?" she asked Brock and Dawn as they both nodded. She beckoned them over and sat down on a comfortable patch of grass.

"It was eight years ago. I was still a rookie trainer, going up to Snowpoint city for my seventh badge. My trusty starter pokemon, which was still a Gabite back then, was always at my side. Now, I was an exceptionally strong trainer, but I lacked the experience to make mature decisions, and this one, almost cost me dearly."

She took a small breath as she reminisced about the events in her head.

"I was naive and ill prepared for a snowstorm, which I found myself in at that moment. It overwhelmed me on the spot. One moment, it was a sunny afternoon, and the other, just like that, it turned into a storm. I wasn't going to make it; I knew I wasn't going to make it, although Snowpoint city was just a few miles further. I couldn't find shelter anywhere, heck, I couldn't even see a foot in front of me."

Cynthia now began to smile at the memories. "And at that moment, just before I was about to collapse, I knew you could always trust on

your pokemon. They sheltered me, all of my pokemon, and carried me aimlessly through the snow, until they finally found Snowpoint city. I was hospitalized, as well as all my pokemon. Luckily, I was going to be fine, and so did all of my pokemon... Well, most of them anyway."

She now frowned as the duo stayed silent, ushering for her to go on. "My Gabite, being super weak against ice, was in a critical condition. A lot of the doctors said he wasn't going to make it, but there was one who didn't give up hope. His name was Thomas Earl, a doctor who only worked there for a year, but was already considered one of the best."

The champion smiled again as she patted her trusty Garchomp on the head. "And they were right. He managed to cure Gabite. He worked his ass off to save this pokemon for a naive teenage girl who nearly got herself killed, and it made the two of us stronger, a lot stronger."

She stopped for a moment as she now looked at Dawn and Brock.

"After I became Champion, I would pay Thomas a visit regularly out of appreciation. He literally was the nicest man you could imagine, along with his wife and child. He talked about his profession like it was his obsession, and curing pokemon was the reason he was alive, he stated. Until, three years ago, something horrible occurred. In a freak accident, both Thomas' wife and child burned to death, leaving him alone."

The duo nodded, confirming Malice's story was true after all as Cynthia went on. "When I came to visit, he was gone. He'd resigned his job the day before, and nobody had seen him leave. I hadn't seen him ever since; some say he committed suicide, others said he just disappeared. I didn't believe them, I knew he was alive and doing well somewhere. It seems I was wrong on that last part."

Her frown deepened. "Something has possessed him, turning him into a monster, into Malice." She shook her head.

"He'll always be Thomas to me, a doctor who has had a very rough past and seems very lost at the moment. I don't even know where he came up with that ridiculous name, he always was completely the opposite. Anyway, when I saw him threatening Ash's Pikachu like that, I almost couldn't believe it."

She sighed once as Dawn spoke up. "But he did, and with a reason."

This piqued Cynthia's interest as the coordinator elaborated further. "He told us somebody started the fire, somebody who wanted his life along with his family, somebody he wants revenge on, that's why he kidnapped Pikachu. Have you any idea who this might be?"

The champion looked at her owlshly.

"Somebody wanted Thomas gone? No, that can't be right, I can understand a lot of people want him gone right now, but then?" She gave a steadfast shake of her head, as Brock took a different approach.

"Did you maybe note that something was off when you visited Thomas back in Snowpoint? Anything that would strike you as odd?"

The champion shook her head again in a negative. "No, absolutely not. He was always very kind. If someone wanted him gone, they must've had a big grudge against him."

She sighed again as she looked around, it was almost evening and the sun was about to set. "Let's go back to the pokemon center. You all had a very long day. Besides, I want to know if Ash managed to win."

She smiled as the duo nodded, grinning in return. When they had left to the forest, Ash was winning by a big margin, so they had no doubt he pulled through.

Returning their pokemon, they leisurely trekked through the forest back to the pokemon center.

'Interesting,' thought a new voice once all the people had left. 'Malice is close and wounded, another perfect opportunity like this won't Tobias get in a lifetime.' He finished his thinking process as he turned visible. Tobias' Latios smiled, which soon turned into a grin, as he looked at the empty battlefield where he had witnessed the whole event. 'Soon, when Malice is out of the way, I'll defeat that puny trainer Ash Ketchum, and claim Latias as my own.'

He closed his eyes as he concentrated on his trainer. '*Master? Malice is close by, I'm right **here** at the moment,*' he telepathically sent to his trainer, along with a picture of his location.

'Excellent,' was the response. 'I'll be there in half an hour, stay where you are. Then, we can finally finish what we started three years ago.'

Did you like it, love it, hate it? Review please! Next two chapters are going to be fluffy chapters between Ash and Latias, so if you have diabetes, I'll suggest getting your insulin shots ready! Also, finals are almost done, I'll be hearing if I passed my year or not at the end of next week. Until next time.

Syrup-Waffle

Adorableness all around

Well guys, finals are finally done! And after what's been the hardest month of my life, I can proudly say that I passed all my tests successfully :D This means I will not be kicked off my study and it also means I have vacation right now. I'm so happy guys, I can't express in words how grateful I am. Of course, your words of kindness have helped me tremendously as well and for that, I thank you all. Updates will be consistent again (probably one every week) so look forward for that. For now, enjoy this first fluffy chapter, I hope I've done it justice :3

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, the show would have an actual plot!

"Togekiss" Speech

'Togekiss' Thoughts

'Togekiss' Telepathy

"Togekiss" Whiteboard marker

Dawn's flying and fairy type began its descent towards the mostly empty stadium, where the young pokemon trainer and the artists had stopped their conversation. As soon as they got note of the Togekiss, their faces became deadly serious. For all they knew, Togekiss could be the bringer of bad news, and Ash prepared for the worst.

Bianca too, was worried. She knew how Malice played, and frankly, she was pretty afraid he might've tried something cheap. After all, if it would benefit the man, there would be no reason he wouldn't try.

Finally, the pokemon landed, and greeted them with a happy smile, making random gestures with its wings to try and explain what

happened. The humans looked at each other before they both sweat dropped.

"Do you know what it is saying?" Ash said awkwardly, rubbing the back of his head in embarrassment.

Honestly, while he was pretty good in guessing what his Pikachu said most of the time, that didn't mean he understood poke speech fluently.

Bianca wasn't much of a help either. She looked at the raven haired boy with a nervous laugh. "Well, it looks happy. That's a good sign, right?" she added hopefully, Ash chuckling weakly at her response.

"Dawn's Togekiss is *always* happy," Ash revealed, pinching his nose in contemplation.

"Togekiss, is Pikachu okay?" He addressed the pokemon after a moment, his heartbeat rising and his nervousness growing. He was almost afraid of the answer, but let out a huge sigh when Dawn's pokemon nodded an affirmative.

"They did it..." he muttered, relief washing over him. "They actually did it, thank Arceus! Where is Pikachu now?" he asked, when he remembered he couldn't understand Togekiss in the slightest.

Nonetheless, the pokemon responded happily, and Ash waved his hands in a friendly gesture for it to stop.

"This isn't going to work Togekiss. Wait a sec, I got a plan," he told the flying and fairy type.

Bianca, in the meantime, placed a reassuring hand on Ash's shoulder.

"You must be so relieved, Ash." She smiled, and the pokemon trainer gave a relieved sigh in return, nodding his head up and down.

"You wouldn't know," he responded, letting a smile slide on his face as well. Grabbing his custom loveball from his belt, he threw it in the air.

The ball burst open not a moment later, and Tia gave a happy coo as she took in her environment. *'We're still at the stadium?'* she questioned the artist and the trainer, as she now took in the sight of Dawn's pokemon.

Ash's smile turned even wider at the sight of the dragoness, and quickly explained what was going on. "Tia, this is Dawn's pokemon. They got Pikachu back!" he revealed joyfully.

The moment he spoke those words, the dragoness was nuzzling him contently.

'I'm so happy for you Ash,' she told him sincerely, Ash enjoying her closeness.

He nuzzled her back, her smooth fur ticklish on his skin.

'So, where's Pikachu now?' she asked after a moment, stopping her nuzzling and looking at the group.

"That's where you come in," the raven haired boy explained, feeling warm inside for some reason. "You can understand poke speech. Togekiss knows where Pikachu is at the moment!"

The psychic and dragon type nodded, and after a while of listening to the bird pokemon, she turned back to Bianca and Ash again. *'Pikachu is stable, but still very weak. He's being transported to the pokemon center right now by Conway and Barry. Apparently, these two, along with the champion, helped Dawn and Brock in defeating Malice,'* she told her best friend and her love interest, the two listening in awe.

"The champion was there too?" the young trainer asked, not believing it.

'She was, and she's still there with Dawn and Brock. The forest caught fire in the battle; they're putting it out right now. That's why they sent Conway and Barry ahead with Pikachu.'

The happy trainer smiled once more, rubbing Latias' cheek gently.

"Thanks Tia," he said to her, as she gave another happy coo at his touch.

"Latias? What about granddad?" Bianca asked worriedly.

This time, the dragoness' face turned grim. *'Malice confirmed he has Lorenzo... And he still does. Unfortunately, they don't know where Lorenzo or Malice are at the moment, as he managed to escape. They're going to inform the police as quickly as possible about him though and hope to catch him soon.'*

Latias paused a moment as she shook her head somberly. *'I'm so sorry Bianca,'* the psychic said, comforting her best friend with a hug.

Ash too, hugged the artist. She had a bitter smile on her face, and hiccupped lightly, trying to remain calm. "I-it's ok, we got Pikachu back, we're getting granddad back too," she reassured herself, not giving up hope.

"You betcha Bianca! And when I see this Malice myself, I personally kick his butt!" Ash spoke out confidently.

Bianca gave a slight giggle at the young trainer's response. "Thanks Ash, Tia, and you too Togekiss for the news," the artist stated, the trainer giving a thumbs up and both the pokemon a happy smile.

Ash now turned his attention to the whole group before addressing them. "Well? What are we still doing here? To the pokemon center! Barry and Conway should be there any moment now with Pikachu!" Ash exclaimed excitedly. He couldn't wait to hold his starter pokemon close again, and happy thoughts arose in his mind.

Latias gave another smile at Ash's positive emotions, before nudging him gently.

'Ash? There's a slight problem.' She pointed to the exit, which had itself packed with interviewers and camera crew. The aforementioned people were held back by two officer Jenny's, trying to get at least a glimpse of Latias on their camera for their big scoop.

"You know, sooner or later you have to give them an interview, that's just part of the job," the artist stated, looking at the pokemon trainer.

He shook his head and sighed loudly. "Rather later than sooner then. I want to see my Pikachu first, is that too much to ask?" he questioned the group.

Latias pondered a moment for a solution, before her heart began to pump faster at the plan she formulated in her mind, and she gave Ash a shy look.

*'You know, we can always **fly** to Pikachu, if you want,'* the dragoness suggested, heat rising to her cheeks.

The trainer looked at Latias for a moment, before his eyes widened at her implication.

"Tia, are you saying?" He didn't need to end his sentence as she nodded her head gently.

'It's a perfect day to fly, and that way, you'll be avoiding all of the media as well,' she added, waiting nervously for Ash's response.

The trainer in question didn't contemplate for long, if at all. "Sure! I'd love to fly with you!" he stated happily to his legendary.

She beamed with joy and gave him another nuzzle, before lowering her back to him for easy access.

He climbed on top of her back, looking for a spot to place his hands, when he felt an invisible force gently guide his hands around her

slender neck. He swallowed the lump in his throat, and blushed a bright red at the intimacy of the act, before raising a brow at Latias' move.

'F-for safety purposes!' she stuttered out cutely, her cheeks just as red as Ash's.

He chuckled at her cute stutter, and Bianca squealed internally at the adorable scene. "Hey lovebirds, I'd hate to interrupt, but what about me?" She jokingly flapped her arms a couple of times like wings, getting the message across.

They both turned their heads away in embarrassment, before Ash tried to respond. "You... I-We're not..." He lowered his head as he couldn't find his words, Latias even more embarrassed than the raven haired boy.

Bianca giggled at the couple's reaction, putting a hand in front of her mouth in joy.

'Bianca, please. Stop saying things like that,' her best friend pleaded desperately to her.

'Awww, but you guys are so adorable. You should kiss him already and get this over with, he obviously likes you,' she thought back, raising her brows suggestively.

Latias squeaked at Bianca's response and shot her a murderous glare. Only the thought about kissing the raven haired boy sent butterflies through her stomach, and made her feel the luckiest dragoness on the planet.

Right now she wasn't feeling bad either. Ash was currently hugging her body tight, his arms around her neck, and she could feel his heart beat, which was just pumping as fast as hers. This made her relax just a tiny bit, Ash was just as nervous as she was, which she found absolutely adorable as she looked at his blushing cheeks.

Soon, Ash looked back at Latias, and gave a shy smile of his own, before releasing his Charizard in the air. The fire and flying type appeared with a loud roar, claws ready, and shooting an intimidating glare at Dawn's Togekiss, who gave an oblivious smile in return.

"Charizard, relax! That's Dawn's Togekiss. You only need to give Bianca a ride," Ash said, smirking at the artist who now backed up slightly in fear.

Charizard turned his head at the Altomare resident, his glare not withering in the slightest, and puffed out a cloud of black smoke in annoyance.

"There's your ride Bianca! Aren't you going to climb on Charizard's back?" the trainer said smugly.

Latias couldn't control a giggle herself at Ash's retaliation on the artist.

'You're evil,' she accused the trainer in a lovely way, as the two looked at Charizard who was about to refuse his trainer's request. Ash sighed internally; he should've known he would react like this.

Latias sensed this, obviously, and decided to help him out.

"So you're Charizard huh? I'm disappointed; I thought you were up for a race against a legendary with some weight on your back. Guess I was wrong." She turned her head up nonchalantly, and Charizard growled at her dangerously.

"You want a race girl? A race is what you get!" he retorted, lowering his back for the artist, who looked on with surprise. She climbed on reluctantly, Charizard still giving the legendary a death glare.

'There, problem solved,' she spoke happily to her telepathic connections.

"How did you- never mind, let's just go." The trainer shook his head and chuckled. He didn't even try to understand.

"The race will be around the island and then back to the pokemon center again! Are you ready?" Latias questioned the fire and flying type. He nodded, concentrating all his muscles for takeoff.

"Then set..." Bianca looked at Latias, then to Charizard, and then back to Latias again.

"Tia?" she asked fearfully, sensing Charizard preparing for takeoff. "What are you-" She couldn't end her sentence as Latias screamed "go!" cheerfully, and just like that, Ash's pokemon was gone.

"Lati-AAAAAAAAAAHHHH" she screamed, the legendary pokemon laughing at her best friend's misfortune.

"You're evil," Ash now said in return, laughing just as hard.

She smiled cutely, before giving him a grin.

"Latias! Don't you dare!" he warned her, already knowing what she was thinking.

'*Sorry Ash,*' she apologized, before tugging her arms in her body, and flying off at the sky in tremendous speech.

"Holy Arceusssssss!" Ash screamed at the top of his lungs, the wind whizzing past his face, grabbing a hold of Latias even tighter.

Tears started to form in his eyes, and the sound of his laughter was heard even over the wind.

"Woohooo!" Ash screamed, laughing joyfully, Tia cooing happily alongside with him. She knew he would like it, and soon, she'd reached to first clouds. Doing a front flip, she turned around, letting the boy touch the clouds briefly, before shooting back down to the earth, accumulating even more speed.

"Whooaaaaaaaaa!" he screamed with a tremendous smile on his face, feeling his stomach sink in his gut.

Latias was enjoying every second, the hollering of the boy spurring her on even more as they were heading straight for the sea.

'Hold on tight!' she warned cheerfully, putting a protect around her and Ash, not stopping her dive in the slightest.

"Oh Arceus!" he yelled over the wind, the sea coming closer and closer, before they dove straight into the water like a rocket. Ash hold on for dear life, actually finding he could breathe thanks to Latias' protect and looked around in awe.

The dragoness didn't dive too deep, as she knew her protect would falter any second, and humans couldn't exactly hold their breath for long. Moreover, even she had trouble looking in front of her as she dove in too deep, let alone a human.

The sight underwater amazed Ash; hundreds of different water pokemon swam by the pokemon trainer and psychic dragoness without a care in the world. Shellos, Buizel, Magikarp, Carvanha, Wooper, Marill and even a Gyarados were just some of the pokemon Ash saw on his little underwater trip.

'Take a deep breath, Ash,' Latias said to her love interest, her protect wearing off. He did as he was instructed, and soon, the coolness of the sea engulfed his very being.

The suddenness of it took Ash by surprise nonetheless, as he tried his best to remain calm. The pressure that was put on him panicked the trainer a little, but the dragoness sent him reassuring thoughts in his mind: him holding Pikachu in his arms again, him winning the Lily of the valley tourney... And him holding Latias gently as they snuggled close.

Ash felt warmth spread inside his body yet again at that last thought, even though he was in the cool sea at the moment, and snuggled

Latias just a little closer.

She gave a happy shudder at his touch, and decided to enjoy this moment for a little while longer.

Honestly, she wasn't sure why she sent that last thought, but he'd enjoyed their cuddling so much earlier, she hoped that it would calm him down, and it did just that.

She felt at ease, here in the sea with the one she loved by her side, but soon, he gave her a tap, indicating he was running out of air. She dove back to the surface again, and purred happily as Ash hugged her tight.

"That was amazing Latias!" he cheered, as the two lazily drifted over the surface of the water, enjoying the warm rays of the sun.

'I'm glad you enjoyed it, Ash,' she responded back, nuzzling her trainer's head in affection. Ash sighed contently, and closed his eyes for a moment, being at peace.

He didn't want this moment to end, but he knew a certain pokemon was waiting for him, and reluctantly addressed his legendary pokemon. "Let's go to the pokemon center Tia, Conway and Barry should be there with Pikachu right now," Ash suggested to Latias, rubbing a hand gently over her right cheek.

She cooed in response, and soon, shot off with a moderate speed towards the island again.

Paul grumbled, walking towards the pokemon center with his head turned low. This couple few days couldn't have gone worse. Firstly, he got slapped by a random girl he didn't even know, then, he got accused of poisoning his opponent's pokemon, almost getting him disqualified, and to top it all off, said random girl was a legendary pokemon all along, who smacked his ace with almost no trouble.

While he should feel jealous that his rival managed to catch a legendary, and beat him in the process, he actually felt... Proud. He didn't know why, but Ketchum defeated him at his best, even after all the crap he gave him, and that was the kind of rival he could respect.

"Paul!" an obnoxious voice yelled from behind him and he sighed internally. Turning around, he saw Barry sprinting towards him like crazy.

Coming to a sudden stop, he talked to him a mile a minute, not even catching his breath while making wild hand gestures.

"Paul! Tell me you won from Ash. You did, right?" he asked the purple haired trainer as he snorted once.

"No. I got utterly destroyed."

Not waiting for a response, he started to walk again.

"W-wait up," the blonde boy said, stopping Paul dead in his tracks. "Where's Ash now?" he questioned the trainer as Paul shrugged his shoulders.

"How should I know? Why do you even want to know?" he spoke with indifference to Barry.

"Well..." the trainer whispered, before pointing to Conway.

Paul almost gasped as he saw the yellow rodent, who was resting in the nerd's arms gently.

"Is that?" Paul questioned as Barry nodded. He gave Barry and Conway a look of disbelief. "How?" he asked them.

"We'll explain later, right now, we need to go to the pokemon center as soon as possible," Conway told him, and Paul nodded at that.

After a moment, they reached the pokemon center, and were quite surprised to see a certain Charizard waiting patiently with a human

girl who looked as pale as a ghost. Besides them was a Togekiss, resting peacefully.

The girl now took note of the three boys.

Paul tensed up for a moment at the sight of the girl, before he relaxed. This wasn't the Latias, this was the artist who looked exactly like her. It was however, Ash's Charizard, which meant the trainer must be close by.

The artist muttered some dark words under her breath about a certain dragoness, when she stopped her internal monologue as she saw the three men approach with the little mouse pokemon resting weakly in Conway's arms.

Finally, they stopped before the artist, who petted the sleeping mouse gently, happy to see Pikachu again.

Charizard gave a reassuring grin at the bundle of yellow fur.

"Ash wouldn't be around, would he?" Paul finally spoke up for the group, looking at the artist urgently.

She didn't need to answer the question, just then, Latias approached with Ash on her back. His face was stoic as he stepped from his legendary silently, all the while looking at the sleeping form of his Pikachu.

He couldn't move, his legs felt heavy, and his throat felt like a lump was stuck in it. Latias nudged him gently and after that, he felt his legs move automatically, as Conway held his Pikachu out for him. Wordlessly, he took him in his arms like an infant, and Pikachu stirred slightly, slowly opening his eyes.

Ash had difficulty holding it together now, slowly rubbing his starter pokemon behind his ear.

"Hey buddy, welcome back," he whispered. The Pikachu gave his trainer a weak smile before muttering out a "Chu" in contentment. Ash hugged him close, hiccupping slightly before taking in a deep breath.

"I'm so glad I got you back. I wouldn't know what I would do without you," he told his electric mouse pokemon sadly.

The group looked on with smiles, even Paul had his lips faced upwards, as the raven haired boy kept on hugging his Pikachu teary eyed.

After a while, Dawn, Brock and the champion joined too. Together, they went into the pokemon center, and the trio told the rest of the group what had happened.

Pikachu was taken care of by the Nurse, stating he needed to rest at least another week to get restored to full health. "You're very lucky young man. Whoever has treated your pokemon's poison has done a good job," Nurse Joy had told the boy.

He grumbled at the remark, Malice was under their nose the whole time, and nobody noticed it. Frankly, he didn't believe that Malice was telling them the truth about the poison. This was just his sick way of humor, he reasoned, and he didn't like it one bit.

The champion stayed for a little while longer, and even offered the group dinner. They went to a restaurant close by, and talked about all the events that had occurred. The purple haired trainer even apologized to Bianca for his rude behavior the other day, and she accepted his apology without so much of a hassle.

After dinner, Cynthia had to say goodbye, as well as the other three boys, each going their separate way.

The original group, after a long day, was finally together again. "I don't know about you guys, but I'm exhausted. I'm going to bed," Ash

exclaimed to Brock, Dawn, Bianca and finally Latias, who was invisible at the moment.

"You should Ash," Brock responded. "You deserve a good night's rest."

The others nodded, and Ash wished them a good night.

Walking back to the pokemon center slowly, he gave a shy smile at his invisible pokemon, who he knew was following him at the moment, before blushing slightly. 'Your offer still stands, right?' he thought to her with growing nervousness in his voice.

The dragoness' response was a loving nuzzle, her claws massaging his shoulders skillfully. '*Of course Ash,*' she answered him excitedly. Honestly, that was the sole reason she was following him right now. It was just a couple minutes after eight, and Latias felt only a little bit tired, but this didn't mean she was letting this opportunity slip by, not in a hundred years!

They soon reached the pokemon center, checking up on Pikachu for a final time -who was doing fine and resting himself- Ash and Latias went to their room afterwards.

Ash closed the door carefully, Tia having dropped her invisibility in the meantime. The dragoness was getting pretty nervous right now. Here she was, alone with Ash in a bedroom, it didn't exactly help her mind with the mental images it came up with.

The trainer on the other hand, while looking a bit flustered, actually radiated calmness. He didn't know why, but having Latias around him put him at ease, especially if he could hold her close. That was exactly what he was going to do, as he put her cheeks in his hand gently.

The psychic and dragon type blushed a bright red at Ash's touch and sudden straight forwardness. He gave her a smile that melted her heart, and her nervousness only grew tenfold.

"I'm so happy you're here Tia," he admitted, swallowing thickly and trying to find his words. "I don't know what it is, but I feel so happy around you. I can't explain it," he whispered to her, now beginning to blush too.

The dragoness cooed in ecstasy, she could feel it; he was beginning to fall for her. It wasn't very hard to notice, but a lot of confusion was amongst the emotions as well. Latias wouldn't have liked it more than to capture his lips with her own, but that could confuse the boy only more. No, she had to wait just a little bit longer.

The pokemon trainer chuckled at his own words, before continuing. "What I'm trying to say is, thank you, Tia," He stated and for a moment, he felt the huge urge to kiss her.

Her face just radiated love, her cheeks an adorable red, and this feeling inside him almost made him feel sick. Yet, his rational side said she was his pokemon, making him stop dead in his tracks.

Nonetheless, after a while, his face started to move automatically, and he softly kissed her right cheek. The cute squeak Latias made when he let his lips linger there just a tad longer than he intended, made him smile like an idiot.

Tia at the moment, felt like she could die happily. Ash, after so many years, had returned her kiss, and his lips felt like heaven on her cheek.

Ash hugged her close, enjoying her warmth before whispering into her ear. "Somehow, I've always known it was you back at the dock."

The young legendary shuddered at his breath, his touch making her feel so loved. She guided the young pokemon trainer to his bed, before tossing his blanket away with her psychic.

Ash looked at her questionably, before she gave him an adorable smile. *'Oops... Guess you can only use me as a blanket right now.'*

She blushed cutely as Ash lowered himself on the bed with a goofy smile, Latias on top of him and enveloping his body like a blanket. After she had settled down, the dragoness let her head rest against his, and Ash never had felt so nervous and calm at the same time.

"Goodnight Tia," he said softly to his pokemon.

Latias gave him a warm smile in return. *'Goodnight Ash, sweet dreams.'*

The next morning the couple had woken up around eleven AM, the others having already left the bedroom. Giving the dragoness a nuzzle, she cracked one eye open before giving a cute yawn.

"Wakey wakey. The others are having breakfast, would you like some too?" Ash offered his 'blanket', petting her head lovingly.

'Nooooooooooooo,' she complained. *'I want to stay in bed with youuuu,'* She moaned out, still half asleep.

Ash blushed at her response, gently trying to push the dragoness away. While he had no problem cuddling with her, his stomach was complaining that it needed to be filled. "C'mon Tia, I'm hungry," Ash brought in, trying to persuade the young legendary, without much result.

'Don't go!' she said sleepily, grabbing his body with her claws, and began hugging it like a huge teddy bear.

'Now you're mine.' She sighed, not letting the trainer get up.

Ash gave up after that, and decided just to roll with it. After five minutes of cuddling though, his stomach protested with a loud rumble, and Latias reluctantly let go of him.

He gave her a loving smile, she looked absolutely adorable sprawled across his bed like that, and quickly got himself dressed properly. He

nudged her softly, giving her a peck on her forehead.

"Let's go, otherwise there will be nothing left," Ash stated.

The dragoness grumbled, but got out of bed nonetheless. A quick flick with her psychic and most of her feathers were all back in place where they should have been.

Getting invisible, the duo went downstairs, and found their friends eating idly. That changed the moment they spotted Ash, and all began to smile mischievously.

"Good morning Ash. Have you *slept* well?" Bianca greeted the trainer with a grin.

Ash immediately caught what she implied, and began to look away shyly. "Y-yes, thank you for asking," he stuttered out. He took a seat next to Brock, who was doing his best not to burst out in laughter.

"Gee," He said. "That new blanket that they decided to test out on Ash's bed last night looked awfully comfortable." At these words, Ash blushed a bright red, and the group giggled at his reaction.

Latias wasn't doing well either. Luckily, she was invisible, otherwise she felt like she could die of shame.

"You two looked so adorable together; I just had to take some pictures," Dawn added while she clasped her hands together. The trainer, who had been drinking his milk, spit it out in surprise, and Latias gave an audible squeak this time.

"You what?" Ash sputtered out, the group now bursting out in laughter.

"That look on your face. Priceless," the artist stated between her laughter; Dawn and Brock laughing just as joyfully.

Fortunately for Ash and Latias, the laughter soon died down, and Ash grimly took some toast with egg.

"Awww, don't be upset Ash. I know for a fact that Tia is having it worse. I mean, she's blushing so much I can see her through her invisibility cloak," the artist jabbed at her best friend.

Another round of laughter was the answer, before Ash cleared his throat loudly.

"So," He said, effectively getting the attention of the group. "Tia, I was wondering. I've noticed you like swimming a lot, and the island has a big tropical pool located not too far from here."

He smiled.

"What I'm saying is, would you like to go to this pool with me?" he asked to the dragoness, shutting the whole table up.

His grin couldn't have been smugger. Dawn had her mouth wide open in an O form, Bianca was moving her mouth up and down like a Magikarp in stupor and Brock looked like he was about to cry out of jealousy.

Tia on the other hand, had trouble staying silent at the request.

Ash had asked her out!

She squealed with happiness from the inside before responding joyfully.

'I wouldn't love anything more.'

Did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Review please! Next is going to be pool time, so stay tuned for that! Syrup-Waffle

Pool time: The build up

100 followers! Are you guys mad? That means 100 different individuals are interested in my story, that's insane! Anyway, welcome to the first part of the pool scene. Yes, part one, because otherwise it would've been a beast of a chapter again, so I split it up. Next week probably the climax. Also, I'll be working in the bakery again the next three weeks! Yes I work in a bakery, so that means less free time, so scratch what I said earlier! More news, I've been playing a lot of sm4sh recently, and it has made me excited to start a fic about it! Of course, that would be only after I finish this one, but for those who're even remotely interested, look at my profile page at a certain meme I did, you'll figure out who the main characters are going to be. For now, enjoy this chapter ^^

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, then the move splash would've been the ultimate move.

"Swimming pool" Speech

'Swimming pool' Thoughts

'Swimming pool' Telepathy

"Swimming pool" Whiteboard marker

The disguised dragoness looked on with giddiness at the massive entrance of the swimming pool, holding Ash's hand gently but firmly.

The young man smiled at Tia's enthusiasm, and chuckled softly, turning the young legendary's attention towards him.

'What's so funny?' she asked him, smiling slightly, her soft brown eyes staring deeply in his chocolate brown ones.

The young trainer shook his head lightly in mild amusement, and responded happily. 'Nothing, it's just, you're so adorable when you're excited about something,' he thought back, grinning shyly at his female companion.

Latias cooed in response and the trainer began to grow slightly nervous as her face turned soft, holding his cheeks gently in her smooth hand palms. Her eyes were hypnotizing, and her cheeks an adorable shade of red, as she almost whispered her response.

'You know what else makes me excited?' the love struck dragoness breathed out.

Ash could only swallow audibly. Latias was leaning in closer, and he could feel her breath on his face. His heart was pumping like crazy, and while he knew what she was trying to do, he didn't stop her. Instead, his own breathing grew erratic, as her lips were now just an inch away of his.

The young legendary didn't know why she was suddenly so straight forward, but Ash didn't stop her. Moreover, she could sense his emotions, which were clearly positive with the predicament the trainer found himself in at the moment.

She couldn't wait any longer, his lovely remark had triggered such strong emotions for the boy, and this was the only way how she could respond to him at the moment.

Time seemed to stop for Ash, and he closed his eyes in anticipation. His own pokemon- no, *Latias*, was about to kiss him, and oddly, he wanted nothing else.

But what he expected to be Tia's lips brush his own gently, was actually a very hard force against his shoulder, which knocked him straight off his feet. The surprised teenager let out a yelp of surprise, and landed roughly on the hard ground below him.

Tia was kissing nothing but open air at the moment, and opened her eyes in confusion.

What happened?

The loud yelling of a group of young adults was her answer, and she looked at her fallen trainer.

She gasped loudly and was at his side immediately. '*Ash! Are you alright?*' she asked with concern in her voice.

The trainer groaned, and rubbed his elbow lightly.

"Hey! Can't you watch were you going kid?" an obnoxious voice yelled at the pair. The other people in the group began to laugh, as the boy who slammed Ash into the ground, continued his angry rant.

"I'm talking to you!" he yelled threateningly.

Latias, at the moment, was seething. Never in her life had she been so angry. These 'tough' guys not only stole her first kiss from Ash, but hurt him too. Moreover, they were acting like it was his fault, while these guys were obviously to blame. Hell, they were even a good couple of years older than Ash, how immature could you get?

Latias gaze was murderous, and she would definitely have done something she would've regretted, weren't it for Ash's hand on her shoulder who hold her back.

"Sorry," the trainer muttered finally to the group.

The young legendary was baffled, Ash could take them on no problem, teach them a lesson even! But all he said was 'sorry' to them for something he didn't do!?

"Yeah you better be! Next time, I'll kick your ass!" The group laughed once more before they left the couple alone, and entered the big entrance of the swimming pool.

The legendary was still beyond pissed, before she addressed her love interest roughly. *'Why did you let that happen? I could've given them a piece of my mind!'* she stated angrily.

Ash sighed loudly, before giving her a weak smile. 'I know you would've done more than only giving them a piece of your mind,' he thought to her accusingly.

Latias huffed in annoyance, but couldn't help but let a sly smile slide on her face. Ash knew her better than she thought, and she nuzzled the trainer gently.

'They didn't hurt you too bad, did they?' she spoke to him softly.

Ash snorted in an exaggerated tone at her concern, obviously joking. 'They didn't even scrape me, fair lady,' he exclaimed with an air of nonchalance.

The sweet dragoness giggled at his antics, before nudging him gently. *'Let's get inside then, shall we milord?'*

'If you wish,' he responded.

The disguised legendary grabbed his hand again, and leaned on his shoulder lovingly. Even after that little event, Ash still felt extremely happy at the moment, as he walked inside the main hall of the tropical swimming pool.

The two watched in awe in the main hall, looking their eyes out. Just as you would expect, it was huge. At the end of the hall was a single desk, a woman in her mid thirties was behind it, typing away on her computer. Above the desk, a big sign with 'Tickets available here.' was readable in big blue neon letters.

A red carpet lead up to the front desk, and at each side were rows of artificially palm trees to decorate the hall further. Behind the desk was a look-through glass wall, making you able to see just a glimpse of what the pool had to offer. Loud cheers echoed through the glass

walls, and the sound of laughter and splashing water was enough to make the dragoness just as giddy as before.

With seven waterslides, two wild waterslides, multiple bubble baths and saunas, a big pool with artificial waves, and two big pools outside with diving boards, the biggest swimming pool in Sinnoh, Tropicana, had to offer something for everyone. The duo approached the desk, Latias giving her trainer a loving nuzzle.

The queue to the desk wasn't that long, fortunately, and soon, it was Ash and Latias' turn, the dragoness almost unable to contain her excitement. The woman gave the young couple a warm smile, before addressing them.

"Hello, welcome to Tropicana, may I help you?" she asked them sweetly.

Ash nodded and held up two fingers. "Two tickets please," he responded to the lady.

She gave the duo a grin, before she began to prepare the tickets on her computer. "You're in luck young man, pokemon get fifty percent off," she told Ash matter of factly, before pointing to Tia, who looked on nervously at the woman.

The pokemon trainer gave the woman an incredulous look, and she giggled at his reaction. "Don't look so surprised, you're pretty popular Ash. Almost the whole island knows about you and your Latias after you defeated Paul in the quarter finals yesterday," she explained them simply.

'Hehe, oops,' Tia spoke in Ash's mind apologetically. It was her idea to use her old disguise, even if Ash had warned her about the risk, but she had brushed it off, stating it was no biggie.

Ash respected her wishes, but now, she maybe needed another form other than Bianca 2.0 after all.

'Don't worry,' he reassured her. 'We're just going to make you a new disguise in a moment.'

She nodded sweetly as Ash paid the tickets.

"Thank you, have fun!" the woman replied, waving her hand. The two scanned their tickets, and the machine beeped, letting them go through the gate. From there, the room split up, each hallway leading to the changing rooms, one for men, and the other for women.

'We'll meet up at the entrance of the main pool. In the meantime, I'll make another human form. You're going to love it, I assure you,' the dragoness stated happily, giving him one last nuzzle before running off. *'And no peeking Ash,'* she warned him cutely, giving him a wink.

The young man blushed slightly at her remark, before walking towards the opposite direction.

Once he reached the men changing room, the smell of chlorine hit his nostrils like a truck, and he breathed in loudly. The smell reminded him of good times, as swimming pools were supposed to be, and he quickly found an empty booth to change himself.

Ash's shoulder did still sting a little after that slam, but he didn't let this bother him. He put his valuable stuff and clothes in a locker after he was done changing himself.

The key had a sturdy strip of black plastic around it, and was supposed to be worn like a bracelet. Ash however, didn't get the strip around his wrist, no matter how hard he tried, and gave up soon after that in frustration. He would ask Tia to help him in a moment.

Speaking of Tia, he hadn't seen her yet, and he was already at the entrance of the main pool right now.

It was a sight to behold however, a lot of rocks, different trees and plants made it really look like a tropical swimming paradise, and hundreds of different people and pokemon were enjoying

themselves thoroughly. In front of Ash was a big pool that went through two narrow rock formations with a bridge hanging in between them. At his right were the stairs to a very steep waterslide that connected to the pool in front of him, and to his left was a bar that let outside with the paddling pool for little kids.

"This is so awesome," he muttered, before a pair of hands covered his eyes.

'Guess who,' giggled a sweet voice in his mind.

Ash tried to look thoughtful, putting a hand under his chin for emphasis before giving his reply. 'A cute red and white dragoness in her new form. Now lemme see!' Ash spoke out jokingly, trying to turn around swiftly.

Tia however was prepared for this, and scolded him playfully, holding him in place with her psychic. *'Ah ah ah, Ash. Flattery won't help you this time. Say uncle first,'* she stated, giggling at the young man's perplexed reaction.

Said young man played along immediately after that, and smiled slightly. 'What? No way! I'm not going to say uncle before you do,' he sputtered at her, his voice resolute.

'I wonder if you're ticklish, Ash,' the disguised legendary retorted, smiling innocently.

The raven haired boy widened his eyes in horror, and quickly gave in. 'No, have mercy! Uncle, uncle, uncle!' he responded rapidly at Latias' implication. The young dragoness though, didn't listen.

'Awww, too late Ash.' She smiled devilishly, and poked him in his sides, making him erupt in laughter.

'Ack! Latia-haha-as, plea-hehehe, stop!' he thought back desperately between his laughter, Tia giggling along with him.

'I'm your trainer now, say it Ash,' the young legendary commanded cutely to him.

'You're my trainer- hahahaha- now, please! Have mercy, oh awesome trainer! Hehehehe,' he panted out and finally, Tia let go of him.

Not even five minutes in this swimming pool with Latias, not even touched a single droplet of water yet, and Ash was having more fun than he could remember.

'No fair,' he muttered, catching his breath between giggles. 'You can use your psychic powers,' he told her, looking like a pouting child.

She blew him a raspberry playfully; Ash still had his eyes closed, thanks to Latias' psychic powers, and now felt it wear off slowly.

'Sorry ashy, I'd told you no peeking. Otherwise you would've seen me while I was tickling you,' she responded before adding, *'How do I look? B-be honest alright?'* she stuttered shyly.

Ash opened his eyes slowly, and the sight of the girl in front of him blew him away. She was just a couple of inches shorter than he was, her fire red hair just reaching over her shoulders. At her left, she wore these cute pink beads that caught one good lock of her hair, and her amber eyes were pools were Ash could drown in.

Her skin was completely smooth, no deformities whatsoever and to top it all off, she wore a cute white bikini that left absolutely nothing to the imagination. Finally, her shy look, while she held one of her own arms awkwardly, waiting for Ash's judgment, finished the picture completely. She looked like a young model, and whether it was intentionally done to catch the young trainer's attention or not, it certainly worked.

Ash was completely speechless, and he was sure most of his blood rushed to his cheeks. The trainer wasn't the only one who was speechless, the moment she'd stepped foot in the entrance of the

main pool, she'd gotten looks. Most of it were young teenagers, eyeing her hungrily, but some of them were even young adults, who either winked at her, or got nasty looks from their own girlfriends who spotted the young men stare at Latias. Even a couple of girls gave the young dragoness sultry looks.

The legendary ignored this completely however, her attention solely focused on the blushing boy in front of her.

"You..Uhm... Wow..." he stuttered out, embarrassed, completely at a lack of words as he rubbed the back of his head awkwardly.

She swung her body from side to side innocently, showing off more of her contours to the stuttering trainer, still waiting patiently for a decent answer.

"You look great!" he finally complimented a little too loudly to Latias, which got him some giggles from random people who were walking by.

Tia didn't mind at all, and squealed internally. Her little plan had worked; whoever said that looks didn't matter was an idiot. She'd taken a little peek inside her trainer's brain what he preferred from the opposite sex, and while personality was a definite number one in Ash's mind, he still was a male. A teenager to be precise; hormones were flying through his body like crazy, and the form Latias had taken on was simply breathtaking.

'Thank you Ash,' she said sincerely, blushing slightly. *'Since you like it so much, I'll definitely keep it.'* She gave him a tender hug, and the trainer felt his head go hazy for a moment, his knees buckling slightly as he threatened to faint right then and there.

He managed to calm himself down luckily, and felt the warmth he experienced last night return tenfold. 'You should,' he thought back automatically, his hormones doing most of the talking instead of him. Her hair smelled nice, like coconut, and her skin was as smooth as a baby's.

The sweet legendary broke the hug, before giving a concerned look. *'Your shoulder,'* she noted, gently putting a hand on the nasty looking bruise.

Ash rolled his shoulder lightly at her touch, indicating he was fine. *'It's ok. It doesn't hurt that much,'* he reassured her, before Tia began to smile shyly again.

'I can make it even hurt less,' she whispered in his mind, and gently kissed his shoulder, sending a shiver down Ash's spine. *'Better?'* she asked sweetly.

Ash was almost tempted to say no, just so she could kiss his shoulder again, but he caught himself nodding his head, smiling like an idiot.

'Great!' the legendary spoke in return, grabbing one of his hands and dragging him along.

'Where are we going?' Ash asked curiously, before she pointed to the longest waterslide Ash had ever seen.

It was green in color, and started inside the building, before making a sharp turn going through one of the walls outside. From there, it came back inside again, and ended in a drain like structure. You would spin a couple of times, before getting dropped in the middle, falling three or four feet in the pool under it. With plenty of steep drops, and parts that were completely dark, it was a fun slide from beginning to end.

'I want to go in there first!' she stated with a huge smile on her face. Ash chuckled internally, typical Latias.

'Alright, lead the way. But before we go...' Ash pointed to his wrist and showed the locker key to Latias. She made one smooth motion with her hands, and the key was locked securely around his wrist.

'Thank you,' the trainer stated happily, and before soon, they found the entrance of the waterslide. Just as one would expect, the stairs of the slide went up almost to the ceiling of the building, and a lifeguard was on watch at the top, making sure everything was running like it should be.

This time, the duo had to wait a couple of minutes, and Latias was almost bouncing up and down in excitement. *'This is going to be so much fun!'* she exclaimed cutely, holding one of Ash's hands the entire way. A lot of people gave the trainer jealous stares, and for some reason, he enjoyed those immensely. Finally, they reached the top, and the lifeguard made a sign that they were up next.

'Look Ash,' Latias spoke, pointing to a sign above the waterslide. It was the infamous sign that showed what was allowed, and what wasn't when going down the waterslide. But it was this one picture Latias was pointing at specifically that made Ash's heart beat just a little faster. Like most waterslides, it was allowed for a pair to ride the waterslide together, if one was sitting in the other's lap.

It was mostly done for little kids with parents, or people with little pokémon who wanted to ride the slide together. This didn't mean that Tia wasn't about to abuse this freedom, and much like the first time the young legendary had placed Ash on a swing in the secret garden, she now sat him down at the beginning of the slide, and snuggled herself firmly on his lap.

Ash's face couldn't have been more adorable, and Tia gave him a happy coo in his mind, before giving the lifeguard a fletching grin. Said lifeguard didn't move a muscle, and ushered a silent sign for Ash to go.

'Ash! You can go now,' Latias said sweetly in his mind. The stupefied human now gave the disguised legendary a loving smile, before weakly pushing himself off the edge.

The duo rode on slowly, before it became completely dark, and then the sudden first drop took both by surprise. "Wooooohooooo!" Ash

yelled cheerfully, holding Latias tightly, water splashing everywhere. The legendary screamed just as hard in Ash's mind, and the hollering duo finally left the dark tunnel, making a sharp turn to the right that spiraled downwards.

'Whoooooooooooo Aaaaassssh!' the girl laughed in the trainer's mind, putting her hands up in the air.

The spiral stopped, and the two were now heading outside with considerable speed. The slide was half open, the rays of the sun warming the duo's skin, before Ash lied flat on his back, allowing Tia to let her head rest on his shoulder. The slide zigzagged from the left to the right, making the two shout every time they made a turn. Suddenly, the ride made an u-turn and after that was the second steep drop.

"Whooooooooaaa!" Ash yelled joyfully, Tia closing her eyes and doing the same.

From there, the slide came back inside again, and soon, the two were back in the dark, only this time, the slide was illuminated from the inside, making it look like the starry night sky as the two slid on gently.

"Wow," Ash breathed out in awe, looking around at the pretty figures, Tia just as breath struck. The slide made a couple of turns, each turn changed the lights, from white, to red, to blue and finally white again as the next steep drop approached.

"Hold on tight!" Ash hollered out in ecstasy, and just like that, they both went down with enormous speed again, making another sharp turn before getting to the last part of the slide that went outside. This part was mostly right, but went pretty steep, making the duo pick up even more speed.

' Whooooo,.' Latias screamed, having the time of her life. The slide made a u-turn again, and the two were back inside, where the last steep part of the waterslide was.

Again, the duo hollered their lungs out, and got dropped off in the drain like structure, where Ash lost grip of the young legendary.

"Noooo Tiaaa!" He laughed dramatically, desperately reaching his arms out to catch the smiling girl.

'Aaassshhh! Help me!' she said in turn, the two spinning like crazy. The young legendary let out a girly shriek when she fell in the hole first, splashing in the pool under it.

Just as she reached the surface, Ash followed in turn, giving her a wide grin. "Incoming!" he yelled, making a cannonball of himself, splashing the already wet legendary again. She squeaked, before giving the young man a playful smile.

'Ash Ketchum!' she stated, splashing the boy in return, who was laughing his ass off at his legendary's misfortune. The two continued to splash each other before a lifeguard blew on his whistle, indicating the two should stop what they were doing and get out of the pool.

Smiling at each other, they obeyed, and soon were out of the water, before Latias began to drag Ash off again. *'I want to try the red one next,'* she stated like a child, and Ash chuckled internally again, this was going to be a nice day indeed.

After they had rode every slide multiple times, including the wild water slides - which were very awesome in Ash's opinion - the two decided to visit the outside pool to cool off. The water was noticeably colder than the pools inside, and it had multiple diving boards; one for the small kids and pokemon, and two for the older ones who were brave enough. Naturally, Latias dragged Ash to the highest one, and was already climbing it.

"Twenty feet," Ash read out loud from the sign, that didn't sound very high in Ash's mind.

'Hey Slowpoke, what's taking you so long?' Tia called him from above jokingly. He grinned at her before climbing the ladder himself. His opinion on the matter soon changed when he reached the top; it was a little bit higher than he expected, and tried to play it off coolly.

"Is this all? I was expecting more," he spoke out nonchalantly.

Latias gave him a knowing smile, before gently hugging him. *'Ash. You don't have to play tough with me; it's your gentleness that I like so much,'* she admitted cutely to the dumbstruck human.

Ash let out a breath of relief at that, before responding weakly to his legendary, blushing slightly at her compliment. *'Alright, it's a little bit higher than I expected, but I'm going to jump anyway. You know how adventure thrills me,'* he retorted, and Latias gave him a bright smile in return.

*'I certainly do. But did you **know** I'm actually pretty agile even in this form?'* s he asked, and to give her statement strength, she did a cartwheel from the board itself, before using its boost to do a double summersault backwards, landing gracefully in the water.

The young trainer was amazed yet again, as were two other boys, who were waiting behind Ash for their own turn. "Dude, that was awesome! Is she your girlfriend?" one of them asked.

The young trainer looked at him owlishly before stuttering out his answer. "Well... Uhm..."

The slightly older boy behind him laughed at his response. "Well, if she isn't, I'm going to make sure to get her number later on," he replied.

Ash didn't know what came over him, but he retaliated immediately. "Well, too bad for you she *is* my girlfriend!"

The boy raised a brow. "Is she really now?" he asked Ash questionably, not believing him in the slightest and challenging him

to proof it.

Ash snorted, his fear of the diving board completely gone. Taking a run-up, he used the boost to jump high in the air and make a simple summersault that ended with him diving in the pool beneath him. The cool water was a welcoming change, and just like Ash had expected, Tia hugged him tightly, climbing on his back as Ash began to swim lazy laps around the pool. He gave the boy a smug grin, who gave a dead glare in return.

'That's right, Tia is mine!' Ash thought triumphantly, before realizing his mistake too late. The young legendary blushed an adorable red, before responding Ash, hearing his words loud and clear.

'Ash? What do you mean by that?' she asked shyly.

The young trainer paused for a moment. What *did* he mean with those words anyway? Was he falling for her? She tried to kiss him earlier today, and he would've let her weren't it for those punks. He did technically ask her out on a date, but that was to shut up Brock, Dawn and Bianca. But right now, he did the same with the boy from the diving board.

Was he crushing on Latias?

He didn't answer the young legendary, and she decided not to question it any further. She felt how many conflicting emotions arose in his mind when she'd asked it, and just decided to drop it. Changing the subject and the rather awkward mood, Tia nudged the trainer gently.

'Let's go from the diving boards again,' she suggested. Ash nodded at her, and soon, they were ready to jump and dive in again.

Afterwards, the duo went inside the swimming pool again, hitting up the sauna briefly. There, the two sat silently together, the disguised psychic having difficulties not to burst out in laughter.

'Ash, look at that guy next to you,' she giggled in his mind softly, trying to remain stoic. The trainer slowly turned an eye towards the humongous man, who scratched his hairy belly lazily. Ash tried to remain calm, but Latias wasn't helping his cause at all.

'That guy could hold ten Eskimos warm and give twenty bald people hair at the same time,' she snickered lightly before bursting out in laughter.

Ash was snickering himself at Tia's remark, the big man looking at Ash with a frown on his face.

"Is there a problem?" he said roughly to the duo, the girl laughing hysterically while no sound was coming out of her mouth, while Ash continued, but failed to hold a calm face.

'Yeah, Whitney called. She wants her Miltank back!'

At this, Ash burst out in laughter as well, quickly grabbing Tia's hand before leaving the sauna with her.

"Good riddance," the man muttered, letting his mind wander elsewhere. The young couple went to a bubble bath next, still laughing at the events what had transpired.

'That was so rude!' Ash told the young legendary accusingly, his statement holding no strength as he began to laugh like crazy again.

The young legendary laughed with him, before retorting in a playful manner. *'You laughed just as hard, which makes you even worse!'*

The boy feigned hurt, and let the warm bubbles engulf his being, sighing contently.

'Aaaahh, here I am, listening to a girl accusing me of things I would never do, feeling oh so injured. But this magical bath healed me like a full restore. Maybe they use the same components?' he asked jokingly.

Tia blew him a raspberry, and joined him in the bath, snuggling him close.

The two were silent, just enjoying the bubbles and the closeness of each other, before Tia after some time began to speak up.

'Ash?' she asked him softly.

The boy cracked one eye open, looking deeply in her amber eyes. "Hmmm?" he responded lazily. The now nervous legendary began to twiddle with her thumbs, before giving him a cute smile.

'I just wanted to say, thank you. I'm really enjoying my time here with you,' she admitted, before leaning in, and kissing his right cheek gently.

'That's both the cheeks down, one to go,' Latias thought to herself, as Ash now turned his complete attention towards her, grabbing both of her cheeks suddenly.

Latias said nothing, and let the boy guide her to whatever he was about to do. The moment Ash felt her lips touch his cheek, something ignited in his mind. It felt like fireworks were going off everywhere, but yet it missed something, the big bang that finished it all.

He wanted to ignite that big bang, and his hands moved to her cheeks automatically. Ash was sure now, he wanted Tia, and just before he was to move in for the final kill, the couple got interrupted yet again. Letting go of her cheeks awkwardly, he looked at two older ladies who joined the bath with them, their Oddish and Paras at their side as they rattled about nothing but gossip.

"Oh look at this Marie, young love! Isn't it cute?" She giggled obnoxiously while the other lady joined in.

"It certainly is Joanne. Don't mind us dearies, just go on with whatever you were doing prior." The old lady winked before

resuming her chit chat with her friend. Ash groaned internally, the mood absolutely ruined again, before giving a weak smile at his companion, who looked a little sullen as well.

"You want some ice cream?" he offered her hopefully, trying to cheer her up. Latias' eyes lit up immediately after that, and she was already out of the bath, hopping up and down excitedly.

' *Yes please!*' she responded happily.

Honestly, Tia could be so childish sometimes, and he laughed at her response. Leaving the bubble bath himself, he joined her towards the open bar.

'*I want chocolate chip and cookie dough,*' she ordered sweetly to Ash, who gave an amused smile in return.

'Sweet tooth,' he replied jokingly, before pointing to an open table. 'Why don't you take those spots, and I'll be joining you with ice cream in a minute,' he suggested to her, standing in line.

She nodded happily and sat down, going over all the events that had happened today. So far, this has been one of the best days in her life, and by the looks of it, it was only getting better.

"Hey cutie pie, what are you doing here sitting all by yourself?"

Latias' smile instantly faltered at the sound of that remark, as she looked in the direction where it came from; it was the same boy who knocked Ash over earlier today.

His friends were with him, as was his pokemon, a Machoke who gave her a creepy grin. They didn't recognize her, obviously, and her blood began to boil at the boy's cockiness before he responded again.

"Giving me the silent treatment eh? Don't worry, I can loosen that tongue of yours. What do you say?" He rubbed her legs smoothly,

Tia jerking back in response, looking absolutely disgusted.

The group laughed at her response, the boy however, wasn't amused at all.

"A feisty one, isn't she? I'll change that in a moment," he said with a hint of irritation in his voice. The young legendary was absolutely livid, and would've given the boy so much pain weren't it for Ash stepping in.

"Hey! Leave her alone!" he yelled angrily, holding his and Tia's ice cream in his hand.

"Boy! Do you want to get your ass kicked?" the older man threatened, slapping the ice cream out of the young trainer's hand.

Ash raised a brow, losing his patience rather quickly before he responded. "You better back off, before I have to hurt you," he retorted to the man.

The older boy laughed hysterically at his response and was about to punch Ash straight in his face when his hand was stopped by an invisible force.

His laughter died soon after, and he looked on with horror as his palm bent the other way, making a movement it *shouldn't* be doing before it cracked loudly. Pain coursed through the man, and he screamed loudly at his broken wrist. The others in the group looked on fearfully, as their friend now began to grab his head in agony as well, screaming even louder.

Tia was fed up with this pathetic scumbag, and with Ash's ok, pummeled him in a world of hurt. The boy's Machoke, not sitting by idly, was about to karate chop Ash in oblivion, before he got stopped in mid air as well. The pokemon flew back with so much force against a wall; it hit it with a loud thud and didn't even give a cry of pain as it fainted on the spot.

The group now ran away in fear, as Ash gave the signal for Latias to stop. 'That's enough,' he responded simply.

She stopped bombarding the boy's mind with her psychic powers, and he fell down in a quivering heap, crying uncontrollably. Soon, a couple of lifeguards were at the scene, and lifted the boy away on a stretcher.

"You did this to him?" one of the lifeguards asked Ash. Tia was hiding behind his back, as the young pokemon trainer nodded slowly.

"I'm sorry to say, but you have to come with me. This will probably cost you your trainers license kid," he said sternly, shaking his head in disapproval.

Ash's eyes widened as he looked at the lifeguard incredulously. He couldn't be serious, they were trying to molest Tia, and he defended her! *They* should have their trainers licenses revoked, not the other way around!

Fortunately, before Ash or Latias could protest, a purple haired man reading a book helped him out. "It's ok Jeremy, what this man did was merely self defense," he spoke out to the lifeguard.

Jeremy gave one look at the downed Machoke, before responding doubtfully. "Are you sure?"

The man closed his book, grinning slightly. "Positively, let me handle him, ok?" he replied as Jeremy nodded. The life guard resumed his duties before the purple haired man turned his attention towards the young pokemon trainer.

"It's great to see you again, Ash," Lucian addressed politely. Ash's smile couldn't be wider as he greeted the elite four member in return.

"Lucian! How have you been doing?"

"Oh you know, the usual. It seems you haven't changed a bit though. How's Dawn and her Buizel doing?" he asked him curiously as Ash responded.

"Actually, Buizel is my pokemon now. We swapped pokemon because he preferred to battle instead of doing contests. And Dawn's doing fine," he responded, before introducing Latias to Lucian. "This is Tia, an old friend of mine. She decided to join us and watch me participate in the Lily of the valley."

The bespectacled man readjusted his purple glasses before giving Ash a grin. "That's one healthy looking Latias you got there. I see you're treating her with lots of love and care," he noted before Ash stuttered his response.

"How did you know?" he whispered, surprised somebody saw through Tia's disguise yet again.

"Ash, I'm a psychic user myself, when I saw that Machoke flying back against a wall and your murderous glare, putting two and two together wasn't that difficult. Most people here know that you have a Latias by now, so be careful when you let her use her psychic in her human form, otherwise she has to create another disguise," he warned the trainer, who nodded at Lucian's logical thinking.

"Well, now that's out of the way. How about some ice cream for real this time. My treat," The elite four member offered the young couple. The duo grinned and nodded their head enthusiastically, they could already taste the sweetness of their victory.

Did you like it, love it, hate it? Lemme know! Sorry for all the teasing, but the pay-off next chapter will be all the better! Next chapter climax people, whoo! Syrup-Waffle

Pool time: The climax

Hey guys! Sorry for the delay, this chapter was supposed to be up last sunday, but working the whole week in a bakery is tiring as hell. Seeing as I owe you guys, I worked as quickly as possible to finish this bugger. This chapter will end the fluff (for now), and next chapter is going to be pretty serious again.

But, I've reached the point that all writers fear, and I simply have to take a break. I'm burned up, and basically have been writing everyday since I started this fic. I'm sorry guys, but I'll be taking a month hiatus to charge myself up again, and then bring you guys the next chapter. I apologize for the inconvenience, I hope you guys can understand!

Also, have I ever told you guys about the ever awesome Storylover? I'm his beta for his amazing fic called Dragonfall, and if you love altshipping and haven't checked it out already, definitely do so right now! Seriously, go read that first and then come back to this chapter! Storylover is a very humble person and he deserves to be spoiled rotten, so give him some affection. That or shower him in asparagus and mushrooms, either way is fine :P

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, well, IV and EV training would be a lot easier.

"Lucian" Speech

'Lucian' Thoughts

'Lucian' Telepathy

"Lucian" Whiteboard marker

If one thing could cheer up Latias' soiled mood, it would have to be ice cream. Lucian insisted on buying Ash and her the frozen goodness after what'd happened, and once they were all seated around a table, the young trainer thanked the elite four member thoroughly.

"Thanks for the treat, Lucian," Ash stated sincerely, happily licking away at his ice cream cone, while Latias was snuggling close to him. "Tia says she's grateful as well," he added, giving a bright smile to the dragoness.

She cooed in response lovingly, and nodded her head up and down eagerly to Lucian afterwards, enjoying her ice cream just as much.

"Please, it's no trouble. After that minor incident a moment ago, I say you two deserved it," the elite four member responded simply. He'd opted for a simple scoop of vanilla, while Ash and Latias were both enjoying a scoop of double chocolate chip with cookie dough.

The couple grinned at his response, and Tia beamed at Ash's positive emotions towards the frozen treat. *'I told you you would love chocolate chip with cookie dough.'* She giggled at her love interest.

Ash grumbled a little, before retorting jokingly. 'You're cheating! Using your psychic powers to see what I like or not, no fair.' He pouted to Tia.

She giggled once again and nuzzled him warmly. Nonetheless, the raven haired boy did indeed enjoy his ice cream a lot, but not as much as Tia's body affectionately pressed against his.

He was sure that he had something going on for the dragoness, and he knew she did for him as well.

So why was he so nervous to admit it?

Didn't she try to kiss him earlier on? Did *he* not try to kiss *her* back in the bubble bath? Ash sighed internally, these feelings were so alien

for the boy, and he didn't know how to handle them at all. Yet Tia's gentle and loving touch made him feel at ease and the trainer decided not to think too much about it. Instead, he decided to enjoy the young legendary's company while he could.

Latias didn't have these troubles at all; she knew it couldn't be long now before she would reel in her price, so to speak. She just had to be a little more patient.

In the meantime, Lucian stroked his imaginary beard at the warm scene, before commenting. "It would seem Latias likes you a lot, and given your silence I'd assume you already made a telepathic connection with her, correct?" the purple haired elite four member noted, calmly enjoying his vanilla scoop.

Ash nodded enthusiastically, greatly enjoying Latias' closeness.

"You betcha I did! I really like her voice, it's like the singing of angels," Ash truthfully replied, giving the young legendary a shy smile.

Said young legendary blushed an adorable shade of red at Ash's compliment, and snuggled just a little bit closer. Lucian raised a brow at the obvious love struck duo, silently contemplating.

'Are they...?'

He readjusted his glasses slightly, chuckling inwardly. Why he even bothered to deduce anything was beyond his comprehension, the evidence was presented straight to his face.

'This should be very interesting indeed,' he thought as he cleared his throat slightly, getting the attention from both 'mon and trainer.

"Say Ash, I have a proposition for you. As generous as I am, nothing's for free, and you most certainly would have a lot of explaining to do weren't it for me stepping in," Lucian stated coolly, referring to the little incident earlier on.

The raven haired boy gave him a questioning glance.

He went on, explaining what he had in mind. "You see, this swimming pool has an outside battle area as well. Since it's been so long since I've had a good battle, I'd figured you could entertain me with a friendly match."

The raven haired trainer widened his eyes. He couldn't believe what he'd just heard. "You want to battle me?" he asked incredulously. "But the only pokemon I've with me is Latias at the moment," he brought in.

The elite four member gave a wide grin at his response. "Exactly."

Now the young trainer understood, and gave a competitive smile. "You sure you want to go through with this? Because Latias and I won't hold back," he warned the bespectacled man.

Lucian laughed softly at the question, and retorted Ash politely. "I wouldn't expect anything less." He stood up from his table abruptly, turning the attention from most of the people who were enjoying ice cream as well towards him, before he challenged Ash loudly.

"Ash ketchum, I, elite four Lucian, challenge you to a one-on-one match!" he exclaimed to the young trainer.

Murmurs could be heard among the people, some whispering they didn't believe it, others watching with wide eyes as Ash responded coolly. "I accept your challenge."

Latias gave Ash her widest smile she could muster, and cheered loudly. *'I'm going to battle an elite four member for Ash, whoooo!'* s he hollered out in ecstasy, obviously overjoyed about an opportunity like this.

Ash chuckled softly at her response, and Lucian gave him a single nod. "The battle will start in fifteen minutes, are you okay with that?" the elite four member asked Ash.

"Of course!" the raven haired boy responded.

Lucian nodded once again. "I'll see you there in fifteen minutes then." And he walked away calmly.

The young trainer didn't even have time to comprehend what just happened, when a random guy shouted what he'd just heard as loudly as possible. "Hey everybody! Semi finalist Ash Ketchum and elite four Lucian are going to battle! And Ash is going to use Latias!"

"What?"

"No way!"

"When?"

"cool!"

"Yeah!"

In just two minutes, the whole swimming pool was talking about this upcoming event like crazy, and both Ash and Latias decided to stay a little low until the battle officially began.

'Alright, we need to make sure nobody sees you changing in this form,' Ash thought to the sweet dragoness, who responded innocently.

'Why? I can make another disguise just as easily.'

'No!' Ash responded immediately, sighing slightly in embarrassment as Tia giggled at his reply.

*'I didn't know you liked this form **that** much,'* she teased him, making the trainer blush even more.

'It suits you,' Ash softly admitted to her after a while. 'A beautiful form for an even more beautiful dragoness,' he added and gave her a wink afterwards.

Now it was Latias' time to turn fifty shades of red, and she looked away shyly as the young trainer just now realized what he'd just said. Was he... *Flirting* with Latias? Shaking his head slightly, he focused on the task at hand.

'Anyway, we need some kind of trick to make sure nobody suspects that you are... Well, you!' Ash stated.

Tia gave him a cute grin before whispering in his ear. *'If that would be all. Is there anything else that you need Ashy?'* she responded hotly, sending a shiver down his spine. His heart was screaming for him just to say 'yeah, you!' and kiss her already, but his mind was afraid he would screw it up, so he stayed silent instead, and gently shook his head no.

The young legendary looked a little disappointed at her trainer's response. She was sure she had him in the bag this time, and was hoping he would just go for it, but he managed to escape her grasp yet again. Pouting a little, she gave Ash a loving nuzzle nonetheless and responded enthusiastically.

'Then, let's get ready for a battle!'

Ten minutes later, and the bleachers surrounding the battlefield were almost painfully cramped with people. Apparently, the whole pool had heard about the battle, and the crowd was more than ready for a good match. Almost nobody was swimming anymore, and those who did, could hear the loud cheering coming all the way from the inside.

This wasn't just a random battle. This was a match between a semi finalist who owned a legendary and an elite four member, and as such, even though it was a friendly battle, it was treated like the real deal. They even managed to get an announcer and camera crew for the battle, sending out the match live towards the local station of the island.

Lucian was present, waiting calmly for his opponent who had yet to show up.

The announcer however, was already talking like crazy, informing the watchers at home, or the trainers who were still present at the island what was about to go down.

"Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, and welcome, to this very special broadcast of Sinnoh battles live!" the announcer began, getting the crowd even more riled up.

"I'm your host, Tom Peterson, and if you're just watching, boy do I have a surprise for you!" he exclaimed loudly. "Just now, at the Tropicana pool, elite four Lucian has challenged a young trainer to a one-on-one match! And not just any young trainer, but none other than semi finalist Ash Ketchum from Pallet!"

At this, the crowd began to roar even louder, the announcer having trouble to hold his own excitement in check. "It would appear Lucian is ready, however the wait is for young Ash, who's still nowhere in sight," he informed, before the crowd began to clap and point wildly to a shadow that was approaching slowly.

"Never mind guys, I was wrong! Here he is, your semi finalist, Ash Ketchum!" the announcer roared and the crowd went wild again.

The aforementioned trainer waved his hands to the people in the bleachers happily, and took his spot on the battlefield, where Lucian was thoroughly analyzing him.

"It seems you're more than ready Ash," he noted, slightly amused at the boy's enthusiasm.

"I am, let's have an awesome match!" he replied to the elite four member. '

'Indeed, I wish you the best of luck.'" The two men shook hands briefly, the crowd cheering and approving of their sportsmanship, as

the announcer spoke up again.

"It seems both parties are ready, which pokemon are they going to use for this battle?" he wondered to rile up the crowd even more.

The masses had already made up their minds, and were chanting only one name. "Latias! Latias! Latias!" they all yelled cheerfully.

Ash chuckled, he knew he should've seen that one coming, and addressed his invisible legendary who was floating right next him in amusement. 'They like you,' he noted happily, while Latias responded him teasingly.

'Well, they can't have me. Only you can,' she replied cutely, giving him a mental wink.

Ash's face turned just a little shy, before flirting back innocently. 'What do you mean? I practically got you ever since you first laid your eyes on me.'

The cute squeak he got from *his* dragoness made him smile like an idiot. The young trainer definitely was flirting with Latias, and somehow, he was winning their little game, which he quite enjoyed.

Tia wasn't done though, and tried to retort. *'N-not true!'* she stuttered out sweetly. *'You were about to smash against a wall back in Altomare, and as a guardian, it is my duty to protect the city and its inhabitants, including you at that day. Nothing more, nothing less.'*

Ash gave a smug grin at her little denial reply, and chuckled inwardly. 'Yet here you are Tia, about to battle for me as my pokemon. If I didn't know any better, I'd say you're trying to impress me.'

Another cute squeak, and Ash's smile turned even more smug. The young trainer didn't know why, but her squeaks were absolutely adorable, and he could do this all day long, weren't it for a certain opponent he was about to face.

Nevertheless, the young legendary tried to hold her ground. '*And what if I am?*' she challenged the pokemon trainer.

Ash's voice turned gentle, and before he even knew it, he blurted out the first thing that came to his mind. 'Well, I just have to reward you appropriately then.'

His mind caught up with his thinking process, and he couldn't help but blush a little himself when he said this. Yet he grew excited at the mere thoughts of it as well. He certainly was going to reward *his* dragoness after the match. He wanted this, and she definitely wanted this, he wasn't going to hold back anymore.

Latias couldn't respond, too embarrassed by the boys implications. It seemed her new form had loosened the trainer up quite a bit, Ash was *flirting* with her and actually making her embarrassed. Moreover, he was going to reward her after the match. Of course she already knew what he had in mind, but this gave Latias the resolve to impress her trainer even more, and she would give her all to defeat Lucian.

The referee raised his flags, and addressed both Ash and Lucian. "This will be an unofficial one-on-one match between semi finalist Ash Ketchum and elite four Lucian. Trainers, please show your pokemon!" he shouted to both trainers.

Ash grinned and gave a single nod to signal Latias, looking more excited than ever. Immediately after, the air around him began to sparkle in a bright light, and soon, his legendary psychic dragoness was floating before him in all her glory, ready for battle.

The crowd's reaction was immediate, and they were all hollering their lungs out at the sight of the young psychic. Lucian gave a slight smile of his own at the powerful looking legendary, and voiced his thoughts politely.

"Your Latias looks very strong Ash. However, is she enough to defeat *this* ?" he questioned and simply threw his pokeball in the air;

it burst open and out came a purple feline Tia was certainly familiar with.

"Espee!" Lucian's own psychic type shouted, and took a moment to look at her opponent, which made the pokemon slightly excited as she took in the sight of the floating dragoness.

"A legendary huh?" she questioned to Tia, who had a lot of trouble not to lose her temper.

She knew this wasn't the same Espeon back from Alto mare, obviously, but the pokemon resurfaced bad memories nonetheless. She grimaced slightly, and shook her head to clear her mind.

"Yup," Latias responded simply, not bothering to make a lot of small talk. She was here to win for Ash, not have chit chat with her opponent's Espeon. Tia could however, feel the psychic power radiate off of the purple cat pokemon, and knew this wasn't going to be an easy match at all.

"Ash has opted to go with his legendary pokemon, while Lucian chooses his Espeon! This oughta be a match to remember folks!" the announcer roared, both parties getting ready for the referee's signal.

'I know you can take her Latias,' Ash cheered his dragoness on, boosting her morale just a bit more. Even if she didn't, Latias was going to show everybody how strong she truly was. She wasn't going down without a fight, that was for sure!

Cooing to Ash in a thank you, both pokemon got ready, and finally, the referee gave the signal. "Latias versus Espeon, begin!" he yelled and he lowered his flags, the game was on.

"Espeon, start this off with a shadow ball!" the bespectacled man commanded his pokemon. The feline nodded and fired the dark orb of energy at incredible speed towards the idle dragoness.

"Latias, dodge that attack quickly and retaliate with dragon pulse," Ash retorted to Lucian's offense. The trainer feared that the Espeon would have a super effective attack for his Latias in store, and his assumption was right.

Tia was completely focused on the battle, yet the humongous speed of the shadow ball *still* caught her off guard, and she had to move her body in a sudden jerk reaction to even dodge the super effective attack. Her eyes widened just a little for a moment, but she tried to hide it in the process of dodging.

The Espeon however, had already seen her reaction and gave her a huge smirk. "Surprised young legendary? This is the power of an everyday pokemon if trained to maximum potential," she tauntingly exclaimed.

Latias gave her a scowl, ignoring her taunt and prepared the draconic energy, before unleashing it at full power at the purple feline. The dragon like beam soared through the sky like an almighty beast, and gave a look of power and destruction. Would've it been any other trainer, they would've ordered in panic to their pokemon to evade, but Lucian wasn't your average trainer. He remained calm, as was his Espeon, who still was standing on the same spot.

"An incredible start from both trainers, as Ash's Latias barely dodged that super effective shadow ball from Espeon, and now retaliated with a powerful looking dragon pulse. Yet Lucian and his pokemon look completely unfazed!" the announcer stated loudly as Latias attack was nearing its mark.

Ash raised a brow in question at the elite four's tactic. 'Why isn't he doing anything?' he thought to himself. That attack would do massive damage, even to a well trained pokemon like Lucian's Espeon.

His answer came in the form of a single command, and it caught both the dragoness and the young trainer completely off guard. "Psychic," Lucian said simply to his pokemon.

The Espeon's eyes glowed with a blue hue, and what Ash thought would've been a simple make-shift protect, or a deflect to defend the pokemon, was actually an offensive reply as the beam made a sudden u-turn and traveled back at the stunned legendary with twice the speed.

This time, the young dragoness was unable to keep her surprise from her face, and there was no way she was about to dodge that attack, even with her agility and speed.

"Latias, protect!" her trainer spoke out in panic, sweat already pouring from his skin. If this attack would hit, it would do an amazing chunk of damage, something Ash would not appreciate.

Luckily, Latias reacted to his command accordingly, and quickly put a protective layer around her. The beam smacked against her protect like a truck, and the massive explosion turned the battlefield in a cloud of smoke.

"An amazing display of wit from elite four Lucian, turning that dragon pulse from Latias against her. But don't count Ash out, who responded in turn, protecting his pokemon in a display of quick thinking. This is already a high class battle folks!" the announcer boomed in his mike.

The crowd was as ecstatic as ever, and cheered and roared loudly.

'Are you alright Tia?' Ash asked concerned, his heart was beating a mile a minute and his fist were balled. Even with a legendary, he needed to play his A game if he wanted to beat this Espeon.

'I'm fine Ash, not a scratch,' was the dragoness' reply. She did however, began to feel a little nervous. This Espeon was unpredictable, making it a formidable foe.

Still, Lucian's pokemon hadn't moved a muscle since the start of this battle, and the cat pokemon was *purring* of all things, wagging her tail from side to side like she was sunbathing!

Latias was getting a little agitated, and huffed in annoyance at the purple kitty. "I'm impressed," Espeon admitted. "I've never met a pokemon who could dodge my psychic retaliation. Maybe you're really going to give me a match?"

'This cat is getting on my nerves,' Latias said angrily to her trainer, who quickly formulated a new plan.

'If straight up attacks don't work, let's try stealth then.' Ash smirked to his pokemon, and she nodded in affirmation. *'Turn invisible,'* Ash thought to her.

In an instant, the young psychic was undetectable for the naked eye, and Lucian closed his eyes for a moment in thought.

'Well, that didn't take long,' The elite four member commented to his Espeon.

'But two can play that game,' his pokemon replied back telepathically, smiling slightly.

"Ash goes for the silent approach, and hopes to surprise Lucian with invisibility, is it going to work?" the announcer wondered. The crowd was on the edge of their seats and watched intently.

'Shadow ball where Latias is,' Lucian thought to his pokemon, who complied obediently. Again, she fired off a dark orb of energy, seemingly to nothing but thin air, but a yelp of alarm from Ash's psychic dragoness stated otherwise.

'What's happening?' Ash now questioned nervously. The shadow ball whizzed just past the invisible legendary, but Espeon didn't stop there.

'Keep on shadow balling, close her in,' Lucian calmly spoke to his feline. The pokemon fired off more shadow balls, each with perfect precision.

'She knows where I am Ash, and she's firing of shadow balls without Lucian's command!' Tia warned her trainer, narrowly missing Espeon's attacks. Lucian chuckled at the young trainer's panicked and contemplating look.

"Ash, commanding your pokemon telepathically is a very advanced tactic that only a few trainers can do, let alone a pokemon who can turn invisible as well. But, did you honestly expect I couldn't do the same? Moreover, your Latias is a source of psychic energy, easily detectable by Espeon," he explained simply.

Ash gritted his teeth in frustration, this wasn't going according to plan at all. He needed another approach, but what?

He didn't have much time to think as his pokemon addressed him nervously. *'Ash, a little help!'* Tia desperately pleaded. That last shadow ball scraped her left wing, and she didn't know how long she could keep up with Espeon's barrage.

'Perfect Espeon, now use signal beam!' the elite four member shouted triumphantly. That last attack had forced Latias to the left, and the super effective bug attack Espeon was preparing covered that part completely.

The young trainer saw the attack too late, and the colorful beam headed towards the cloaked legendary with such speed that she almost had no time to even process it. In a last ditch attempt, she tried to block it with her psychic, but she was too beam had too much velocity to stop in time, and it exploded violently on her chest.

She shrieked loudly, her invisibility dropping, and she fell out of the sky like a sack of flour, hitting the ground with a loud thud.

"No, Latias!" Ash yelled, concerned for his pokemon.

"Ow, that attack looked like it hurt, and it seemed that Lucian had no trouble pinpointing the invisible legendary. Ash is in a troublesome

situation, if Latias doesn't get up, it could be over for them without even landing a hit!" the announcer exclaimed loudly.

The crowd watched in awe, and most of them cheered as loudly as possible for Latias to get up.

'Please Tia, I know you can do it! Please get up,' Ash begged desperately. Tia was stirring, that attack was the most painful thing she had ever experienced, nothing could compare in her mind, and she tried her best to brush it off.

Slowly, she rose from the ground, scowling slightly at herself for going down so easily.

'I'm sorry Ash, but this battle is over. Espeon, finish her with shadow ball,' Lucian commanded his pokemon.

The purple kitty sighed internally; she was hoping for a match but she won flawlessly, from a legendary even! Being the best was boring. She fired off the dark energy orb at the still recovering Latias, who could do nothing but watch as it soared straight at her face.

"Latias, watch out!" Ash screamed in alarm, without result.

The young legendary closed her eyes on reflex, and the orb exploded right on her face. The super effective hit had so much force behind it, it dragged the young dragoness all the way back, and she let out another loud yelp of pain. This attack was even worse, if that was even possible, and she lied motionless on the field as dust kicked up from her slide.

She felt her energy fade, and the world started to get dark before her. In her mind, she was scolding herself over and over again. The match was done, she had failed her trainer, she had failed making him proud, hell, she even had failed landing a single hit on the Espeon. She wanted it to be over already, and forget this had ever happened, yet a little voice in her mind was nagging at her to get up.

'Go away,' she murmured sullenly to the voice, but it was persistent, and after listening closely, she could identify it. This wasn't her conscious; the voice was no one other than Ash!

He was pleading for her to get up, and opening her eyes slowly with a grunt, she saw the Espeon *still* standing there, preparing yet another shadow ball to finish her for good.

Latias didn't know what happened at that moment. Maybe it was the sudden rush of adrenaline that went through her body, the smug face of her opponent who was extremely irritating, or the fact that Ash was *pleading* to her to dodge the attack, but with a sudden swiftness she didn't know she possessed, the young dragoness got up, barrel rolled to the side, and evaded the finishing blow in the process gracefully.

Okay, it was definitely because Ash was pleading to her.

The reactions were immediate though, as the Espeon gasped, not having expected this in a thousand years. The crowd roared loudly at Latias dodging the attack and even Lucian gave an amused chuckle.

"The willpower from Latias people! Somehow, she managed to take a shadow ball to the face, and still dodge the next super effective hit in the brink of time. The question is, what's Ash going to do now?" the announcer shouted through his mike curiously.

"Yeah Latias! I knew you could do it!" Ash praised his pokemon. She gave a weak but happy coo in return and addressed the situation.

*'What do we do now? I haven't even been able to **move** that Espeon yet, and she's so strong,'* Tia admitted sullenly to her trainer.

Ash gave her a reassuring smile. 'We're going to win this Latias, trust me. There's still a trick I'd like to try out,' the young trainer responded confidently.

"I trust you, Ash. What did you have in mind?" The young legendary replied back.

Ash gave her another grin, before yelling out his next command. "Latias, use *psychic* on Espeon!"

The purple cat pokemon shook her head in disappointment. "I have to applaud you for evading that last attack, you've proven yourself pretty capable in taking hits, but do you think *psychic* on me is going to do anything?" she asked her opponent, who gave her a bright smile back.

*"I trust my trainer, if he orders me to use *psychic*, then I will. We **are** going to defeat you. Take this!"* Latias shouted before bombarding Espeon's mind. For the first time, Espeon's facial expression turned into that of pain, as she grimaced slightly at the not very effective attack.

Finally Lucian retaliated, speaking out his commands again rather than thinking them telepathically. "Counter with your own *psychic* Espeon."

She nodded and soon, the *psychic* strain on her mind was completely gone.

Latias panted. She was bruised all over, and using such a powerful *psychic* attack so soon after getting hit so hard tired her.

Nonetheless, she was ready for Ash's plan and couldn't help but smile a little devilishly. "Now Latias, use *dragon pulse* again," Ash commanded and his legendary obeyed.

"Ash opts to go for straight offense again after having finally put some damage on Lucian's Espeon by using *psychic*, albeit a little!" the announcer roared yet again through his mike.

Espeon rolled her eyes, did they not learn anything? Lucian too, was a little surprised, was this another trick, or Ash being desperate?

Either way, he was being cautious and decided not to use the same tactic he used before. Instead, he ordered his purple feline to counter with a signal beam.

Feeling confident, the Espeon fired the colorful beam straight at the incoming dragon pulse, and just like she expected, it tore through the attack like a hot knife through butter. But that's where her assumptions began to take a turn for the worst, because the beam tore through Latias as well, completely making her disappear into nothingness.

"What!?" she yelled incredulously.

Even Lucian looked surprised, and his face turned into horror quickly after when he saw the real Latias fire her attack from behind his pokemon.

"It was a trick! Espeon look out, behind you!" Lucian warned, but he was too late.

His pokemon had only a couple of seconds to move her head before the powerful attack hit her dead on. She shrieked and slid back on the ground in a cloud of smoke, remaining on all fours, now taking the match completely serious.

That attack did a fair amount, and Espeon, for the first time in four years, felt completely surprised. This battle was finally getting interesting.

Lucian too, finally got excited and snickered to his pokemon. 'It seems they tricked you. When was the last time that happened?' he asked, amused.

'Oh shut up, will you?' Espeon replied deadly serious, while Lucian still chuckled.

"Amazing people! It seems that Latias tricked Espeon with some sort of illusion and landed her first massive hit, incredible!" the announcer

shouted, amazed at the clever display and the crowd too, was hollering and screaming their lungs out.

'Seems like I finally wiped that smug look from her face,' Tia said to Ash happily, feeling excitement run through her system again after that hit. *'Your plan is working Ash!'*

Ash gave her bright smile, and while Latias was hurt severely, she beamed in return.

"Latias, get in close!" Ash now commanded. The legendary tucked her arms back in her body, and flew at the purple kitty with amazing speed.

"Be alert Espeon," Lucian warned to his pokemon. He didn't have to say that twice, as the psychic legendary was about to ram into her full force. She fired a shadow ball at the incoming legendary just before the young psychic dragoness was about to hit her. But just like last time, it shred through her 'opponent' like a piece of paper and Espeon gasped again.

'How's that possible!?' she cried out. 'I'm sure that was the real one, I could feel the psychic power radiate from her!' she yelled in panic to Lucian, who for the second time, had no time to counter as the real Latias slammed into the Espeon full force, knocking the noticeably smaller pokemon from her feet.

She gave a cry of pain yet again, and a desperate look at her trainer afterward. *'What do we do?'* she yelled at her smiling trainer, who looked absolutely stoked.

'I honestly don't know,' he admitted excitedly.

The purple feline gave Lucian a dead glare. *'You mean you don't have a counter for this at all?'* the feline asked, exasperated.

The trainer shook his head. *'Nope, isn't it exciting?'* he replied happily.

Espeon was ready to claw her own eyes out, just as Latias fired off another dragon pulse at her.

"Shadow ball again, Espeon!" Lucian spoke out to his weakened pokemon. She did as she was told, and like both trainer and pokemon expected, it was another illusion. This time, Espeon was prepared, and turned around in time to see her real opponent fire her dragon pulse.

"Counter with signal beam," Lucian spoke excitedly.

Feeling confident again, the Espeon gave a smirk and fired the signal beam at the incoming draconic attack. Her eyes however, widened so much that they threatened to fall out of her skull as the attack went through this Latias as well.

"What!?" The purple kitty shouted in disbelief again. Even Lucian widened his eyes; he was being outplayed by a teenager and snickered at the irony.

"Crap." he muttered to himself, and again, his Espeon was hit very hard with a dragon pulse from the real Latias.

"I don't know what's going on, but it is as if Ash is the elite four member here. Lucian is getting completely outplayed when he was about to win flawlessly just a moment ago, this Ash Ketchum is a powerful trainer indeed!" the announcer praised the Kanto resident.

Ash kept a level head though and praised his own pokemon instead. 'The announcer meant that you're very powerful, Latias!' he spoke to her lovingly.

She giggled cutely at her trainer's response and looked at the Espeon, who was panting herself now, sweat dampening her fur. Latias couldn't help but taunt her a little.

"Oh Arceus! What happened to you? It looks like you got beat up pretty badly. Need some help with that?" The dragoness feigned

concern, and the feline hissed threateningly.

"Don't mock me child! I've twice the age and experience under my belt, don't think you'll be defeating me!" she yelled in return.

Latias couldn't help but give her a huge and smug smile. Even if she still managed to lose right now, she would be very happy with the results anyway. Both pokemon were on their last breath, saying that you almost defeated an elite four pokemon was a feat on its own.

But Ash wasn't done yet and addressed his tired but pumped up pokemon.

'Ready for our last trick?' he said confidently to the sweet dragoness. Ever since the illusion trick worked, Ash just *knew* he was going to win. This was his element; nobody could stop him when he was on a roll, not even an elite four member.

Latias simply nodded, and flew with incredible speed straight at the Espeon again.

"Focus Espeon, that way, you'll figure out the real one," Lucian suggested.

Espeon nodded and closed her eyes, and just like her trainer had predicted, the Latias in front of her felt off. She passed harmlessly through her, and another took her place, flying from another direction straight at her.

Again, it passed through Espeon harmlessly, who focused entirely on these illusions, desperately trying to find the real one. This went on for another twenty seconds, before Lucian began to sweat a little. Something was up, Lucian just knew it, and that dreadful feeling in his gut said that he needed to do something, anything!

Ash didn't feel nervous at all, it looked like the tables were completely turned, and he placed his cap backwards, shouting his next attack victoriously. "Now Latias, finish this with dragon pulse!"

Lucian gasped in horror; they were *all* decoys all along, and saw the real Latias descending like a rocket from the sky, preparing her draconic beam. Lucian knew it would be over if that hit his Espeon, but there was no way she could dodge in time.

"In the air Espeon, quick, psychic that attack right back where it came from!" he shouted desperately.

Espeon was on it in an instant, her eyes turning into a blue hue again, content in sending that attack right back and finishing this battle once and for all.

"This is where I win," Ash suddenly spoke up, closing his eyes and chuckling slightly.

Lucian raised a brow at the young trainer, had he failed to hear his last command?

Ash went on, opening his eyes again. "Did you honestly think Latias was doing nothing the whole time she was in the air?" Ash chuckled again. "Let's see whose psychic powers are stronger now."

Lucian's breath got stuck in his throat, and after that revelation, looked flabbergasted at the dragon pulse that was still heading towards his Espeon, even with all her psychic powers on it that tried to desperately change its course.

It was all for naught, Latias' own psychic powers, which were boosted considerably thanks to the calm minds she did in the air, held the beam steady, completely overpowering Espeon's psychic.

The purple feline felt her psychic being crushed and looked breath struck at the incoming beam. She could only swallow audibly as it engulfed her entire body, before exploding violently, covering the entire battlefield in smoke.

"Espeon!" Lucian shouted! He didn't even hear a cry of pain from his pokemon and when the smoke cleared, his Espeon was still standing

miraculously.

The announcer and the whole crowd was deadly silent, waiting for the inevitable result. Latias however, knew the outcome already, so did Ash.

The purple cat pokemon gave Latias one last smirk out of respect, before falling over, not getting up after that. Lucian was shocked beyond comprehension, as was the crowd, and even the referee looked slack jawed. He, an elite four member, had just lost from a teenager.

After a moment, the referee regained his professionalism again and raised his flag. "Espeon is unable to battle, Latias wins! That means this victory goes to semi finalist Ash Ketchum!" he declared and just like that, the crowd exploded in sheer ecstasy!

"I can't believe it! Ash Ketchum has defeated elite four Lucian in a one-on-one battle! This kid is unbelievable!" the announcer boomed over the loud noise. The crowd went out of the bleachers and hoisted both Latias and Ash high up into the air, who both laughed joyfully at the attention.

'I knew you could do it, Latias,' Ash thought lovingly to his legendary, who in turn gave him a huge smile.

'What about my reward Ashy?' she spoke innocently to the victorious trainer, whose cheeks began to blush at Latias' question.

'You'll get your reward in a moment,' he promised her, getting even more excited at what was to come.

Latias squealed internally, and once the two were put down again, Lucian congratulated the young trainer thoroughly.

"Ash Ketchum. You are the most promising trainer I've ever met and had the pleasure to battle with. Truly, you deserve to win this tournament, and I'll be looking forward to our rematch one day, which

will be an official full six-on-six battle instead. You know I'll be preparing myself for it when that day arrives, and I hope you surprise me just as much as you did today. Congratulations Ash, you've bested me."

The trainer shook Lucian's hand excitedly with a huge smile on his face. "Thank you so much! I'll train even harder and show you on that day how capable of a trainer I truly am!"

The elite four member nodded and took his leave, a huge crowd of people following him and asking for autographs. Ash too was asked for autographs, and some young kids even pleaded to him if they could pet Latias.

Ash didn't mind, and the dragoness certainly didn't mind as well, as some people even took pictures of their kids riding on Latias' back. At some point, Ash had to excuse himself, and after Latias was checked upon with the Nurse, she sneakily changed back into her new human form again.

Immediately after, Ash dragged her off, Latias' breath getting a lot faster.

'Where are we going?' Tia asked curiously.

Ash gave her a gentle smile. 'To your reward,' He responded her softly.

Soon, the two found the entrance of one of the wild water slides and they entered it quickly. Once the couple let the current drag them on, Ash wrapped his hands around Latias' body lovingly, and she gasped internally at his closeness.

His touch was different than other times when he hugged her, it felt so much stronger, so much more filled with emotions; affectionate emotions directed towards her, and the young dragoness closed her eyes in contentment, letting her head rest on one of his shoulders.

The hugging duo reached the first turn, and in that turn was a small cove, which Ash swam towards with Latias around his body. He pressed her body against the wall gently, and looked deep in her soft amber eyes. His own breathing grew erratic as Tia grabbed one of his hands and nuzzled it lovingly.

Ash's heart was pumping like crazy, and he felt warm inside. Her rosy cheeks, shy look and loving touch took Ash's breath away. His head moved slowly towards hers automatically, closing the distance considerably, not losing contact with her for a moment. This time, he was going to make sure to finish what he started.

Neither jerks nor old ladies were going to stop him this time, and he hesitated but for just a moment. "I've wanted to do this all day long," the trainer finally admitted to the love struck legendary, before his lips brushed hers softly.

Fireworks everywhere, Latias' mind went numb, and Ash's gentle lips elicited a shudder of pure love from the dragoness. The kiss didn't last particularly long, nor was it very deep, but both parties were pretty flustered anyway when Ash moved back slowly.

Tia cooed in disapproval though, and gently held Ash's cheeks in place. *'You're supposed to hold the kiss longer,'* she whispered, and just like that, captured the lips of the trainer again, completely in a trance of ecstasy.

The raven haired boy closed his eyes, holding Tia close, moving his hands through her soft hair as she continued to kiss him gently. The young trainer felt only happiness surge through his veins, and he deepened the kiss just a tad more.

The two broke the kiss reluctantly after a moment, Tia almost shaking with happiness and Ash breathing heavily.

'Ash?' the dragoness finally spoke up softly with teary eyes.

'Yes, Tia?' he responded just as softly, gently rubbing a hand over her cheek.

'I love you.'

The trainer simply responded by pressing his lips to hers again, and the dragoness let the waves of pure emotion sweep her away to her paradise.

Finally! Are you guys not happy? 70k in and Ash and Latias finally shared their first kiss. Don't worry, there's plenty more of where that came from! Yup, Ash and Latias are now officially a couple, yay! So, did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Lemme know! Until the next update! ~Syrup-Waffle

Memento mori

Okay I'm back again, once again, Syrupboy95 el capitain. Shit went so hard gotta do it again, this time tho call me champion! Free lava cookies to whoever got that reference ^^

So yeah, how have you guys been doing? It's been a clean four weeks since I updated and I thought: 'yeah, let's write a new chapter again' which I did :) I have to warn you guys though, this chapter is a complete one eighty from the previous three chapter, pretty dark stuff. I just had to do it, this was planned from the very beginning, so I hope I don't disappoint you guys. On with the story!

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, Nidoking and Nidoqueen could actually breed!

"Lorenzo" Speech

'Lorenzo' Thought

'Lorenzo' Telepathy

"Lorenzo" Whiteboard marker

Pain.

That's all what went through Lorenzo's mind as he slowly stirred from unconsciousness, warily opening one eye to check his surroundings. His vision was blurry, his throat was dry and all his joints were aching horribly, screaming at him to be relieved from the terrible position they were in for such a long time.

The old gondola maker had long seized his desperate struggling, the firm ropes he was bound with only cutting in his skin more as he did so, making his wrists red and raw. Not only that, but the gag in the

veteran's mouth made him unable to breathe freely, leaving him gasping for air at times, and rendering him completely immobile.

He had fallen in and out of consciousness multiple times, leaving the old man very disoriented, and the way how Malice treated him was almost inhumane. Luckily, he got enough water from his captor, but just barely, and he hadn't eaten anything for the past couple of days, leaving him starving and miserable.

Lorenzo wouldn't have been surprised if any bedsores had formed on his body, the prolonged pressure on his side by constantly lying in the same position had that effect on you when you got older, and Lorenzo was definitely getting aged.

Yet none of that mattered to him. The only thing that mattered was his granddaughter at the moment. Malice wanted Latias, that much was obvious, but he also threatened- no he *promised* the old man he was going to kill Bianca in cold blood in front of his face.

That was something Lorenzo couldn't handle, he would never forgive himself if something like that happened to his granddaughter, and he would be partially to blame for it. At least, that's what he stubbornly believed to be the truth.

'I shouldn't have provoked him. He's a psychopath; he would've never gone after Bianca if I didn't,' he thought to himself in absolute sadness.

Tears long stopped falling from the old man's face, and he refused to give Malice the satisfaction of seeing him in so much hurt. He just hoped that his granddaughter and Latias were able to join Ash and Brock in time. Surely, the heroes of Alto mare knew how to deal with this lunatic; he prayed to Arceus that they did.

Fortunately, Malice wasn't after the souldew, hell, chances were he didn't even know about the secret garden. So at least Lorenzo didn't need to worry about another Alto mare apocalyptic scenario, which was always nice in his book.

Dust flared in the veteran's nostrils, making him cough heavily. Malice was always on the move, and as such, they were never in the same location for too long. Every time he woke up groggily, they were somewhere else, and the places didn't even remotely look like each other, leaving Lorenzo with no clue as to where they were going.

The gondola maker soon discovered the crazy man was pretty good in stealth. How he managed to drag him from place to place without being spotted was beyond his comprehension, and he covered a lot of ground in a day. Maybe he had some sort of vehicle, but Lorenzo hadn't seen anything of the sorts, only the Frosslass who never left his side. She did so only if he ordered her to.

Yet the humidity kept growing thicker and thicker each time they moved somewhere else, indicating they were heading to a place with a sub tropical climate, and the old veteran had a pretty good guess as to where this place was.

Of course he also checked out the environment, and as he let his one open eye skim over it curiously, he found to his astonishment that he was in a cave. A very short cave, with a wide opening, as he could clearly look outside.

The big exit gave him an excellent view of the lush and green forest, leaving his mind with not a single doubt: he was at the Lily of the valley. However, that quick victory turned into gut wrenched dread when he saw the thick black layers of smoke rise up in the air in the distance, indicating a good portion of the forest caught fire.

At the same time, a silhouette of a very pissed off man and his floating pokemon appeared, making Lorenzo's eyes widen in fear. Malice had returned, and he wasn't looking happy; not one bit. His face was turned into a dark scowl, and the way he limped told the old man he was hurt pretty badly.

His only pokemon, the Frosslass, had her face turned into an even darker scowl, if that was even possible, and her aura screamed

murderous intent. The veteran gulped, something went horribly wrong with Malice's plan, which Lorenzo heard only slivers of when he was discussing it with his pokemon, and that relieved the old man tremendously.

This probably meant his granddaughter and Latias were save, but on the other hand, it scared him to no end. This also probably meant big trouble for him in return, and he was right on that bet. The moment Malice had his eyes locked on his bound form; he stopped his limping, pointed a finger at him, and snarled rather loudly.

"You!" he said venomously, steadily speeding up his walk into an intimidating jog. When the doctor reached Lorenzo, Froslass at his side, he breathed in loudly, before slowly exhaling. Trying to keep his hateful emotions in check, his hands on his sides, he began to pace back and forth slowly.

"Your granddaughter has some very tenacious friends, I gotta admit," he spoke rather annoyed, whacking a finger in his musings while chuckling slightly as he did so, his pokemon keeping that murderous stare on him the entire time, chilling him to the bone.

"They actually managed to foil my plan, and now, I don't have Ash's Pikachu, Latias, or even your little Bianca..." Malice stayed silent, eyeing the old man for his reaction. Lorenzo didn't dare move a muscle, although he felt very relieved at hearing this, he lied on the ground as still as possible.

"Aren't you happy grandpa? The 'good' guys wins and the 'bad' guys loses, just how it's supposed to go right!?" he questioned him rather forcefully, snorting once at Lorenzo's silence.

"But, oh wait, yeah, that's right. The bad guy still does have something, namely an old fool who has been nothing but a pain in the ass to me!" he screamed at the top of his lungs, making Lorenzo flinch.

"But, the 'heroes of Alto mare' made one grave mistake, they thought they could mess with me, Malice! Now, you're going to pay dearly for their insolence," he almost whispered to him.

Lorenzo's breath quickened and his heart beat went up as the doctor blocked his line of sight completely, giving him his most spiteful look he could give.

"As a doctor, I know the anatomy of the human body very well... Let's see how much pain Frossard and I can inflict on you before you die a miserable death!" he said ominously, chuckling like crazy.

Lorenzo closed his eyes, waiting for the inevitable to come. He knew this was going to hurt, but not as much as seeing Bianca getting tortured and killed, and that placed a bittersweet smile on his face.

'I'm so sorry Bianca, Latias. Please don't mourn over me, for I care so much more about your well being than my own. Please forgive me,' he prayed silently in absolute fear.

Yet he felt relieved. His granddaughter was safe, Latias was safe, and no doubt the entire police force was looking for Malice and him.

Even if he were to die here, they likely would arrest Malice in no time, and lock him up for good. His girls would live on, and that's the only thing that mattered to him. 'Latias, I'll be finally seeing you again... I have to break that promise that I made to you... I'm so sorry. Tell me, is this place you're at everything they say it is? I wonder...'

Even in his sad musings, Lorenzo had a smile on his face, which irritated Malice to no end.

"Oh? You still think this is funny, do you? Just wait until I've wiped that dumb look right off your stupid face!" the doctor screamed, grabbing a scalpel to start violating the old man's body.

The next few agonizing seconds felt like an eternity to Lorenzo, and he waited anxiously for more pain to appear, but to his stupor, nothing happened. Was this another sick and twisted joke from Malice? Did he expect him to open his eyes and then drill his scalpel through multiple layers of tissue?

Nonetheless, he reluctantly opened them, and flinched immediately when he saw the scalpel just an inch away from his face. But other than that, Malice was not moving. In fact, he looked stuck in place instead.

A strange grunt came from the doctor, the only sound he could produce at the moment, as he desperately tried to move his muscles, but failed horribly. 'What the hell is happening?' he thought with fear. Somebody had him in a very strong psychic lock. Had Ash and Latias found him?

Froslas was too surprised to even react to this new predicament, and just quick enough to teleport away from a dangerously powerful dragon pulse attack. The colorful dragon like beam exploded violently at the back of the cave, sending dust and debris everywhere.

At the same time, the doctor felt he could move again, and quickly, almost fearfully turned around to face his newcomer.

"Well, hello there Malice, long time no see," the ominous voice of Tobias introduced himself, giving the doctor a gentle bow. His Latias' gaze was stern and intimidating, while his gaze was calm and collected.

Malice's eye twitched involuntarily at the sight, all his bottled up rage resurfacing, completely forgetting he was about to butcher his captive.

"Well, well, well, look who's finally here. Came back to finish what you started three years ago?" Malice mockingly questioned,

somehow keeping very calm besides the serious situation he was in. His Frosslass teleported at his sight again, looking absolutely livid.

"Fros," she said in her icy voice, venom dripping from her mouth.

"Oh look at that, you finally got yourself a pokemon, and a feisty one too. I'm surprised you took so long to get one, seeing as you always had a soft spot for them. One of your many flaws, just like your pointless existence," the legendary trainer responded, completely ignoring Malice's earlier question.

The doctor grumbled. "Keep Frosslass out of this, she has nothing to do with it. Why are you really here Tobias?" he asked sternly.

Tobias chuckled, amused at Malice's antics. "Please, stop acting like you hold the cards. You are nothing Malice, it is like you expected. I'm here to destroy you, once and for all."

Malice gritted his teeth; there was no way out of this one. He was severely injured, his Frosslass was still very weak from the battle against Dawn and Brock, and he had no tricks left up his sleeve he could use to escape whatsoever, it was over.

Slowly, very slowly he turned his head low and responded. "... Alright Tobias, I give up. But at least let my Frosslass go, and give me the decency to ask you some questions that's been on my mind for a while," he muttered somberly.

Of course, his Frosslass immediately protested, but with a flick of the hand, she became deadly silent again.

"It's ok Frosslass, fate has decided for me, just go." He turned his attention back to Tobias, while his pokemon hugged him teary eyed, shaking her head in disagreement.

Tobias mockingly sniffed, wiping an imaginary tear from his eye. "How sad, trainer and pokemon saying goodbye, I'm almost wiping my nose," he exclaimed, Latios unable to keep a grin from his face.

Malice snarled at the comment, but otherwise, said nothing.

The legendary trainer rolled his eyes, and sighed loudly at the pathetic scene. "Alright Malice, I'll let your Frosslass go, she can even stay at your side as you fire away those questions at me," he responded loudly, sitting down on the warm cave floor. He perked a brow slightly at the bound form of Lorenzo, who had been struggling like crazy now, but otherwise didn't make a comment about it.

The doctor sat down as well, Frosslass not letting him go as his face turned dark. "Why? Why did you do it?" he questioned immediately.

Tobias grinned, the amount of hate and sadness coming off from that single statement brought him joy to no end. "You know how it goes in our business Malice. You and her decided to leave for good, *it* had no use to the both of you anymore. *It* sent me after you with the intention to end you both, but you've always been good in stealth, and managed to get off the radar for seven years."

He stopped for a moment, before continuing. "Until, one day, I heard about a doctor who miraculously saved the ace of the current Sinnoh champion, who just started her journey back then. It was a long shot, but worth a try, since you like pokemon so much and know their anatomy so well. Would you believe my surprise when I saw that abomination of a child you two had gotten? Killing your spouse was easier said than done, they put up a fairly good fight, especially your kid, which was very surprising."

Malice tried to keep his anger in check, but couldn't help but grin as he just could imagine the surprise on Tobias' face as his little girl gave him so much unsuspected trouble. "So that's it huh? *It* needed us gone, so why did you leave me rot in the snow, why didn't you finish me?" he asked in disbelief.

Tobias snorted. "You know how we work Malice, you had nothing to live for, you should've died out there, but somehow, your willpower to get vengeance kept you going." The tone in his voice suggested respect, but also pity for the pathetic attempt.

The two stayed silent for a moment, before Tobias began to snicker. "Did you honestly believe you could've defeated me if you had Latias under your control? You're a fool Malice, you should've stayed in Alto mare, and lived the rest of your pathetic life there!" he stated with a grin.

The doctor gave a low growl in return. "You're the one who's pathetic, still taking orders from *it*, I was sick and done! I was happy Tobias, living with my wife and child in Snowpoint, something that you've never felt before!" Malice yelled, as the legendary trainer gave him a bemused smile.

"Is that so? Because I felt plenty of happiness when I broke that little bond of yours that you call love by destroying your family. You lost all your touch when you met your wife. You once was this cold blooded mercenary, and then you changed in doctor happy-go-lucky, saving pokemon's lives. Disgusting! It was time somebody brought an end to it, and I enjoyed every second of it."

The sadistic grin Tobias gave him made Malice's blood boil, before the legendary trainer spoke up again.

"So doctor Thomas huh? What a boring name you chose, everything became boring about you once you met your wife," he insulted him.

Malice though, retaliated immediately. "Like Tobias is such a great name for you. Where did you find that garbage, did a Smeargle sketch it for you?"

This comment slightly annoyed Tobias, but he kept calm nonetheless.

"I see your wit is something you didn't lose, but you've been incredibly sloppy. Poisoning Ash's Pikachu? You had the fat guy already didn't you? Why go through all the hassle in obtaining the Pikachu when you just as easily could've used him as bait? Just shows how rusty you are!" Tobias exclaimed, trying to rile up Malice even more.

"Back up plan," the doctor said simply, lying through his teeth. While it was somewhat true, there was more behind it, but he wasn't going to tell Tobias that. "Even if something went wrong, I still would have the fatso, but *you* tried to ruin it for me anyway. You tried to kill Pikachu! You switched up the poisons!" he accused the legendary trainer, who just fletched an evil grin.

"That I did, I was surprised you could save him, but then again, you've been such a great doctor."

Tobias put up an exaggerated and whiny voice of a little kid as he held out his arms. "Oh please doctor Thomas, save my Rattata, he's in the top percentage of all Rattatas, so he can't die, please!"

He began to laugh maniacally, Malice remaining oddly calm despite the fact he would've killed the person who was mocking him, wouldn't it be Tobias.

"So how did you find me? Did *it* give you my location?" he asked, ignoring Tobias' laughter.

After a while, he stopped his laughter and responded him calmly. "Not exactly, you see, it must've been fate that you decided to come here, because I wasn't here for you in the first place at all. I'm here because of Latias and Ash, but Ash in particular."

He went on.

"However, you decided to be annoying, and try to capture Latias. *It* actually already gave you a second change, stating that killing your wife and child was enough. But you're obnoxious, and decided to meddle with my affairs. Since I failed killing you three years ago, what better timing than to get rid of you than now?"

Tobias paused again, before going on. "Yes, *it* did gave me a fair warning in advance that you were coming, only finding you would be a bit of a problem. But it seemed you weren't try to hide at all, either that, or you're really rusty."

Malice couldn't believe it. So Tobias was here for Ash all along, not him? That was something he didn't expect in the slightest. "So what are you going to do to Ash? Kill him?" he asked the legendary trainer.

Tobias snorted again. "You really think that low of me. Sad. If I wanted to kill him, I would've done so quite some time ago. No, *it* has send me here for a different reason. A reason that's none of your business!"

Tobias stood up again, and as he did so, his Latios rose with him. "I'm done with you Malice, time for you eternal do- AAGHH!" The explosion of the shadow ball knocked the trainer of his feet, making him wince in pain.

"Fros!" Malice's ice and ghost exclaimed in a demonic voice, defending her trainer's life like her own depended on it, and it did.

"No Frosslass you idiot! Teleport away!" Malice stated in panic, but it was already too late. Even if she wanted to, she couldn't, Latios' psychic grip on her was way too strong.

"Please Tobias, forgive my Frosslass her foolishness, take your anger out on me, not her!" he desperately pleaded to him.

"Enough!" the trainer roared, clearly pissed off. "You're like the pimple on my ass! Latios, dragon pulse the Frosslass into oblivion!"

The dragon complied all too willingly, and the doctor could only watch in horror as his only pokemon got hit by the draconic beam dead on, exploding violently with an ear shattering sound.

"Frosslass no!" Malice screamed, his pokemon falling out the sky like a sack of flour, obviously fainted. He put his arms protectively around his Frosslass and glared at the Latios, daring him to finish it.

"Wait," Tobias said suddenly, looking at the scene in front of him curiously. He had seen that look on Malice's face before, and the

way how the Frosslass reacted, could it be...?

"No way!" the legendary trainer spoke out, and began to laugh hysterically. "Oh, this is just too rich!" he added between laughter, Malice's glare only growing bigger.

"What's so funny? Finish it already you twat!" he screamed, but Tobias ignored him, and continued to laugh loudly, before resorting to an evil chuckle.

"I'm surprised you haven't figured it out yourself yet, then again, you always have been oblivious. No wonder you were so sloppy the entire time," the trainer stated matter of factly.

"What the hell are you talking about?" Malice now roared, clearly pissed off.

Tobias patted some dust from his half destroyed clothes, before responding. "Tell me, when exactly did you obtain that Frosslass?" Tobias asked, grinning maniacally.

"What does it matter to you?" he responded in turn, not really seeing where he was going with it.

"You didn't have her when I attacked your family three years ago, and since she's an ice type, I assume she's from Snowpoint, so I ask again: when did you obtain the Frosslass?"

Tobias waited for a response, and after some time, Malice muttered a little.

"Right after the incident. When I passed out in the snow, she brought me to a nearby cave. She treated my hypothermia as best as she could, and fed me berries to keep me alive. I don't know why, but she never left me ever since. There, you happy now?"

"I'm more than happy, there's a special reason why you kept her didn't you? While you love pokemon, you never liked owning one,

something I will never understand. That aside, her antics and happy and bright personality reminded you of her... Your wife!"

Tobias began to laugh again at Malice's stupefied expression. "Not only that, but she was the *real* reason you wanted to go on, not vengeance on me, isn't that right?"

The smug grin on Tobias' face left Malice speechless, but know that he thought about it, he knew it was the truth. Deep down, Frosslass had always reminded him of Julia, his wife, and that gave him some of the happiness back that Tobias so violently had ripped away from him.

The legendary trainer though, felt better than ever, he was about to crush Malice so hard it wasn't even funny, and he knew exactly how to break the ice.

Getting his pokedex out of his pocket, he pointed it at the downed Frosslass, and the mechanical device beeped, before answering in a robotic and monotone voice.

"Frosslass, the snowland Pokemon. It is said that Frosslass freezes her foe at a temperature below sixty degrees Fahrenheit. Legends in snowy regions says that Frosslass is actually a woman who got turned into a Frosslass after getting lost on an icy mountain."

Tobias' grin widened even more. "Intriguing, isn't it? Especially the last part where they talk about a *woman* getting turned into a Frosslass. Reminds me of a certain mountain guide that I killed with her child by trapping them in their own house while setting it on fire!"

"..."

The silence was ear shattering. Malice couldn't move, not a single sentence was produced from his mouth as he looked at his little, fainted Frosslass. Tobias began to laugh hysterically again.

"That Frosslass was your wife the entire time! That's why she was so attracted to you, that's why you were so rusty, she held you back! Oh man, this is priceless! Hahahahaha, and you didn't know she was your wife for all this time!" The legendary trainer kept on laughing while Malice was deadly silent.

Everything in his body felt numb, was her love so strong for him that she had willed herself into this Frosslass in an attempt to comfort him? Even if that meant losing all her memories?

No, she may have lost her memories, but she had been attracted to him ever since she turned into a Frosslass. The body may have been different, but her heart remained the same. She had loved him with all of her heart, even death wasn't strong enough to separate her from him for good.

"Oh Julia, please forgive me."

He couldn't say anything else to her; the Frosslass was removed from his grip, and hoisted up in the air by Latios's psychic. Tobias' grin turned possibly wicked again as he spoke his next words very slowly. "Two pidgey with one stone. Now Latios... *Rip* her apart."

The doctor didn't look, couldn't look, even if he knew his wife was getting killed in front of him again. He didn't cry, didn't scream, he just lay numbly on the floor as his Frosslass got brutally murdered. He had gone through this before, and soon, his turn would follow.

"Aw, did I kill your wife twice? Well, you can send her my regards!"

Just as Tobias said that, Malice felt himself getting hoisted up in the air by Latios' psychic himself.

Tobias chuckled evilly again. "It was nice knowing you..." He stated with a wicked grin, before ending his sentence.

"Brother."

Oh boy, so that just happened. Yep, I'll be leaving you guys with more questions and a cliffhanger. What are Malice and Tobias exactly? Who's *it*? Will Lorenzo survive? Not at all answered in the next update of: When fate comes knocking! Anyway, review guys, I appreciate constructive criticism dearly! ~Syrup-Waffle

Carpe diem

Alright, let me start this off with apologizing to you guys. It's been three weeks since I updated, I know, and I'm sorry for that. Life has been pretty busy, with college, my personal life and my big sis getting married in two weeks, so I hadn't much time to write at all. Honestly, the sudden lack of motivation to write was a big key factor in all of this too.

Now this doesn't mean I'm going to abandon this story. It just means updates might take a little bit longer than usual. Also the reason why this chapter is pretty short. I was planning to write more, but I like where I cut it off, and I reasoned you guys have been waiting for far too long for an update! From pretty dark to pretty romantic? Kinda? Enjoy this little appetizer nonetheless ^^

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, every pokemon would be obtainable in one game!

"love" Speech

'love' Thoughts

'love' Telepathy

"love" Whiteboard marker

Evening had fallen on the island, most people at the Lily of the valley were inside, enjoying their meal or otherwise the coziness and warmth it provided. Rain was expected to fall, so naturally, most pokemon trainers weren't about to test their luck. But of course, there was always the exception on the rule as the sky let loose.

"C'mon Latias, hurry!" Ash called to his dragoness, beckoning her over to a big tree that provided at least some coverage to the heavy

rain that was pouring down to the earth below. Not that it really mattered, the raven haired trainer was pretty much soaked already, as was Latias, but that didn't stop the young legendary from giggling like a schoolgirl as she ran into Ash's awaiting arms and snuggled up close.

"What's so funny?" the trainer asked her happily, holding her tight. The disguised pokemon gave him a quick peck on the lips before responding.

'We just won from an elite four member this afternoon, and now, we have to take shelter from the rain!' She began to giggle again at the irony of the situation as Ash chuckled slightly.

"And whose fault is that? You're the one who dragged me into this forest!"

She blew him a raspberry playfully, closed her eyes, and silently listened to the rain and Ash's heart beat in his chest. It was so soothing, almost like a lullaby. She sighed in contentment and happiness, enjoying the young trainer's company. Latias felt like she was dreaming, only this time it was real and definitely ten times better than she ever could imagine.

After that heavenly kiss in the wild water slide, the couple decided it was time to go back to the pokemon center. Of course, that was easier said than done. This time, there was no running from the press, and after a quick interview, Latias had dragged Ash away and flew him off in the setting sun.

It was only a thirty minute flight for the legendary, but endorphins were practically shooting through her body, and those had other plans for Ash as a mischievous smile crossed her features.

This didn't go unnoticed by Ash, who was hugging her like a big teddy bear. He was in a similar state as his dragoness. He never had felt this feeling before, but Latias made him feel so loved, so happy.

He couldn't describe it, all he knew was that he was on cloud nine, and he didn't want it to end.

Her smile however, was the only warning she gave him before she shot down like a missile to the forest below.

"Latiassssss!" Ash hollered over the wind, her sudden dive making him hold on for dear life. She suddenly came to a halt, the adrenaline boost Ash got from that little trip putting a silly smile on his face.

"Why are we stopping here La-" His words got stuck in his throat, the young legendary had transformed back in her new human form and the look she was given him made his heart race.

She closed the gap rather quickly, gently pressing his back against a nearby tree. Her breath was heavy, and her eyes half lidded. No words needed to be said as she softly captured his lips with her own. The young trainer was thunderstruck, her lips felt so nice, and he kissed her back quite eagerly, putting his arms around her petite frame.

He didn't know how long the two had been there, silently kissing each other without a word, but soon twilight approached, and the dark clouds that packed together afterwards had said enough. And now, the two were silently conversing under a big oak tree as rain continued to fall. They were muddy and wet, but they didn't care.

The young love couple was together, and that was all that mattered. Latias was leaning against Ash as they sat there, his arms wrapped around her and his chin resting gently on her head.

"You know, Latias. I could sit here forever, just you and me," the young trainer murmured, giving her head a kiss. The disguised legendary sighed once more in happiness, feeling the raw emotions radiate from the raven haired boy.

'Me too Ash,' Latias replied genuinely. She gave him a heartwarming smile and kissed him once more. The two said nothing for a while,

just enjoying the scenery before the dragoness gently broke the silence.

'Who's your next opponent anyway Ash?' Latias asked him curiously, trying to begin some small talk.

"A guy named Joey, I've heard he's a very good battler, but that's about it. I haven't had much time to do a lot of research about him, because you know..." He gave her a smile, his long raven hair obstructing his view a little as little droplets of water fell from it. Ash found it funny his dragoness' hair still smelled like coconut, even when she was soaked, was it part of the illusion too?

Her real form didn't smell like coconut at all, more like honey and walnuts. Maybe she knew he loved the smell of coconuts?

Ash decided not to dwell on it for too long as the red haired legendary gave him a nuzzle. *'Well, then we must do some research on Joey tonight and come up with a good counter team together. The battle is in two days after all,'* she whispered to him lovingly.

Ash nodded his head. "Tonight. For now, I'm not going anywhere."

Latias giggled at Ash's response. Of course she knew he was joking, her Ash would catch a cold with all those wet clothes on his body if he didn't change in dry ones soon. Still, that didn't mean they had to go right now. The couple could afford to stay for a little while longer. The disguised legendary didn't worry much about her own health, they had to be in a much colder climate for her to catch a cold.

The heavy rain was now reduced to a slight drizzle, and various forest pokemon were heard over the sound of the little droplets hitting the ground, creating a very soothing scene.

'Ash?' Latias spoke shyly to him, almost too soft for him to hear.

"Hmm?" the trainer responded. He had opened his eyes and looked at the disguised dragoness curiously. She was nervous, her face an

adorable red as she twiddled with her thumbs. Whatever she was about to ask, was something she wasn't sure of.

Latias steeled herself, and looked him straight into the eyes before continuing. *'D-do you know what a French kiss is Ash?'* she stuttered out cutely, her blush intensifying. She immediately regretted that question when she asked him, almost afraid of the boy's answer.

Ash however, looked at her owlshly. He didn't understand why she was blushing, it was just a different way to kiss somebody, right? They had kissed each other for the last couple of hours. Surely this wouldn't be such a big difference.

"That's how people in the Kalos region kiss, right? Why'd you want to know?" Ash inquired her, still not sure why she was acting so shyly, although he found it totally adorable. He'd heard about French kissing of course, but didn't know what it exactly entailed.

Luckily, Latias seemed to know, and gave him a shy smile before responding with a little bit more confidence.

'You're right Ash, but it's a little more than that. It's a very intimate thing couples do to express their love... Oh and you'll be using your tongue,' she added quickly, heat rising to her cheeks once more. She eyed the young trainer for his reaction, who stared at her wide eyed. His heartbeat rose again, and his cheeks flared as his mind processed the information Latias just gave him.

"Oh," he responded simply, unable to make a comprehensible sentence in his mind. He swallowed once, before thinking things through slowly. On one hand, he was not entirely comfortable with the idea in using his tongue, but on the other hand, he found extreme excitement rush down his body at the mere thoughts of it.

'Would her tongue taste like coconut too?' he wondered, an idiotic smile plastered on his face.

His decision was made quickly when he saw Latias' face though. It was filled with hope, but also understanding if he didn't want to do it. Ash knew at that moment she really loved him, and he wanted to prove to her that he did just as much, before cupping the dragoness' cheeks gently.

"So uhm... You want to try it out then?" he asked her finally, a small smile on his lips.

Latias' eyes sparkled, surprised he went along with it so easily, but certainly not complaining as she nodded her head enthusiastically. Small droplets of water fell from the duo to the ground below as the disguised legendary closed the distance between their lips significantly.

'What am I supposed to do exactly?' Ash inquired his dragoness, a little bit of nervousness clear in his voice.

She sent him a mental smile. *'I'm just going to kiss you normally, but when you feel my tongue on your lips, you have to part them a little, the rest will follow automatically, trust me,'* the young psychic reassured him lovingly, and once more, he felt her smooth lips touch his own.

He immediately felt happiness surge through his body again, just like every other time she kissed him, but this time, instead of holding her lips there, she parted them slightly, and he felt her tongue press against his own lips gently.

Just like she instructed, he parted them, and he felt her tongue brush over his own softly. He shuddered at the contact; it was foreign to him, but certainly not unpleasant.

Curiously, he began to move his own tongue over hers, and found out he quite enjoyed the reaction he got out of his dragoness. It was sloppy sure, but full of passion as well, as Latias reluctantly broke the kiss. The young love couple was catching their breath

afterwards, eyes shining and cheeks blushing. The dragoness gave him a coo in his mind, before winking at him seductively.

'You want to try that out on me now?'

Ash blushed shyly, which made Latias internally squeal. She found him extremely cute in this state, and gave him another reassuring coo.

The young trainer nodded his head eagerly though, and softly brought his lips back on the dragoness'. Trying to mimic Latias' actions as best as he could, he brought his tongue to her lips gently, silently asking for entrance.

She parted them, and like a moment ago, he felt his tongue go over her own, which made another shudder go down his spine. The disguised legendary was in a haze, her mind felt foggy, the only thing that she registered was Ash's smooth tongue over her own.

He carefully began to explore the inside of her mouth and noted with surprise that she indeed tasted like coconut as well. The kiss lasted much longer this time, and when they broke it again, the two were panting.

'Did you like it Ash?' s he silently asked her trainer, more for confirmation than anything, as she already knew the answer.

He smiled. "No, I loved it," he exclaimed, nuzzling his dragoness' cheek with his own.

'I love you Ash, more than anything in this worldm' Latias confessed again, happiness oozing from those words.

The young trainer gave her a peck on her forehead, hands rubbing her rosy cheeks delicately.

"I love you too, Latias," he responded just as genuine. The rain had stopped, but it didn't register in neither Ash's nor Latias' mind as they

came together in another heated kiss.

Can you feel the love tonight? E-hem, so yeah that happened. This is my attempt in trying to put some real romance in this story. I know it probably sucked, but hey, at least I tried! Next chapter the reveal to the group, so expect some humor and a little bit of preparation for the semi finals! Syrup-Waffle out!

Illusions and giggles

Slowly, very slowly we are progressing this story :p Enjoy this newest chapter!

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, Ash would really catch them all!

"Nurse Joy" Speech

'Nurse Joy' Thoughts

' *Nurse Joy*' Telepathy

"*Nurse Joy*" Whiteboard marker

Rattling away on her computer silently, Nurse Joy couldn't help but let out a little sigh. Things were going slow this evening, which was to be expected. The storm took great care of that, repelling potential trainers away and mostly keeping everybody inside.

But even now, twenty minutes after the dark clouds had settled down, the Nurse had almost nothing to do other than keeping track of her paperwork, which frustrated her a little. She wanted to help people, not being stuck here all night dying of boredom.

Nevertheless, she kept her spirits high, and gave a small smile to her Chansey, who ever so loyally stayed at her side in case something did happen. The quiet was soon broken however, when two teenagers entered the main lobby loudly, laughing like crazy while holding each other close. They were both soaked to the bone, but you had to be an idiot if you'd think that they cared, or if you didn't see they were totally head over heels for each other.

Nurse Joy gave a happy internal squeal at the loves truck duo, but from the outside she frowned.

"Oh my," she spoke out loudly to get their attention. "You dearies are all wet, why don't you two take a shower before you catch a cold? Chansey and I will take care of your clothes," she suggested to them.

Yes, the Nurse was so desperate to do something different that she rather would wash clothes instead of doing paperwork. At least then she was helping someone.

The young couple though, especially Tia, misinterpreted her suggestion completely, thinking the Nurse meant taking a shower together, and they blushed heavily. Luckily, Ash quickly came to his senses and gave Latias a coy smirk, seeing his golden opportunity to embarrass his dragoness even further.

Ever since he started to flirt with her, he found out he absolutely adored her squeaks, and tried to get as many as he could out of her. "Hmmm," he replied innocently, bringing a finger to his lips to make it look like he was actually thinking about it.

'That does sound appealing. What do you think Tia? You want to take a shower with me?' he asked her finally, trying to remain as stoic as possible.

Her reaction was immediate and she squeaked out in embarrassment, shyly trying to avoid eye contact with him. *'I... Err... No. I mean yes! I mean... I didn't mean...'* At that moment, Latias felt she could die of shame, and the raven haired trainer began to laugh hysterically at her misfortune.

She puffed up her cheeks angrily as she glared at him, the young trainer trying to catch his breath between bursts of giggles.

'*Not funny Ash,*' she responded, trying to show that she was serious, trying to remain her glare. That soon faltered however the moment Ash cupped her cheeks, and began to shake them all about while making a silly voice.

'Who's my cute dragoness? Who's my cute dragoness? You are, yes you!' he spoke joyfully, almost unable to contain his laughter.

The young dragoness almost burst out in laughter herself at Ash's silliness, and swapped his hands away playfully, a huge grin stretching her features.

*'Keep going like that Ashy, and you'll see just how **cute** this dragoness can be.'* She winked at him seductively, before planting a loving kiss on his lips. Her tone made Ash slightly nervous, and he decided to keep his mouth shut after that. Turning to the Nurse instead, the young trainer addressed her with a slight smile.

"We would love that, thanks!" he responded politely, before Latias gave him an unsure look about that decision.

'Don't worry; I was only joking about the shower part. You know that, right?' he inquired her softly.

The young legendary nodded her head gently. She knew, but that wasn't why she was nervous. Her form was calm, yet her eyes betrayed her as she responded to the raven haired boy. *'That's not the problem Ashy. You know this is an illusion, right? Well... Err... The clothes are also an illusion; it isn't like I can take them off.'*

This new predicament made Ash tense up a little. It was not like he had a second set of clothes lying around that Latias was wearing right now. Moreover, they were completely wet and muddy. He already accepted the Nurse's help though, so should he come back on that decision then?

He didn't have too much time to ponder. Nurse Joy would definitely suspect something if he would make up excuses as to why his girlfriend's clothes couldn't be washed.

He rather not have the whole world know he was dating a pokemon, that sounded so weird, especially since he was still a teenager. Just

as he was about to refuse her offer anyway, Tia nodded her head at Nurse Joy as well, who clapped her hands joyfully in return.

This couple was definitely weird, she noted, the girl hadn't said a single thing this entire time, and then the boy suddenly began to laugh out of nowhere. Still, she was a professional and ignored it, the Nurse was more than happy she could be of service anyway.

The boy did seem familiar though, too bad she only worked night shifts, so she often had no idea who was competing in the Lily of valley or staying at the pokemon center.

Fortunately, she could look it up, just to satisfy her curiosity. She would do so after she was done with their clothes of course. "Wonderful! Please follow me then," she stated, beckoning the duo to follow her. They did so in relative silence, although the young teenager couldn't help but give Tia a questioning look.

'Don't worry Ash, I have a plan,' she exclaimed to him reassuringly.

Ash simply nodded, trusting in his dragoness' judgment. They soon entered the washing area, and the Nurse handed them a pair of fluffy looking bathing robes, one white, and the other pink.

"You can change in there. After you're done, you can hand your clothes to me, I'll take care of the rest," she explained sweetly.

The young couple gave another nod, before Ash began a silent conversation with Latias while slowly changing in the warm and fluffy bathrobe. 'So, what's your plan Tia?' he asked her. He was pretty curious, though he already had a good guess.

The dragoness hummed a little, before responding. *'I'm going to trick the nurse in thinking I'm handing the clothes over, while in reality, I'm handing over nothing but air.'*

'I already thought so,' Ash replied. 'But isn't such an illusion pretty straining?' the young trainer inquired her; relieved he finally had

something warm and dry hug his body.

'Exactly, that's why I've to stay close to her; it'll be a pretty good training for me anyway. Meanwhile you can take a shower,' she reasoned with him.

They both stepped out of the changing booth, and Ash heart rose a little at the sight of Latias in the pink bathing robe. She was gorgeous, and the young legendary apparently knew as she gave Ash a sly wink.

'Like what you see?'

Ash nodded his head robotically, these feelings for her where driving him crazy, and Latias gave him a sweet giggle. The pair handed over their clothes: one set of socks, fingerless gloves, jeans, a T-shirt, a vest... and then a hand full of nothing.

Ash had difficulties not to snicker, because the Nurse really thought she was holding the muddy clothes, she even contracted her muscles and everything. While Nurse Joy got to work, Latias nudged her trainer towards the direction of their room.

'Let's meet up in the dining room, the others probably are there too,' Tia suggested him. He gave her an eager peck on the lips before agreeing with her.

'Alright, see you there then.' The young trainer navigated himself through the long hallways and quickly found his room. Once inside, he undressed and turned on the shower, contemplating on what had happened so far. It had started like any other tournament: his friends cheering him on, a rival to beat, and his pokemon all eager to win.

But then his Pikachu got severely poisoned, almost to the brink of kicking the bucket. And just as Ash thought his starter was going to be fine, he got kidnapped too. Luckily, he got him back thanks to his friends.

Speaking of Pikachu, Ash was going to check up on him first and foremost, dinner could wait. The trainer let out a heavy sigh, he still couldn't use his electric starter for the upcoming match in two days, but that was okay, Pikachu's health was far more important.

Then there was Paul who was being a pain in the ass more than usual. Surprisingly, his demeanor changed completely after his match with him, as well as when Ash got Pikachu back, which was a huge relief for the young trainer. Lorenzo was still missing, as was the doctor who caused all of this. Officer Jenny assured they had the whole island on lockdown, nobody got in or out without them noticing first, so Ash had a lot of hope he would be found safe and sound.

But the most surprising event what had happened so far was *her* . She had came for him, all the way from Alto mare to cheer him on. Ash let a stupid grin slide on his face as he thought about Latias. She wanted to be his pokemon, compete for him, and now, she was his first girlfriend. The young trainer knew that was a term he still had to get used to. It was so odd to think he was dating a pokemon, hell, he had kissed her, tasted her even for Arceus sake!

Yet he only felt happiness when thinking about those events. His dragoness was so sweet for him; they defeated Paul together, they had even defeated Lucian, an elite four member together. The raven haired boy wanted to repay her, to let her know he truly cared about her, but how?

He knew diddly squat about girls or dating, let alone a girl that was a pokemon at heart. Should he buy her a gift? What would she even like? Maybe he should wear some of Brock's cologne to smell nice whenever he was around her. She always seemed to smell nice.

Latias liked calling him Ashy. Should he give her a cute nickname too? All these uncertainties were making his head hurt. The young trainer shook his head; she deserved something special, and he was sure to find that something for her sooner or later.

Turning off the shower, he changed in some casual attire, before making his way to where his Pikachu was lying. The yellow mouse was fast asleep when he entered the room; most of the machines were removed, only an IV remained attached to the electric rodent.

Ash rubbed his cheek gently, and Pikachu's ears perked up ever so slightly at the touch.

"Pi?" he questioned groggily, looking at the hand which was petting him and to whom it was attached to.

"Hey there buddy, how do you feel?" Ash asked him warmly.

The moment Pikachu saw his trainer, his eyes shot open fully, and a huge smile adorned his features. "Pika pi!" he exclaimed loudly, leaping in his trainer's arms who began to nuzzle him contently.

"I missed you Pikachu, it looks like the nurses have been treating you well, huh?" he asked him, planting a kiss at the top of his head.

"Chaa," was the happy response from his partner and friend. Ash chuckled and gently put him back on the bed, a small smile on his face.

"So Pikachu... I uhm..." he began to rub his head awkwardly. He wanted to tell him that he had something going on with Latias, but he wasn't sure how to approach the situation.

Pikachu however, knew Ash from the inside out, and smirked a little as the trainer clumsily tried to explain about him and Tia.

"I-ah I am seeing this girl and-" The electric rodent immediately interrupted him. "Pika-chu. Pika pika," he said smugly, and Ash had difficulties not to choke on his own words, an embarrassed blush overcoming his cheeks.

"H-how did you know?" he asked incredulously, he hadn't even mentioned Latias at all.

"Pi pikachu," the electric starter pokemon retorted, wagging a finger disapprovingly at Ash for underestimating how good he knew him.

The young trainer snorted. "Hey! I'm not that obvious. You just guessed lucky," he replied adamantly.

Pikachu though, kept on smiling smugly. "Chu pika?" the rodent asked innocently, patiently waiting for an answer.

"Yeah, I've kissed her Pikachu," Ash answered him quickly. Pikachu however, wasn't quite done.

"Chu pika pi?" He now asked, his grin getting wider and wider the second the conversation went on.

Ash blushed furiously at the question and stuttered out a reply. "Pikachu I-we... Err... Yeah, I did French kiss her... Now can you stop asking embarrassing questions?" he pleaded to his starter.

Of course, said starter didn't listen; teasing Ash was way too much fun. "Chu pika pikachu?"

Pikachu's grin couldn't be possibly wider when he asked this question and this time, Ash looked at him owlshly.

"What's that?"

The mouse pokemon couldn't help but burst out in laughter after that.

After bidding Pikachu a goodnight, Ash found his way to the dining room. It was cramped with people, all idly chatting and enjoying their food. Normally, nobody would blink an eye at the trainer, but as soon as he entered, quiet murmurs and whispers could be heard.

It felt like everybody's attention was directed to him, and in some sense, that was exactly what was going on. He awkwardly tried to

ignore all the stares of awe he got, until a bold girl; maybe a couple years older than him blocked his path.

"You're Ash Ketchum right?" she spoke to him cutely, already knowing the answer but asking anyway.

"Uhm... Yeah?" He responded unsurely to the girl, having no clue what she wanted.

"I'm April; your battle against Lucian today was so awesome! Maybe you could give me an autograph, please?" She blinked her eyelashes at him a couple of times and Ash was quick to reply. While he was hungry and looking for his friends, he couldn't possibly deny her.

"Oh, sure!"

She giggled at her friends, who quickly handed over a permanent marker to Ash.

"Can you write 'for April and Amy, love Ash' with your autograph under it?" the brown haired girl asked pleadingly, to which Ash gave a happy nod.

"So, where do you want the autograph?" he asked her with a huge smile; the attention was certainly appreciated.

She handed him one of her pokeballs giddily. "That's Amy my Milotic, she's a huge fan of your battling style ever since this tournament started. That only increased when she saw you beating Lucian. It would mean the world for her if you could autograph her pokeball."

The trainer complied and did his best to make his writing readable, before scribbling his signature on the pokeball for the girl. April beamed and gave him a quick hug.

"Thank you, I'll be rooting for you until the end," the brown haired girl spoke happily, before finding her spot at her table again.

Resuming his destination, the trainer couldn't help but feel like a celebrity. Left and right people were flashing him smiles, or just giving him nods of recognition. Finally, he found his friends, who already had seen him coming from a mile away.

"Ash, over here," Dawn beckoned him, pointing to an empty seat next to her.

"Hey guys, how have you been?" he asked Brock, Dawn and Bianca, sitting down and grabbing a menu. Fortunately, they still had to order as well, so he could catch up with them a little.

"We're fine Ash. And looking at a certain video that went viral this afternoon, we can only conclude you had a great time at the pool as well," Brock noted. "Congrats on beating Lucian by the way," he added, and the two girls nodded their heads in agreement.

"Thanks guys! Tia and I had a great time. Lucian was a tough opponent, but in the end, I adapted and surprised him, giving me the win," Ash exclaimed triumphantly, looking eagerly at the menu.

"Speaking of Tia," Bianca brought in. "Where is she Ash?"

The young trainer looked around to note that indeed, Latias was nowhere in sight.

"Huh?" he said to no one in particular. She told him to meet in the dining room, right? Immediately, alarm bells were going off in Ash's head. What if Malice had captured her?

Those eerie thoughts were destroyed in an instant when a beautiful waitress approached Ash, one he knew all too well. It was Tia no doubt, but the trainer was too shocked to even make a comment about why she was dressed as a waitress when she actually began to *talk* to the group.

"Good evening, may I take your order?" she spoke in that angelic voice of hers.

Ash was baffled, her lips moved, and sound was coming out of them! How was this possible!? Brock was the first to respond though, grabbing one of her hands, he began to woo her, completely on cloud nine.

"Oh Angelica." He read her name from her nametag. "Oh you're an Angel indeed. My name is Brock, and I would like to order the way. The way to your heart! It must have been fate that brought you here, our love was destined. I would like it very much if you went on a da-AUUGHH." his Croagunk jabbed him in his side, and began to drag him off once again.

The girls were laughing awkwardly at the scene while Ash was still stunned into silence. "Don't mind him please," Dawn said to 'Angelica', who giggled cutely.

"It's ok; I already have a boyfriend anyway." She gave Ash a sideways glance. "So, have you decided on what to take?"

"Yeah, I'd like a cup of tomato soup, and Bianca here wants the chicken salad," Dawn ordered. The waitress quickly jotted it down.

"Excellent, and what about you cutie?" she addressed to Ash with a seductive undertone.

"Wha-huh?" he replied dumbly, unable to hide the surprise in his voice.

Latias had difficulties remaining her composure, but managed to do so anyway. "I can make a suggestion if you'd like? What about the *Kalos* special?" she spoke to him, smiling coyly.

"I-uh, what?" he stuttered in utter confusion, unable to make a comprehensible sentence at all.

"Excuse me, what is the *Kalos* special anyway?" Dawn asked for Ash, seeing as he was at a loss for words at the moment. Brock had just joined the table again when Angelica began to explain.

"Oh it's a very *thrilling* dish. It's a *tongue* from an exotic *pokemon* with a dressing of white wine. A very... *Electrifying* experience." At the word electrifying, she turned her full attention to Ash, who gulped audibly.

"So, wanna try it? I know you love it," she spoke to the raven haired trainer, who tried to calm down and gather his thoughts.

Dawn, Bianca and Brock looked at the waitress as if she lost it, but Ash understood what Tia was implying. She wanted to get a little payback for all the teasing the three did, and was probably using an illusion to let it seem she was speaking.

So he nodded his head enthusiastically. "Sure, I'll try this Kalos special... *Angelica*." He gave her a full fledged grin.

Making sure Latias had the attention of the whole group, she replied excitedly. "Great, one Kalos special coming right up!"

Pouring a glass of white wine, she began to drink it all in one go, before gradually closing the distance between her and Ash.

The look of confusion of Ash's friends turned into utter shock when the waitress did not stop her advance at all; instead, she began to move almost sensually.

"Enjoy Ashy," she whispered, and just like that, captured his lips with her own. The sensation sent a shiver down her spine, and once more, Ash parted his lips slightly to let her explore his mouth.

Her tongue felt heavenly, sweet from the whine she just drank, and he let his own tongue go over hers excitedly.

Latias couldn't think straight anymore, she could only enjoy this moment. And with that, her illusion broke, Bianca being the first to recognize Latias due to her voice. The artist was shell shocked, she suddenly recognized the waitress, and watched mouth agape how her best friend was kissing Ash like a pro.

'Latias!?' she thought incredulously.

The young legendary gave her a mental wink. *'Hi Bianca, do you like the Kalos special?'* She giggled, letting her tongue roam the inside of Ash's mouth.

Bianca was unable to answer; she couldn't even if she tried. When Tia broke away the kiss, she saw the utter shock on the faces of Ash's friends.

Dawn was impersonating a Magikarp, Brock was quietly sobbing and Bianca's face slowly changed into that of a sly smile.

'Latias you cheeky dragoness,' she said, to which the young legendary began to giggle madly. She sat down next to Ash, who addressed the whole table.

"Guys, I have to tell you something." He pointed at Tia smiling like crazy. "This is my girlfriend."

The former gym leader looked ready to quit life, while Dawn almost fell out of her chair. Bianca however, gave a sudden squeal.

"That's so cute! Nice going Latias." She winked at the disguised legendary, who blushed slightly at the praise.

"*Latias!?*" both Brock and Dawn sang in union.

Tia nodded as Ash explained. "She made a new disguise, and kinda tricked you with an illusion just now. We've been together ever since we beat Lucian this afternoon."

Latias nuzzled Ash affectionately, while Dawn and Brock recovered from this new information.

"He actually did it," Brock muttered in surprise.

"Awww, you guys are adorable together," Dawn said warmly after a while.

"Yeah Ash. I'm proud of you," Brock added, giving him a thumbs up.

The young couple thanked their friends shyly. Finally, the real waiter showed up and slightly bowed to Ash. "I see you have found yourself a mademoiselle, monsieur Ketchum. Mon félicitations on beating Lucian as well. This is from the house."

The waiter left the table with a bottle of high class bubbles, and the group decided that a slight celebration was certainly in order.

"All right," Brock addressed to the group. "Who wants some?"

Would've been slightly longer if it weren't for the fact that I'm busy, so this is all that you guys get for now. Like it, love it, hate it? Tell me all about it in a review. Until next time! Syrup-Waffle

Preparations and kisses

So, this a very quick chapter that actually should've been added to the end of last chapter. I apologize in advance for its shortness, but I'm so busy. I hope the speed and lack of longer chapters is any indication of that. Enjoy!

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, I would make an anime for the older generation and one for the younger newcomers!

"Ash and Latias" Speech

'Ash and Latias' Thoughts

'Ash and Latias' Telepathy

"Ash and Latias" Whiteboard marker

After dinner, Ash decided to do a little research on his upcoming opponent. Of course, Tia joined him quite eagerly. She was sitting on his lap, occasionally giving him a gentle nuzzle while the young trainer silently read Joey's trainer info that he'd found online.

"Wow, have a look at this Latias," the raven haired boy muttered to his dragoness. "This guy is as strong as what I've heard about him."

The disguised legendary turned her attention towards the article Ash had opened up, and began to read it out loud in her trainer's mind.

'Prodigy Joey Beatum continues to awe the masses by winning the Unova league quite spectacularly. The former Silver conference finalist decided that enough was enough, and showed the world what he really was capable of. Sweeping through the gym leaders like a bravebird from a Talonflame, Joey had his eyes set on only one thing: winning and becoming the champion. The young man's unique

style of battling caught most of his opponents completely off guard, and so Joey claimed the victory, defeating Carl's Serperior with his starter pokemon, a Raticate.'

The young legendary gave a look of disbelief at Ash. 'A Raticate?' she repeated. 'Aren't those very weak?' Tia asked her trainer for confirmation.

Ash shrugged his shoulders, finding it a little hard to believe himself.

"Well, they usually are. But if you manage to win a league with one of them, it just has to be very strong."

Ash paused for a moment, going over Joey's track record in the process. "Besides, my Pikachu is exceptionally strong too. And I haven't seen anyone else using one of those on my travels other than an old rival of mine."

Latias nodded at the explanation, snuggling close to the young trainer who mumbled something incoherent.

'Hmm?'

Ash spoke up. "He's also reached the semi finals twice, one time the finals, and then last year he won the Unova league!"

Tia didn't see the problem.

'So?'

The raven haired boy did a double take in surprise at Latias' laid back reply, before responding feverishly. "So? How am I ever going to beat this guy? I've never gotten past top eight until now!"

Stress was evident in Ash's voice, but Tia just gave him soothing coo, rubbing her cheek with his.

'Relax Ashy, are you forgetting you've got me now? Also, we won from an elite four member, something Joey didn't do. He lost his first

match immediately against Caitlin, who is a psychic type user herself. We'll be fine, and I know you'll do great.'

The reassuring words did make Ash relax, and he gave his dragoness a genuine smile before smooching her on the lips. "Thanks Tia, I needed that."

A happy coo was his response, while the young trainer scrolled further down to look at Joey's other pokemon.

"Still, this guy's not going to be a push-over. He has pokemon from two different regions I haven't been to yet. So I have to prepare for those as best as I can," the trainer stated.

'Oh? You haven't traveled through Unova or Kalos yet?' Latias asked curiously, to which Ash shook his head.

"No I haven't, half of these pokemon are pretty unknown to me. Take this one for example. Re-u... Reunica- how do you even pronounce its name?" Ash shouted exasperated, throwing his hands in the air in frustration.

Tia giggled cutely at her trainer's antics before giving him a peck on his cheek, smiling brightly. *'Reuniclus Ash. It's a psychic type. I don't know much about it myself other than that it's very slow,'* she answered sweetly.

"Well, that's just one of the pokemon he has that I don't know," Ash added afterwards to his dragoness. "How am I going to prepare for all of them?"

The trainer huffed in annoyance; this was certainly going to be a very high mountain to climb.

'You don't,' Latias replied softly. *'Just go with your guts Ash, your battling style is just as unique as this Joey person, if not more unique. You just have to catch **him** off guard first, outplay him from the start.'*

The raven haired trainer pondered Tia's words and his options carefully. No doubt Joey was going to look at his profile too, and certainly do everything in his power to stop Latias. He'd to act on that, counter the counters, if you will.

Suddenly, a bright idea popped up in Ash's head, and he smiled happily. "You're right Tia. And I know exactly how to surprise Joey! But I need your help with it."

The young legendary was all ears immediately. *'Of course, anything you want Ashy,'* she responded with a nudge. *'What's your plan?'*

Ash's smile brightened significantly at her eagerness. She was just too cute. "Tomorrow I'll be training my pokemon. But you need to do something very important for me in the meantime. If everything works out, you should be back that same evening."

'What do you want me to do?' Latias asked, listening intently to Ash.

The trainer chuckled, how could he not have seen that she was head over heels for him sooner?

He replied immediately. "This is what I want you to do..."

After the young trainer had explained his plan, the legendary gave him a happy nod. *'Alright, that sounds like a great idea Ash, I'll do it.'*

He gave her another loving kiss, holding it there for a couple seconds just to enjoy the soft texture of her heavenly lips. "Great," he exclaimed as he parted from her reluctantly. "Now we only need to do one more thing."

He brought his dragoness' attention back to the screen and the list of Joey's pokemon it displayed. "What pokemon is he definitely going to bring to counter you?"

When the couple finally was done preparing, the clock had struck midnight. The duo was tired, a glance at each other was all it took for the two to come to an agreement. Silently, they walked to their room to get some much needed rest.

The Nurse that had washed their clothes earlier that evening gave a polite wave as they entered the main hall and went upstairs. There, they found the door to their stay in no time, and while closing it carefully, Tia gave her trainer a pleading look.

'Can I... Uhm, perhaps sleep in your bed with you again, please?' She gave him a couple of puppy eyes and a quivering lip as she clasped her hands together.

Ash, who was about to suggest the same thing anyway, completely melted at the sight, and had already moved away his blanket for her.

"How can I say no to such an adorable face? Of course you can!" he excitedly answered her in a hushed voice.

Latias gave a happy squeal, and transformed back in her true form the do a couple loop-de-loops in the air out of enjoyment, of course being careful not to wake anyone up.

'Thank you Ashy! You er... Want to use me as a blanket again?' The adorable blush that overcame her cheeks made the raven haired boy smile like an idiot, and he couldn't help but get flustered himself.

"Yeah, I'd like that," he softly replied.

Closing in on Latias, the young legendary began to twiddle with her claws nervously before slightly backing away. *'Ash? What are you doing?'*

The trainer gave her a confused look. "I was about to kiss you?" It was more directed as a question than an answer really, and Tia gave a small smile before returning back to her human form.

'Okay.'

She puckered her lips in anticipation, but Ash made no effort to meet her in a kiss at all. "Why'd you turn back to your disguise?"

He sounded almost disappointed, and Latias frowned at the question, wasn't it obvious?

'So that you can kiss me of course, Ashy,' she retorted cutely without much thought.

The young man didn't immediately respond, but when he did, confusion overtook the psychic dragoness. "Tia, could you turn back into your pokemon form for me again please?" he asked her softly.

Even though she had no idea what her trainer was planning, she complied nonetheless, yet her confusion only rose when she saw his smile widen.

'Why do you want me in my real form?' She pouted a little; he hadn't even kissed her yet.

Ash gave her a grin. "So that I can give you the affection that you deserve."

The trainer winked at her, and the young legendary blushed once more.

She had no words, did he just really say what she thought he was saying?

'Bu-but, I don't even look remotely human right now,' she brought in weakly. Latias didn't even know why she was protesting. She always thought Ash would be weirded out if she tried to kiss him in her real form, yet Ash didn't stop his approach on her at all.

"I don't care how you look like Latias," he exclaimed passionately. Cupping her cheeks with his hands, he let his warm breath go over her snout before continuing.

"I only care what's on the inside. You're still the same silly, energetic and adorable girl I fell in love with."

He booped her nose with hers, and she shuddered visibly at his words.

'Oh Ash,' she stated, drunk on love as she was for him.

The legendary didn't waste any time and joyfully pressed her mouth on his own. Her lips were definitely warmer, being a dragon and all, and the somewhat odd angle he had to kiss her was something Ash definitely had to get used to.

Yet the passion remained, even more so than the times when he'd kissed her in her disguise. Her larger form moved him to his bed effortlessly, and she had him pinned rather easily a second later, Latias making no indication to break the kiss soon.

Holding her claws in his hands, the young legendary had Ash covered under her body like a feathery blanket, and she was impatiently asking him for entrance with her tongue. The raven haired boy complied, and the dragoness' much bigger tongue explored the inside of Ash's mouth vigorously.

Her saliva was thick and her tongue sweet as Ash tried to wrestle with it playfully, enjoying the eagerness his dragoness was radiating. Funny enough, her tongue didn't taste like coconut anymore, but honey and walnuts; exactly how she smelled in her real form.

Slowly, he pushed it back, finally entering her mouth with his own tongue. It felt foreign, and he curiously began to explore as he let his tongue go over her canines, Latias being very careful not to hurt him as she gave him a low growl in approval.

The sound caught the young man completely off guard, remembering that his dragoness was still, in fact a predator. Yet something was very alluring about it as well.

He made her make that sound!

Something so feral coming out of the randomness that was Latias was odd to hear, but also very exciting. He wanted her to growl more.

Yet, the fear of being caught by one of his friends hung thick in the air as well, and Ash quickly had made his decision.

'Tia, don't growl, you'll wake the others!' he tried to hiss, but it sounded more like a silent hint for her to do the exact opposite.

Tia had seen the subtle reaction her growl had gotten out of her Ashy, and his words of protest spurred the young legendary only on to act upon them. The thrill of being caught was also a helping factor, as she slowly broke the kiss and gave Ash a smug grin.

'You like it when I growl, don't you?'

The young man blushed a fiery red, and tried to deny it adamantly. "N-no!" he stuttered in embarrassment.

The psychic type gave an internal squeal at the adorableness, and gave Ash a seductive look on the outside at the same time.

'You're cute.'

The dragoness gave him no time to react as she fiercely captured his lips with her own again, growling loudly in the process. It sent a shiver down Ash's spine, and Tia did not relent even though he pleaded her to stop making so much noise, which didn't sound very convincing.

Another growl, more sensual this time, when suddenly Brock -who was sleeping in the top bunk- decided to snort and shift his body to the right, making both Ash and Latias flinch, paralyzed with fear. Luckily, He became quiet after that and Ash breathed out a sigh of relief.

"That was way too close. I told you to stop Tia!" Ash scolded her, a smile creeping on his face nonetheless.

She pouted at him, feigning hurt as she gave him a loving nuzzle afterwards. *'I know you liked it Ash...'* She bit her lip as she continued. *'Would you like it if I would **moan** for you too?'*

Ash's face erupted into embarrassment, and evaded answering that question all together.

"G-good night Latias," he stuttered out cutely, closing his eyes to avoid looking at her face any longer. Latias burst out in giggles, before snuggling close to him and planting a kiss on his cheek.

'Goodnight Ash,' s he finally replied, closing her eyes as well to let sweet sleep overcome her.

...

'Ah!'

"Stop it Tia!"

Hi! So uh, yeah, I know that was very short, and the romance probably wasn't very good either, but hey, I tried. That counts for something, right? Like it, love it, hate it? A review would be nice! Until next time. ~Syrup-Waffle

No pain, no gain

Busy, busy, busy :P So I apologize if this chapter is meh. Enjoy anyway!

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, I would implement FFA's into the game.

"Joey" Speech

'Joey' Thoughts

'Joey' Telepathy

"Joey" Whiteboard Marker

"Alright guys you're doing great. Good job so far," Ash praised his hard working pokemon happily. Only one day remained before he had to face off against Joey in the semi finals, and the young pokemon trainer wanted to make sure his team was more than ready.

"Ash's pokemon sure are giving it their all, don't they?" Dawn noticed in awe.

Brock nodded. "They sure are. After all, this is the first time Ash has managed to reach the semi finals, so they want to put up the best fight possible tomorrow for their trainer's sake," he explained knowingly.

"It also helps that Ash hasn't told them yet who he's going to pick," the former gym leader added with a chuckle.

"So this is like a competition for them," Bianca realized, having put down her pencil momentarily to add her two cents to the conversation.

Brock nodded again. "Exactly. The only one who knows for sure is Tia."

Bianca hummed a little. "Speaking of Tia. Where is she anyway? I haven't seen her all day," she said a little worriedly.

Dawn gave the artist a reassuring glance. "Ash told me she had to run a very important errand for him, which would cost her most of the day. She'll be back late afternoon though, so don't worry."

The brunette gave a slight frown. "He didn't happen to tell you guys what the errand was, did he?" she inquired, to which both Dawn and Brock shook their head no.

"That's Ash for you," Brock replied, shaking his head in amusement. "We just have to wait and find out tomorrow."

Meanwhile, the young pokemon trainer was still giving his pokemon commands and directions. "Now Donphan, use stone edge on Charizard," he shouted to his ground type. His pokemon complied, and shot dozens of sharp chunks of rocks at high velocity to the idle fire breathing lizard.

Charizard wasn't worried, while the attack was devastating and nigh impossible for him to dodge, it lacked a lot of raw strength. He simply opened his maw, and shot a flamethrower at the incoming projectiles, heating them up to such a high temperature that they dissolved into nothing.

"Alright Donphan that's enough," Ash stated, petting his elephant pokemon affectionately. "You're definitely improving. Last time your stone edge didn't even come close to Charizard."

The ground type nodded, not yet satisfied with the result, but taking pride in the positive words from his trainer nonetheless.

"Charizard, while you're very strong, you need to stop underestimating opponents. If that stone edge did hit, you would've

been hurt severely," Ash told his fire and flying type.

The pokemon puffed out a cloud of black smoke, but nodded his head anyway. His trainer was right, he knew, and he deeply respected Ash's opinions and decisions. But that didn't mean he always listened to him though.

Ash, being content with that response, called over his other pokemon. "What do you say we take a little break huh?" the trainer suggested to them. A huge roar of approval was the reply, and the young trainer grinned. "I do believe Brock was cooking lunch if I'm not mistaken."

As if on cue, a heavenly smell wafted through the area, making everybody's mouth water.

"You sure aren't Ash," the pokemon breeder called out to the trainer. "Dinner's served. Now, who wants some?"

"Wow, this is great Brock; you have outdone yourself once again," Ash mumbled with a full mouth of food.

The girls giggled at the scene. "Careful Ash, otherwise you might choke," Bianca jokingly exclaimed.

"But it's so good," the young trainer moaned before resuming his lunch eagerly.

Brock smiled and gave him a friendly pat on the back while the girls kept on giggling. "Glad you're enjoying it Ash," he spoke truthfully.

The pokemon too, were eating their food in earnestness, and soon, the group of friends were talking idly to each other.

"So, are you ready for tomorrow Ash?" the coordinator asked the raven haired boy curiously.

"You bet I am!" he stated excitedly. "Right now, I'm just doing some last minute training to get everybody's morale up. But I've come up with a great strategy together with Tia that's going to beat Joey for sure."

"Is that so?" an unknown voice spoke up from the left. It belonged to a young adult, not older than twenty years of age. He wore a blue cap, a simple yellow T-shirt along with blue shorts and a pair of blue and white sneakers.

Other than the clothing, he was tall and his physique pretty muscular, yet his eyes radiated gentleness. His face was smooth and his hair auburn. A powerful looking Raticate was planted on his left shoulder, and a smile adorned his face.

"You must be Ash Ketchum then. Hi, I'm Joey Beatum, but everybody prefers to call me youngster Joey."

"Youngster Joey?" Ash questioned with a small smile. He shook the young adult's outstretched hand, who chuckled a little.

"Yeah, you see. When I was a kid, my Rattata and I challenged everybody who we came across. Naturally, we lost every time, but that didn't keep us down."

He shook his head in amusement before continuing. "I was young, so people started to call me that way, and it kind of stuck," he explained simply.

Ash nodded in understanding. "And I assume that it was this Raticate, right?"

"You got that right. My Raticate is in the top percentage of Raticates, that's why I was able to win the Unova league last year," he stated, before looking around.

"I see you're training hard for tomorrow. I must admit, you've got some pretty powerful pokemon Ash," Joey praised.

"Thanks, I'm positive we're going to have a great match tomorrow," Ash replied excitedly.

"I'm definitely looking forward to it," Joey responded. "Also, congratulations in beating Lucian one-on-one. But don't think because you have a legendary, it's going to be an easy match. I'll make sure your Latias has no change against me," he said steadfast.

"We'll see about that, like I said, I've my strategy ready. The question is, are you prepared for it?" Ash challenged him.

"I'm more than prepared. I've learnt from my match against Caitlin. Your little psychic pokemon isn't going to fool me like it did Lucian." He smirked. "Good luck," he added respectfully.

"You too," Ash replied genuinely.

With that, the young adult took his leave. "Oh and Ash?" He called out. "You should consider buying some shorts. They're easy and comfy to wear!"

The raven haired boy laughed. "I'll keep that in mind youngster Joey."

A single wave was his response, before the young adult was out of Ash's sight.

"Alright, break time is over guys. Let's get in a little more training before calling it a day," he addressed his pokemon .

They agreed wholeheartedly with their trainer. Tomorrow couldn't approach soon enough for them.

"One more time, Bayleef. Use vine whip," Ash called out to his grass pokemon. She obeyed without question, doing her best to get a hit in

on Sceptile, who easily dodged all of her attacks. The grass starter gritted her teeth, this was getting frustrating.

"Don't let your emotions get the best of you. Try to focus," Ash offered her.

Bayleef was panting hard. 'This is impossible,' she thought. Sceptile was just too fast.

"How's it going Ash?" Dawn asked him after having stepped into the clearing. It was late afternoon, Ash and his pokemon had been training all day, and they were tired.

"It's going fine. Trying to improve Bayleef's speed a little."

He glanced over to the blunette, who had brought him something to eat. "Thanks," he said softly.

He sat down beside her, enjoying the cool breeze that blew against his face. The silence was a welcoming chance for the trainer, but it was broken way too soon by another person that stepped into the clearing.

"So this is where you've been training, Ketchum," Paul's rough voice rang out around the area.

Ash chuckled. "What're you doing here Paul?"

The purple haired trainer frowned. "I'm just wishing you good luck for tomorrow, since I won't be around to watch."

He paused. "Seriously, beat this guy and win the tournament."

The raven haired boy gave him a single nod. "Thank you Paul," he responded genuinely.

"So, I heard Pikachu's been improving. That's good to hear," he told him.

"Yeah, if everything goes well, he may even be competing in the finals, if I manage to reach it," Ash told his rival.

"Good," was the simple reply.

"Why's your Drapion out of his pokeball though?" Ash inquired him.

"Uh..."

"Hahahahaha, do you call that a vine whip babygirl? My grandmother could hit harder with a fell stinger." The poison and dark type laughed loudly at Bayleef, who instantly stopped her attack at the taunt, and threateningly raised her vines at him.

"Shut up filthy arthropod. Are you stalking me? If so, I know some places where I can stick these," she responded darkly.

He gave her a smirk. "Big words coming out of a tiny mouth, maybe you should stop choking on your own vines first before sticking them anywhere else."

Bayleef gave him a low growl. "Do I need to beat your ass? Because I would love to do so."

Drapion rolled his eyes. "Immediately resorting to violence I see. Honestly, I've never seen anything more pathetic in my life."

"Have you tried a mirror?"

The poison and dark type frowned. He didn't expect that comeback, and deliberately changed the subject. "Are you still pursuing your trainer? How's that been working out for you? Oh wait, it didn't. Some cute legendary snooped him up right before your eyes."

Drapion was sure that would get a rise out of Bayleef, but surprisingly, it didn't.

"I know. I had a good conversation with Latias this morning actually. And as long as she makes Ash happy, I'm happy," she responded

maturely. "Unlike you who couldn't even knock up a Weedle if you wanted to."

The poison and dark type chuckled dryly. "Don't you know every time I mate a bald Rufflet is born in Unova?"

Bayleef scoffed. "No wonder that they're endangered."

This time, Drapion did huff a little. "Wow, a word with four syllables. Need some ice now to cool off your brain?" he mocked her.

"You can scrape some of that ice from your heart. If you even know where it is located at."

Ash, Paul and Dawn meanwhile looked at the two squabbling pokemon dumbly.

"Are... Are they flirting?" Dawn asked shyly after a while. Both Ash and Paul shrugged their shoulders.

"That's enough Bayleef, return," Ash recalled his pokemon, not wanting things to escalate while Paul did the same with his Drapion.

"Anyway Ketchum," Paul muttered after a while. "I wish you the best of luck tomorrow. I'll be going now."

The purple haired trainer turned around, and took his leave.

"We should be going too, Dawn. If everything worked out, Latias should be back any moment," Ash told her matter of factly.

Recalling all of his other pokemon, the duo left the clearing to go back to the pokemon center.

Latias was exhausted. She'd been flying all day at top speed to get what Ash needed, and that took a heavy toll on the young legendary. She knew it wasn't going to be an easy task, but certainly

manageable for her to accomplish, and that is exactly what she'd done.

Besides, the thought of an overjoyed Ash when she would return successfully sent a happy shiver through her body, and she definitely would do it all over again if he asked. Moreover, this was also a good endurance training for the dragoness, so it was a win-win in her book.

Finally, the Lily of the valley island was in her sight again, and she couldn't wait to reach the pokemon center soon enough. Dropping her invisibility cloak, she scanned the nearby area with her psychic powers for a recognizable aura, and soon found one.

Her smile widened significantly. 'There you are Ashy,' she thought happily.

He was walking with Dawn towards the pokemon center, and she took a quick nose dive to intercept them. Slowing down a bit, she took Ash completely by surprise by tackling him down to the ground below.

'Ash,' she cooed, nuzzling his face affectionately.

Dawn snickered silently at the scene while the young pokemon trainer laughed at his dragoness' antics.

"Hahaha Latias, that tickles," he told her, nuzzling his cheek with hers softly. She cooed once more, content in staying right where she was.

'*I missed you ashy,*' her honey sweet voice spoke to the raven haired boy.

"It hasn't even been a day," Ash retorted with a grin.

She pouted cutely, before giving him a bold lick across his cheek. '*I did get everything what you asked me to get though,*' she spoke

huskily. *'Don't I get a reward now?'*

Ash blushed a bright red at her words and the layer of saliva she left on his cheek.

'Tia, not here. Especially with Dawn right behind us,' he thought back.

'What difference does it make? She has seen us kiss before, hasn't she?' She grinned devilishly, she had him right where she wanted him.

Unfortunately for Latias, Ash had an ace up his sleeve, and coughed loudly at the reply.

"You got what I needed Latias? That's great," he said a little louder than necessary.

This immediately sparked Dawn's attention, who had turned her head away in modesty, but now turned it back again before clasping her hands together.

"Ooohh, what did you get Latias?"

The dragoness gave the trainer an angry glare for ruining the moment -who just grinned back at her innocently- before she answered Dawn's question.

"She says that you just have to wait and see," Ash translated for Dawn. The psychic and dragon type had moved from the raven haired boy in the meantime, and he dusted off his pants dismissively.

"Aawww, can't you please tell? I'm curious," the coordinator begged.

Ash shook his head. "None can do, you'll see tomorrow," he promised the blunette. She pouted, but went along with it otherwise.

The glum look the young legendary wore after she'd been denied by Ash made the boy chuckle a little.

'What's so funny Ash?' she spoke a little annoyed.

'You're cute when you try to look angry,' he teased her.

She squeaked indignantly at the answer, refusing to look him in the eyes any longer. Ash chuckled once more.

"Dawn? Could you leave us alone for a moment? I need to speak with Latias privately," Ash stated to his traveling companion.

"Sure," she answered sweetly.

The somewhat irritated legendary rose a brow at the request. What did Ash want to talk about?

When Dawn was gone, the young pokemon trainer turned his full attention to his dragoness, and twiddled with his thumbs nervously.

The sudden timidness of the trainer made Latias squeal internally. It made him look so cute! But she didn't show this of course. She was still 'angry' with him after all.

"Hi Latias," Ash began awkwardly, unable to find the right words.

She couldn't help but let a small smile escape past her lips, he was just too adorable.

'Hi Ash,' she answered back jokingly.

The trainer sighed; this was going to be a disaster. Steeling himself, he prepared for the worst.

"I just wanted to say, thank you. For everything I mean," Ash added quickly. He began to blush. "I can honestly say that without a doubt, this has been the best week of my life so far. Sure, Pikachu almost... You know, but he's getting better, and I made it to the semi finals," he said happily.

"But the best thing that has happened so far this week; is you," he spoke softly, rubbing his head awkwardly at the confession.

His genuine words shattered Latias' irritable attitude in an instant. Her breath quickened and her eyes turned gentle at Ash's little speech, and he continued on passionately.

"I love you Latias, I really do. You would go to the distortion world and back for me if I asked you to do so, and I love that about you."

The dragoness' body began to fill with warmth and love for the trainer.

"Your silliness, your affectionate manners, your sweet nature, I love all of it," Ash confessed.

At this, Latias' eyes started to water in happiness, but she let him finish before doing anything else.

"So, I wanted to give you something to show you that I truly care," he stated gently.

"Close your eyes."

The love struck dragoness complied immediately. Her heart rate went up, and she gasped a little when she felt Ash's smooth hands go around her neck gingerly. She felt something cold getting attached to it, and her mind went into overdrive.

Did he buy her a necklace?

"Open them," Ash instructed.

She did so, and she looked at the piece of jewelry around her neck mouth agape. It was indeed a necklace. The chain was made completely out of silver, but that wasn't what caught her eyes, it was the little figure that was dangling loosely around her neck.

It was a Latios, completely made out of sapphire and diamonds. It shone brilliantly in the sun, like it radiated an aura of power, and Latias almost choked at how beautiful it was.

'Oh Ash. It's lovely,' she said teary eyed, holding it close to her heart.

"It looks really nice on you," Ash complimented shyly.

"Also, it's... Uhm, a double piece actually," the trainer revealed.

Latias gasped again when the raven haired boy showed her a second necklace, this one a Latias, completely made out of ruby and diamonds.

"You give the Latios to the one who you love, while I wear the Latias one. That way, we always carry a piece of each other wherever we go," the trainer explained shyly.

The dragoness was at a loss of words. Was this... A proposal? It definitely felt like one, and Latias had difficulties holding it together. So naturally, she responded the only way how she could.

She pressed her lips against his smoothly, enjoying the surprised reaction she got out of her trainer, which quickly melted away into pure bliss.

'I love you too Ash, with all of my heart,' she replied, kissing him passionately.

The raven haired boy felt relieved and happy, and when she broke the kiss reluctantly, handed over the second necklace to his dragoness.

"If you would."

She levitated it around his neck, and secured it tightly. It looked so adorable on Ash. She cupped his cheeks and kissed him again, not caring if anyone saw her.

The dragoness was going to make sure Ash wasn't able to use his mouth anymore when tomorrow arrived. She growled passionately, not letting go and pouring her entire being into the kiss.

'You're coming with me,' Latias exclaimed hotly, dragging Ash along with her.

'Well,' Ash thought to himself. 'That went better than expected.'

Like, love it, hate it? A review would be nice. Next chapter finally the start of the semi finals, so hold on to your ponytas! Until next time ^^

~Syrup-Waffle

Vs Joey! Don't you bug me

Merry christmas everybody, and a happy new year :D

...

Ok, so I've been away for a while, I'll admit. But it was exactly what I needed. All that pressure to deliver in time made my head ache, and honestly, it made writing more of a task than a hobby for me.

So enjoy this newest chapter! After I've hit the 100k words, I'll be going through all the chapters again to revise where is necessary. Updates will continue to be slow (around 3 weeks each chapter) so bear with me please.

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, I would make more moves, designed specifically for competitive play!

"Pokemon" Speech

'Pokemon' Thoughts

***'Pokemon'* Telepathy**

***"Pokemon"* Whiteboard marker**

"Where are they?"

It seems like this was a common question ever since the group had reached the Lily of the valley. Only ten minutes remained before the semi finals was about to start, while Ash and Latias seemed to have vanished into thin air.

"I don't know. Ash requested to speak with Tia in private when we're walking back to the pokemon center, but they never returned," Dawn

responded worriedly to Brock and Bianca.

"You guys don't think they have been captured by Malice, right?" the artist asked with dread in her voice. She didn't know if she could survive the news if it were to be true.

Brock shook his head. "The whole island has been put on high alert. If Malice shows his face for only a second, he would be busted."

The group was waiting nervously at the main entrance of the stadium, the time ticking away agonizingly slow, when finally, Ash's cap was visible on the horizon, and soon, the trainer in question followed while running as fast as his legs could carry him.

"There he is," Dawn noticed, happily waving at the approaching form of the raven haired boy who waved back in return. Coming to a sudden stop, Bianca asked the question which was on everybody's mind.

"Ash! Where have you been? And where is Tia?"

The trainer panted for breath, his cheeks burning as he slowly responded. "Just... Some last minute training," he breathed out. "Latias is in her pokeball. Didn't want to waste her energy by flying me all the way here," Ash explained.

Brock raised a brow. "Last minute training? But Ash, you haven't been in the pokemon center since yesterday! Do you honestly want us to believe you trained her all night?"

Dawn and Bianca looked at the trainer for an explanation, who began to fiddle with his thumbs nervously. "I... Uh... Got lost again?" he weakly brought in.

The blunette nodded her head slowly; not believing him of course, but trying a different approach. "Ok, so how'd you get the necklace Ash?" she asked, pointing at the beautiful looking Latias dangling around his neck.

"I bought it for Tia as a present. She has a Latios, while I have this one," Ash stated proudly, relieved that the coordinator changed the topic.

"Is that so? Tia must've been very happy with it then," Brock suggested smoothly, catching on to what Dawn was thinking.

The trainer blushed, his nervousness returning tenfold at Brock's tone.

"Y-yeah... She was very happy with it," he muttered in embarrassment, desperately trying to ignore the smirks he got from Dawn and Brock.

Bianca just listened owlshly, not really sure what was happening right now.

"Gee, I wonder how she would've expressed that happiness Ash," Brock stated innocently, before feigning an odd look at the trainer.

"But what's this? Is that a... Bite mark?" he teasingly spoke to his friend at the clearly visible red spot on Ash's neck.

Suddenly, everything seemed clear to Bianca as she looked at the raven haired boy with wide eyes. "Wait... Ash did you-"

Before she could end her sentence, the trainer spoke up. "Oh look at that, the match is about to start! Let's go guys," he exclaimed loudly before running inside.

Brock and Dawn giggled while Bianca still looked on in shock.

"Did they really?" she asked in disbelief.

"No, Latias did really." Brock laughed out loud while entering the stadium himself. The artist blushed a bright red at the reply, and followed the former gym leader inside timidly. Dawn just kept on giggling, her Piplup giving her a confused glance.

"You'll understand when you're older," she reassured her water pokemon cutely.

Inside, the stadium was bursting with excitement. Packed to the brink with eager pokemon fans, they all waited impatiently for the match to finally begin. Thrilled to no end, the crowd roared in deafening approval when the announcer at long last let his voice be heard.

"Good morning ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls to the first semi finals of the day!" the announcer yelled loudly in his mike. "I'm your host Peter Tomson and let me tell you, do we have an incredible and exciting match for you guys."

The masses cheered loudly, obviously waiting for this battle ever since the quarter finals, and they were more than ready.

"These two young and unbelievably talented men are about to face off in what well could be the battle of the event! So if you guys are ready, then it's time to meet the players."

All the cameras pointed to the western entrance, expectantly waiting for the first semi finalist to enter the field. Peter Tomson spoke up again, somehow getting over the thunderous sound the crowd was making.

"In the green corner, we have two times semi finalist, one time finalist, and champion of the Unova league! Give it up for Joey Beatum from New Bark Town."

The young man walked to his spot on the field smoothly, his Raticate on his shoulder as he waved to the crowd. Trying to remain calm, he closed his eyes to steel his nerves.

'Alright, Ash is a very tricky player. I need to keep my Latias counter in the back if I want to win. Think before you act. Now let's do this,' he reassured himself, getting into the right mindset.

As expected, the masses began to chant but one name. The absolute favorite to win this match, even Peter Tomson couldn't keep his emotions in check when he began to introduce the youngest player to ever beat an elite four member.

"And in the red corner, we have legendary catching, elite four beating, the winner of the Kanto battle frontier! Give it up for Ash Ketchum, all the way from Pallet Town!"

The crowd went wild, the young raven haired trainer basking in all the support he got as he happily made his entrance. The two trainers walked to the middle of the field to show each other respect.

"Good luck Joey," Ash told his opponent.

A confident grin was his response. "You too Ash, let's have a great battle."

Shaking hands, the masses responded in kind at the sportsmanship.

"It looks like we're all set ladies and gentlemen. Then let's get ready to battle!" the announcer boomed in his mike loudly.

Unlike Joey, Ash oddly wasn't worried. 'I got my pokemon and my friends at my side. I won't lose,' he thought with certainty.

The referee gave the signal. "This will be a full six on six match, substitutions are allowed. The match will be over once all of the pokemon from one side are unable to battle. Trainers, show your first pokemon!" he exclaimed clearly, raising his flags in the air to show that the match had begun.

Cracking his neck, youngster Joey threw his first pokeball into the air.

"Let's go Conkeldurr," he shouted.

Out came a menacing looking pokemon. Somewhat resembling an ogre, the fighting type looked very strong. Two heavy pillars rested in

his clutches, and determination radiated from his face.

Ash closed his eyes in contemplation. 'The first pokemon he uses is immediately something I've never faced before. I need to be careful,' He thought.

"What kind of pokemon is that?" Dawn muttered from the bleachers, pointing her pokedex at it.

"Conkeldurr, the muscular pokemon and the evolved form of Gurdurr. Conkeldurr uses concrete pillars like canes, tossing them with ease," the mechanical voice informed the blunette.

"Wow, that means Conkeldurr must have a lot of strength," Bianca brought in, looking the pokemon up and down to get a good sketch of it.

"Indeed. But this wouldn't be Ash if he didn't think this through. Now we may finally see what Ash has come up with together with Tia," Brock stated, the two girls nodding their heads in agreement.

In the meantime, Joey was waiting for Ash's first pokemon. He'd analyzed his opponent's team thoroughly, and concluded Conkeldurr would be the overall best pick to lead off with.

'So, what's going to be your answer, Ash?'

The raven haired boy chuckled inwardly. 'Let's see how you will respond to this Joey.'

Grabbing a pokeball from his belt, he threw it into the air with much enthusiasm. "I choose you, Butterfree!"

The butterfly pokemon emerged from his pokeball, happily fluttering his wings in the air.

'What?' Joey thought bewildered. 'I didn't see any record of Ash having a Butterfree.'

His surprise was palpable on his face, and Ash gave him a smug smile as he decided to humor his opponent.

"This is actually the first pokemon that I caught ever Joey, back when he was still a Caterpie. Sadly, I had to release him so that he could be with his mate. But Latias was so kind to find him for me yesterday, and he was all too eager to help me out."

Joey's surprise gave away for a small smile. "Well played Ash. But don't think you'll win just because you caught me off guard here. Conkeldurr won't go down that easily."

The pokemon in question gave a nod, trying to intimidate the bug and flying type, who wasn't fazed at all.

"So that's what Ash has been hiding," Brock spoke with happiness in his voice. Turning to the two girls -who looked at him with confusion- he began to explain. "Ash has released a couple of his pokemon when he was traveling through Kanto and Johto. If my assumptions are correct, we may see some of Ash's oldest companions."

"That's so cute.," Dawn noted bubbly, Bianca agreeing with her.

"It seems Joey decided to go for the fierce Conkeldurr, while Ash opted for the gentle Butterfree. This is going to be a match to remember folks!" the announcer yelled with excitement in his voice.

The referee raised his flag. "Conkeldurr vs Butterfree, begin!" he shouted.

"Conkeldurr, fire punch now," Joey commanded his behemoth.

He complied with a grunt. Enveloping one fist in a fiery glow, he charged the idle Butterfree with all of his power.

'Strong, but also pretty slow,' Ash noted simply.

"Butterfree dodge, and then retaliate with sleep powder," Ash spoke calmly to his old friend.

The pokemon nodded his head, gracefully dodging Conkeldurr's flaming fist of fury, before sprinkling a fine powder all over the fighting type.

"Great first counter move by Ash, who used Conkeldurr's slow speed stat to his advantage. How will Joey react?" Peter Tomson wondered curiously.

The masses watched on enthusiastically, shouting and cheering loudly for Ash and Joey alike from their seats.

'Crap,' Joey cursed. 'First move and Conk is already asleep. What shall I do now?'

While the young adult was thinking for a solution, Ash was just getting started. "Now Butterfree, let's show Joey what you're really capable of. Use quiver dance."

The butterfly pokemon did as he was told, using a beautiful, elaborate dance to raise his special attack, special defense and speed, while Conkeldurr was still fast asleep.

"Great opportunity for Ash to set up. If Joey doesn't think of something fast, this could very well end up badly for his fighting type," the announcer howled at the top of his lungs.

"I didn't even know Butterfree could use these moves. He definitely has gotten a lot stronger since I last saw him," Brock exclaimed, amazed at the little bug and flying type.

Joey, in the meantime, swallowed audibly. Nerves were wracking him, he felt like the same helpless little kid who always lost when he was younger, and the match had just started!

Fortunately for him, fate decided to help him a little. His pleas for Conkeldurr to wake up were answered, and with an annoyed grunt, his pokemon opened his eyes again.

"Yes! Now use bulk up," he said to Conkeldurr with hope in his voice. 'I need to catch that Butterfree off guard myself. When Conk has tanked a hit, he can reply with an incredible attack of his own.'

"Joey doesn't want to be left behind, and ordered his Conkeldurr to use bulk up, raising its attack and defense," the announcer informed the crowd.

"Alright then, Butterfree use hurricane!" Ash spoke triumphantly. It was a devastating attack Butterfree had learned just a few months prior. With a quiver dance up, this fighting type shouldn't stand a chance, surely.

Butterfree's soothing wing movements suddenly stopped, and the happy glint in his eyes disappeared as he created a massive tornado, crying out his name as he shot it at the Conkeldurr full speed.

The behemoth's eyes widened just a little, definitely impressed by the attack as he braced for impact. There was no way for him to dodge, and the incredible strength of the tornado sucked him in, threw him like a leaf around the stadium, until he slammed full force against one of the walls.

A cry of pain and a cloud of dust was the result. The masses were immediately silenced, the force of this Butterfree was something they had never seen before.

"Oww, that must've hurt. Can it be that Joey has lost his first pokemon already?" Peter Tomson wondered.

Everybody except Joey seemed to think so, because the loud gasps of disbelief when he ordered his pokemon for his next move were heard clearly all throughout the stadium.

"Now Conkeldurr, use payback," the young adult shouted.

Sure enough, a second later, two glowing eyes were seen, and a destructive purple force traveled with immense speed at the sputtering form of the Butterfree, catching him and Ash completely off guard.

The attack hit, making Butterfree cry out in pain as he was shot out of the sky.

"Incredible! Joey's Conkeldurr somehow managed to survive and retaliated with payback, a move that doubles in power once the user is hit. What a battle this is already," the announcer bellowed.

Ash gritted his teeth. That was something he didn't expect in the slightest. Butterfree quickly recovered from the move though, and looked determined to continue.

"Butterfree's hurricane with all its power wasn't even enough to finish Joey's pokemon," Bianca spoke with disbelief to Dawn and Brock.

"Yes, but look at Conkeldurr. That definitely did a number on him. One more and he certainly will be down for the count," Brock replied convincingly.

"Go Ash, I know you can do it," Dawn cheered, her Piplup just as fired as she was.

"Alright Butterfree, let's use hurricane once more," Ash commanded as he pumped a fist in the air.

The bug and flying type began to create another massive tornado, but this time, Joey was prepared. "Conkeldurr, use stone edge," he said.

Little chunks of rocks were shot everywhere, but Ash countered smoothly. "Keep that tornado as a shield Butterfree, use it against him."

Sure enough, all the rocks were sucked up into the vortex and eventually shot back, the tornado soon following afterwards.

The fighting type grunted as he got pelted with its own attack, his trainer desperately shouting for him to dodge the incoming hurricane.

"What an amazing response from Ash, can Joey's pokemon overcome this next attack?" the announcer questioned the audience.

'Well, that backfired immensely,' Joey thought nervously. Realizing his pokemon was never going to dodge, he decided to use the only option he had left. "Use mach punch on the tornado Conkeldurr."

Grunting, the fighting type's fist began to glow, and with incredible speed, moved forward to hit the destructive attack.

To everybody's astonishment, the leftover rocks which were still in the hurricane, got pulverized and were shot back at the Butterfree at such speed, he was unable to even comprehend what was happening, before he got hit with the four times super effective attack dead on.

Crying loudly, he dropped out of the sky, before hitting the ground with a loud thud.

Conkeldurr's attack did little to stop the tornado though, and once again, he got lifted by Butterfree's attack and slammed forcefully against the wall behind him.

"Unbelievable, it looks like we have a double down here ladies and gentleman," the announcer boomed in his microphone. "Both players are doing their best to get to their pokemon though."

"C'mon Conk, I know you can get up," Joey spoke desperately.

"Please Butterfree, open your eye,." Ash spoke just as desperately.

Just as the referee was about to call a double down, both pokemon began to stir.

"That's it Butterfree, I knew you could do it," Ash praised his bug and flying type.

"Great going Conkeldurr, just a little more," Joey spoke hopefully.

Both pokemon were standing now, Butterfree even too tired to get airborne. The two pokemon were staring at each other like in a Mexican stand-off, just daring one and other to keep up standing straight.

The stadium was deadly silent, waiting with bathed breath for the outcome.

"Why don't you just give up big guy? You've fought hard, now it's time to rest," Butterfree taunted tiredly.

"Njet, Conkeldurr will never give up, little bug. Respect for butterfly to get me on last breath. But you will taste defeat today," he replied gruffly.

Butterfree huffed. "You were truly a respectful opponent, but I can't disappoint Ash. He's the one who shaped me into who I am today. And I will repay him with everything he's done for me by giving him this win," Ash's bug pokemon retorted adamantly.

"Conkeldurr understands, but little bug needs to learn I'm go-getter. Conkeldurr only goes down by truly powerful opponent," he brought in, panting hard and challenging the Butterfree.

The bug and flying type began to slowly flap his wings in response, glaring dominantly at the fighting type before slowly beginning to rise into the air. The Conkeldurr widened his eyes at the display of strength, a blow for his dignity if he didn't do something himself.

"I'm more powerful than you Conkeldurr. Or can you silence me by proofing otherwise?" Butterfree taunted.

The masses watched mouth agape at the butterfly pokemon who looked down upon the floored Conkeldurr, who gritted his teeth as he tried to control his muscles into a final action.

Lashing out at his opponent with a shout, he felt his own body betraying him as he closed his eyes at last, before falling flat on his face in the process.

"Conkeldurr is unable to battle, Butterfree wins!" the referee shouted, raising his flag to show that Joey had lost his first pokemon.

"There you have it folks! Butterfree is able to snag the first win for Ash in this very tight battle. What a sensation!" Peter Tomson cried to the audience, who cheered loudly for Ash and Butterfree.

The big screen showed Conkeldurr's icon going black, five unopened pokeballs for Joey remaining while Ash still had all six.

"Great job Butterfree, I'm so proud of you!" the raven haired boy praised, hugging his tired butterfly pokemon happily who joyfully hugged him back.

"You did well Conk, take a nice and long rest now," Joey told his pokemon as he recalled him. Going over his strategy once again, he waited patiently for Ash to be ready.

"Why don't you take a rest yourself Butterfree? Return," Ash spoke softly to his hard working pokemon. Readjusting his cap, he gave Joey another smile. "How did you like that Joey?"

The young adult nodded his head in respect. "Very good Ash, but I've only just begun," he replied without worry.

Ash chuckled, before grapping his next pokeball. "But so have I Joey. So have I."

In the bleachers, Ash's friends were more than impressed.

"Butterfree was so great," Dawn happily said, clasping her hands

together in joy. Bianca was too busy sketching to reply, while Brock just nodded with a small smirk.

"Guess whatever Latias did last night has worked in Ash's favor."

Oh boy. Latias sure knows how to repay the one she loves, doesn't she? XD Anyway, like it, love it, hate it? Review please. Until next time!

~Syrup-Waffle

Vs Joey! Better take flight like HM02

Alright, let me start off with apologizing for the lack of speed in which I update this story. But I'm experiencing huge writers block at the moment. Still, I couldn't stand to let you guys wait any longer for a new chapter. It's rather short, but I hope you'll enjoy nonetheless!

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, Ash would never release any of his pokemon!

"Thunderbolt." Speech

'Thunderbolt' Thoughts

'Thunderbolt' Telepathy

"Thunderbolt" Whiteboard Marker

Excitement and happiness surged through Ash's veins, his next pokeball already in his outstretched hand. The sun reflected the item brilliantly, making it sparkle like a precious gem.

"It looks like Ash has chosen his second pokemon with much confidence," noted Peter Tomson, the crowd impatiently waiting for the raven haired boy to reveal his pick.

Ash chuckled inwardly. The announcer was right in every sense, this certain pokemon held a special place in Ash's heart, and he was more than ready to show the world exactly why.

Joey noticed it too, but didn't comment on it. Instead, he calmly waited for his opponent to make a move.

Finally, Ash threw the ball up in the air with much enthusiasm, shouting, "Pidgeot, I choose you!"

The huge bird pokemon materialized into the air, and she gave a loud cry that radiated strength and leadership.

This was the second time Ash managed to surprise Joey today. His shock was palpable on his face, before he quickly regained his composure. 'First Butterfree and now Pidgeot! I can only assume what the rest of his pokemon are.'

Grinning, Joey praised his opponent's cleverness nonetheless. "Well done Ash. But don't think you've bested me just because you let your Latias assemble all your old companions."

"I wasn't banking on it, but it makes this battle all the more difficult for you. Pidgeot is one of my strongest pokemon, you'll need something very special to take her down," Ash replied evenly.

"I see. Then how about this?" questioned Joey, throwing his counter on the field. "Let's go, Jolteon," he shouted.

The electric eeveelution appeared, his face turning into a dark scowl immediately while intimidating sparks flew from his body.

"Ash has opted for his Pidgeot while Joey counters it with his Jolteon. Battle of the Kanto pokemon people, how exciting!" Peter Tomson cried out, the crowd cheering on loudly.

"A Pidgeot? That's so awesome!" Dawn gushed in awe, Bianca's pencil almost smoking at how fast she was drawing.

Brock just gave a nostalgic smile. "So my assumption was correct. I wonder who else Ash has chosen," he muttered curiously.

Meanwhile, the raven haired boy silently eyed Joey's Jolteon up and down. The fierce pokemon growled menacingly, his demeanor screaming dominance. Any other pokemon would've been intimidated, but one look at his Pidgeot stated otherwise.

The normal and flying type was calm and collected, a grin forming on her beak as she looked at her trainer. Ash couldn't help but grin back.

"You don't really think a type advantage will be enough to take down my Pidgeot, huh? She almost feels insulted," the raven haired boy taunted good naturedly.

Joey gave a quick laugh in response. "Talk is cheap, Ash. You'll see just how fine my Jolteon will do."

The referee gave the signal, raising both of his flags into the air. "Jolteon vs Pidgeot, begin!" he shouted and lowered his flags. The game was on once more.

The young adult's eyes shone like fire, taking the initiative immediately. "Now Jolteon, let's start this off with a thunderbolt!" he commanded his pokemon.

The electric type gave a growl of approval, crying out his name loudly as he executed the attack with incredible speed.

The bolt of electricity approached Pidgeot at an alarming rate, cracking the sky around it in a shower of beautiful, but deadly sparks. Joey thought it would impress Ash at the least, but he was way too calm for his liking, and that Pidgeot of his. He couldn't lay a finger on it, but she almost looked bored.

"Pidgeot, use quick attack to dodge and then retaliate with hurricane," Ash commanded simply. The flying and normal type complied. Even though it was not a very effective move, Jolteon weren't exactly known for their defenses and thus, considered very frail. Ash knew they were more like glass cannons than anything, so this attack would still do massive damage, especially coming from his Pidgeot.

For a moment, it seemed like Ash's bird pokemon was unable to dodge the incoming thunderbolt, but with a speed that was

practically impossible to follow with the naked eye, Pidgeot vanished.

The bolt disappeared harmlessly into the air, and both Joey and Jolteon were stunned for a moment at what just happened, until suddenly a huge vortex, easily twice the size as Butterfree's, was shot at the electric type from behind him.

"Jolteon dodge," Joey barked out in panic. The eeveelution sidestepped the hurricane just in time, eyes wide at the raw power he felt coming from the attack. "Use thunderbolt again," his trainer commanded quickly.

Sweat dripped from Joey's brow, this kind of speed was only matched by legendaries or highly trained pokemon. It was almost unreal.

The trainer's nervousness would cost him though, his electric type was not even fast enough to perform the attack before he got rammed full force by the flying and normal type.

The impact was enough to knock him off his feet and make him slide over the field. Quickly getting up, he growled dangerously at the force that was Pidgeot.

"Incredible! Ash ordered his Pidgeot to use quick attack again just to interrupt Jolteon's thunderbolt. Will Joey be able to overcome Ash's pokemon?" Peter Tomson wondered curiously.

Joey berated himself silently, if he wanted to hurt this Pidgeot, he needed to play smart. "Alright Jolteon, use shock wave!" he suggested. The eeveelution smirked; shock wave was a move that always hit, no matter what. Now he would show her who was boss and fry this bird like a turkey on Thanksgiving.

However, Pidgeot wasn't fazed at all. She gave her trainer a nod, letting him know she could take the hit no problem. Grinning, he gave his next command. "Alright Pidgeot, use Hurricane again, full force!" the raven haired boy shouted enthusiastically.

She gave a cry of approval, flapping her wings rapidly to create another massive tornado.

Joey raised his brow, didn't Ash know Pidgeot was about to get hit? Regardless, his Jolteon released his attack, a wave of pure electricity shooting all around him.

"What is Ash doing?" Bianca spoke worriedly.

Brock just gave her a reassuring glance. "Just watch and you'll see," he replied confidently.

"Come on Ash, I know you can do it!" Dawn cheered him on.

The electric attack hit Pidgeot, Joey praising his pokemon for a job well done, but soon, his face turned into horror as he saw she didn't even flinch.

"Impossible!" he muttered.

The crowd and the announcer were just as amazed. "Look at that people! Ash has managed to make a breed of Pidgeot that's flying and ground type instead of normal," he joked. "Bad news all around for Joey, this Pidgeot looks unstoppable at the moment."

The deafening roar of the masses almost shook the earth, Jolteon only able to let out a surprised howl, before Pidgeot's hurricane smashed into him. His shock wave attack did not even slow her down, and he almost got tossed out of the stadium at the mere strenght of the attack, before hitting the ground with a loud thud.

Gritting his teeth, Joey was at a loss for what to do, before a small nudge from his shoulder brought him out of his spell. His Raticate looked at him, his eyes burning with determination.

"You mean...?"

His normal type nodded his head. Joey knew he could use his Latias counter just as easily on this Pidgeot as well, but had to preserve

her, for obvious reasons. Now though, his starter pokemon saw a worthy opponent, and Joey had to agree wholeheartedly.

Making his decision, Joey fortunately noted that his electric type had managed to take the hit, although he was panting severely now. A scowl so dark he'd never seen before had crept on his Jolteon's face, it almost screamed murder.

Meanwhile, Ash felt like he was back in Kanto again. Battling with his oldest buddies made a nostalgic smile come over him, and he almost missed Joey's next command because of it.

"Volt switch," he said to his pokemon calmly. However, the electric eeveelution disobeyed, and gave a loud bark of disapproval.

"It seems Joey's Jolteon doesn't want to leave the fight just yet," Peter Tomson remarked loudly.

Pidgeot couldn't help but snicker at his childish behavior. This Jolteon had potential, true, and was certainly strong, but also very young and stubborn. He wouldn't stand a chance against her, no matter how you looked at it. She was just way stronger, simple as that.

"What are you laughing at?" He growled dangerously.

The bird pokemon just shook her head. "Listen to your trainer, little one. You don't want to face off against me any longer, less you want to lose the little dignity you have left," she spoke motherly.

"Shut up!" he roared. "I'm going to beat you into a pulp! I've never lost to a flying type before, and you won't be my first!"

"You're outclassed, young hatchling," she replied calmly. "I've years of experience from my lovely trainer alone, what's more, my leadership of an entire flock of my species. Accept defeat and respect your trainer's command."

"I don't give a crap who you are, even if you were Arceus' mate herself, or do you prefer your *lovely* trainer instead?" he taunted mockingly.

Pidgeot gave a low smirk. "In fact, I do, tiny Eevee. If he wished to be my mate, I would accept without a second thought. He's the one who cared for me as long as I can remember, and I *will* protect him even if it will cost me my life!"

She extended her wings fully in a show of dominance, before listening to Ash's next command loyally. "Use heat wave, Pidgeot!" the raven haired boy cried out victoriously.

The flying and normal type began to generate very hot air, one could almost see the earth begin to scorch from the heat, which was traveling at tremendous speed towards the Jolteon.

Meanwhile, Joey was still calling out to his prideful pokemon to perform the attack, and just when he was about to return him to his pokeball himself -less he got hit for no reason- he saw his electric type grit his teeth in frustration, before letting loose the electric waves in a wide arc with a loud roar.

The volt switch packed so much energy, even Pidgeot was surprised for a second, unable to dodge while her own attack was still going on. It hit her dead on, making her give a low grunt in pain, but she did not falter otherwise.

Just when the heat reached Jolteon, he was being recalled, his face full of rage.

"Finally, Jolteon listened to his trainer, and not a second too late! That heat wave from Pidgeot looked absolutely powerful, while she tanked the volt switch without much trouble. What's going to be Joey's next move?"

The crowd cheered on loudly, Brock, Dawn and Bianca watching intently at the pure power that was Pidgeot. "She's so strong," Dawn

commented in awe. The artist nodded in agreement.

"That's because Pidgeot has a lot of experience. Unlike Butterfree, she's been the leader of a flock of Pidgey and Pidgeotto for quite some time since Ash has released her," Brock explained.

"That's so cool," Bianca said, taking in every detail of Ash's calm and collected bird pokemon.

Joey let out a sigh he didn't know he was holding. Jolteon was stubborn, he knew, but it was always a driving point for him, pushing the electric type to his limits. Now though, he gave himself a small reminder to train his Jolteon to get his stubbornness under control as well.

"I'm more than amazed Ash; your Pidgeot truly is very powerful. She maybe could even rival Latias," he praised his opponent. Ash stayed silent, taking the compliment with a simple nod, while his pokemon landed in front of him protectively.

"However, will it be enough to defeat my next pokemon?"

Without another word, his Raticate jumped from his shoulder unto the battlefield. For a second, the stadium was silent, before it erupted into a thunderous roar.

"It's going to happen people! Joey's Raticate will be taking on Ash's Pidgeot. This will be simply phenomenal!" Peter Tomson shouted in excitement.

Pidgeot recognized the species all too well. Rattata were commonly hunted in her flock, as were Raticate. But this one was very different. It didn't look fierce or confident at all, but rather weak, like a veil to hide its power which she didn't like one bit.

The normal type did however, lower his tail for a second, as a sign of respect for her, which she couldn't help but reciprocate, lowering her head while keeping her wings upright and outstretched.

"I'm very curious what your Raticate is capable of, youngster Joey," Ash admitted, smiling.

"I'll make sure not to disappoint your Pidgeot," he replied, smirking.

The two contenders looked at each other with determination, silently waiting for the referee to give the signal.

Pidgeot is simply awesome! I wished Ash would just bring her back on his team. The lousy nincompoop. Promising things and never returning for her :(Anyway, did you like it, love it, hate it? Review maybe? Until next time :)

~Syrup-Waffle

Vs Joey! Clash of titans

Hi guys, I'm finally back! So it's been a while I know, but 2016 has not been nice for me. Life decided to screw me over royally and so I had my hands full these last couple of months. Now though, things finally seem to return to normal, and I decided to write a new chapter for you guys. For anybody who's still even remotely interested in this story, this is for you! ^^

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, Ash would've never lost in the Kalos league. Seriously, I'm getting so sick and tired of these writers doing this every single time -.-

"Raticate!" Speech

'Raticate!' Thoughts

'Raticate' Telepathy

" *Raticate* " Whiteboard marker

Joey felt calm, a complete one-eighty from just a moment before. The battle with his Conkeldurr and Jolteon were both hectic, true, but he wasn't battling with them anymore. He was now fighting with his friend and partner for life; his Raticate, and honestly, this made him confident and excited.

"Let's show Ash and Pidgeot true power!" he said to his normal type.

Raticate nodded, his trainer's composure reflecting his own attitude quite nicely.

The crowd was ecstatic, this battle of epic proportions could only get better as these monsters silently glared each other down.

"Be careful Pidgeot, this Raticate is very strong," Ash warned her.

She gave him a nod, her wings still outstretched in a show of domination.

Finally, the referee lowered his flags, indicating the match was on. "Raticate vs Pidgeot, begin!" he shouted loudly.

The raven haired trainer wasted no time in commanding his Pidgeot; he wanted to get rid of this threat as soon as possible.

"Let's start this off with a quick attack," he yelled to his loyal flying and normal type.

Just like before, she seemed to vanish into thin air, her speed impossible to follow with the naked eye.

Joey wasn't worried this time. He would bring down this Pidgeot and he was confident in his case.

"Use protect," he countered coolly.

His pokemon obeyed, putting a green energy shield in front of him which blocked Ash's offense without much trouble.

Pidgeot bounced off the defensive layer harmlessly, squawking as she had to readjust herself to stay airborne.

"Amazing! Joey negated Ash's first offensive attack immediately, bouncing the momentum in his favour!" Peter Tomson exclaimed.

The crowd erupted in cheers once more, their hype for this match only building.

Just then, Raticate's item which he was holding, a flame orb to be exact, activated. The normal type gave a grunt at the familiar feeling of the burn, but otherwise didn't react.

'huh? What happened just now?' Ash thought in confusion. One moment, Raticate was fine, then the other he was suddenly burned.

The young adult only gave a grin at his opponent's surprised look. "You're not the only one who has tricks up his sleeve, Ash!" he responded, cracking his neck. He was now fully prepared to get rid of this powerful Pidgeot.

"What's happening?" Dawn asked unsurely to Brock, who had a vague idea.

"It seems Joey burned his Raticate on purpose with that orb it was holding. If I remember correctly, it has to do something with its ability, but I forgot exactly what," the former gym leader admitted.

"Either way, Ash needs to be very careful, right?" Bianca asked for confirmation, her eyes glued on the match. Her sketches were completely forgotten for once.

Brock nodded. "This is Joey's strongest pokemon, after all."

At the same time, Ash was thinking the same thing. Joey wouldn't burn his ace on purpose for nothing, so he was extremely cautious.

"Let's scout with a safe hurricane from a distance Pidgeot," he ordered her finally. In the back of his mind, he was calculating. It was of importance to get behind the true reason of this tactic of Joey as quickly as possible.

The experienced bird pokemon agreed with her trainer. Something was off about this Raticate, and she obediently held a safe distance between her and her opponent, preparing her devastating attack.

'Got you,' youngster Joey thought triumphantly. That flame orb was solely there to boost his Raticate's attack even further thanks to its ability; guts! And now, while Ash thought his Pidgeot was at a safe distance, it was time for him to go on the offense.

"Raticate, sucker punch now!" he commanded his normal type.

In that instant, Raticate was gone, and before Pidgeot had even an idea what was happening, got hit rather forcefully on the back of her head, cancelling out her attack.

She gave a cry of complete surprise and pain. The strength behind the punch was enough to ram her bulky frame into the ground with a loud smack.

"Pidgeot!" Ash screamed.

Dust and smoke kicked up where his bird had fallen, making the raven haired trainer worried for his pokemon.

Meanwhile, Joey's Raticate, who was still in the air and now falling down, seemingly went in for the kill as he accumulated more speed and prepared another attack.

"Facade," the young adult told his pokemon.

Raticate obeyed. This ultimate attack of his was also boosted by the burn. There was no way any pokemon would survive such an onslaught, not even this Pidgeot.

"Pidgeot get out of there, quickly!" Ash yelled anxiously. He was at a loss for words how fast Joey's pokemon had been. It almost seemed like it teleported across the stadium!

"Bad news for Ash and his pokemon! Joey's sucker punch caught both of them completely off guard. If he doesn't do something quick this may well be the end of his Pidgeot!" Peter Tomson speculated.

The audience was at the edge of their seat, all eyes on the cloud of smoke and the Raticate disappearing inside of it.

The pokemon in question glowed extremely yellow, charging all of its strength into this finishing move to give Pidgeot no chance to recover at all.

A loud boom was the result, debris flying everywhere as Raticate made contact.

Ash was stunned into silence. The attack was devastating, he could only assume the worst as the smoke slowly cleared.

"Nice job Raticate," Joey praised his pokemon preemptively through the smoke. He'd dealt quickly with this Pidgeot, something he was used to when battling with his starter pokemon.

"No Pidgeot," Bianca muttered sadly. She hadn't even gotten the chance to fully sketch her.

Brock and Dawn both said nothing, the former gritting his teeth while the latter held on to Piplup tightly.

Raticate grinned, sure of its case he had hit the bulls-eye. But when the smoke had cleared away, only a massive crater remained, Pidgeot nowhere in sight.

"Huh!?" Joey bellowed, shock written all over his face. His normal type was just as surprised, his eyes as wide as saucers.

"Quick attack," Ash's victorious voice hollered through the area strongly.

Not a second later, Pidgeot swooped down from the sky, slamming into the much smaller rodent with all of her force.

"What a spectacle! Ash's normal and flying type was out of harm all this time, her incredible speed fooling everybody! Ash took this opportunity to retaliate back with a quick attack, landing his first solid hit on Joey's Raticate!" Peter Tomson roared over the wild cries of the crowd.

Joey's ace was knocked off his feet and sent flying, until he hit the ground on his back with a loud thud.

Ash smiled at the bewildered look of his opponent. "You didn't really think one attack would keep my Pidgeot down for too long youngster Joey?"

As if to give strength to his argument, she landed in front of Ash, squawking menacingly at Joey's downed pokemon. All her senses were calm and collected. She knew she had to be sharp to win this one for her trainer, because the moment she got hit by that sucker punch, she knew this Raticate meant serious business.

Joey chuckled, his own pokemon already up again and ready to go for another round. "It seems I slightly underestimated your Pidgeot. Not any longer. We will hold nothing back Ash Ketchum!"

At the same time, Dawn and Bianca cheered happily at the outcome while Brock gave a sigh of relief.

'Pidgeot has grown a lot, just like Butterfree. Ash's old pokemon continue to surprise me,' he thought, a nostalgic smile coming over his face. 'You can do this Ash. I'm sure of it.'

Joey gave his next command, "Raticate, facade one more time."

"Counter it with your heat wave!" Ash followed in turn.

The normal rodent charged the bird pokemon like an angry Bouffalant, his body enveloping in that same yellow glow.

Pidgeot narrowed her eyes, her wings flapping crazily to generate enough heat for her attack. The scorching heat was even more destructive in power than last time, yet Raticate ran towards it with a mighty cry.

Joey knew there was practically no way for his pokemon to dodge the incoming attack, so he encouraged him to keep at it as best as he could.

"Keep on going Raticate, you can take her!"

The blast of heat hit him square in his chest, making him flinch. But he didn't stop his attack, if anything, it made him even more resolute to see it through until the end.

Pidgeot did slow him down a little. But other than that, he was steadily getting closer to her.

"The willpower of Joey's normal type is incredible! At this rate, he will get a massive hit in on Ash's flying and normal type," Peter Tomson exclaimed with excitement.

"Don't stop Pidgeot, give it your all!" Ash roused his pokemon, trying to rack up as much damage as possible.

She upped her game, the heat even getting unbearable for Joey in the distance. Both pokemon were not about to relent.

At last, Raticate began to grunt. The combined damage from the heat wave and the burn had its toll on him, but with a victorious shout of his name, he struck Pidgeot straight in her gut.

The bird pokemon gave a high pitched squawk, having difficulties to stay in the air after that massive blow.

Both attacks ended, rodent and bird alike panting heavily. They were battered and bruised, but neither wanted to disappoint their trainer. They refused to go down.

"This is such an exciting match," Dawn gushed, "go Pidgeot!"

Bianca was back at sketching furiously, that epic moment of Raticate charging through Pidgeot's heat wave clear in her mind.

Brock smiled. "This is coming down to the wire. Whoever has more determination will win this match."

Both pokemon glared at each other. Still, there was a twinkle of respect in their eyes as they regained their strength.

"I haven't had such a strong opponent in a very long time," the rat pokemon admitted, his threatening stance not diminishing.

"The same goes for me, honorable one," she replied, landing on the ground with her massive wings. "However, I simply can't lose this match! For my trainer's sake. It's about time I finish this."

Raticate nodded his head at her words. "It looks like we've come to an agreement then."

Meanwhile, Peter Tomson let his voice be heard once more. "Both pokemon are at an impasse here and on their last breath, who will come out on top in this incredibly tight match?"

"Pidgeot, are you ok?" Ash asked worriedly. He noted with concern that her left wing was damaged pretty badly. Also, he saw that she had difficulties breathing because every inhale seemed to make her flinch with pain.

The massive bird gave him a reassuring glance nonetheless, stating she wanted to keep on battling.

Joey's pokemon was in the same exact condition. It was a miracle his fur wasn't burned from his body. His upper tooth was chipped though, and his back leg wasn't responding to his commands like it was supposed to because of a nasty bruise.

Yet none of that mattered, this was a matter of pride and a show of dominance. Bird vs rat. Predator vs prey. A heated showdown that had reached its climax.

"This was a good match Ash. However, here is where it ends for your Pidgeot. Raticate, u-turn!" Joey shouted.

"We'll see about that! Pidgeot, use quick attack!"

Both pokemon stormed at each other for a final attack: one engulfed in blue energy, the other zigzagging at incredible speeds.

The two pocket monsters collided strenuously, creating a huge explosion at the middle of the battlefield. Both Pidgeot and Raticate came out of it looking unscathed. They stopped their attacks and turned around, daring each other to keep standing up.

Everything went quiet, everybody was watching silently for the inevitable outcome. Both Joey and Ash held their breath, their pokemon showing no sign whatsoever who was about to go down.

Then, Pidgeot faltered, closing her eyes and getting on one knee.

However, she didn't topple over.

Instead, Raticate closed his eyes for a final time and fell flat on his face, out of the match. His eyes were turned to swirls and the referee gave the signal.

"Raticate is unable to battle, Pidgeot wins!" he exclaimed loudly.

The whole stadium burst into loud cheers and roars, Pidgeot giving one final squawk to show her dominance while spreading her wings.

"Unbelievable! Joey's Raticate is out! Ash's Pidgeot was too much for him to handle and now Joey's down to four pokemon while Ash still has all six!" Peter Tomson cried out.

Raticate's image went black on the big screen, showing three unrevealed spots and a Jolteon for Joey, while Ash's side showed four unrevealed spots and a Butterfree and Pidgeot.

"Yeah! I knew you could do it Pidgeot!" Ash stated, jumping up and down with joy.

His pokemon cooed, slowly limping towards her trainer before enveloping him into a big feathery hug.

Ash hugged her back, the big avian very soft to the touch.

"Pidgeot is a beast!" Dawn hollered with her Piplup happily.

Bianca and Brock were clapping out of pure respect while the audience continued to cheer for the victorious bird.

"You did great Raticate, take a nice rest, return," Joey praised his starter pokemon, returning him into his ball. While he had lost this round, Pidgeot was in no capable fighting condition whatsoever. He'd be surprised if Ash let her keep on battling.

He gave his opponent a thumbs up, which Ash reciprocated. Just as the young adult had expected, the raven haired trainer returned his pokemon as well.

'While I'm down two pokemon, both Butterfree and Pidgeot are hurt severely. I still have my Latias counter in the back, so nothing's lost yet,' Joey thought, grabbing another pokeball from his belt.

'Let's see how you handle this Ash!'

Meanwhile, in the VIP section, champion Cynthia was watching the battle as well, clearly impressed with Ash's performance up until now.

'You're going to get far Ash,' she thought sweetly. 'After that win on Lucian there's no doubt in my mind that you'll reach the finals.'

She frowned after that. 'However, your biggest opponent you'll ever face will await you there. It's going to take every ounce of your strength to take him down, for he has not lost a single pokemon yet this entire tournament.'

See? This is how you write the outcome of a decisive battle! How difficult can it be Tokyo TV!? Anyway, did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Review please. I'll try to update regularly from now on again, but I will not promise anything. Until next time.

~Syrup-Waffle

Vs Joey! Heated Battle

Very quick chapter because I'm about to get busy IRL and didn't want to leave you guys hanging. Next chapter is going to be longer I promise :) Also, I finally hit 100k words, and with that, over 200 followers! Thanks to everybody for the love and support. Enjoy as always ^^

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, Brock would return because he's awesome!

"Peter Tomson" Speech

'Peter Tomson' thoughts

'Peter Tomson' Telepathy

"Peter Tomson" Whiteboard Marker

"Ash! Are you ready to resume our battle?" Joey questioned his opponent energetically. The young man's eyes shone with fire, his next pokemon in the palm of his outstretched hand.

"Ready whenever you are," the raven haired boy replied, patiently waiting for Joey's next pokemon.

"Good, because I'm far from being defeated yet! Let's go, Typhlosion," he yelled, throwing the Johto fire starter's pokeball into the air.

It burst open and the volcano pokemon materialized on the field. His everlasting menacing look scanned the area for his opponent. When he saw none, he growled, the flame on his back burning brightly.

'A Typhlosion huh?' Ash thought with mild interest. His own Cyndaquil had evolved not too long ago, so he was certainly

experienced with the species. He had two options here and while a type advantage was nice, that pokemon in question wasn't all too agile on a battlefield like this, which consisted mainly of grass and rocks.

So, with his mind made up, he chose for raw power and speed. "Tauros, I choose you," Ash exclaimed.

Ash's raging bull pokemon appeared in front of him and was itching for battle, his front leg kicking dirt, indicating he was ready to charge the moment his trainer ordered him to.

"Another battle of raw power people. Joey has chosen his fiery Typhlosion while Ash picked his fierce Tauros. Will Ash come out on top again or will Joey turn the battle into his favour this time?" Peter Tomson questioned.

'So Ash chose one of his thirty Tauros he has,' Joey thought, rubbing his chin in contemplation. 'So is this his strongest one? Or is this the one with the most speed? I have to play carefully, see when the battle begins and plan from there.'

Meanwhile in the stands, Ash's friends were watching the battle passionately.

"Those are some cool looking pokemon," Bianca voiced her thoughts, smiling at both the fire and the normal type.

"They certainly are. Ash actually has a Quilava himself, the pre-evolution of Typhlosion. He also has twenty-nine more Tauros," Brock told the girls. He laughed as they gave him incredulous looks.

"Why does he have thirty Tauros?" Dawn questioned, perplexed.

Brock sweat dropped. "Uh... A case of very bad luck," he replied and left it at that.

Seeing as both sides were ready again, the referee raised his flags. "Typhlosion vs Tauros, begin!" he stated, and lowered his flags in a sign the battle had started once more.

"Let's start this off with a fire blast Typhlosion!" Joey suggested his pokemon.

He grunted, obeying his trainer. The star shaped blast of fire traveled at the snorting bull at tremendous speed, who was seemingly not impressed with the attack in the slightest.

"Dodge and then use rock climb," Ash counteracted, determination oozing from his voice.

Quite easily, Tauros sidestepped the fire attack which exploded harmlessly behind him. Immediately after, he began to stampede, creating a rising rock pillar under Typhlosion which ascended the fire pokemon into the air.

Ash's normal type began his charge, his speed building up into an incredible dash that left Joey and Typhlosion with no time to dodge.

"Slow him down, use fire blast one more time!" Joey shouted, alarmed at the advancing Tauros.

Typhlosion began to prepare his devastating attack again, but with a sudden burst from Ash's pokemon, he was unable to fire it off and got slammed straight in his chest.

The fire pokemon gasped for air, the wind getting knocked out of him as he fell to the ground below. He glared at the speedy normal type, who let a small grin cross his features.

"Great work Tauros," Ash praised.

"Incredible! This Tauros definitely has mastered the art of agility! Joey got his work cut out from him. How will he deal with this pokemon from Ash?" Peter Tomson wondered.

The young adult gritted his teeth. 'This is without a doubt Ash's fastest Tauros, but it still hits like a truck. I need to find a way around its agility and dexterity and fast,' he thought, mildly concerned.

"Are you okay Typhlosion?" he asked his pokemon.

The fire type nodded, letting out a roar as the flame on his back burned with the intensity of a mini sun. This Tauros had pissed him off, and now it was going to pay for it dearly.

"Alright, then let's hit him with an eruption!" Joey shouted.

The fire starter went on all fours, his back spewing a large amount of molten rocks high into the air as if it erupted like a true volcano.

"Try to dodge Tauros, then use earthquake!" Ash said in turn.

His pokemon nodded, doing his best to evade the attack which quite literally tested the limits of his skills.

Now Joey grinned. He had his opponent's pokemon on its toes, so to speak. All he had to do was to interrupt its next attack, which was exactly what he was going to do.

"Focus blast," he said simply.

The volcano pokemon grinned much like his trainer, and fired the concentrated orb of pure energy straight at Ash's pokemon.

Eyes widening in alarm, the raven haired boy tried to save his Tauros from the incoming super effective hit.

"Cancel that earthquake Tauros, get out of the way, quickly!" Ash urgently warned him.

However, the normal type saw the attack too late. The orb exploded violently on the bull, making him howl in pain. Smoke covered the area, and Tauros felt his strength leaving him, doing his best to keep

on standing strong even though he felt he was about to collapse any second.

"A critical hit from Joey's side it seems, as Ash's Tauros has major trouble in keeping upright after that massive blow it received just now. Bad news all around for Ash, but amazing ingenuity from Joey who kept his composure and responded accordingly to Ash's strategy. Will this be the first victory for him?"

The crowd was amazed once more at the display of cunning from both sides and let it be heard, cheering and clapping for their favourite contender.

"So that eruption was nothing more than bait?" Dawn asked curiously to Brock.

He nodded. "Joey saw that he needed to create an opportunity to hit Ash's Tauros, and held off from using Typhlosion's super effective move until he was certain it would hit, doing the most damage. Very clever," he praised.

"Too bad for Ash it was a critical hit, poor Tauros," Bianca sympathized with the pokemon.

"Great job there Typhlosion! Now that he's hurt, use another fire blast!" Joey urged his pokemon.

"Tauros, you have to get moving, try to evade and then counter with your earthquake!" Ash ordered gently.

While the bull's mind was strong, his body was weak. He tried to move every muscle in his bulky frame to get out of the way, but it wouldn't listen to him. Instead, he gave a frustrated grunt in defeat, knowing he was about to get hit and there was nothing he could do about it.

"Not smiling anymore, are ya?" Typhlosion taunted to the normal type pokemon, "now take this!"

The fiery onslaught which came forth out of Typhlosion's mouth was destructive to say the least, and it came closer to Tauros with the second. He closed his eyes on reflex, waiting for the inevitable hit.

"Tauros, return!" Ash quickly said, holding out his pokeball to swap him out at the last second. The red energy beam safely returned his normal pokemon inside, Typhlosion's fire blast hitting nothing but rock and ground.

"A wise decision from Ash Ketchum, returning his pokemon just in time. However, who is he going to choose to battle this hot blooded Typhlosion now?" Peter Tomson questioned.

Tauros image on the big screen turned grey, showing it was yet to be defeated, but currently not in battle anymore.

'That critical hit hurt. Joey may not have taken any pokemon down from me yet, but he crippled three of them pretty big. I gotta play with what I have left, and go for the type advantage," Ash thought logically.

"You continue to surprise me Ash, that Tauros of yours was very quick. However, my Typhlosion simply hits harder," Joey taunted good-naturedly.

"It appears he did youngster Joey. But I'm not about to give up. I still have some surprises left up my sleeve," the raven haired boy replied confidently, grabbing another pokeball from his belt.

"I see," Joey chuckled. "Then hit me with your best shot!"

Ash smiled, throwing his next pokemon on the field. "Lapras, I choose you!" he called out to his water and ice type joyfully. The big plesiosaur-like pokemon entered the battlefield, giving a happy cry of her name.

She was filled with euphoria, thrilled to be able to battle for Ash once more. Lapras eyed her opponent carefully, searching for a possible

weakness to take down this Typhlosion as fast as possible.

"The boy from Pallet has chosen the type advantage in the form of his Lapras. Will it be enough to defeat Joey's Typhlosion?" Peter Tomson pondered loudly through his mic.

The crowd was as loud as ever. This match was getting better and better, and they knew the climax had yet to come.

"Wow, Lapras has certainly grown a lot," Brock brought in, amazed at how much bigger she was and how much stronger she looked.

"What do you mean?" Bianca asked.

Brock elaborated, "When Ash met her, she was just a baby Lapras who got seperated from her family. He took care of her until eventually he found the herd she traveled with. Now she's the leader of her own herd and looks as powerful as ever!"

"Awww, that's so cute," Dawn responded, clasping her hands together.

Back on the field, Joey was thinking deeply. 'Another old pokemon of Ash I presume. I have no idea how powerful she is, but going off on Butterfree's and Pidgeot's strength this is certainly going to be a tough match. Should I switch out though? Jolteon is weakened, and the last time he had a type advantage it didn't matter at all.'

As if Typhlosion sensed what his trainer was thinking, he gave him a reassuring growl, loudly barking his name in confidence.

"So you want to keep on going, huh Typhlosion?"

A grin and a nod.

"Alright, let's take down this Lapras together then!"

On the other side of the field, Ash was smiling fondly. "It's been awhile Lapras. But we're not going to let that discourage us! Why

don't you show me everything you've learned in the time we've been apart?" he suggested lovingly.

She cooed sweetly, ready to follow up every command Ash was about to give to her.

The referee raised his flags. "Typhlosion vs Lapras, begin!" he spoke clearly and lowered his flags in the progress.

The battle raged on.

Did you like it, love it, hate it? Maybe a small review? I appreciate every bit of praise or constructive criticism you give me ^^ See you all next time.

~Syrup-Waffle

Vs Joey! Water the odds?

Hi guys! So we're almost done with this battle; next chapter is going to be the conclusion, so don't worry ;) Also, we're reaching the end of this fic very soon. It's maybe 30 to 40k words left so we're a good 2/3 in. Next few chapters after the battle I'm finally going to shed some light on Tobias and Malice's past. Everything will be explained, so for those who're interested in that, look forward for it.

For those who want more fluff, I'm certainly not forgetting about you guys ^^ Some lighthearted cuteness is always good in my book. If you guys have suggestions what Latias and Ash should do, don't be afraid to share them. For example, let them go to the movies together, or maybe a dance party. I like to hear what you guys think. For now, enjoy :D

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, Ash would never go back to school in the Alola region. Seriously, the anime is getting pretty ridiculous at this point :(

"Lapras" Speech

'Lapras' Thoughts

'Lapras' Telepathy

"Lapras" Whiteboard Marker

Typhlosion was pumped. Sure, he took some damage from that Tauros, but ultimately, crippled him in one fell swoop. Now it was this Lapras' turn, and he couldn't help but taunt her a little.

"You're definitely a big girl aren't you? Better watch out that you don't get yourself burned though."

"Who me?" she replied back innocently. "All I see in front of me is a burned up lucifer that desperately tries to get its heat back. Too bad I squash it for good measure. More out of pity than anything mind you."

The fire pokemon growled, the flame on his back burning intensely. "You've got some nerve girl, I give you that. However, if you think you can mock me you are sorely mistaken. I'll show you exactly how brightly I burn!" he roared.

Lapras giggled. "Hit me with your strongest ember then."

"Girl! You're going down in flames!" he barked back.

Joey rolled his eyes at the behavior of his pokemon. "Keep your head cool Typhlosion! Use fire blast," he commanded.

The pokemon obeyed all too willingly. He grinned when he prepared the attack, much like he'd done with the Tauros. This was going to be a piece of cake.

"How about this!" he cried, firing the five pointed fire star straight at the unimpressed water and ice type.

She did nothing, patiently waiting for Ash's command.

"Joey is back at the offense again. We all know how devastating this attack can be, how will Ash respond?" Peter Tomson shouted, the crowd following in turn.

"Lapras doesn't look worried at all, why's that?" Bianca asked to Brock.

"While this is a neutral hit, I'm guessing she completely placed her trust on Ash," he explained. "She beliefs he has a way out of this, and I believe the same."

"Wow, that just goes to show how deep the bond is between Ash and his old pokemon," Dawn said in amazement.

"Yeah! They've been through so much together, it's no surprise they love Ash dearly," the pokemon breeder replied, nodding his head.

At the same time, Ash had already formulated a plan. 'Overconfidence is going to bite you in the butt Joey,' the raven haired trainer thought. 'You may have severely damaged my Tauros with a little luck, but that's not going to happen to Lapras.'

The super heated attack came closer with the second, until at the last moment, Ash gave his command. "Use surf," he countered simply.

Lapras complied. All around her, a wall of water rose, traveling fast in every direction. She herself used the attack to close the distance between her and the stunned Typhlosion, surfing on top of it.

His fire blast was evaporated into nothingness, the grinning water and ice type the only thing burned in the Typhlosion's skull as she quite literally rode herself to victory.

Joey was taken completely off guard. There was not a single way for his Typhlosion to dodge this incoming tsunami. He didn't even have time to recall his pokemon; that's how fast the attack traveled. The fire type could do nothing but brace himself for impact.

Like an angry Bouffalant, the water smacked against him, knocking him off his feet and dragging him away.

"Typhlosion!" Joey shouted loudly. He gritted his teeth and berated himself mentally. 'I should've switched him out. All of Ash's old pokemon are exceptionally strong. A type disadvantage is something I shouldn't have to deal with then.'

To everybody's amazement however, Typhlosion was still standing after that attack. He was on his last breath though, eyes screaming bloody murder as he let them wander over the field in search for his opponent.

He couldn't find her.

"Where are you hiding you piece of Trubbish?" he screamed.

Meanwhile, Joey widened his eyes in alarm. "Above you Typhlosion! Get out of the way," he warned his pokemon.

It was too late.

"Now Lapras! Finish it with a body slam!" Ash hollered victoriously.

The Johto fire starter gulped audibly as he saw the massive pokemon coming down on him.

Lapras, who'd rode the surf attack until it ended, had jumped upwards in hope to confuse her opponent, with result. She slammed into him with a massive cry of her name, his entire body getting crushed under her much bigger frame.

A muffled shriek was the last thing Typhlosion could utter before he fainted, his eyes turning to swirls.

"Told you I was going to squash you." She smirked at the defeated fire type.

The referee raised his flags in signal. "Typhlosion is unable to battle, Lapras wins," he exclaimed.

"What a sensation from Ash and his Lapras people, who managed to take Joey's Typhlosion down swiftly! Things are looking bleak for Joey, who only has three pokemon left!" Peter Tomson informed.

The big screen showed Typhlosion's picture going black, indicating he was out of the battle.

The crowd was getting louder, the climax of this battle was approaching quickly.

"They did it," Dawn cheered happily.

Brock nodded, impressed with how much Ash's old pokemon had grown. "However, this match is far from over," he brought in. "Just look at how calm Joey still is."

"You're right," Bianca noted. "That's odd."

"Maybe. Or he has figured something out we haven't yet. Hmm," Brock mulled.

Joey was indeed calm as he silently returned his fallen fire pokemon. He had his eyes closed, deep in thought as he desperately tried to find a way to bring this match back.

'I have three pokemon left, one of them is pretty hurt, but he's also the only one who has the advantage,' the young adult thought, referring to his Jolteon. "I can't risk my Latias counter yet. She's too valuable, but my other pokemon has a pretty tough match up too.'

Then, suddenly, an epiphany appeared right in front of him. 'Wait a minute. Ash might still have all of his pokemon, but three of them are weakened severely. If I... Yeah, that might work!'

A faint smirk worked his way up on Joey's face. He had a plan and it was a pretty solid one. All he had to do was stick to it. He could still win this if he played his cards right. Ash still had his ace, but so had he!

"All right! Let's go, Jolteon!" he shouted with renewed vigor. Out came the hot-headed electric type, a scowl still evident on his face from his last encounter with Pidgeot.

"Oh lookie here, a water type pokemon," he snarled sarcastically to Lapras.

"And ice! Don't forget I'm part ice too," she chirped in return.

"Thanks for stating the obvious dumb broad!"

Lapras feigned hurt. "My, my, such harsh words. Somebody is a little grumpy today. What happened, did Pidgeot kick your behind?"

The mention of that name made Jolteon growl dangerously. "Shut up! She got lucky, nothing more!" he lied.

"Is that so? Then why don't you look at the big screen and see how lucky she got?" Lapras suggested.

The electric type did and widened his eyes in disbelief. There, it showed that Pidgeot was still not defeated yet. Moreover, Raticate was out of the match, which meant he lost to her.

"Impossible!" he roared.

"Sorry to burst your bubble kid, but Pidgeot is just that strong. I wouldn't stand a chance against her either, but you'll see I'm still a worthy opponent."

The eeveelution chuckled, then laughed loudly. "Yeah right! I'm going to beat the living crap out of you and then take down that disease spreading pest you call Pidgeot!"

Lapras' eyes narrowed. "You need to watch your mouth tiny Eevee, otherwise I have to shut it up for you."

"Don't call me tiny Eevee!" he snapped. "I'm a powerful Jolteon! Now prepare to get blown away you autistic dinosaur!"

"Jolteon is unable to battle, Lapras wins!"

"What a twist yet again folks! Jolteon didn't stand a chance against the much more powerful Lapras. Although he hit her multiple times with super effective attacks, she kept on standing strong. Incredible!" Peter Tomson yelled.

Ash gave his pokemon a warm hug. "Nice job there Lapras, I'm really proud of you," he praised.

She cooed and affectionately nuzzled him in return.

Joey withdrew his pokemon with a small smile. 'All still according to plan. Lapras might not show it, but to an experienced eye like mine I can tell Jolteon damaged her a lot. The final preparations are almost complete.'

Reaching for his belt, the young adult took his second to last pokeball. 'This next play should determine the winner. It's a little bit risky, but I have to go for it.'

"Ash," he called to his opponent. "Are you ready for the finale?"

The raven haired boy faced him. "Definitely youngster Joey! Show me everything that you've got."

"Well then... Here she is!"

The pokemon who Joey threw on the field was definitely menacing. She was a large bipedal looking dinosaur. Her hide was like a green armor, and multiple green spikes protruded from her neck, back and shoulders. Her belly was the only thing not protected by this green armor, but rather with blue diamond like scales.

A deafening roar entered through the stadium, her razor sharp claws glistening in the sunlight, ready to tear through anything, and they probably could! Finally, the pokemon rested her gaze on Lapras.

While the water and ice type had the advantage, she knew this pokemon was on another level than her. This Tyranitar just oozed dominance and strength. Lapras had to steady herself and give everything that she had left.

Meanwhile, Ash was pretty much confused. 'Huh? I don't get it. This is supposed to be his counter to Latias. Then why use it now? Does

he have another pokemon specifically for Latias or am I missing something?'

He couldn't comprehend Joey's thinking process in the slightest. Nonetheless, he was ready. Some free damage on a threat like this was always nice.

The referee gave the signal. "Tyranitar versus Lapras, begin!"

Joey wasted no time. "Tyranitar, stealth rocks, now!"

She complied. Multiple rocks appeared on Ash's side of the field.

The raven haired trainer began to sweat a little. He was no stranger to these rocks and they brought very bad news.

"Lapras, use surf," he countered.

However, before the attack could connect, Joey returned his pokemon with a smirk.

"You didn't really think I would let my Tyranitar receive unnecessary damage, did you? She was only there to get up the rocks," he explained simply.

Ash realized the predicament he was in, and gave Joey a thumbs up out of respect. "Well-played."

"I don't understand," Bianca said in confusion. "What do stealth rocks exactly do and why is it so bad for Ash?"

"Well," Brock began, "While Ash still has all six pokemon and Joey only two, four of them are pretty hurt. So while you would logically assume Ash is in the lead, these stealth rocks ensure that's not the case."

The pokemon breeder went on. "Ash can't switch out Lapras anymore, because the next time she gets in, she'll receive twenty-

five percent damage upon entry from the rocks. That'll be enough to take her down."

Now Bianca began to understand the situation Ash was in with sudden realization. "Wait, does that mean...?"

Brock nodded. "Indeed. Butterfree can't switch in anymore. He definitely faints upon entry. Same with Pidgeot and probably Tauros as well. Joey has defeated half of Ash's team with one move. What's more, he still has Tyranitar; a pokemon that completely counters Latias."

"Can't Ash get rid of these rocks then?" Bianca asked worriedly.

"He doesn't have the right moves. Latias can learn defog, but she doesn't know how to use it. If Ash's last pokemon is Charizard he's in a very bad spot-"

'Because Charizard takes fifty percent because of stealth rocks too,' Joey finished in his mind.

Suddenly, the tables had turned completely and Ash knew it too.

'So, what are you going to do now, Ash?' Joey thought confidently, grabbing his last unrevealed pokeball.

"Things are looking bad for Ash if he can't get rid of these rocks!" Peter Tomson noted. "And who will Joey's last pokemon be?"

"Let's go, Goodra!" the young adult shouted before throwing his pokemon on the field.

The friendly slime dragon materialized with a happy smile, ready for a battle.

'So Joey's final pokemon is Goodra. It looks strong, but pretty adorable at the same time, kinda like Tia,' Ash thought and blushed.

He held the necklace he bought for the dragoness and him in the palm of his hand. The Latias shimmered brightly in the afternoon. It almost felt like it was whispering sweet nothingness in his ears like Latias had done last night.

Ash's heartbeat went up significantly at those thoughts. Not only did he reunite with his old friends, but things got pretty heated with him and the dragoness soon after. She was pretty happy with her gift after all, and couldn't help but show him through some deep intimacy.

Of course, Latias' eagerness and knowledge on the subject made her the initiator in the somewhat... more questionable activities that transpired that night, but Ash would be a damn liar if he said he didn't enjoy it.

The raven haired boy went from flustered to downright embarrassed when he reminisced about those memories. Apparently, Latias had a very lewd side to her otherwise happy and innocent character as well that she kept hidden for everybody, because she knew exactly how to press all of Ash's buttons.

'Those moans of her are just evil,' he thought shyly. Ash could still feel her pant against his face, her hot breath washing over him as she moaned something naughty just because she knew he liked that.

The pokemon trainer shook his head. He had to concentrate; thinking about Latias could be done another time.

"All right Lapras, let's keep on battling!"

She gave a sweet affirmative cry.

Only two more pokemon stood in Ash's way, and then, he had finally reached the finals.

Did you like it, love it, hate it? A review is nice ^^ Until next time.

~Syrup-Waffle

Vs Joey! Final stretch

The end of the semi finals is here people! Next chapter we're finally going to move on to something different. I hope you will enjoy ^^

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, a detective spin-off anime featuring Looker would probably exist.

"Tyranitar" Speech

'Tyranitar' Thoughts

'Tyranitar' Telepathy

"Tyranitar" Whiteboard Marker

"Lapras is unable to battle, Goodra wins!" the referee stated while raising his flag.

The crowd erupted into cheers.

"There we have it folks! Joey finally managed to take Ash's first pokemon down. But it certainly wasn't easy. Goodra has taken some pretty big hits from Ash's water and ice type and it certainly shows!" Peter Tomson informed.

The commentator wasn't lying. Sweat dripped from the dragon's face and he was panting. He almost had lost from the much more experienced pokemon wasn't it for the fact he was super specially defensive.

"Great job Lapras, I'm proud of you! Now take a nice and long rest," Ash praised his hard working pokemon before returning her.

Meanwhile, Joey was thinking. 'Well Ash, what's it going to be? Charizard or Latias?' he thought calmly. At this moment, he held the cards. It didn't matter if Goodra would fall, his Tyranitar would be able to deal with both of Ash's pokémon and his Stealth Rocks would do the rest.

For a moment, it appeared if Ash was indecisive. His head was lowered and the sun masked his expression. Until slowly, he raised a single pokéball in the air. But it wasn't just any pokéball, it was a custom themed Latias loveball and everybody in the crowd knew exactly what that meant.

Needless to say, they were hyped.

The ground shook with the noise they were making and they all raised their hands up in the air much like how Ash did.

Then, the raven haired boy gave a grin, holding the ball in his outstretched hand and pointing it straight at Joey. It shimmered in the sun while Ash gained a look of determination.

"So, are you ready youngster Joey?"

the young adult chuckled, but still stiffened slightly. He was more than ready, but now that the moment was finally here, nerves still got the best of him.

"Show me her," he challenged.

No words had to be said as Ash threw the ball on the field. It opened with a bright light and in front of him the cute dragoness he had become to love so much appeared.

Latias gave a happy shrill, one that was met with thunderous applause. Loud roars of approval filled the stadium; even Peter Tomson was excited beyond reason.

"It's happening! Ash has chosen his Latias. This will be simply phenomenal!" he gushed.

"Woohoo! Go Latias!" Bianca cheered happily. Dawn soon followed, the two girls hollering their lungs out while Brock stayed level-headed.

'This probably means Ash's last pokemon is Charizard. Latias can't lose against Joey's Tyranitar because Charizard has practically nothing to hit it with. C'mon Ash, I know you can do it,' he thought hopefully.

At the same time, Latias wasn't eyeing her opponent like you would expect, but rather, her trainer. Ash blinked in confusion, before his face erupted into a furious blush. She was giving him her best pair of bedroom eyes she could muster, her voice pretty much heated as she spoke to him.

'Hey there cutie,' she greeted seductively. The sounds of her syllables almost melted inside Ash's brain, a very pleasant experience for the raven haired boy.

Ash tried to respond, but it only resulted in an adorable squeak that had the trainer very embarrassed and Latias cooing.

'You're lucky we're in a stadium full of people Ashy,' she growled playfully, *'otherwise I would be doing very inappropriate things to you right now.'*

She moaned his name for good measure, panting and tongue lolling out of her mouth while she did so.

'C-could you please focus on the battle Tia?' Ash finally thought back. He could literally die of shame right now.

Latias gave him an innocent smile, but complied in the end. She could always tease Ash later... amongst doing other things with him.

"Well somebody has the hots for her trainer," Goodra spoke with a grin. It was fairly obvious to him when a dragoness liked somebody, especially if Latias stared at Ash like that.

"Oh, I have more than the hots for my trainer," she replied and winked back.

Goodra snickered. "Interesting. A legendary pokemon going all the way with a human? I've never heard something like that before."

"I suppose it isn't that common. But I love him and he loves me. He just made me very happy last night so I simply had to return the favor."

"Ah, now I understand. You made him a man last night, didn't you?" Goodra said with a smug grin.

A faint blush appeared on the dragoness' cheeks, confirming the Goodra's answer. "I can tell you that he's *definitely* a man," she responded to him in the end.

The dragon chuckled. "This was your first time too, wasn't it?"

"All I will tell you is that last night certainly isn't going to be the last time if I have anything to say about it!"

Goodra laughed. "I'm actually a little bit jealous. I would've tried to seduce you weren't it for the fact you're head over heels for your trainer, so I won't. Instead, I'm going to give it my all in a battle."

Latias got in a battle stance, a challenging grin on her face. "Bring it sweetie!"

The referee gave the signal. "Latias versus Goodra, begin!"

"Goodra is unable to battle, Latias wins!"

"As expected people, Latias didn't get hit a single time while knocking out Joey's weakened pokemon in return, winning this match easily. All that remains is his Tyranitar. Will Joey make this miraculous comeback or will Ash prevail in the end?"

Joey snorted, but stayed silent otherwise. 'Not as miraculous as you might think,' he thought back. All the stones had been set, he only needed to topple one over to create a chain reaction. His Tyranitar was that stone. She would be the one to take down this Latias.

Simultaneously, Ash was praising his dragon and psychic type. "Good job Tia, you were awesome!"

She nuzzled him lovingly while giving him a bold lick across his cheek afterwards.

'Not as awesome as you were last night,' she responded back hotly.

Ash's blush returned tenfold, the layer of saliva she left on his face not helping him in the slightest.

'Your necklace is nice,' he chose to say, noting how the colors contrasted her coat beautifully.

'Thanks Ash! I love the Latios it is supposed to represents very much. Do you know what I want to do with that Latios?' she whispered sweetly, her breath hot as she closed the distance very quickly.

The raven haired boy whimpered. Latias was way too good at this game and for a moment, he was about to give in until he remembered where he was.

Like she could read his mind, she opted for a quick lick on his nose instead before backing off, a lewd smile on her face.

'Tonight,' she promised cutely, emphasizing her statement by sensually dragging her thick tongue all over her Latios necklace, her

eyes never leaving Ash.

It sent a shiver down the boy's spine and he gulped audibly. His throat was suddenly very dry and great excitement was visible on his face.

The legendary pokemon giggled sweetly. 'Poor Ashy, maybe I aroused him a little bit too much. Well, no matter. I'll happily help him out with that later today,' she thought naughtily.

readying herself for probably her toughest match yet, Joey let out his last pokemon.

Out came the Tyranitar with a menacing roar. At the sight of Latias however, she gave a friendly smile.

"Hi dearie, no tough feelings all right? Let's have a wonderful battle together," she stated.

The dragon and psychic type dropped her glare, surprised for a moment before smiling back.

"Yes. Let's give our trainers everything we got!"

"Oh I'm sure *you* gave your trainer everything you got already dearie," she said smugly.

Latias blushed furiously. "How did you know?"

"I can kinda smell you right now, and your trainer's scent still lingers on your body as well. Got yourself worked up a little didn't you?"

The dragoness couldn't answer, she was too embarrassed. Apparently, she hadn't only aroused Ash, but herself too.

'Stupid hormones,' she pouted.

"It's okay dearie. I actually think it's pretty adorable. Just be sure to wash yourself afterwards if you don't want to embarrass yourself in

the future," she suggested gently.

"Maybe. Or I like having my trainer's smell on me. It's kinda addicting to be honest." She smiled.

The Tyranitar grinned. "How lewd. Are you one of those types? Prancing around to show everybody how proud you are that you did your trainer?"

Latias only grinned back in return. "Maybe I did a lot more than just doing him. Too bad you're a dark type, otherwise I would've showed you," she teased.

The dark and rock type's grin couldn't be wider. "You naughty girl. I like that. I'll make sure your trainer will reprimand you severely for your behavior young lady."

"Ash knows I'm a bad girl. He will give me my punishment later today and I'll do my best to apologise in any way possible," she replied innocently.

Joey's pokemon chuckled. "You're cute dearie and you have a cute trainer. Please take good care of him," the much older pokemon suggested motherly.

"Thank you, and I will! Don't worry."

"Good! Then show me the power of a legendary!"

She roared again, a practised scowl on her face which Latias knew had to be fake.

'Remember Ashy, my psychic has zero effect on her. Invisibility and illusions won't work in this case,' she reminded him sweetly.

'I know! And I can't switch you out either because of Pursuit. That will definitely knock you out. But we're going to do our best without these abilities and still win,' he replied, determination oozing from his lips.

She cooed confidently and got back in her battle stance, ready for the final battle.

"Tyranitar versus Latias, begin!"

As the battle went on, things were getting severely difficult for Ash. At the beginning of the match, both pokemon were about even, but with time Joey slowly gained the upper hand. His Tyranitar was fast, strong and capable of blocking Latias' hits without too much trouble.

Out of options, Ash decided to attack her directly again.

"Use dragon pulse Latiass!"

A pause.

'Wait what?' he thought bewildered. 'Did I just really call her Latiass?'

Looking at his dragoness, a lewd grin had stretched on her face. She certainly had heard it too, and while she followed his command, she couldn't help but tease him.

'So Ashy likes my butt huh?' she replied in a sing-song voice.

The raven haired boy acted shy. 'I'm not going to answer that. I was caught up in my thinking process alright? Please drop this subject.'

Latias hit the Tyranitar with her dragon pulse, who tried to retaliate with a crunch attack.

'Aww, don't be shy,' she cooed. *'You can look at my butt all you want if you like it that much!'*

She dodged the super effective hit, while simultaneously stretching her behind in the air for her trainer.

Ash's cheeks immediately took on the same color as Latias' tush. He tried to avert his eyes but failed horrendously.

'I... Uh, Tia... I mean-' he sighed in frustration when she began to giggle.

'You're so cute when you stutter Ash. It really makes me hot!' she panted naughtily.

She dodged another crunch, followed by her own dragon pulse which Tyranitar blocked.

'Do you know what else is hot?'

She wiggled her rump for emphasis, something that made Ash a stuttering mess.

'So cute,' she thought with a small blush and an internal squeal at her trainer's embarrassed face. Truly, Latias had never loved somebody before like she did Ash Ketchum.

'Tonight I'm all yours Ashy, including my butt.' She giggled and blew him a kiss.

It all came down to this.

It was no surprise Tyranitar had the advantage over Latias. Even though the legendary pokemon managed to damage her severely, ultimately, Tia had to apologize to Ash. She couldn't battle any longer, and with a mature decision Ash returned Latias to her pokeball.

Of course, the crowd was ecstatic that Joey's Tyranitar had basically defeated a legendary, but one healthy pokemon still remained for the raven haired boy.

Joey was all smiles however. His plan had worked! All that his pokemon had to do was to land a stone edge on Ash's Charizard and he pretty much had won.

"Ash! I want to say that this was the toughest match I've had ever since I challenged Caitlin. You truly are a worthy opponent, one that is going to be a pokemon master for sure one day."

"Thanks youngster Joey, you're no slouch either. I have to say I really had to do my best."

The raven haired boy grabbed his last unrevealed pokemon. "You know who this is don't you?"

Joey nodded. "I certainly do."

Ash smiled and without a word, threw his last pokemon on the field.

"What pokemon is Joey definitely going to bring to counter you?" Ash asked Latias.

The duo was currently looking at the screen which displayed all of Joey's pokemon. After a moment, the disguised legendary pointed at a particular one.

'He's definitely bringing Tyranitar. I pretty much can't do anything against it, and if it has Pursuit, which is a big possibility, it can trap me if you try to switch me out.'

The trainer nodded. "So I have to play extra careful with you then. Also, Tyranitar is rock and dark, which means it's four times weak against fighting."

Ash gave her a happy kiss. "I know just who I am going to bring."

Absolute horror. That was what Joey was feeling at the moment. Not because he was afraid, but because he was surprised beyond comprehension. All this time, he had planned each move carefully, he had thought out all the possible outcomes, yet Ash somehow had fooled him all along!

His plan shattered right in front of his eyes like a fragile porcelain vase. Gone was all his confidence, burned to ashes, blown away like chaff before the wind.

He held the cards, right!?

In reality, Ash had an ace up his sleeve from the beginning. His Tyranitar knew it too. She was too weak to fight this pokemon. Maybe at full health, but certainly not in her condition. For Ash's last pokemon was not his Charizard, but none other than his Primeape.

"Well, you guessed wrong Joey," Ash stated. "This is also an old buddy of mine. We haven't battled in a long time, so I thought it would be appropriate to bring him back specially for this occasion."

Joey chuckled loudly. Ash had a counter for his Tyranitar from the start. There was nothing he could do about it.

It was over for him.

"Well played Ash Ketchum, well played."

So that concludes Ash's battle with Joey! Did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Review pretty please, it'll make me happy :) Until next time!

~Syrup-Waffle

Questions and answers

Hi guys, I'm finally back! First off, let me apologise for the inconsistency of the updates in this fic. Truth is, I lost interest at some point, and thus my motivation was non-existent. I knew I had to take a good break to rekindle my flames, and so, after a couple of months, here I am again in full spirit!

I'll try to update between this and my Meloetta story from now on, so I'll hope the next update will hit within two weeks.

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If that were the case, Darkrai's signature move would still be accurate!

Enjoy ^^

"Officer Jenny" Speech

'Officer Jenny' Thoughts

'Officer Jenny' Telepathy

"Officer Jenny" Whiteboard marker

Just outside the stadium of the Lily of the valley, Brock, Dawn and Bianca were expectantly waiting on their friend. Ash had just defeated Joey in a very tense match, securing him a spot in the finals.

"I can't believe he has finally done it, and with some of his oldest companions no less," Brock stated, impressed.

"I didn't even know Ash had so many strong pokemon," Dawn added.

Bianca nodded. "I didn't either, but the moment I met Ash, I knew he was somebody special. If anybody is going to win this tournament, it's going to be him!"

Finally, the raven haired boy appeared from the big entrance which led outside, a happy smile plastered on his face. Ash's stroll was casual, but he couldn't hide the excitement inside his body. It was fairly obvious he was holding himself back.

When his friends saw him, they waved and beckoned him over.

"Ash! Over here!" Dawn called out cheerfully.

He waved back and ran over to his friends, who all began to congratulate him.

"You were amazing, Ash. It was definitely a treat to see some familiar faces battle it out for you. You deserved this after all of your hard work, truly!" Brock praised him.

The girls nodded in agreement. "Butterfree was so awesome, and Lapras! And don't get me started on Pidgeot," Bianca gushed while showing off the sketches she drew.

"You've come from so far, Ash. You really are my inspiration and reason why I want to become a top coordinator," Dawn added sweetly.

"Thank you guys, really. This means so much to me," Ash admitted shyly. His Latias-necklace sparkled for a moment, as if Latias was voicing her thoughts from her custom loveball as well; For Ash, it was nothing but sweet and filled him with warmth.

"Thank you too, Tia," Ash whispered. He loved the girl with all of his heart, and he knew he wouldn't have come this far without her help. She was the one who gathered all of his old friends, after all.

When the group walked back to the pokemon center, they were pulled over by an officer Jenny on a motorcycle.

"Is something the matter, officer?" Ash asked cautiously. He certainly hadn't forgotten the whole mess with Pikachu and Malice.

"Oh, officer Jenny!" Brock spoke dramatically while dashing forwards and grasping her hand. "I know what's wrong; the fact that I love nurse Joy at the same time as you is a serious crime. Now lock me up, my love, and we cou-aghh!"

Croagunk's Poison jab effectively shut Brock's desperate attempt to flirt with the cop up, afterwards dragging him away.

The group ignored Brock in favour of Jenny, who stayed perfectly professional. She turned her attention to Bianca, and spoke to her gently.

"Are you Bianca Vernice?"

The artist nodded her head, eyes widening a little as she got a suspicion why the officer was here.

"Is this about my granddad?"

The officer nodded her head. "We found him not too long ago. He was brought into the hospital and resting right now. A hiker made an urgent call when he found him bound and wounded in a cave. He's pretty bruised, but otherwise doing fine."

Bianca couldn't believe her ears. They had found Lorenzo, he was going to be okay! Tears streamed down her cheeks to the ground below in pure happiness.

"Thank you, thank you!" she hiccupped between her sniffles; her smile grateful and warm as her friends encompassed her in a tight hug.

"He's requesting to speak to you guys as soon as possible," officer Jenny informed the group.

Bianca nodded in understanding. He probably had a lot to tell.

"So, does this mean you caught Malice as well?" Ash asked for clarification. Lorenzo was kidnapped by him, after all.

"Unfortunately, we haven't. There has been no sign of him at all. I have to say he's pretty good in staying in the shadows, but we're slowly going over every inch of this island. We won't rest until he's found, you can count on us!"

Ash grimaced. So he managed to escape yet again. He didn't want to resort to this, but if the police hadn't found him tomorrow, he was going to go after Malice himself. He was too dangerous to be left alone.

"What did Lorenzo say?" Ash inquired.

"He has refused to speak with us. That's another reason why I came to get you guys as quickly as possible. He'll only speak to you."

Bianca shuffled around awkwardly. She knew her granddad; if he only wanted to speak to people he trusted, it either meant he was going to tell something very important, or something so ridiculous nobody would believe him.

"We'll talk to him," Bianca replied. "I'm just so glad he is safe. Thank you for all your hard work, officer."

Jenny saluted, before driving off to the hospital herself.

Not much later, the group had arrived as well. Ash quickly went to heal his pokemon, and informed Latias what had happened. The legendary dragoness had snarled when Ash told her Malice escaped once more, but her sweet coos overshadowed that with the great news Lorenzo was safe and sound.

Right now, she was in her custom disguise she had created for Ash; holding his hand while Bianca hesitated to open the door her granddad was staying in.

'It's okay, Bianca. We're here with you. Lorenzo is safe. It'll be all okay,' her best friend reassured her.

The artist steeled herself, took a deep breath, and then smiled to her disguised friend. 'I know,' she thought back.

She opened the door, and there, in a plain hospital bed, lied Lorenzo. He was watching TV when he heard the door open. His features turned gentle when he saw his granddaughter, and an incredible feeling of relief washed over him. "Bianca," he croaked hoarsely.

She ran into his outstretched arms, and promptly began to cry. "Granddad!" she wailed. "I missed you so much!"

Lorenzo hushed her with sweet words, never letting her go. "It's okay, sweetie. I'm here, I'm okay. I'm not going anywhere."

They stayed like that, until Bianca reluctantly broke her hug, and looked at her fallen granddad. "Look at you, you're bruised all over," she said sadly.

"I'm going to be fine. I've been through worse when I was younger. Your old tough granddad doesn't kick the bucket that easily."

That got a giggle out of Bianca, who held his hand firmly. "My friends have been taking very good care of me," she stated, giving Latias the space to hug Lorenzo as well.

"And who is this fine young lady?" Lorenzo asked.

'Hi Lorenzo, it's me,' Latias replied sweetly.

"Tia?"

The dragoness in disguise hugged him, nodding her head in his torso as she did so.

'I've been so worried about you,' she said.

Lorenzo chuckled. "So you've finally made your own disguise, huh? Why am I not surprised?"

The old gondola maker smirked in Ash's direction, who instantly began to blush.

"Ash and Brock, heroes of Alto Mare, I can't thank you enough of taking such good care of my granddaughters."

"Please, Lorenzo, don't mention it," Brock spoke in return. "We're just glad to see you in one piece."

Finally, Dawn introduced herself as well, a bit shy as she felt a little left out. Luckily, she warmed up to Lorenzo pretty quickly.

When the emotional reunions were over, the group all took a chair to listen to Lorenzo's tale.

"Malice attacked me in my kitchen, defeated my Houndoom with a bit of luck, and took me prisoner," the old man began. "I don't know much after that. The only thing I know is when I was in a cave, here on the Lily of the valley, when I saw a big explosion going off."

"Team Rocket's robot," Dawn and Brock whispered.

Lorenzo nodded. "Not much later, Malice returned. He was wounded, and also very pissed. I figured his plan had backfired, and I was right about that deduction. He told me about how he lost your Pikachu, Ash, and how your friends had saved the day; this of course, meant big trouble for me."

The old man paused for a moment, coughed and then resumed his story. "You see, he was going to take out all his anger on me. He threatened to find and kill you, Bianca, and he was going to torture

me in a way only a psychopathic doctor could do. But then, *something* intervened."

Latias' features turned dark, as she wrote her response on her whiteboard. *"And that something made this asshole flee and escape, right?"*

Everybody nodded in agreement with Latias' quick thinking.

Lorenzo's voice turned dead serious. "No, that *something* took Malice out."

The whole group was stunned and silent, they hadn't expected this turn of events.

"What happened?" Ash asked.

"Tobias happened," Lorenzo replied darkly. "He came for Malice to finish him off, but not before he dropped some info."

"Tobias!?" Ash shouted. Even Latias stiffened at hearing that name.

"Yes, Tobias. And I called him a *something*, because he isn't human, not at all. But then again, Malice isn't either."

Latias gave her two cents as well. *"It's true. Ever since I first met Tobias in the bleachers, he gave off a very creepy vibe. But why would he try to kill Malice?"*

"Because he was his brother, and he tried to kill him three years ago, but apparently failed," Lorenzo responded.

"I had a suspicion they were related," Brock muttered. "So Tobias killed Malice's wife and daughter by burning his house down. In other words, Tobias is the reason why Malice tried to get Latias and kidnapped Pikachu in the first place; to have his revenge on what he did to him three years ago."

"But why would Tobias even do such a thing?" Dawn asked, almost shivering. She couldn't fathom how Tobias could kill his brother's wife and daughter without any remorse.

Lorenzo sighed. "That, I don't know. But what I do know, is that Malice used to be a mercenary in his past."

Dawn now shivered visibly. "He... he killed people for money?"

"I'm pretty sure he did, but he was tired of it, and decided to quit. I guess he didn't have the authority, and that the guy who was in command sent Tobias after him to finish him for good."

"That would explain why Tobias burned Malice's house down," Latias brought in.

"But it doesn't explain why Tobias is after you, Ash," Lorenzo revealed worriedly.

"Wait, now Tobias is after Ash as well?" Bianca asked incredulously.

Latias immediately held Ash's hand in reassurance, while she growled dangerously.

'He told me he wasn't going to hurt you, Ash. But right now, I don't know if I believe that anymore.'

"Apparently, the whole reason he is here is because of Ash. He didn't tell what he wanted with you, Ash, unfortunately," Lorenzo said.

The raven haired trainer stayed silent as Lorenzo went on. "After Tobias was about to end Malice, his Froslass jumped in to save her trainer, only for her to find her end as well. She was killed by Tobias' Latios."

The group gasped; some paralyzed with shock, others looking worriedly at Latias. "So, he has two legendaries." Brock sighed. "I wonder what his other four pokemon are going to be then."

Latias shook her head. *"It doesn't matter, even if he has six legendaries, Ash and I will defeat him in the finals."*

"That's right, he is Ash's opponent," Dawn realized.

"Really?" Lorenzo said. He grumbled. "I only expect trouble for you then, Ash."

"It's okay. This Latios isn't Tia's brother. She will defeat him, and all of Tobias's other pokemon," he replied confidently

"Poor Froslass, though. She only did what her trainer asked of her," Bianca sympathized.

"Not really. That Froslass was actually Malice's reincarnated wife," Lorenzo revealed.

"What?" Ash shouted. "How is that possible?"

"I don't know. But old folklore has it Froslass was a human who got lost on a snowy mountain, and then turned into the pokemon we know today," Lorenzo explained. "Tobias really rubbed it in Malice's face, because he didn't know that Froslass was his wife."

Lorenzo coughed again. "But that wasn't the weirdest part. What happened afterwards, was the most peculiar thing I have seen ever since Annie and Oakley took control over the DMA."

"What happened, granddad?"

"Just when Tobias was about to kill Malice-

"Why are you laughing?" Tobias asked his brother, who was painfully trapped in Latios' psychic grip. "I just ended your wife's life for a second time, and you are about to follow. There's nothing to laugh about!"

However, Malice only laughed louder, and gave his brother a crooked grin. "You lost, little bro. All this time, I tried to get my revenge on you. Three painful years trying to forget, only for my real nature to knock on my door, like fate. You were going to be my last victim, even if I had to die for it myself, and now, I finally won. I can rest in peace while I have ensured my victory!"

Tobias raised a brow at his lunatic brother, but otherwise stayed silent.

"You were nothing, Tobias. Like you said, my life doesn't have a meaning anymore. I have nothing left here, which is why, this will be the end. But at least, I took you down with me."

"What are you talking about?" Tobias snarled.

Malice didn't answer. Before the widening eyes of Lorenzo, he and his Frosslass began to disappear into nothing but ash.

"You lost. You lost. You lost. You lost."

"He kept on saying those two words until he was gone. Tobias was beyond livid, but in the end, his job was done."

"They really disappeared like that?" Latias asked with wonder in her eyes.

"Yes. You have to believe me. That's why they can't find Malice, and never will. He's gone, not even his body has remained. And whoever that Frosslass was, suffered the same fate. She too, wasn't human nor truly pokemon. Only Tobias and Latios remained with me in that cave."

"What happened then?" Brock wondered out loud. Everybody was expectantly looking at Lorenzo, but he had to apologize.

"I really don't know. I blacked out after that, and the next thing I know, I was in the hospital."

"But why wouldn't you tell this to the cops? They could disqualify Tobias and throw him in jail!" Ash brought in.

"And have me declared insane? I have been disoriented for days, of course they won't believe anything that I said. Not this story at least. Besides, Tobias would have an alibi for sure. He has enough legendary power to pull it off."

Latias had to agree with Lorenzo, but that didn't stop her resolve.

'It's time we took a little visit to Tobias' room and find out exactly who he is and what's going on. Right, Ash?'

Did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Review please; I crave them :P Next chapter, Tobias' intentions revealed. Until next time ^^

~Syrup-Waffle

The truth

Next chapter is ready, folks! Enjoy ^^

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, the PMD spin-off games would have been fully animated instead of only a couple specials.

"Ash and Latias." Speech

'Ash and Latias' Thoughts

'Ash and Latias' Telepathy

"Ash and Latias" Whiteboard Marker

"Are you sure this will be a good idea?" Ash asked Latias unsurely. They were standing in front of Tobias' room he had rented for the tournament, ready to investigate. "I mean, we're essentially breaking in. What if somebody found out?"

Tia gave Ash a reassuring kiss on the lips. *'It'll be fine. I scanned the area, and Tobias is nowhere in sight. Besides, if he does show up, I'll make sure we get out of there before he notices anything.'*

Ash decided to trust his legendary pokemon, and nodded his head. "Okay then. It's time we solved this mystery once and for all."

The raven haired trainer reached for the handle and tried to turn it, only to meet a strong resistance. "It's locked," he muttered.

In the next instant, Tia's eyes glowed, before the lock was psychically picked without too much trouble. A click was heard, and with confidence, she opened the door for Ash.

'Here you go, cutie.' She winked and motioned for him to enter.

Ash had to suppress a chuckle, a faint blush appearing on his cheeks. He gave her a peck on the lips, before answering, "Thank you, sweetie."

Latias giggled. She felt like they were a couple who just got married and were now on a honeymoon. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case.

Silently, she followed Ash inside the room.

The room-like any other room in the hotel-was pretty bland. A bed, with a big wardrobe to store in clothing were the two most prominent things inside the room. Furthermore, there was a bathroom, a desk, and a table with a couple of chairs. The place was very neat and clean. Apparently, Tobias was a very organised person.

'Watch closely, Ashy. Somewhere in this room, the answers to our questions must be able to be found.'

The raven haired trainer had to agree with Latias. Whatever Tobias' intentions were, he must've kept a record of his activities. They had to be somewhere in this room.

"Let's search then."

'Already done,' Latias replied. Her eyes stopped glowing, indicating she had just scanned the room for anything that caught her eye.

'In the desk, there's a small diary. That must be what we're looking for.'

"Great job, Latias," he praised her.

She gave an appreciative coo in response. *'Anytime, Ash. Now, let's see what's in there.'*

Ash took the diary out of the drawer. It was as white as snow, and when he opened it, he gave a confused look. "It's written in a language I don't understand."

'Let me see it.'

Ash handed the diary over to Latias, who began to read some of it.

'Sola salvere possit fatum.'

"What does that mean?"

'It's Latin,' Latias replied. *'It means only fate can save.'*

"You know Latin? That's so awesome!"

Latias blushed, happy with Ash's compliment, and tried her best to comprehend what was said next.

'It doesn't make any sense. The text is almost a prophecy. Find solace, find benevolence, find mayhem, find malice, and you may find your fate. What does that mean?'

Ash and Latias were so intrigued with the text, that they failed to notice a third person standing behind them.

"It means fate can't exist without them," Tobias' deep voice replied, making both human and pokemon jump and let out a startled shriek.

Turning around, they both gulped as they saw the unamused face of the mysterious man.

"You know, snooping around somebody else's room, especially your opponent's, can be a serious violation of league rules. You know I can have you disqualified, right? Besides, it's also very rude."

He opened his outstretched hand. "I'll take that back, if you'd please."

Shamefully, Latias gave back the diary to Tobias, while Ash was sweating profusely.

'How did he get past your psychic senses?' he thought to Tia.

'I don't know! I couldn't sense him at all until a moment ago.'

"It's also rude having a silent conversation about the person standing right in front of you," he berated the young couple.

Ash almost choked. "You can read my mind?"

"No, but I can pick up on Latias' telepathy, and to answer your question as to why she couldn't sense me, I have a Darkrai and a Latios, as you may know. They're powerful enough to hide my presence. But enough about that. I understand you two have a lot of questions, so please," he motioned to the table and the chairs, "sit."

Ash looked at him owlshly. "You mean, you're not going to throw us out and have me disqualified?"

Tobias gave a crooked smile. "Now why would I do that? That would be no fun. I much rather battle you, and then make you lose spectacularly. Now, any questions you may have about me, my brother, or my intentions I will answer. I promise."

Again, he offered the duo to sit, while Latias watched him like a Braviary. She didn't trust Tobias for a second, and held Ash very close to her in case he decided to do anything funny.

Tobias noticed this, and smiled slyly. "Ah, Latias. How have you been? I love the new disguise, by the way. Did you make it for your little boyfriend over there?" He asked with false interest.

'Cut the crap, Tobias. You will answer us, and then let us go,' Latias snarled back.

The legendary trainer held up his hands. "Easy there, I already promised to answer all of your questions, and I'm not holding you guys hostage. You're free to go whenever you please. If anything, you should be thanking me. After all, I was the hiker who saved Lorenzo."

Latias' features turned even more angry. *'Don't lie! Why would you save Lorenzo after killing your own brother?'*

Tobias sighed. "I see you two are still very confused about the whole situation. Please, just sit, and I'll tell you everything. If you still have questions afterwards, then I'm happy to answer them. After all, my job here is almost done."

"Let's just listen to what he has to say, Tia," Ash reasoned, gently persuading her to sit in one of the chairs.

'Fine, but if he tries to hurt you in any way, I'll blast his head off of his body like an overripe Tamato berry.'

Tobias tsk'ed. "Still as fierce as ever, I see. It's no matter. Just keep in mind I have a Darkrai and Latios with me. So don't be trying anything foolish, you'll regret it."

The disguised legendary huffed, but stayed silent nonetheless. She sat down with Ash, where she harshly refused anything to drink from Tobias.

When Tobias had taken a seat as well, he began his story.

"First off, let me apologize for all the trouble my brother gave you two. Everything that has happened between you and my brother is my fault. He tried to get his foolish revenge on me for trying to kill him. I should've finished him off three years ago along with his daughter and wife," he said casually.

Latias was almost ready to explode on the spot right then and there. *'How could you talk so lightly about something so horrible?'* she demanded.

"I guess it comes with experience," Tobias admitted. "I apologize, what happened to my brother and his spouse must sound terrible to you, but for me, it was necessary and my job."

Ash and Latias looked at him incredulously.

"Let me explain. I'll start from the very beginning, and when I mean that, I do really mean the very beginning of this very universe."

Tobias paused for a second, before continuing.

"When Arceus created the universe, he agreed that it needed rules, so it could prosper without the need of his help at all times. Without these rules, the universe wouldn't be able to exist, and would collapse in on itself. This is why rules of nature exist, for example," Tobias explained.

"One of these rules also covered fate. The rule for fate was simple; itself could decide the fate of every living being on this planet, so that everything would go smoothly and just as planned within the rules Arceus had set for the universe. But unfortunately, while fate is strong, there are even stronger things that can meddle with its affairs. So, to make sure everybody's fate was set in stone, it created guardians. These guardian's sole purpose was to combat the anomalies that could alter somebody's fate, or else a rule of the universe would be broken."

Tobias watched if Ash and Latias understood so far. When he was satisfied, he continued.

"My brother, was one of these guardians. He got the name Malice, and his job was to create malice everywhere where it was necessary. For centuries, he did his work loyally, for it was his sole purpose that he was created. If he were to quit, he would quite literally stop existing."

Latias and Ash eyed each other in realization. Lorenzo told them how Malice had disappeared, as had his Frosslass. They couldn't deny what Tobias was saying was the truth.

He went on, "Each guardian has his own set of unique skills. My brother was gifted with stealth and a very extensive knowledge of the

anatomy of human and pokemon alike. He became a very deadly mercenary, and did his work exactly how *it* had wanted."

Tobias took a gulp from his coffee.

"But fate had made a mistake. Because even the guardian's fate could be meddled with, and that's exactly what happened."

'He fell in love,' Latias realized.

"Yes, he fell in love, but not with a human. He fell in love with another guardian."

Tobias' face got dark for a moment.

"Solace," he said.

"Solace?" Ash reiterated.

"Yes, Malice fell in love with Solace. She had seen how lonely Malice had become. His job was without joy, while her job was without sorrow. The two craved for each other's touch, but they knew it was forbidden to start a relationship. It was ten years ago when Malice and Solace decided to abandon their job and run away anyway, and surprisingly, they didn't disappear, because their *love* kept them together." Tobias almost gagged.

"They had found a new purpose in life; to have a family. But they knew they had to stay low as well, so Malice took a job as a pokemon doctor, naming himself Thomas, and Solace became a mountain guide, naming herself Julia. They disappeared off the radar for seven years."

Tobias took another gulp of his coffee.

"They knew the consequences of their actions. They neglected their duty, so there was no purpose to their existence anymore, yet they didn't disappear into thin air; something which was supposed to

happen. They became an anomaly. An anomaly that needed to be dealt with. I was the one who had to deal with it."

"So you killed Malice's wife and child, with the assumption Malice would disappear as well, because once his family was gone, he had nothing left to live for," Ash filled in.

Tobias nodded. "However, he still didn't disappear. Solace is strong. She reincarnated herself as a Frosslass, lost her memories, but gave Malice his resolve to go on. He now had a new purpose; to get revenge on me. He moved to Alto Mare, in the hope to forget, but when he witnessed the DMA fiasco from Team Rocket two years ago, a new plan formed in his head. He wanted Latias, so he could power up the DMA himself, and use its power to wipe me from existence."

Ash and Latias finally began to understand Malice's intentions.

"So that's why he kidnapped Lorenzo, got my Pikachu for good measure, and tried to capture Latias in the process."

"Indeed. But because malice and solace are emotions that don't go exactly hand in hand, my brother lost a lot of his touch. He became soft, which worked out for you guys in retrieving Pikachu, and for me in tracking him down. So again, I apologize for all the trouble he made you go through. My brother was a lost soul, who didn't even should've existed at this point. Let him rest in peace," Tobias said respectfully.

Latias narrowed her eyes. Something was off about that last statement. She could almost feel Tobias wasn't genuine.

'Didn't you hate your brother?'

For a moment, Tobias' eye twitched, before he hid that reflex and gave a calm smile.

"Oh yes, I certainly did. He gave me a lot of unsuspected trouble. Partly because he was being obnoxious and harassing you guys, thus being a nuisance to me as well. After all, I'm here for you, Ash Ketchum."

'That's not the real reason you hated him, now is it, Tobias?' Latias replied, easily seeing through his cover up. *'You hated him because he fell in love.'*

"That's none of your business, woman!" Tobias barked, losing his temper.

Latias shrunk back behind Ash, who gave an angry frown at Tobias' sudden change in behavior.

"Love," Tobias muttered, regaining his composure. "It's such an useless emotion. It only causes strife and problems. We would be better off without it," he concluded.

"How could you say such a thing? You robbed your own brother of his happiness, a happiness he had found because of love."

"A happiness that was never meant to be," Tobias countered harshly. "It was forbidden love; they knew what was in store for them."

'That's not true, they had every right to be happy. Love knows no boundaries after all, Tobias. Isn't that something special?' Latias inquired softly, deeply looking Ash into his chocolate brown eyes.

"Ironical coming from the dragoness who fell in love with her human trainer. Your relationship is frowned upon in certain regions as well, don't you know? But that didn't stop you two lovebirds," he mocked.

"That's because I love her and she loves me, and like Latias said, love knows no boundaries. I don't care if it's frowned upon in some regions!" Ash boldly declared.

"Oh? Then you won't mind declaring that in front of the whole stadium when we battle, right?"

Immediately, both Ash and Latias shied away from that question, and looked unsurely at each other.

"You see? If the world knew you were dating your own pokemon, Ash, chances are your reputation would go down the drain very quickly. This *love* you feel for each other will only bring you trouble, and I'm that first obstacle in your road."

"What do you mean?"

Tobias closed his eyes and sighed. "I told you I was here for you, Ash. You're an anomaly, a big one. As the chosen one of Arceus, you must follow your fate, just like everybody else must."

"And what would my fate be?" Ash asked.

"To lose the Lily of the valley," Tobias answered bluntly. "Actually, your fate is to lose every single tournament you ever participate in."

Ash's shocked face gave away for denial. "No," he muttered. "That can't be right!"

"I'm sorry, Ash," Tobias said. "Fate has decided for you. You will never win a tournament, and you *may* never win a tournament. Why do you think you have never reached the semi-finals before now?"

'That doesn't matter anymore,' Latias defended Ash. *'Ash has me! I will win this tournament for him!'*

"And that's exactly why I am here," Tobias countered. "You were never meant to meet Ash ever again after the events in Alto Mare, yet love is such a pesky little emotion, it'll find a way. Your love for Ash began to alter his fate; he would win the Lily of the valley with you as his pokemon by his side, which would go against the fate *it*

has decided for Ash. So that's why *it* sent me, one of its guardians, to make sure Ash would lose," Tobias revealed.

"You're here... to stop me from winning the tournament?" Ash muttered.

"Yes, I am an unbeatable trainer with legendaries," Tobias said cockily, "I am the bringer of bad news, and the one who makes that bad news into a reality."

He paused, before grinning darkly.

"I am called Mayhem."

Oh man! So I hope this chapter clears up what Malice and Tobias exactly are, and what Tobias' true intentions are as well. Of course, if you ask yourself: "Why did Tobias even exist canonically in the anime?" there's only one logical answer ;) Did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Review please! Next chapters will be the last bit of fluff in this story, before the final battle against Tobias AKA Mayhem begins. Until next time!

~Syrup-Waffle

True love

Fluff ahead, people! I hope you'll enjoy :D

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, there would be more evolutions for different 7th gen pokemon!

"Latias" Speech

'Latias' Thoughts

'*Latias*' Telepathy

"*Latias*" Whiteboard marker

'Hey, are you feeling okay?' Latias inquired softly.

She was floating behind Ash, who was stiffly making his way back to the pokemon center. His muscles were tensed, his fists were balled and his face was a mixture of anger and disbelief.

"To be honest, Tia, I don't know what to feel anymore," Ash admitted.

They had just returned from Tobias' room with a truth the raven haired trainer couldn't comprehend, nor wanted to accept. He had fought so hard to get where he was. He defeated his rival, Paul, and won from youngster Joey even! Even with Malice being a big nuisance to him, his friends and particularly, Pikachu, he was still standing in the finals!

But now, it didn't mean a thing anymore. He was destined to lose the Lily of the valley. Hell, he was destined to lose every other tournament he would participate in, for the rest of his life! His dreams came crumbling down like a weak card house, and after Tobias was done explaining why exactly he was here, Ash had silently left.

"I'm here to stop you from winning, Ash."

The raven haired trainer couldn't get Tobias' voice out of his head. He wasn't even human, with an overwhelming legendary pokemon team at his side! How was he ever going to win against an opponent of such a magnitude?

"You will never win against me, Ash. As Mayhem, I have the power of most legendaries at my fingertips. You have seen what my Darkrai alone can do. I am in complete sync with all of my pokemon thanks to my heritage. I have never lost a battle. It's impossible for me to lose."

Ash gritted his teeth. He felt betrayed. If only because fate had to intervene to stop his dreams from becoming a reality.

"Nothing you will do against me will matter. I'm too powerful to beat for you."

Ash wanted to scream out in anger and frustration, lash out verbally to fate for such a laughable destiny that made his whole life purposeless, but he couldn't find the strength to do so. He felt defeated, and didn't know what to do anymore at the moment.

Latias had quickly followed him when he left the hotel, of course. She had given the guardian of fate, otherwise known as Mayhem, a very angry scowl-who simply continued to drink his coffee like nothing was wrong-before slamming the door closed so hard, that it almost broke off its hinges.

Ash knew she wouldn't let him wander off alone far after a revalation like this. She was way too worried about his well-being for that. When the dragoness caught up to him, he could feel her incredible need to console him.

She brushed her soft, feathery cheek gently against his, while cooing softly in his ear.

'I understand that you're devastated now, Ashy,' she whispered, her warm feathers feeling greatly comforting to him. 'To think your fate is something so cruel.'

She stopped the young man from walking any further with her claws, and gently turned him around. Her warm, amber eyes-which were filled with so much passion for Ash-stared back at him deeply. *'But,'* she said sweetly, *'I don't think it was coincidence we met again. We were destined to meet each other sooner or later after the events in Alto Mare.'*

She cooed lovingly, and nuzzled Ash once more. *'Because I love you, Ash. You are my hero. You saved me that fateful day. I didn't understand the feeling in my tummy afterwards; how you taking my hand sent Beautifly through my stomach, and how happy I was to play with you in the secret garden. I was smitten with you, Ashy.'*

She paused for a moment, and her golden orbs began to twinkle and water.

'Back then, I was so innocent, but you shaped me into the mature and strong dragoness I am today. Everything I know is because of you, Ash,' she revealed truthfully.

The raven haired trainer listened silently, his eyes widening at Latias' story.

'That day, I should've gone with you, but I was afraid of the unknown. I couldn't bear to leave Lorenzo or Bianca behind, so I opted for a painting and a kiss on your cheek, so you would never forget me.'

She blushed as she reminisced about those events, and pressed her soft lips against Ash's surprised own, before moving back slightly. Cupping his cheeks in her claws-her eyes thick with emotion for him-she began to whisper.

'You and I were simply meant to be, Ashy, and nobody is going to change that fact.'

She kissed him again, more deeply this time. She greatly enjoyed the trainer's lips on her own and his eagerness to kiss her back. When she broke the show of affection, never letting go of Ash's cheeks, she continued.

'I flew here with Bianca to cheer you on, because I love you. I became your pokemon and battled Paul, because I love you. I went with you to a swimming pool, and won from Lucian's Espeon for you, because I love you. I crossed through Kanto and a big part of Johto in a single day to assemble the pokemon you released years ago, because I love you. I was at your side, and battled for you against Joey, because I love you. I gave you my everything; my body, mind and legendary powers, they are all yours, because I love you. Ash,' she breathed sweetly with joyful tears in her eyes, *'I would give you my life and soul, because I love you. I love you, Ashy. I love you so much!'*

Tears streamed down her cheeks when she kissed him again, silently asking for entrance with her tongue.

Ash was left speechless, his emotions flaring with the intensity of the sun for the dragoness in front of him. He let her guide him to her lips, and parted his mouth for her, until he felt her much bigger tongue go over his in a flurry of wild emotions.

She mashed her tongue against Ash's, shuddering at the contact and his taste. It felt like heaven for Latias. She passionately made out with her trainer, swapping saliva and twisting and turning her tongue in every way.

'I love you. So, so much, Ash. I love you with all of my heart,' she confessed telepathically. She reiterated those three words in different ways over and over again in Ash's mind, never breaking the deep kiss she was in and enjoying it to the fullest.

'I love you with every fiber of my being. I love you with every breath I take.'

Her tongue kept on wrestling with Ash's, putting it into submission and she took the opportunity to explore his mouth further.

'I love you with every glance I take at you. I love you with every battle I win for you.'

She let her tongue roam over his teeth, her pleasure rising as she felt Ash's emotions clear as day; his heart ached for her, and she saw the tears that began to escape his eyes as well.

'I love you, Ash. Forever and ever. I will never stop loving you.'

She found his tongue again, and pressed her own tongue against it once more, never getting enough of Ash's taste and warm mouth.

'I love you with everything that I am, Ash.'

Finally, she began to break the heated kiss. Latias slowly pulled backwards while breathing heavily, Ash's extremely flustered face and teary eyes all the applaud she ever needed.

*'So, that is why I **will** make your dreams come true. Just like how you made mine dreams come true, Ashy. Malice, Mayhem, not even fate will be able to stop me.'* She gave him a big final smooch on his lips, before letting go of his cheeks completely. *'I love you.'*

The raven haired trainer couldn't find the words to such a powerful confession. His dragoness definitely was everything to him; Ash wanted nothing more than to reciprocate those words, but he knew it was unnecessary. He knew she could feel his emotions, and those spoke louder than a thousand words. He realized that it truly was because of her that he was now standing in the finals. It was because of love; her love for him, and his love for her. It was burning stronger than a Sacred fire, and was deeper than the oceans in Hoenn. It was pure; something so beautiful couldn't be tarnished by Arceus himself.

"I think I know what to feel now," Ash whispered, lovestruck as he was. No malice, anger, disappointment or hatred was present in his mind. Only hope and full bloomed love for Latias.

"Tia, I love you too. Please make my dreams come true."

She cooed and happily kissed him again, her velvet lips a heavenly sensation for the trainer.

'I would love to do nothing more.'

She lifted him on her back psychically, before taking off to the sky.

On a bench in the woods, the champion of Sinnoh was silently enjoying an ice-cream cone. She was happy to be away from the masses for once. Cynthia certainly enjoyed the Lily of the valley, but she could take only so many screaming fans before she got a headache.

Contemplating on the turns of events that had happened the last couple of days, Cynthia scowled. 'So, Ash managed to reach the finals, but his opponent is a guy who's almost unreal. How can Tobias have so many legendaries?'

She'd looked at his records, and didn't believe what she saw. Even with all these legendary pokemon, he had only needed his Darkrai to get this far. 'To be honest, I'm not even sure if I am able to beat him,' she admitted, taking another lick of her ice cream.

She sighed internally while closing her eyes. 'And then there's Thomas. I don't know what happened to him that he changed so drastically. He was always such a nice person. I just hope the police captures him soon, so that I can talk to him, and maybe hammer some sense back into that thick skull of his.'

Her silent debate was broken when a second girl joined her on the bench.

"Hello, are you here for me?" Cynthia asked politely.

The girl nodded her head.

"Do you want to take a picture with me?"

She shook her head.

"An autograph then, maybe?"

The girl-instead of answering-grabbed her whiteboard and handy dandy black marker to write a message.

"I need your help."

Cynthia perked her brow. "Wait, Latias?"

Tia nodded her head. *"You hadn't seen my new disguise yet. Sorry about that."*

The champion waved it off. "Never mind that, how's Ash?"

The disguised legendary shrugged her shoulders. *"All over the place, if I'm being honest. He had a lot to digest today. I put him back in a very good mood, though,"* she said happily, satisfied with herself.

Cynthia nodded her head in understanding. "So, how can I be of any help to you? You know I'm always happy to help my friends, especially in such an odd situation you guys are currently in now."

"Tobias is a problem," Tia wrote, *"we found out he's here specially to stop Ash from winning. It's difficult to explain, but if I want to beat him, I need to be more powerful."*

"How are you going to accomplish that in such a short timeframe, Latias? You only have this evening and tomorrow left to train."

"There's a way I can become a lot stronger very quickly, but I need an item for it."

"You're not talking about the souldew, are you?" Cynthia inquired.

"I wouldn't use my brother's power! Besides, Alto Mare kinda gets destroyed if I took him with me. No, I'm hoping you could get my claws on another item."

"What did you have in mind then, Latias?"

"A key stone. Can you get that for me?"

Cynthia pondered the question for a moment. "A key stone? That's a very rare item. But I do think that it can be arranged. I have to ask Diantha for one then. But you do know that mega-evolution only works with the correct mega stone and a strong bond with the trainer, right?"

The disguised legendary smiled. *"I don't think my bond with Ash can get any stronger. As for the mega stone-*

Latias was practically hopping up and down in excitement the moment Bianca and her had arrived at her room. The legendary had just heard they were going to the Lily of the valley; she was going to see Ash again!

Honestly, her birthday couldn't get any better. So whatever Bianca had bought for her as present, would be the sweet cherry on top.

"Latias? I thought long about what to give you for your birthday, and after some discussion with granddad, we agreed that it was time you kept this safe instead of us. This is a very special item that's been handed down from your ancestors for generations."

From a shoebox under her bed, Bianca produced a beautiful shining pearl. There wasn't a single flaw in its gorgeous colors, and she held it out for the dragoness to take.

'What is it?' Latias asked with awe, staring at the jewel with amazement.

"Lorenzo and I don't know, but he reassured me that you will know what to do with it when the time is right."

Latias cooed, and took the precious gem from her best friend after a tight hug.

'Thanks, Bianca.'

The dragoness felt the warmth the stone seemed to radiate in her hand. She also felt a connection with the stone from deep within, almost like with the souldew, which surprised her for a moment.

'It's... very magical,' she breathed out to her best friend.

"I realized it was a Latiasite not too long ago. So with a key stone, Ash could trigger my mega-evolution in battle; that's going to be our ace against Tobias."

Cynthia gave a wide smirk. "I didn't even know you could mega-evolve. Clever girl. How did Ash react to this?"

"He doesn't know yet. I promised him we would do something fun tonight, rest up, and then train as hard as we can tomorrow."

Latias' features turned passionate and confident while she wrote her next reply in big letters.

"We're going to beat Tobias, together!"

My attempt to show the incredible love Ash and Latias feel for each other, especially Latias ;) So did you guys like it, love it, hate it? A review a day, keeps the doctor away! Next chapter, Ash and Tia having fun at the bowling alley. Until then ^^

~Syrup-Waffle

At the alley

Next chapter is here! I hope you've all had a great Easter last week :D Enjoy!

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, the pokemon Sun and Moon anime wouldn't exist.

"Bowling" Speech

'Bowling' Thoughts

'Bowling' Telepathy

"Bowling" Whiteboard marker

"Where are we going, Tia?" Ash asked curiously. He was currently flying on her back, holding tightly onto her slender neck while they zoomed through the air.

'You'll see in a minute, Ashy. You're going to love it, I'm sure! Just the two of us doing something fun before we have to face off against Tobias in two days.'

Latias had just returned from her conversation with Cynthia, and after she picked up Ash from the pokemon center, she had shot off with him to the south of the island.

"I don't really mind what we're going to do," Ash replied honestly, "As long as it is with you, it'll be something I enjoy!"

Latias craned her fluffy neck to look at Ash seductively. *'I know another couple of things we could do and enjoy together afterwards.'* Her slightly flustered face gave away for a light coo, until she suddenly captured Ash's surprised face into a deep kiss midflight.

The raven haired trainer was stunned for a moment, until he melted in those honey sweet lips. His cheeks felt warm at Latias' implications, and he couldn't help but to kiss her back eagerly.

The sweet dragoness was enjoying herself thoroughly, all while skillfully flying them to their destination. She relied on her sixth sense to navigate them, namely her psychic, while she continued to kiss Ash deeply.

Twilight was approaching; the sky was painted with a fiery glow of every color of red and orange imagineable. When Latias finally broke the kiss, slightly panting, she gave Ash a cute wink and a nuzzle before accelerating.

'Hang on tight,' she warned sweetly, nose diving to the ground when their destination came into view.

Ash squinted his eyes at the rough winds, until he could see a pretty big building which immediately gave away what they were going to do.

'We're going bowling?' Ash thought excitedly to his dragoness, who giggled back in happiness.

'Yup! I figured throwing down some pins with you would be enjoyable to do. I've rented one lane for an hour, and afterwards, we're going to gourmet food,' she told him warmly, knowing Ash would love it.

"This is so awesome! Just know that I'm a very decent bowler, Tia. You're not going to win easily," he declared to her competitively.

She gave him a wide smirk. *'What makes you think I don't know how to bowl? Ever since you left Alto Mare I had to do something to get rid of the boredom, so I picked up bowling with Bianca. You'll see just how great I am!'*

Latias landed gently, disguised herself and gave Ash a sweet peck on his lips. *'Let's have some fun, okay?'*

Ash smiled and held her hand, letting go of all his worries. "Okay."

the duo made way to the bowling alley. Inside, they were greeted by a kind lady behind the counter. In the back, the sound of bowling balls hitting the lanes and knocking over the pins could be heard. At the left was the restaurant, which emanated a very mouth-watering scent of different meats and vegetables being prepared.

All in all, the atmosphere was very cozy, and it made both Ash and Latias smile in anticipation.

"Good evening, finalist Ash Ketchum," the lady said professionally, "I believe you made a reservation, correct?"

"Actually, my girlfriend here made the reservation, but I guess she did so under my name," he replied.

Latias nodded her head in confirmation with a small smile and a blush on her cheeks. Especially the part where Ash called her his girlfriend made her heart flutter.

The lady seemed to type something on her computer, before gesturing with her hand further into the building where the bowling lanes were.

"All right, everything seemed to be in order. The first lane is all yours for an hour, Mr. Ketchum. Please don't forget to change your shoes, and we hope that you enjoy your stay."

Ash thanked the lady, and almost dragged Latias to the other counter where they could change their shoes. He was that excited.

The legendary dragoness giggled and hugged him close. *'Easy there, Ashy. Usually I'm the one who's excited for something and dragging you everywhere,' she said in amusement.*

The raven haired trainer apologized and rubbed his head in embarrassment. "Sorry, Tia. I guess I just really want to bowl with

you."

'Oh, Ash.'

She smooched her lips against his softly, enjoying the warm, pleasurable embrace before letting him go. When the duo had changed their shoes-Ash the normal way, and Latias via an illusion-they approached the first lane where a computer screen asked for them to fill in their names.

"Do you wanna start?" Ash asked his girlfriend.

Tia nodded her head enthusiastically. She wanted to show the raven haired trainer just how good she truly was.

Around them, people who recognised Ash began to whisper. Ever since he'd beat Lucian, his fame started rise. Even more so now that he was standing in the finals. It also helped he had one smoking hot girl with him, which resulted in a lot of envious stares from the ladies who so desperately wished to be in Tia's shoes right now.

'That's right,' the disguised dragoness thought to the girls in satisfaction, 'Ash is all mine. Look all you want. This is my boyfriend.' She gave a devious wink in their general direction, which made the girls' eyes widen and a few even puffed up their cheeks.

Smirking, Latias hugged her trainer lovingly from behind, who'd just finished filling in their names.

'I'm not going to hold anything back against you, Ashy. Just because I love you doesn't mean I'm not going to embarrass you in front of the whole alley,' she teased, blowing hot air in his ear which made him shiver.

Ash held her hands in his own-which she had wrapped around his midsection-and smiled. "You sound sure of yourself, Tia. I don't want to see you cry when all is set and done," he warned playfully.

'The only one who's going to cry is you when you hit all those gutter balls,' she countered, giggling as she skipped to the rack to pick her bowling balls. They were decorated in the form of pokeballs; the heavier, the rarer the kind of pokeball they were designed as.

Latias, wanting to impress Ash, went straight for the heaviest, which were obviously decorated as Masterballs and came in around a whopping thirty five pounds. For the disguised legendary however, they just as well could've been feathers, because she lifted them as if it was nothing.

Tia ignored all the slackjawed stares she got, put one of her bowling balls away, went to the approach, got in a professional stance for her first throw that just radiated that she exactly knew what she was doing, and with the grace of a butterfly, threw the ball into the lane with a magnificent curve, knocking over nine of the ten pins.

"Nice throw," Ash complimented, "A flat ten."

'Thanks Ash. This'll be an easy spare. Just try to keep up with me.' She winked, blew him a kiss, and knocked over the last pin without trouble in her second throw.

"I don't think I have to worry too much," Ash replied teasingly while picking up an average weighing bowling ball for his first frame. Eyeing the foul line, he measured the distance in his mind he had to take, took a couple of steps backwards and lofted the ball perfectly on the lane for an impeccable strike.

The way he did it almost looked like childplay and Latias had trouble believing it. *'How did you do that?'* she whispered in awe.

Ash shrugged his shoulders with a big mischievous smile on his face. "Lucky throw, I guess."

'That wasn't a lucky throw! You've done this before, haven't you?' she accused with a small smile, jabbing her finger in his chest.

"Hey, I told you I was a decent bowler. I actually participated in the Kanto Junior Bowling Championships for under twelve," he told her innocently. "Now you know why I wear these fingerless gloves as well."

'That's cheating!' She giggled while giving Ash another loving smooch on his lips and hugging him close. *'Why haven't you told me this before?'*

Ash chuckled at the sweet girl in his arms. "Because I kinda quit after I started my pokemon journey. I did get used to the gloves, though. So that's why I still wear them."

'Not fair,' she pouted, *'How am I supposed to win now?'*

"Easy," Ash answered. "You don't. Just admit I'm way better than you, fair lady, and I'll spare you the absolute humiliation," he said to her exaggeratedly in a dramatic voice.

This resulted in Latias snorting before bursting out into another fit of giggles. *'We'll see about that, Ashy. I'll strike you down!'*

The two competitors got ready for frame two, and just like before, Latias knocked down nine pins, resulting in another spare. Ash however, was pitch perfect and got another strike.

"Feeling the heat already, lovely?" the raven haired trainer teased.

Latias pushed him playfully. *'We still have eight frames left, cutie. Don't you worry your pretty little head about it.'*

Tia took her stance, and threw the ball with just a bit more curve, hoping to finally knock over that final pin in her first turn, but for a third time in a row, one remained standing.

"Emergency call for a Murkrow?" Ash joked.

'That Murkrow won't be a problem. I'd like to see you throw an Unfezant first,' she challenged back warmly.

However, Latias overpredicted her curve. The ball hit the gutter and the lonesome pin remained standing tall, almost as if it was mocking her. She frowned and repeated her arm motions to figure out where she went wrong.

"You're flicking your wrist too much," Ash told her kindly. "When hooking a ball, especially such a heavy one, you need to produce more lift with your fingers. This'll result into more torque and therefore more power."

The trainer showed his girlfriend by facilitating her arm and fingers into the right direction. Ash stood directly behind her while doing so, and the close contact made the disguised legendary flustered and warm.

'Like this?' she whispered, repeating the action without Ash's guiding hand.

He nodded. "Give it a shot. It'll take some time to get used to, but throwing strikes will become a lot easier. Here, I'll show you"

Ash went for his third frame, and instead of lofting, this time he hooked the ball. Unfortunately, he didn't release it in the way how he wanted and the ball went exactly through the middle.

"And just as I say that I leave a 7-10 split."

Latias giggled at the sheer disappointment in Ash's voice. She knew how eager he was to show her.

'It's okay, Ashy. Thanks for the tip. Now I'll defeat you for sure.' She blew him another kiss and nudged him to the approach for his second throw.

The rest of the frames in the first game went by pretty smoothly. Ash managed to win with a respectable one hundred ninety six points. Just four points short of the two hundred. Latias finished a bit lower with one hundred sixty five, which was still pretty impressive.

As time went on and Latias still hadn't won a single game from her boyfriend yet, her more playful side started to emerge.

'This time, I'll win for sure!' she said with a hint of mischievousness in her voice.

Ash perked a brow and chuckled. "Really? Well okay then. Show me what you've got."

Latias did exactly that. Almost nonchalantly, she threw the ball on the lane, which went straight for the gutter, but at the last second it miraculously rolled the other way around and knocked over all ten pins.

"Wait, what just happened?" Ash said owlshly. He couldn't believe what he just saw.

'Me throwing a strike,' Tia responded innocently, rotating her hips from side to side in a cute manner.

"I can see that," the raven haired boy muttered, "but how?"

'Wasn't that obvious? I threw the ball perfectly and all the pins got knocked over.'

She told this in such a ridiculous way she had trouble keeping a straight face, but Ash seemed to buy it for now and shrugged his shoulders. When he threw his first ball, however, it made a sudden sharp turn and landed straight in the gutter, earning Ash nil points.

'Aw, what happened there?' Tia said teasingly, *'I thought you were so good in this game.'*

Now Ash began to sense something was up, and when he looked his girlfriend in her eyes for answers, she couldn't help but burst out in laughter.

"It's your doing!" he accused her while cracking an infectious smile.
"You're cheating with your psychic powers!"

'Nuh-uh! I'm just the best bowling player alive. Watch me get a perfect game.'

"Let me guess; and I'm just going to keep on throwing gutter balls, huh?"

'Maybe,' she teased while blowing him a raspberry.

"You sneaky little dragoness!" Ash hugged her close while they both laughed. They didn't care that some people looked at them if they were insane. They were happy, and that's all that mattered to them.

"I can't believe you did this to me," Ash grumbled to his sweet dragoness.

Latias was happily grilling an array of different meats at Ash's right side while enjoying his company.

'What do you mean, Ashy? You lost fair and square!'

He sourly showed her the printed out results and pointed to the last scores. "Fair and square, huh? You got three hundred points while I got nil!"

'Aw, don't be sad. You won all the previous games, right?' She giggled again when Ash mumbled something under his breath about cute legends and how unfair they could be.

"Anyway, I really enjoyed bowling with you, Tia. Thanks for that," Ash said genuinely.

The disguised legend blushed, and happily kissed her boyfriend out of appreciation.

'Anytime Ash. I'm really happy you enjoyed yourself.'

The duo continued to eat their dinner, chatting and laughing with each other and just enjoying their evening. Tomorrow was the final

day of training before they both had to face off against Tobias. The day Ash's fate came knocking on his door was fast approaching.

So this was the final fluffy chapter before the last battle. Next chapter will be the start of Ash vs Tobias. So hold on to your seatbelts, folks. We're slowly approaching the end. Did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Review if you can spare the time! It really makes me a happy waffle :) Until next time ^^

~Syrup-Waffle

Mayhem: α

I promised to update this story this month, so I deliver. :) For anybody who's still interested in reading this fic, expect monthly updates until it's completed. We're counting down from now. Probably only four chapter remaining, so hold on to your seats, people! Enjoy. ^^

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, Tobias wouldn't exist.

"Mayhem" Speech

'Mayhem' Thoughts

'Mayhem' Telepathy

"Mayhem" Memories.

It was finally time. The roaring of the crowd was ear shattering, even when Ash was still walking in the hallway towards the battlefield. He could see the light at the end shining brightly, almost blindingly so. Focus. Ash had to focus. This was it; it was here that the raven haired trainer would battle with his fate. None other than Tobias-no, Mayhem himself was waiting for him.

" I'm an unstoppable trainer with legendaries. You will never win against me."

Ash gritted his teeth. He refused to believe that. All his pokemon had given one-hundred percent yesterday when they did their final preparations. He'd carefully chosen his pokemon to battle with; he was ready. A quick glance at his right confirmed just how ready Pikachu was too. His starter pokemon radiated an aura of seriousness and anger. It was Mayhem who was to blame for his hospitalization, after all.

" Pikachu, I'm so glad you made a full recovery, buddy. Let's kick Mayhem's ass, together!"

Those words that echoed through Ash's mind gave him the confidence that he needed. He held his head high, a smile on his face as he nuzzled Pikachu. His electric starter nuzzled him back in reassurance, indicating he would be at his side until the very end.

" Ash, I love you, with all of my heart."

Latias' sweet words he reminisced about made Ash's breath hitch for a moment. He could feel the love from his invisible legendary, who was floating at his left. She was calming him with all the positive emotions she radiated. She was nervous too, Ash could tell, but in order to beat Mayhem, they had to do something to throw him off completely.

'We have to do it, Tia,' Ash thought, 'your mega-evolution alone is not going to be enough.'

' I know, Ash,' she replied, ' whatever happens afterwards, I'll always be at your side.'

She floated in front of him, and gave him a passionate kiss on his lips. Ash enjoyed these kinds of moments the most. It was like time stopped; for a moment, nothing mattered except Latias. When the legendary broke the kiss, Ash had reached the end of the hallway. He steeled his growing nerves, the loud cheering of the crowd completely ignored as he stepped into the sunlight and saw his opponent.

Mayhem was standing there with a smug smile on his face. His eyes were sharp, and a cool breeze floated through his hair. It was almost surreal, and in a way, that was completely the truth. The embodiment of Mayhem, a being that only brought destruction, was in Ash's way of his dream to become a pokemon master.

" Fate is not set in stone."

Ash couldn't remember where he heard that before, or who even said that to him, but the sweet, kind tone of that feminine voice gave him hope. Hope that not all was lost yet. Hope that his dream was still a possibility. He was sure that when he thought that, Tobias' face turned into a scowl for a second, as if he could hear those words echo through his mind as well.

" We will root for you, Ash! You're going to win this!"

His friends. Ash could see them on the front row, cheering and encouraging him. He was blessed to have such good friends, who were always there for him no matter what. Dawn, Brock and Bianca, Barry, Conway, Joey-even Paul and Cynthia were cheering him on.

'That's it, you guys! I can win this!' he thought.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the final battle of the Lily of the valley is about to begin! I'll be your host, Son Petertom, and let me tell you that we have two unstoppable trainers facing off today. In the right corner, hailing from Celestic Town, we have Tobias Takuto!"

The crowd clapped and let their voices be heard.

"And at the left corner, we have the surprise of the tournament. All the way from Pallet Town, Kanto, it's Ash Ketchum!"

This time, the crowd's response was deafening. It was obvious who the fan favourite was to take the tournament.

"This will be a full six on six battle, substitutions are allowed. The battle is over once all the six pokemon of a trainer are unable to battle any longer," the referee explained. "Trainers, show your first pokemon!"

Tobias smirked, and wordlessly threw his first pokemon on the battlefield. Darkrai appeared, just like he had done all of the tournament.

'He isn't changing his battle tactic whatsoever,' Ash noted, 'shall we stick to the plan?'

' Yes,' Latias responded, *'we're not going to change what we've practiced. It's our only chance to win.'*

Ash had to agree with his sweet legendary. Even if Mayhem started off with Darkrai, they had to rely on their ace.

"All right, Snorlax, I choose you!" Ash shouted.

The bulky normal type materialized on the field, and for once, he was wide awake. His stance was intimidating, letting Darkrai know he wasn't going down easy.

'So, you've decided to lead off with Snorlax?' Tobias thought. 'A very wise choice. However, it won't help you. Darkrai will defeat him.'

"The pokemon are out! It looks like we're going to have Darkrai versus Snorlax, people," Son Petertom cried through his mike.

"That's a good counter-pick," Brock said, "Snorlax is very defensive, making it difficult for Darkrai to defeat. Moreover, Ash's Snorlax knows Sleep Talk, so even if it's asleep, it can attack."

"Wow," Bianca responded in awe. "Snorlax is pretty tough, huh?"

"It is." Brock nodded his head. "So, I wonder what Tobias is going to do."

"Yay, go Snorlax!" Dawn yelled in her cheerleader outfit with Piplup at her side.

The referee raised both of his flags in the air. "Darkrai versus Snorlax, begin!" He lowered his flags, indicating that the battle had begun.

"Darkrai, Dark Void," Tobias commanded coolly. The dark-type legendary complied, and shot a dark orb at Snorlax that engulfed his

entire body. Moments later, he was fast asleep.

"Snorlax, use Sleep Talk!" Ash countered. The behemoth began to move in his sleep, before jumping high in the air for a Body Slam.

'Just as I thought,' Tobias noted. 'That's mildly annoying, but nothing Darkrai can't handle.'

"It seems that Ash has thought up a counter measure for Tobias' Darkrai, and since Snorlax is a normal-type, Dream Eater has no effect either. How's Tobias going to respond?" Son Petertom wondered.

"Darkrai, use Dark Pulse."

The legendary dark-type wasted no time channeling the energy he needed, before launching a black and purple beam at the incoming Snorlax. The attack exploded on impact, and slowed down Snorlax' descent quite significantly.

Still, the Body Slam hit, smashing Darkrai under the massive body of the normal-type, albeit not doing as much damage, but effectively trapping him.

'Perfect,' Ash thought. 'Everything is going as planned. Now that Darkrai is trapped, we only have to wait until Snorlax wakes up.'

' *We're lucky Mayhem decided to lead off with Darkrai,*' Latias responded sweetly. '*He could've been a huge problem for me.'*

Meanwhile, Tobias simply waited. 'That Body Slam didn't do much, and while Darkrai is stuck under a sleeping Snorlax, that doesn't matter. Once he wakes up, we can defeat it by keeping our distance.'

"I wonder what Ash and Tobias are thinking," Brock said. "He's not switching his Darkrai out, so he must be confident he can handle Ash's Snorlax. But what about Ash? Once Snorlax wakes up, Darkrai will be freed again."

"I'm sure Ash and Tia came up with something clever," Bianca responded, convinced.

At the same time, Son Petertom was still commentating the battle. "It looks like Darkrai is stuck between a rock and a hard place, people. Both trainers are waiting it out."

Eventually, Snorlax woke up, and when he saw he had successfully trapped Darkrai beneath him, he gave a huge smirk. One look back at his trainer and he knew what was going to happen next; just like how they'd practiced.

'Why's Snorlax smirking?' Tobias thought, mildly annoyed. 'If he isn't going to move I'm just going to recall Darkrai, see who's smirking then.'

But before he could finish his thought, Ash cried out his next move victoriously. "Snorlax, use Selfdestruct!"

"What?" Tobias growled in disbelief. With wide eyes he watched how Snorlax' entire body began to glow white, like he was evolving, until he let himself explode. The battlefield trembled and smoke filled the entire arena. The clap that followed was enormous. Ash had protected his ears just in time while Latias protected him from sand and rocks that were kicked up.

When the smoke cleared, a massive crater had formed in the middle of the field, with both pokemon knocked out cold.

"Both Darkrai and Snorlax are unable to battle. This battle is a tie!" the referee exclaimed.

The entire crowd exploded into cheers. "Wow! What an explosive start, literally! Ash is the first trainer to defeat Tobias' Darkrai in this tournament, while just losing one pokemon himself."

"That was amazing! Go Ash!" Dawn cried cheerfully.

"It was!" Brock agreed. "I can't believe how clever that was. Ash was willing to trade his Snorlax for Tobias' Darkrai."

"Win this, Ash! Or I'll have to fine you!" Barry screamed.

Paul stayed silent. 'He's certainly improved a lot. I blame that Latias.'

Joey let out a low whistle. "That was a bit of a gamble, though. If Snorlax had used Selfdestruct when he was using Sleep Talk, Ash would've lost a pokemon for nothing. But it worked out in the end."

Conway nodded. "Ash is known for his unorthodox play style like that. It makes him such a scary opponent."

"Tell me about it," Joey replied with a chuckle.

At the same time, Tobias was seething from the inside. 'How did I let myself get fooled like that? Darkrai has done practically nothing this match.' He silently returned his pokemon, while looking at the happy smile on Ash's face. 'Don't think you're even close of defeating me, Ash Ketchum. Let's see how you will handle my other five pokemon.'

'He's angry, Ash. Very angry. I can feel his emotions without even trying,' Latias informed.

'That's very good. We need him angry. It's a miracle this strategy is working out in our favour. Now we just have to keep him emotional so he can't think straight.'

"Hey Tobias! What was that? I thought you were such an unbeatable trainer. You look pretty dumb right now, you know?" Ash taunted.

Tobias' left eye twitched, but instead of lashing out, he kept his emotions in check. 'You'll get your medicine in a moment, Ash Ketchum.' He threw his next pokemon on the field, and a beautiful, regal bird pokemon took to the skies. Her chilly and stern gaze seemed to numb everybody who looked at her.

"Unbelievable! Tobias' second pokemon is an Articuno! Who would've thought Tobias had two legendaries? This will be a high mountain to climb for Ash!" Son Petertom cried!

Ash carefully thought about what to do next with Latias. 'Who shall I use? Charizard, or Infernape?'

' Infernape is a lot faster, and since he knows Dig, you can hide underground,' Latias brought in.

'That's true, but one good flying-type move and Infernape is done for.'

' We can use Infernape's speed to our advantage. Besides, Charizard is a very big target.'

'Also true. Okay, let's go with Infernape then.'

"Infernape, I choose you!" Ash cried while throwing his second pokeball on the field.

"Ash has opted to use Infernape against Articuno; a double-edged sword for sure! Let's see what he has in mind."

"Articuno versus Infernape, begin!" The referee shouted. He lowered his flags, indicating that the match was on.

"Articuno, Hurricane now!" Tobias ordered.

She nodded her head and began to flap rapidly with her wings, creating a massive vortex that swept up all the dust and rocks created by Snorlax' Selfdestruct.

"Now, Infernape! Use Dig to avoid," Ash shouted.

He didn't have to tell him twice. Infernape buried himself somewhere inside the battlefield, letting Articuno's attack pass him harmlessly.

"Good going, Infernape. Now use Flare Blitz!" Ash stated.

Tobias grinned. 'Bad move, Ash,' he thought. Just as Tobias expected, the ground above Infernape began to glow and melt by the intense heat the fire and fighting-type was creating. It instantly gave away his location.

"Use Ice Beam to counter," Tobias replied quickly, stretching out his hand to put strength behind that command.

Articuno prepared the icy, teal colored beam and shot it at where she knew Infernape was hiding. Moments later, Infernape burst through from the ground, covered in flames as he rushed to the legendary ice bird in the sky.

He met the Ice Beam head on, which slowed him down a bit. When the beam made contact with the fire surrounding him however, mist began to spread everywhere.

"It seems Tobias' counter attack has created a thick fog, making both trainers unable to see," Son Petertom noted.

"This can't be good," Cynthia muttered, critically analyzing Tobias' tactics. "That mist is just a distraction, Ash has to get Infernape out of there as soon as possible."

"Why is that?" Bianca asked the Sinnoh champion.

Paul grumbled. "Not only is Infernape's Flare Blitz losing a lot of power, but he's also blinded. It's definitely a trap to lure him in and then to counter attack," he explained.

Cynthia nodded. "Paul is right. Ash has to be cautious here. That Snorlax play might've worked out, but that doesn't mean he should be overzealous."

It was like Cynthia and Latias thought along the same line, because the sweet dragoness noticed it too. '*Ash, get Infernape out of there! It's a trap!*' she warned the raven haired trainer. However, he was already too late.

When the mist evaporated, Infernape was trapped in the clutches of Articuno, desperately struggling to break free.

Ash gasped and gritted his teeth. 'How?' he thought.

Tobias saw the frustration on Ash's face and chuckled. "You seem surprised, Ash. Wasn't it obvious that the mist was just a way to avoid your Infernape's attack undetected? My Articuno had plenty of time after her Ice Beam slowed your Infernape down."

"Unbelievable! Somehow, Articuno has Infernape in a tough spot! I wonder what Ash is going to do next!"

"Articuno, finish this by throwing Infernape down and then use Hurricane!" Tobias said.

"Infernape, free yourself with Mach punch!" Ash cried desperately.

His pokemon nodded, and quickly punched Articuno in her gut. The force of the attack knocked the bird off balance for a bit, but with a couple of mighty flaps, she stayed airborne and held on to her opponent stubbornly. Then, she threw Infernape down with all her might. He landed harshly in the crater that Snorlax had created, before sending another Hurricane his way.

"No, Infernape!" Ash yelled. He could only watch, as could his fire and fighting-type as he was hurled around in the powerful vortex, before falling harshly out of the sky right in front of Ash, not getting up afterwards.

"Infernape is unable to battle, Articuno wins!" The referee stated.

"And just like that, Tobias has easily taken down one of Ash's strongest pokemon! It seems Ash is in a bit of a pickle. Who is he going to send out next?"

Ash turned his head low. 'I'm sorry, Infernape,' he thought. 'You did your best. I should've seen that tactic of Mayhem coming sooner.' He

returned his fallen pokemon back to his pokeball, contemplating what to do next.

Fortunately, the soft feathers of Latias nuzzling his cheek made him realize he was not alone in this endeavor. *'We're far from defeated yet, and you know it, Ashy,'* she whispered sweetly, her lips planting a soft kiss on his cheek. *'Let's show Mayhem what we're made of.'*

Ash nodded his head in agreement, his confidence returning. "Hey Tobias! I guess everybody has some random luck once in a while. Even someone such as yourself."

Again, Tobias' left eye twitched. 'Who does this brat think he is?' he snarled. However, from the outside, he simply made a gesture to the referee, indicating he didn't want his opponent to talk to him anymore.

"Ash Ketchum, you are hereby not allowed to talk to Tobias Takuto any further. Should you ignore your opponent's wishes, you may be disqualified," the referee informed. "This rule also counts for Tobias."

Both Ash and Tobias nodded. 'Well, that plan went out of the window quickly,' Ash thought to Latias.

' That was to be expected. However, it worked for how long it lasted. If Fate is going to play cheap, then we have to resort to all the cheap tactics we can use too.'

'Normally I would disagree,' Ash responded, 'but this time, I'll have to make an exception. It was a good suggestion you made yesterday to use taunts to throw off Mayhem.'

' It was pretty easy to notice that this guy has major anger issues, just like Malice had. I guess it runs in the family.'

Tobias snorted. 'I can still pick up parts of your telepathy, Latias, even as you so desperately try to block me out. Whatever you guys

are talking about, I know it's about me. You better tread very lightly,' he warned her.

Latias didn't respond, of course. Instead, Ash did by throwing his third pokemon on the field.

"Charizard, I choose you!" he yelled.

The powerful Kanto fire starter appeared on the field with a loud roar, his presence making the audience go wild.

"Would you believe that Ash is going to use his Charizard against Tobias' Articuno? These two powerhouses are sure going to create a spectacle we won't forget!" the commentator cried excitedly.

"Is Tobias still not going to switch?" Conway asked incredulously.

"He's confident that he's going to win no matter what," Paul responded. "I would've done the same. Why waste time switching out when it doesn't matter if Articuno is going to win or not, knowing that your other pokemon are going to clean the rest of your opponent's team?"

'It's just like Tia expected,' Cynthia thought. 'Tobias' overconfidence could be his downfall.'

The referee raised both of his flags again. "Charizard versus Articuno, begin!" he shouted, and lowered his flags. The battle continued.

"Okay Charizard, let's start this off with a Flamethrower!" Ash suggested.

He opened his maw and let loose a torrent of flames in Articuno's direction. The ice and flying type stayed calm and calculated, patiently waiting for her trainer's orders.

"Articuno, dodge and get in close," Tobias commanded.

With all the grace of a legendary, she swooped down, flying circles around Charizard's Flamethrower and steadily getting closer to him. Charizard widened his eyes slightly at her agility, wondering what she was going to do.

"Charizard, use Air Slash to stop her!" Ash said in retaliation.

Tobias chuckled, amused. "Articuno, keep on going!"

'What? Is he going to let her take the hit?' Ash thought in bewilderment to Latias.

'I've no idea why he would do that either. We better be careful,' she suggested.

Charizard sliced the air and created pressurized wind that traveled to Articuno at great speed, but just like her trainer had commanded, she didn't dodge. Instead, she took the attack head on. Articuno flinched when it hit her chest, but other than that, continued to approach Ash's Charizard rapidly.

When she was finally invading Charizard's personal space, Tobias uttered his next command smoothly. "Sheer Cold."

Immediately, every alarm bell in Latias' head began to go off. She definitely knew what that move was; if it hit then it meant game over for Charizard. *'Ash! Order Charizard to move out of the way!'* she cried out.

However, Ash was pretty calm in response. 'You told me to be careful, right Tia? Well, it dawned on me. Mayhem would only risk getting so close with his ice type to my fire type if he wanted to knock him out in one hit. So that's why we have to let him get close, to take him off guard.'

Ash balled his fist tightly. "Charizard! Grab Articuno, quickly! Don't let her fire off that move."

Charizard grinned, his large muscles flexing. Powerful claws shot out to hold Articuno in a dead lock. He grabbed her by the throat, temporarily cutting off her air supply, which made her gasp and cancel her attack.

"What?" Tobias hissed, his voice hysterical. He couldn't believe Ash had countered him so easily. "Get out of there, Articuno!" he yelled angrily.

However, it didn't matter how much she struggled, the far physically stronger Charizard held on to her without much trouble.

"Use Seismic Toss, and finish it with Flamethrower!" Ash cried triumphantly.

Tobias watched hopelessly how his Articuno got destroyed. When the onslaught was done, she was in no state to battle any longer.

"Articuno is unable to battle, Charizard wins!" the referee exclaimed.

"Is Ash's Charizard even real?" Son Petertom's voice boomed through the mike, "he just took down an Articuno! Charizard is looking pretty unbeatable at the moment. How's Tobias going to respond?"

The crowd was roaring in approval, while Charizard roared just as fiercely.

"That Charizard is a powerhouse." Conway chuckled and readjusted his glasses. "With so much strength, you barely need a strategy."

Barry laughed. "But did you see how Ash handled that Articuno? He stayed so calm, even when he was at the brink of getting defeated in one blow!"

"You can do it, Ash! I believe in you!" Dawn cheered.

At the same time, Tobias scowled darkly. 'Tsk, I got fooled *again*! Ash and Latias are really starting to piss me off. They're such a

dangerous duo.' He sighed and closed his eyes. 'Oh well, it's not like it matters. Soon, my remaining pokemon will wipe the floor with them.'

' Ash! That was amazing!' Latias cooed and nuzzled him lovingly. 'The way how you handled that scenario really speaks of a true champion, sweetie. I guess Fate was wrong; you're really destined to be the very best, like no one ever was.'

Ash gave her a bright smile. 'Thanks, Tia. Only four more pokemon remaining, and another big threat for you out of the way. Articuno could've been troublesome, but we don't have to deal with her anymore.' The raven hared trainer faced Mayhem, who was ready to throw his next pokemon on the field. 'We'll win today, Tia. Not even Fate can stop me this time!'

Did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Review please. :D Next chapter, the battle continues. Until next time. ^^

~Syrup-Waffle

Mayhem: μ

**Tried to have this done earlier, but college withheld me. :P
Anyway, the battle rages on! Enjoy this new chapter, people. ^^**

**Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, I would write it the
official way, AKA Pokémon!**

"pokemon!" Speech

'pokemon!' Thoughts

'Pokemon' Telepathy

Tobias was calm, almost oddly so. Despite that the battle-in his opinion-was off to a rocky start, he had all the confidence he was going to win. 'Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me. You're not going to catch me off guard again, Ash Ketchum,' he thought with a hint of irritation. 'Play time is over.'

The embodiment of Mayhem had never lost two pokemon before and still be tied with his opponent. It was a completely new experience. Still, his remaining pokemon were even stronger than Darkrai and Articuno. Even if Ash still had Latias, they were going to make quick work of her-as well as the other remaining pokemon of the raven haired trainer.

With a small grin, barely noticeable to Ash, Tobias threw his third pokemon wordlessly in the air. A big quadruped feline entered the field. His appearance was a lot like a sabre-tooth tiger. His luscious, mostly yellow fur crackled dangerously with static, and he let out a loud roar while electricity exploded from his body in all directions, showing exactly how intimidating he was.

The crowd watched in awe and cheered loudly at the incredible display of power. Even Son Petertom was stunned. "Is... is it even

possible for a single trainer to have *three* legendaries?" he croaked. "Ladies and gentlemen, Tobias' third pokemon is going to be Raikou! The mountain Ash has to climb continues to grow. Which pokemon will he use in return?"

Ash's heartbeat started to rise. He knew Charizard saw a challenge, but he also knew he would be utterly destroyed. This Raikou was on another level than Darkrai and Articuno entirely. 'Tia, I fear this Raikou is going to be major trouble,' he thought to his sweet dragoness.

She gave him a mental nod in return. *'He will be. But we have to stick to the plan. Let's switch out Charizard and use another pokemon. He's too valuable to lose right now.'*

Ash had to agree. He returned his Charizard, and only thought briefly about his next pokemon. 'I don't have much choice,' he thought. "Sceptile, I choose you!" Ash shouted while throwing the pokeball high in the air.

His loyal grass-type appeared, his eyes sharp and focused while he had his signature piece of wheat between his maw. He immediately knew his opponent was insanely strong, and readied himself to do his absolute best for Ash.

"Sceptile is a good choice," Paul said simply.

"I would do the same thing," Conway admitted. "That way, Raikou's electric attacks won't do nearly as much damage."

Cynthia hummed. 'That Raikou looks a lot fiercer than Tobias' previous pokemon. This is going to be a very rough battle for Ash,' she thought, contemplating what she would've done.

The referee raised his flags. "Raikou versus Sceptile, begin!"

The moment he lowered the flags, Tobias acted. "Raikou, Thunder!"

Ash perked a brow at the aggressive move. 'Why go for a not very effective move with low accuracy to boot?'

Latias shrugged her shoulders. *'I've no idea. But Raikou are very fast. Don't let his speed surprise you, Ash.'*

'Got it,' he thought back. "All right, Sceptile. Dodge that attack and use Leaf Sword!" Ash retaliated.

The massive, potent bolt of electricity that had the whole stadium flashing black and white, was evaded by Ash's grass-type in one smooth move; it exploded harmlessly behind Sceptile as he quickly moved closer to the electric-type legendary. The leaves on his arms grew bigger and sharper, coated in a light green hue as he attempted to slash Raikou right across the face.

"Now, Raikou. Thunder Wave," Tobias called out, his grin widening significantly.

With horror, Ash realized that Mayhem had an ace up his sleeve. Raikou's incredible speed allowed him to pull off the attack. Even though he got hit square in the face, he managed to paralyze Sceptile completely, numbing him to the bone.

'That's right, Ash. You're not the only one with strategies that work,' Tobias thought confidently. Now that Sceptile was paralyzed, all of his speed was utterly gone. Finishing him off was going to be a piece of cake for Raikou now. Still, Tobias had felt the faintest of frowns creep on his face when Ash's grass-type had hit his legendary. Even though he didn't want to admit it, he could see that Sceptile had hurt Raikou; his Leaf Blade attack had surprised the electric-type with its raw power, and the vicious snarl present on Raikou's face was replaced with stunned surprise for a moment. Tobias knew at that moment that this Sceptile was nothing to laugh at.

"Amazing! It looks like it's Tobias' turn to surprise us all. With a swiftness that's unheard of, Raikou's Thunder Wave pulled through- even when he took that massive Leaf Blade attack! Now that

Sceptile's paralyzed, how will Ash respond?" Son Petertom wondered.

'This isn't good,' Ash thought, his fists tightly balled. One mistake was all it took to render one of his strongest pokemon useless. He couldn't afford to make mistakes like that, even if they were small.

'It's okay, Ash. Did you see how much damage Sceptile did? Even now that he's paralyzed, another big attack will definitely put Raikou on his last breath,' Latias chirped with a confidence that was as solid as steel.

"Pika, Pikachu!" Ash's starter pokemon cried, reassuring him that he had confidence in Sceptile too.

"Thanks, guys," he whispered. "Even if Sceptile is not going to win this match, he'll still have done a nice chunk of damage nonetheless."

Meanwhile, Dawn was still cheering loudly for Ash. "Come on Ash and Sceptile! I know you can do it!"

"Piplup Piplup!" her water-type cheered in tow.

"Brock, what's Ash going to do now?" Bianca wondered.

"He has to keep Sceptile close to Raikou. It's the only way he has a chance to avoid his attacks while still landing his own, but that's a tough cookie to crumble," Brock muttered. As a seasoned Gym Leader, he knew there wasn't much Ash could do in this situation. He had to accept that his Sceptile was crippled and work with it to the best of his capabilities.

"All right, Sceptile! Leaf Blade again, get in close!" Ash commanded.

Just like Brock had explained to Bianca, and just like Tobias had predicted, the raven haired trainer went with the only other option he had beside switching out-he moved Sceptile in close.

'You're becoming predictable, Ash. Just a moment ago, you surprised me not once, but twice. But now, It looks like your bag of tricks has run dry,' Tobias thought with a hint of disappointment. He actually liked some resistance; it became pretty boring sometimes, winning every single match flawlessly. Ash had put up a good fight, but the ending was swiftly getting nearer. Tobias was going to put an end to Ash's hopes and dreams right now.

Tobias waited patiently, and let the now much slower Sceptile get in close. His leaves glowed brightly once more, intent to bring them down on Raikou's face like a Hammer Arm. It was then that Tobias voiced his next attack, clear as day. "Hidden Power," he said simply.

Immediately, Latias knew it meant bad news, and Ash soon realized that too. Hidden Power had the nifty ability to be any typing, hence why it was named Hidden Power. You simply didn't know what typing it was going to be. However, it seemed Tobias knew all too well. Hidden Power was mostly a cover move, and since ground-types shut down Raikou completely, Ice was a very logical choice. Unfortunately, that meant it was also super-effective on Sceptile.

The wall of mysterious power smacked into Sceptile hard, hitting him straight into his gut. The grass-type wheezed and cried out, the force behind the attack strong enough to knock him backwards, where he landed heavily on the ground with a loud thud.

"No! Sceptile!" Ash yelled.

He didn't get up; Raikou's attack was enough to defeat him in one blow.

"Sceptile is unable to battle, Raikou wins!" The referee declared.

Loud cheers were heard from the bleachers. Cries of awe and disbelief that Raikou had defeated this immensely powerful Sceptile of Ash in one hit.

"I can't believe my eyes, but it's true! Sceptile has been defeated in one blow. This must be incredibly devastating for Ash, meaning that Tobias has taken the lead again!"

The raven haired trainer gritted his teeth as he recalled Sceptile. "You did good, Sceptile. Take a long and nice rest," he whispered kindly to his grass-type. Once he had put away Sceptile's pokeball, he gave a loud sigh and looked thoughtful.

'I've not much choice now, do I?' he thought to Latias, who nuzzled her cheek against his reassuringly.

' You don't, sweetie. We've to stick to the plan. That means I'm out, and we both know Charizard would get easily defeated by Raikou.'

He eyed the direction where Latias was floating, and then gave a glance at Pikachu, who was sitting on his right shoulder. His electric starter pokemon and friend for life pumped his paw. "Pika, Pikachu!" His cheek pouches were dancing dangerously with the electricity running through them. His eyes were sharp and focused, and his voice carried an air of extreme loyalty to Ash, a desire to win for him no matter what the odds.

"All right, buddy. It's up to you now. Show the world how strong you are. Show Mayhem how *strong* you are." Ash hissed that last part venomously, like the toxic that had run through Pikachu's veins thanks to Mayhem; a toxic he had beaten.

If Pikachu's expression wasn't murderous before, it definitely was now. He leaped from Ash's shoulder exuberantly, and his eyes shone like fire. Pikachu was on a mission, and he was going to accomplish it no matter what.

"Ladies and gentlemen! For the first time in this tournament, Ash has chosen his Pikachu to battle, who recovered completely from a cowardly attack done by an unknown assailant. While the culprit is still on the loose, rest assured he'll be caught by the police very

soon. We're all glad to see Pikachu healthy, and ready to battle for Ash!"

Everybody in the stadium stood up and clapped respectfully. Even Tobias-the one responsible for Pikachu's severe poisoning-clapped. Whether he meant it or not, Ash couldn't tell. What Ash was sure about, however, was that he wanted to punch him in his arrogant face.

'I'll never forgive what you did to Pikachu, Mayhem. We're stronger than you. Pikachu will show you exactly how strong we are.'

The referee raised his flags. "Raikou versus Pikachu, begin!" He lowered them again, and Ash took the initiative.

"Pikachu, Quick Attack, full speed!" he commanded passionately. It felt great to battle with his oldest friend again. Exhilaration shot through Ash's body like a lightning strike. His whole body tensed as he saw Pikachu execute the attack, internally cheering him on at the amazing speed that even put Raikou to shame.

Tobias seemed slightly alarmed; he hadn't expected such speed from a Pikachu who had been hospitalized for more than a week-not even talking about his raw power. Pikachu slammed against Raikou with all that he had, the sudden momentum shift sliding the legendary back on all fours until he came to a halt in front of Tobias, both of them looking rather shocked.

Raikou felt pain throbbing through his body; both pokemon he had battled were remarkably strong, and somewhere deep inside, he began to feel a bit afraid. Nobody had ever inflicted so much damage on him. He always won his battles in a single hit without getting touched. But this? Oh, this was different, so much different.

"Come on, Raikou!" Tobias snarled, his emotions getting the better of him. "Retaliate with your Extrasensory!" The legendary trainer didn't like this one bit. Pikachu's resilience was incredible. He was fighting purely out of willpower alone. No way Pikachu would be that strong

after all what he had to endure last week, yet it looked like there was no stopping him.

Pikachu just kept on going. Ash ordered him to dodge the attack, and he did so without trouble. The two electric-types kept clashing with each other, neither of them giving an inch. Little by little, they started to get worn out. Tobias bit his lip out of frustration. Nobody had ever beaten his Raikou before, but this Pikachu was getting damn close in doing so.

"Raikou! Use Shadow Ball and get this over with!" Tobias roared.

Raikou snarled, high on adrenaline as he was, and prepared to fire the dark orb of energy straight at the speedy Pikachu. However, Ash was quick to react.

"Pikachu! Iron Tail!" he yelled to his loyal electric-type.

Before Raikou could fire off the orb, Pikachu had already slammed his tail against it, the resulting explosion covering both Raikou and Pikachu in a plume of smoke.

"We have a big collision, folks!" Son Petertom informed the crowd. "This last attack will probably determine who's going to be the winner of this battle."

Tobias looked shell-shocked. 'Such speed. It's almost unbelievable,' he thought incredulously. His face turned neutral again soon after. 'I underestimated Pikachu's strength severely. He's not Ash's starter pokemon for nothing.' He cursed himself for being so careless.

When the smoke cleared, both competitors watched with bated breath to the outcome-just like how everybody else in the bleachers was watching in complete silence. Two silhouettes were soon visible through the smoke; one was lying in defeat, and one was still standing. It was immediately clear who had won this battle.

Like he had brought down a titan, Pikachu was standing over Tobias' fainted Raikou with the ice-cold epic look of an experienced veteran. He was badly hurt, his foot limping as he walked towards Ash, but damn if the raven haired trainer didn't think he looked like biggest badass ever.

At once, the stadium exploded into a symphony of roars and cheers that sounded like heavenly music to Pikachu's ears. He barely heard the commentator, the referee declaring him the winner, or what Ash said as he scooped him and praised him into the heavens. All that mattered was that he had shown Mayhem; he'd shown never to mess with him, never to mess with Latias, but above all, *never* to mess with his trainer.

His soft 'chus' and 'chas' was all that he could muster, the warm embrace of Ash lulling him into a comforting, drowsy state. He felt like fainting every second now, and Ash noticed it too. The raven haired trainer smiled, the words he spoke incomprehensible for Pikachu; he could only see Ash's lips moving, but he knew they were filled with warmth, telling him it was okay. The last thing he felt before falling into a well-deserved slumber was Latias' coat brushing his gently. It felt like the softest pillow in existence; one he rested his head against as his unconscious took over.

"You did so great, Pikachu," Ash whispered, his voice filled with pride while the electric-type was lying against Latias' body. He kissed him on his forehead, and petted him lovingly. "Take a nice, long rest. You've deserved it."

He then made a motion to the referee, and whispered something in his ear. The referee nodded, and cleared his throat. "Since Pikachu has sustained severe damage from Raikou, trainer Ash Ketchum has made the decision to forfeit his Pikachu, which means he is not capable of battling any longer," he declared.

"A mature decision from Ash, whose Pikachu showed us all an herculean feat by defeating Raikou. This means Tobias still has three pokemon left, while Ash has only two," Son Petertom informed.

Cynthia smiled. 'Even in the face of Mayhem, you care more for your pokemon than your own dreams, Ash? Truly, you are a pokemon master in the making. I'm already looking forward to when you inevitably challenge me for the title of Champion in the future,' she thought, excitement bubbling inside of her at the prospect of battling Ash.

Paul snorted, the faintest of smirks crossing his face. "That Pikachu is something," he said ambiguously. He didn't bother to elaborate any further over the loud cheers of the girls.

"Did you see how awesome Pikachu was?" Dawn gushed.

Bianca was too focused on drawing a quick sketch of Pikachu to answer; she had no idea how intense pokemon battles could get. But watching them live while one of her friends was one of the battlers made her as stoked as a little girl.

At the same time, Ash had thrown his next pokemon on the field. Latias didn't have to coach him. The plan stayed the same and they both knew it. With a roar, Ash's Charizard took the spotlight again, impatiently waiting for his opponent.

'I have to applaud you, Ash,' Tobias thought. 'You really gave me a run for my money. However, the two remaining pokemon you have won't surprise me. My next pokemon will deal with Charizard, and your Latias... well, my Latios will be enough to defeat her.'

He grinned, and let his next pokemon on the field by simply opening the pokeball in his hand. A small rabbit-like pokemon with large ears and wings on its lower back appeared. Ash had never seen a pokemon like that before.

'Another legendary?' he questioned Latias.

' *This may surprise you, but I don't know, Ash. I've never seen this kind of pokemon before either,*' Latias admitted.

This indeed did surprise Ash. He frowned, and for the first time since Latias had joined him, he had to use his pokedex. The mechanical device scanned the pokemon, and beeped.

"Victini, the Victory pokemon. Victini is a dual psychic and fire type legendary originating from Unova. It is said that trainers with Victini always win, regardless of the type of encounter," the pokedex informed Ash in a robotic voice.

'Are you kidding me!?' the raven haired trainer thought. 'A pokemon that always wins no matter what? I can't believe this!'

Latias looked doubtfully at the small legendary. *'I know one thing; nobody is undefeatable. Charizard will take her down no matter what.'*

Ash nodded his head in agreement. His Charizard was growling silently at Victini, black smoke coming out of his nostrils. Ash noted he was more than ready to follow his commands no matter how odd they might be.

The referee raised his flags again. "Victini versus Charizard, begin!" The moment he lowered them, both Ash and Tobias gave their commands.

"Victini, Zen Headbutt!"

"Charizard, use Slash!"

Both pokemon got in close, Victini with her forehead rippling with Psychic energy, and Charizard with his sharp claws flexing. They both clashed, claw meeting head, and for a moment, it was a stalemate, until eventually Victini began to break through, hitting Charizard in his chest.

He let out a loud roar, the attack making him flinch and he gritted his teeth afterward. His chest was throbbing and burning with pain at the same time. He eyed the fast and nimble legendary with a dark scowl.

"An amazing show of power from both sides, but Victini managed to pull through, her Zen Headbutt leaving a pretty big mark on Charizard's chest. Let's see how Ash is going to adapt."

The raven haired trainer gritted his teeth. 'She has more raw power than Charizard has. We've to hold our distance if we wanna win.'

' *Clever thinking, sweetie,*' Latias cooed. '*As long as we don't let her get close, we should be fine.*'

"Victini, Bolt Strike!" Tobias yelled.

'Bolt Strike?' Ash asked with a perked brow. He had never heard of that move before, and he feared Latias hadn't either.

Much time to think he didn't have. The air in the stadium began to burst with static, the sky darkened and sparks of electricity began to fly around Victini. In a matter of seconds, she had encased herself in an orb of pure electric energy. Ash's eyes turned to saucers as she suddenly began to fly at supersonic speed to Charizard.

"Charizard! Dodge!" he yelled in panic. However, even with Charizard's incredible reflexes, he knew it was already too late.

Victini struck him with the force of a lethal object. Electricity flew everywhere, the stadium flashed in black and white for the second time that day and a loud explosion followed. Not much later, out of the sky Charizard fell.

"No, Charizard," Ash whispered in disbelief and defeat. He was knocked out cold and he crashed to the ground, not getting up after that, while Victini gently lowered herself.

"Charizard is unable to battle, Victini wins!"

The whole stadium was silenced into shock. They had just seen one of Ash's strongest pokemon getting utterly defeated.

"I can't believe it, people. But Ash's Charizard has been defeated without a sweat by Tobias' Victini. It looks like the end for the young trainer from Pallet is approaching here."

Ash made a time-out gesture to the referee, which he granted. "Both trainers will now have a twenty minute break before we continue," he informed.

The crowd began to murmur, but that soon turned to cheers when Latias dropped her invisibility. She nuzzled Ash, and he hugged her, just enjoying the affection while neither said anything. Then, Latias spoke up.

' You did great, Ash. Our team managed to take down half of Mayhem's pokemon. It's now up to me and you to clean up the other half.'

"Will we really be able to do it?" he whispered back. He let his eyes rest on the mega-bracelet he got from Cynthia yesterday. "Even with your mega-evolution, will we be able to defeat Mayhem, Tia?"

Latias pondered this question for a moment. With Victini, Latios and an unknown pokemon still remaining, it seemed utterly impossible. However, she still had hope. Hope that they were going to win. They were not defeated quite yet. *'That's why we gotta stick to the plan, Ash. It's now or never. We **have** to do it.'*

Ash knew what she meant with that. They had agreed on it this morning, and they knew it was a very big gamble. But what did they have to lose? They looked at each other, and Ash nodded his head.

"If you're ready, Tia, then let's use our ace right now."

There you have it, people. Did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Next chapter the conclusion of Ash vs Mayhem. Until next time.

^^

~Syrup-Waffle

Mayhem: ω

Here it is, people. The final battle of this fic, and the second to last chapter. After this one, we only have one chapter to go, which will wrap this story up. We're reaching the end of this ride, so hold on to your seat belt!

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon! If I did, then that would've been my Fate.

"Mega-Latias" Speech

'Mega-Latias' Thoughts

'Mega-Latias' Telepathy

"Mega-Latias" Memories

Enjoy! :)

Ash's body was full of adrenaline as he eyed the crowd. His limbs felt like concrete bricks, and a big lump was stuck in his throat. His breathing had turned somewhat erratic, a nervous chuckle all he could offer to his dragoness, who couldn't keep her nervousness hidden either.

Her eyes were darting rapidly in random directions while her beautiful neck feathers were getting somewhat matted by constantly biting it in a desperate attempt to ease her growing anxiety.

"We *have* to do it," Ash whispered to Latias again. He tried to be brave, but his whisper came out as a stutter more than anything else.

' *I know, Ash. We're going to do it,*' she reassured him, but instead, neither could move a single muscle. The crowd started to murmur

again, their excitement dying down to confusion. Five minutes had passed of the twenty minute break the contenders had gotten, the crowd fully expecting that Ash and Latias were going to do... something, *anything* ; they only got two very nervous teens that looked like they were preparing themselves for their final hour instead.

Tobias looked somewhat uninterested to the young couple, but deep inside, he felt rage bubbling up to the surface. Whatever had them in so much distress definitely wasn't because of him, and that annoyed him, but above all, it *scared* him. It was something he didn't understand.

Then, a wave of nausea suddenly overwhelmed his body, and as soon as it came, it disappeared too. He let out a low gasp, that feeling of fear gripping him tighter, like he was slowly suffocating. All his senses screamed at him to put a halt to whatever Ash and Latias were going to do, but why, he had no idea. They were just standing there, like Magikarp reeled out of the water.

Ash was trying to make his body move, but he couldn't. It was like he was petrified. Thick droplets of sweat fell from Ash's face down to the ground below, his hands hot, his back icy-cold. His arms were twitching and shivering slightly; nobody told him it was going to be this hard.

Similarly, Latias became lightheaded, her anxiety threatening to make her faint. Her wings felt like awkward tree branches on her back, her tongue was as dry as a Sandshrew, and her wing tufts stiff, like her muscles were all cramped up.

Some of the people in the bleachers-who made the assumption Ash and Latias were just going to stay like that, awkwardly looking at them-decided it was a good time to stretch their legs a little. They got up, and prepared to leave until the match was resumed.

'No,' Ash thought with widening eyes. 'Please, come back. You can't leave now!' His emotions were running rampant through his body. He

closed his eyes in defeat; they couldn't do it, they were unable to. It was over. They had their chance and they blew it. Ash's mind became a whirlpool, a mess of incomprehensible thoughts, mocking him, telling him they had failed. It was almost maddening. Until-

" Fate is not set in stone."

"Wait!" Ash screamed at the top of his lungs, startling Latias, the referee, Tobias and everybody in the bleachers. He looked like a man possessed, but once he had their attention, his nerves died down, like a weight had fallen from his shoulders.

" Fate is not set in stone."

'It isn't!' Ash thought with renewed strength. That same, sweet feminine voice he had heard in his thoughts when entering the stadium filled him with hope. He looked like an entire different person. Clearing his throat, he politely asked for a microphone from the referee.

' *Ash?*' Latias squeaked.

He turned to her, took one of her claws in his hands, and gently rubbed it with his palm. "Tia," he said warmly. "It'll be all right, lovely. Trust me. Have faith in me, have Hope-in *us* ."

Ash's words carried a strength that had Latias falling in love with him all over again. Her cheeks burned, and her heart ached for him. She watched him like a little girl with a high school crush, and in some sense, that was completely the truth.

When the raven haired trainer took the microphone from the referee, he tapped it once to see if it was working. Satisfied, he addressed the crowd in a voice that sounded like the calmest river soothingly rippling through a meadow.

"Ladies, gentlemen, Tobias." He paused and nodded once to his opponent, perhaps a sign of rare respect, or maybe just the

confirmation that he had his full attention now. "Have I ever told you about the story how Latias and I met?"

The people in the bleachers turned silent, their interest very much piqued.

"Because it is a very funny story, let me tell you. I thought it's time to share it with you. Anyway, imagine me, a few years younger, even smaller than I am now, competing in a water chariot race with my overexcited Totodile.

"We were ready, pumped up to win the first prize, but like I've always been, I was overzealous. The first sharp turn of the race I threatened to crash right into a hard wall, but all that happened was me bouncing on a coat of soft and warm, invisible feathers. I didn't know it back then, but Latias was watching me, and she had just saved me from a pretty nasty collision.

"From there, it looked like we were out of the race, but as you may know, Latias is a sweetheart, and in her innocence to help me, she grabbed the leash Totodile used to pull my chariot, and we suddenly shot ahead. Can you imagine it, ladies and gentlemen? A Totodile dancing on the water like he was running over it, while in reality this cutie here was pulling us ahead while being invisible? She was totally helping me cheat to victory!"

The crowd giggled and laughed, people who were about to leave quickly sitting back down to hear the rest of the story.

Ash shot Latias a teasing smile, one she returned with a slightly embarrassed, but above all loving coo.

"In the end, her brother intervened, and I lost the race anyway. It was my very first encounter with Latias, and I hadn't even known it. From there, Latias appeared to me multiple times in her human disguise, until she at one point revealed who she truly was.

"I was shocked, to say the least. She had pushed me on a swing, and then decided to transform back to her pokemon form. Needless to say, I fell flat on my face."

The crowd laughed again, their full attention now on Ash's story.

"A few days later, however, after I met Latias, I had to say goodbye. And this is the part where most of you think I caught her, right?"

Murmurs of agreement rang through the stadium.

"Well, that was not what happened. I didn't catch her. Two years would pass before I even would see her again. But before we had said our final goodbye, she ran up to me, in her best friend's disguise how she so often did. I couldn't figure out if it was her, or Bianca, her best friend. She was playful and very sneaky. She probably never wanted me to forget her, because not only did she hand me a beautiful drawing of me and Pikachu, she also gave me a kiss on my cheek."

Latias giggled as Ash smiled at her. "You know how frustrating it was not knowing who it was who kissed me? I was wondering who it was for weeks!"

Again, the crowd giggled. Most of them thought it was very adorable how Ash and Latias met.

Tobias, however, was almost unable to stand any longer. His legs threatened to give out at any moment. His anxiety was reaching his throat, and he was gasping for air. 'There's no way they're gonna do it,' he reassured himself weakly. 'They're bluffing. It's pure bluff.' But deep down, Tobias knew it was a lie he was telling himself; a big fat lie that would blow up in his face.

Ash continued his story, more warmly now. "Latias and I haven't been reunited for long. She came to cheer me on with Bianca for this tourney, but unsuspected troubles with a man who poisoned my Pikachu let her to the decision to become my pokemon for real, and

a few days later, she became something much more than just a friend."

Now, the crowd began to murmur a bit in confusion again. Some were unable to comprehend what Ash had just implied and some were flat down refusing it. But there were also people who got even more interested, wondering if their suspicions were correct.

Bianca watched with bated breath, Brock was getting pretty nervous and Dawn was biting her nails. They hadn't told their friends they were going to *this*.

Likewise, Barry was watching owlishly, Conway was chuckling like a madman, Paul looked like he was about to receive another smack in his face, and Cynthia was grinning.

At the same time, Tobias' eye was twitching crazily, weak grunts came out of his mouth and it looked like he was about to snap at any second. 'Don't you dare, don't you dare! It's all bluff! There's no way you're going to tell *the whole world* you're in love with your Latias, Ash Ketchum!'

" *Fate is not set in stone.*"

At that moment, the voices of the crowd melted away for Ash, like snow in the afternoon sun. He turned to Latias, and he only saw Love. Love in her purest form. She was like an angel descending from heaven, enveloping him in her sweet embrace that had him crooning in pure ecstasy.

Her eyes were filled with nothing but desire for him, and it then occurred to Ash that *she* was the reason that nothing was set in stone, not even Fate. Their Love was stronger than all the Mayhem in the world. Their love would conquer it. They were going to show everybody their undisputed love for each other, right here, right now.

In front of the eyes of thousands of people watching from the bleachers and in front of their TV screens, Ash went on one knee,

like he was going to propose to Latias. His next words were so genuine, that even people who would never accept a human and pokemon relationship had to admit they were meant to be.

"Tia, I love you. I love you so much. I want to spend the rest of my life with you. I want to marry you and grow old with you. You're the most important thing in this whole world for me. Please, be my Latias forever."

Latias' eyes stung with her tears, slowly rolling down her cheeks. She felt an indescribable feeling of happiness, like a dream that was impossible to come true miraculously did come true. She wanted to kiss Ash, pepper him in affection and never let him go. She wanted to yell to the heavens a million times yes to what Ash just admitted. She wanted to marry him; she wanted to tell him over and over again how much she loved him.

Like she was being pulled by an invisible force, she moved closer to Ash, her movements as delicate as a blooming flower. Just for a moment, she saw Mayhem in the corner of her eyes, like a beast that was unleashed from deep within trying to stop her, but that beast was weak, a dying animal that desperately tried to survive. She was going to put it out of its misery.

Her sweet, honey lips touched Ash's gently, then passionately as she darted out her tongue and asked for entrance. He parted his lips for her, her thick, draconic tongue dancing with his own in an ancient ritual to seal their love forever. Her saliva was sweet, making him shudder as they swapped it back and forth, their fiery passion for each other not diminishing in the slightest.

Over and over, he felt Latias press her tongue wantonly against his, reassuring him she was there, that she would always be there. He felt her canines, sharp and smooth, and he tasted the inside of her mouth. Their kiss was filled with so much passion that the whole crowd was looking at them as if they had all turned to statues.

Their necklaces shone in the sun, and it was just now that the crowd noticed it; a Latios and Latias necklace you would give to your significant other, so you would always carry a piece of them with you. It was like these necklaces became one the moment Ash and Latias were making out, like two magnets attracting each other and never letting go.

Far in the back of Latias' mind, she heard the beast that was Mayhem crying in pain. They had deeply wounded it, and those cries of agony made her kiss with Ash only wilder. Even when they were running out of breath, they kept on mixing their saliva together.

In the end, when they finally moved back, panting deeply and with a blush on their faces that made them as red as Latias' coat, Latias gave a soft, loving cry.

' Ash, I love you too. I love you forever and ever, and I'll always love you. I'll never leave your side, not even in the face of Mayhem. I'll always be with you, and I'll marry you and grow old with you. Ash, I'll be your Latias forever.'

Ash had to cover his own eyes to stop tears from falling down, and he laughed shakily. "I'm so happy, Tia," he whispered. "You made me the happiest guy alive."

He nuzzled her, and then stood up to address the stunned crowd again. "Latias and I are in love. We're in a romantic relationship with each other, and she'll be the girl I marry someday," he said with such certainty that it sounded more like a fact than anything. He handed back the microphone to the referee who looked at them like they grew an extra head.

The whole crowd was brought out of their stupor, and suddenly, the air seemed tense. Nobody knew how to react to such a controversy. Human and pokemon relationships were heavily frowned upon, but not illegal. It was more done so in secret, so society didn't have to deal with it. But now, the youngest finalist to ever win from an elite

four member had just showed the entire world how much he loved his Latias.

"This is ludicrous!" Tobias suddenly shouted with a crazy glint in his eyes. His smooth hair, which normally seemed to float to his back like silk, was sticking out from all sides, courtesy of him running his hands through it in pure disbelief. His eyes were bloodshot, and his armpits stained. His skin had gotten as pale as a ghost and his movements stiff and shaky.

He pointed a twitching finger at Ash and Latias, still gasping for breath. "Referee! Disqualify this man! He just committed an atrocity!" he yelled at the top of his lungs.

Some of the people in the crowd began to whisper and nod their heads awkwardly, to which Tobias raised both of his hands, like he was going to give a prayer. "You, people in the crowd!" He laughed, which came out high-pitched, like he still couldn't believe what Ash and Latias had just done. "Don't you think this is plain wrong!? Admit it! A human and a pokemon in a romantic relationship? Disgusting! They don't deserve to be even qualified for this tournament at all!"

He turned back to the referee, who eyed him nervously. "Well? What are you waiting for!? Disqualify them already!"

Ash and Latias stayed silent while Tobias still tried to spur people on to riot, until one girl in the bleachers let herself be heard, loud and clear. She was like a voice of reason; passionate and steadfast her voice rang through the stadium.

"People! All of you stop!"

Bianca's eyes shone like fire, and miraculously, the crowd began to tone down. They recognized the girl as one of Ash's friends. "Don't you see what Tobias is trying to do? He's trying to disqualify his opponent simply because he loves his Latias, while human and pokemon relationships aren't even banned in Sinnoh!" she said incredulously. "Isn't *that* ludicrous?"

She went on when silence was her answer. "Ash just admitted his love for Latias in front of an entire crowd; you saw how much courage that took. Yet the only thing I see when I look around is bias. And yes, a human and pokemon relationship is frowned upon, but who cares? These two," she pointed at the couple standing in the pitch, smiling at her for standing up for them, "they love each other, and that's all that matters. Whether you support it or not, is not important. What's important is to see a kickass finals, so let's continue the match!"

For a moment, it stayed silent, until Paul, of all people, opened his mouth. "She's right! We want to see a kickass finals!"

"Yeah, let's go!" Brock now joined in.

"The break is over, let's continue the match already!" Dawn added.

Soon, the stadium came back to life, all cheering for the match to go on.

"You guys are insane!" Tobias screamed crazily, but there was no one who listened. The crowd got only louder and louder.

The referee coughed his throat, and then spoke professionally: "The twenty minute break is now over. The match will now resume. Trainers, show your pokemon!"

Ash gave Bianca a kind smile. 'Thank you, Bianca. You always supported and believed in Latias and I. We will not disappoint you. A kickass finals is what you're going to get!'

Latias nuzzled Ash one more time, before her lively, amber eyes stared back at his. *'Are you ready, cutie? You've seen how our love threw Mayhem off big time. Let's finish him together! Let's rewrite your fate!'*

"All right! Latias, I choose you!" Ash shouted confidently.

The sweet dragoness cooed, and took her spot on the battlefield. There she waited patiently for her opponent. Mayhem looked like he was having a mental breakdown. He simply couldn't comprehend the chain of events that had transpired.

He looked at Latias and Ash fearfully. Before, they were two meek little Littens, helpless to whatever he had planned for them. But now, they were two gigantic Incineroars, champions of the arena, unbeatable in the ring. And he had just entered their ring, challenging them for the championship belt.

For the first time in his existence, Tobias felt genuinely afraid. He didn't have the upper hand here anymore. He had to stop an unstoppable force in Latias, and move an unmovable object in Ash. The task was utterly impossible. He was wracking his brain for answers, but none came. How did it come to this? Even with three legendary pokemon still at his side, Tobias felt like he was stuck in quicksand, slowly sinking him further down.

His Victini could feel how uncomfortable her trainer was. She'd never seen him like this before. He was always confident, steadfast like Sky Pillar. But now, he felt like a tower made out of jelly, as if he could collapse at any second. It was throwing her off majorly.

"We're back, people. After the craziest twenty minute break I've ever witnessed, we'll continue the final match of the Lily of the valley! It's Latias against Victini! Which of these two legends will be victorious?" Son Petertom wondered.

The referee raised his flags. "Victini versus Latias, begin!" He lowered them, indicating the match had begun again, and for a moment, it was like Tobias was unable to utter a single attack.

'Keep it together! Keep it together!' he mentally berated himself. Like a crazy guy-his voice almost hysterical-he gave his first command. "Victini, V-create!" he screamed.

Ash, while he didn't know the attack, reacted accordingly. "Latias, hold your ground. Use Protect!"

Victini, for a moment, was hesitating. V-create was her most devastating attack, but it also lowered a plethora of her stats, including her defenses. She understood Tobias wanted to end this battle quickly, but she also had the feeling he was not thinking properly. When she finally did use her attack, it was weak, and without the raw power it had normally.

Her V-shaped eyebrows burned brightly, and with a mighty cry, she sent the attack towards the idle Latias.

Latias could feel how hot the V-create was, but she also noticed something peculiar about it; somehow, the attack felt off. Sure, it was a pretty powerful attack, but nothing legendary worthy she would come to expect from one of Mayhem's pokemon.

With ease, she used her Protect, and Victini's attack bounced off against it harmlessly.

"It looks like Tobias showed his cards too early. Latias easily blocked that V-create from Victini, giving her the initiative. How will Ash take advantage of it?" Son Petertom cried excitedly in his mike.

"Latias, use Calm Mind," the raven haired trainer commanded smartly.

The legendary dragoness obeyed and glowed slightly, trying to boost her special attack and special defense.

'He's setting up his Latias. He's going to overwhelm you,' the irrational part of Tobias' mind whispered. "Shut up," he yelled to no one in particular. "I know what I'm doing! Victini, use Bolt Strike while Latias is occupied!"

Like she had done before, she encased herself in a sphere of pure electricity. However, she was a lot slower thanks to her speed drop.

It gave Ash enough time to show Mayhem his final trump card.

'Are you ready, sweetie?' he thought to Latias.

'As ready as I will ever be. Let's do this!'

Ash readied himself, and raised his right arm which held the mega bracelet. It began to react and shine with the Latiasite which Tia was carrying, and soon, she was enveloped in a sphere of energy. The sphere broke with a loud bang, and rising from the ashes like a phoenix was Latias, more powerful than ever.

She let out a deep roar, something Ash hadn't heard coming out of the sweet dragoness' mouth ever. It was astonishing how intimidating the sound was, like a beast about to pound her prey.

Not only was her roar intimidating, her body had gotten wilder as well. She was easily twice her normal size. Gone were her lovely, red feathers, replaced with a cool blue coloring. Her wings were larger as well, fused together with her claws. Her eyes were sharper, and her ears longer. Her roar had Victini hesitating, but she did eventually hit her with her Bolt Strike, hoping she would inflict a nice chunk of damage.

Instead, Latias barely flinched. She growled at the tiny legendary, who had widened her eyes like saucers. The dragoness could swallow her whole if she wanted, and with growing anxiety Victini realized she wouldn't stand a chance.

"I can't believe my eyes! It's like we keep on getting surprised over and over again, because Ash has just mega-evolved his Latias! This is incredible! It looks like Tobias has no idea how to respond, as his Victini's Bolt Strike did absolutely no damage."

'Arceus is with this kid. This Latias is unbeatable, she just evolved again!' Tobias' panicked mind thought crazily. 'Shut up! It's just mega-evolution like the announcer said!' his rational side tried to reason, but it was like his mind was gone fully out of control. He

couldn't utter a single attack anymore. The shock was too great, and he could only watch helplessly at how Latias fired a Dragon Pulse on his Victini with so much power that he had to shield his eyes from all the dust flying his way.

When he opened them again, he gasped, because she was knocked out in a single hit.

"Victini is unable to battle. Latias wins!" the referee said professionally, and raised his flags. The crowd erupted into wild roars of ecstasy. They had never seen a match like this before; it was like both Tobias and Ash were the best trainers in the world, dueling it out in a titanic battle of epic proportions that would only be seen once in a lifetime.

'Tia, that was awesome!' Ash thought to her, grinning all the way. 'And you look nice, by the way.'

She shot him a seductive look. *'Thanks, Ash,'* she responded back, her voice sweet and husky. *'Maybe you like to see me up close in a minute?'*

Ash's cheeks turned red for a moment, and he smiled brightly. 'Sure, I'd love to.'

She purred like a Glameow, bit her lip in desire, and gave Ash a wink. Then, she turned back to Tobias, who looked like he had lost his mind. He was chuckling like crazy, his thoughts whispering to him like disembodied voices.

'It's over, Tobias. This Latias is like a goddess descended from the heavens while Ash is her divine warrior. They're immortal. They're unstoppable. '

He growled in a low voice while reaching for one of his pokeballs clipped to his belt. 'Shut up!' he thought back. 'I'm Mayhem! Mayhem can't be stopped. My legendary pokemon will destroy this Latias and stop Ash from winning the league!'

He threw his next pokemon on the field with as much force as he could. When the deer-like legendary appeared, regal as she was, she immediately understood something was terribly wrong. She was a Virizion, and noticed her connection with her trainer was completely out of balance. Whatever had happened to him had done a massive blow, because the otherwise confident man she called her trainer was almost scratching his own eyes out, it seemed. This, in turn, had effect on her behaviour as well. She was getting nervous, especially when she saw her opponent-calmly and powerfully-floating in front of the raven haired trainer.

As expected, another legendary, Latias commented idly. Mayhem really wasn't lying when he said he was a legendary trainer, but the sweet dragoness also noticed how anxious Virizion was, like she was genuinely scared of her and Ash.

Ash noticed this too. The difference was so great in comparison to how Mayhem's first pokemon appeared on the field, even a child would notice. 'I don't think she's going to be a problem at all, Tia,' he replied confidently. 'Look at her; I bet you could have her fleeing in fright with a simple boo.'

Latias giggled, yet somewhere she believed her trainer was serious, and somewhere, she also believed he was right as well. This Virizion almost looked like a Caterpie with how much she was shivering. It was like Mayhem going nuts had major effect on his pokemon as well.

'If they're even real pokemon,' Latias thought to herself, and that thought satisfied her enormously for some reason, yet she did not know why.

" Fate is not set in stone."

That voice again. She had been hearing it ever since she saved Bianca from Malice back in the museum of Alto Mare. It reminded her of her brother, like he was talking to her, encouraging her to be the best guardian she could possibly be. But this time, she wasn't

guarding Alto Mare, oh no. She was guarding Ash-his hopes and his dreams. She was guarding her love for him, and his love for her. She was his guardian, and she would always be his guardian.

" Fate is not set in stone."

This time, she didn't hear her brother's voice, but the voice of a small child. A sweet girl's voice who spoke with so much authority and strength Latias believed anything was possible. Adrenaline shot through her body, her love for Ash fueling another ear-splitting roar from her throat which was even scarier than the last. The incredible display of intimidation had everybody silenced; even Cynthia had her mouth open in a wide O.

' *Let's do this, cutie,*' she growled playfully to Ash, who couldn't help but to swallow some saliva back in his dry throat. He idly wondered if Latias had been hearing the voice as well, but pushed that thought away when the referee found his own voice again and raised his flags.

"Latias versus Virizion, begin!"

The match was the most one-sided battle the crowd had seen since the start of the Lily of the valley. Latias had defeated Virizion in less than five minutes. One perfectly placed Psychic was all it took to make Virizion unable to battle.

Now it was a one-on-one match, and nobody in the crowd believed Ash was going to lose anymore. Even what little sanity there was left of Mayhem knew it was over. He was almost incapable of throwing his last pokemon on his field. All his nerves were screaming at him, pumping his body full with so much pain he was going numb. There was no place to run, no crack in the earth he could crawl into and hide for eternity to escape what was going to happen. This was his Fate. Soon, there'd be no reason for his existence anymore, and he'd fade away, just like his brother did, because he was going to

lose. Losing was never an option, but it was impossible to lose for him, wasn't it? He was Mayhem!

Was.

The past tense seemed cruelly appropriate now, and far in his short-circuiting mind, he heard the mocking voice of his brother over and over again.

" You lost. You lost. You lost. You lost. You-"

He understood now, like a sudden clarity rose in his mind. It was never Malice's intention to capture Latias and use the DMA. It was about getting his attention and stalling him. Stalling him from the real reason he was here; making sure Ash would lose.

'He tricked me all this time,' he thought numbly, throwing Latios' pokeball on the field. He couldn't feel anything anymore. A constant beep was present in both ears, like a bomb had gone off right in front of him.

'He kept me from driving a gap between Ash and Latias. He captured Pikachu to be obnoxious to me, but that wasn't the main reason. He did it to make Ash and Latias' relationship grow even stronger.' He gasped and felt light headed, he didn't even hear his Latios speaking telepathically to him when the referee raised both flags for the final battle.

'He fueled Ash and Latias' desire to be with each other, kidnapped Bianca's granddad to make himself the biggest villain that was standing between their love, like a solid wall. And I tore that wall down.'

He went down on his knees, grabbing his head with both of his hands while Latios screamed apparent gibberish in a very panicked voice to him, a potent Dragon Pulse from Latias exploding on his body and knocking him in the dirt below. It didn't matter anymore.

'I sealed my own Fate,' he realized anxiously. 'I should've listened to *it* . I should've obeyed his command and left Malice alone. Instead, I spent all my time thwarting my brother, not knowing it was exactly what he wanted.'

Latios went down again, and struggled to get up. His muscles were aching in protest while he looked at his trainer with scared, knowing eyes.

'It's done.'

Another Dragon Pulse exploding violently on Latios' downed body kept him from moving, the smoke that covered most of the pitch obscuring the crowd's view, but once it was dissipated, the referee's voice was loud and clear.

"Latios is unable to battle! Latias wins! This means that all six pokemon of Tobias are eliminated. Ash Ketchum is your Lily of the valley champion!"

Before the crowd could erupt into loud cheers and roars, and before Latias could knock Ash to the ground and nuzzle and kiss him affectionately in pure happiness for making his dream come true, everything seemed to slow down to a crawl.

All the color from the world disappeared, and everybody seemed to be frozen in place, like Ash had paused the screen of an old black and white TV.

'What is happening?' he thought bewildered.

' *Ash? Ash!*' Latias screamed to him.

'Tia!' he thought back, but he couldn't move. Latias and Ash were just as frozen in place as everything else was.

' *Ash, what is going on? We won, didn't we?*'

'We did! We did win, Tia!'

' I love you, Ash!'

'I love you too,' he thought back sweetly. All he wanted was to celebrate with Latias and his friends, but it appeared Fate wasn't allowing that.

Then, a flash was seen, followed by a big rumble that shook the earth. A storm was coming, and it was the same one that happened a few days earlier when Ash was bickering with Paul in the pokemon center. It was potent, and full of rage.

Rain began to fall down; Ash could hear it, he could even feel how it made him wet, but he didn't see it. Everything stayed exactly in place, until a flash so blinding for the eyes went off in front of Ash and Latias, their vision was filled with only white.

When Ash's eyes began to adjust, he noticed he could move again, only his surroundings had completely changed. He was standing in a white void, alone, with nothing as far as the eyes could see.

Similarly, Latias found herself in the same situation. She was already desperately flying in one direction, scanning the endless area with her massive psychic powers for a sign for Ash, but she couldn't find his aura anywhere. Even with her mega-evolution, she failed to spot any aura at all. There was absolutely nothing and nobody in sight, and she realized this would go on for infinity.

"Hello there, Latias," a voice like thunder spoke to her, not unkindly.

"Who are you?" Ash asked the voice, who had spoken to him as well.

"Isn't it obvious? I am you, Latias. I am Ash Ketchum. I am Cynthia Shirona, I am Dawn Berlitz, I am Brock Harrison, I am Pikachu, I am Malice, I am Mayhem. I am everybody, and everybody is me."

Ash understood now. *It* was talking to him, brought him here, but for what reason, he didn't know.

' *Why am I here?*' Latias demanded.

The voice stayed silent, until a purely white being with a painted black outline manifested itself in front of her. It was a Mega-Latias, just like her.

"Isn't that obvious as well?" The being who looked like Ash Ketchum told him.

"I really don't know," he replied honestly, but deep down he had his suspicion. He just didn't want to acknowledge it.

"It's very simple, Latias," the being said. "I am Fate, and I just knocked on your door."

Ash is the champion, hooray! XD Anyway, did you guys like it, love it, hate it? Reviews are appreciated! :D Next chapter, the end of When fate comes knocking. Until then. ^^

~Syrup-Waffle

When fate comes knocking

The final chapter of this fic is here, people. I've put a big AN at the end of this chapter if you're interested in reading how this story came to be. If not, I hope you've enjoyed this massive rollercoaster ride with me. It's been a pleasure, my lovely readers. Without further ado, I hope you'll enjoy the final chapter of: **When fate comes knocking!**

Disclaimer: I don't own pokemon!

"Fate" Speech

'Fate' Thoughts

'Fate' Telepathy

Somewhere, in the infinite void, Fate eyed Ash patiently. The black outline of Its body sloppily followed the contours of Its limbs like it would with a character in an old cartoon; it was almost like a child had drawn It. Despite this, Ash couldn't shake the thought that It didn't look odd whatsoever. It had no face, yet Ash could see Its expression clear as day; It was calm, serious, but there was something else too. Ash couldn't quite figure out what it was. Respect? Kindness? Sorrow? Whatever it was, it was directed to him, and he felt proud and sad about it without even knowing why.

' *Why have you knocked on my door, Fate?*' Latias asked It impatiently. She knew she was playing dumb at this point, but she was genuinely upset It had unexpectedly whisked her away to Its home-a white, endless void-right when she had won the Lily of the valley for Ash. She couldn't even hug-tackle and kiss her trainer before it had happened.

"I'll answer your question in due time, Ash, I promise," Fate said in turn. "But first, let me show you around."

Fate's voice was odd; it made sense to Ash, but at the same time, it didn't. It spoke, yet it felt like telepathy. He heard Latias, but he also heard Brock, and then Dawn and then Bianca. Its voice seemed to change constantly, but it also stayed the same. He just couldn't comprehend it.

Latias felt a headache rise as she thought about these things. Even her powerful mind was unable to come up with a rational solution. So, she tried to ignore this in favour what Fate wanted to show her.

It turned around and raised Its arms, so that Ash was looking at Its back, and suddenly, Ash could see moving pictures appear in the vast void like floating television screens. They stretched on to infinity, all showing events that had transpired in Ash's past.

' *That's me,*' Latias gasped. She remembered these events vividly, and the further away she looked, the further in her past the events she saw had transpired in her life.

"Yes, Ash. That's you. What you're looking at is your entire past spread out before your eyes. As Fate, it's my duty to watch over every living being, just like Arceus has ordered me to do," It explained kindly.

"I don't understand," he responded; but he did, as clear as the sky was blue. What they did together-he and Latias-was an anomaly of monstrous proportions. They had overcome Mayhem together, and he instinctively knew that had never happened before.

"Latias," It began, "I think you know now why I had to intervene so drastically." The memories in the void faded as the fake Mega-Latias turned Its body around again to look back into her amber eyes. "The universe only exists because it has rules she needs to obey. When these rules are not followed, she will crumble, and every living thing will crumble with her."

Ash listened intently as Fate began to walk away with Its hands behind Its back. He followed It. "Now, just like this void is infinite, there are infinite universes as well," Fate explained. "For example, there are universes where you're never born, Ash, or universes where you'll find immortality and live forever.

"There are even universes where you are born as a Latios, raised by your mom as a normal human-child after she finds your egg when Team Aqua and Magma try to steal it from your real mom-a Latias-and where you will be oblivious to the fact you're a Latios until you're traveling all the way into Unova with two new companions. From there, you'll visit Alto Mare again with Pikachu to get some answers, where you'll find that the Secret garden has been turned into a peaceful haven for a lot of Latios and Latias alike, with its icy queen being the very same Latias you met when you stopped Annie and Oakley, only to learn a mysterious team has been hunting Latis down for their own nefarious purposes.

"Or there are universes where legendary pokemon are literal gods, where you will save Latios from dying by giving him some of your life power. In turn, you'll get the ability to speak to pokemon. The two dragons will then travel with you through Johto and Hoenn, where you will learn that an evil spirit has set its sights on both Latios and Latias. You'll meet a shiny Rayquaza and the daughter of Lugia too, who'll do everything in their power to protect the twins until they are reunited with their resurrected dad from the Soul Dew."

Latias looked at Fate owlshly. *'Those last too were... oddly specific,'* she commented. Imagining herself being an icy queen of a herd of Latias and Latios, she began to giggle inwardly. 'Bring me food, servant!' She'd probably claim Ash as her special Latios the minute he floated inside the Secret garden. She wondered idly if that had happened in the universe Fate described to her.

With a dopey grin, she then began to imagine what it would be to travel alongside Ash with her brother still alive, and ultimately, how she would feel when she would meet her dad. 'I think I wouldn't be able to express my joy properly,' she thought. That evil spirit worried

her, though. She wondered who it could be that it had such a grudge against her brother and her. 'Maybe an old foe of my father?' she guessed.

Fate waited patiently again until It had Ash's full attention once more. "Yes, Ash. I was being specific to show you that anything is possible, but even then, all these universes have their own set of rules. I'm the guardian of our universe, and I make sure the rules of our universe are being obeyed."

Ash stayed silent; he already knew where this was going. 'We weren't supposed to win from Mayhem, didn't we?' he thought slowly.

As if Fate could hear the dragoness, It answered. "Yes. The universe has gifted you with incredible strength, Latias, just like Ash. But that came at a cost. One of the rules of this universe was implemented then and there; Ash could never win a league. You have a rule yourself, Latias. But unfortunately, that's something I'm afraid I can't tell you. "

Ash felt odd, like somebody had told him a secret he didn't understand. 'I *really* can't win a league,' he thought, his expression turning gloomy. 'What will happen now that I did?'

Fate's expression turned serious. "That's why I called you here, Latias. You and Ash did the impossible: you battled against the universe and you won. But that holds dire consequences. The world will soon start to fall apart, until there's absolutely nothing left."

The dragoness couldn't believe her ears. They had doomed the world? A panic she didn't know was present started to grip her around the throat. '*What can we do to reserve this?*' she gasped. All her friends who she loved so dearly flashed before her eyes, and a couple of tears threatened to roll down her cheeks.

"Well..." It responded, "There is a way. I have the power to send you back in time, just before the final battle starts. The only thing what you have to do then is to lose."

Ash's heart threatened to stop in his chest at the news. "So, that's it then, huh?" he whispered, not believing after he'd finally won, he had no choice but to do it over and lose anyway.

"I'm sorry, Latias," It apologized, "There's no other way. Lose to Mayhem and save the world."

Latias was unable to respond; tears now rolled freely down her cheeks as she thought about the love of her life. 'Ash, I'm so, so sorry. I came so far, but in the end, it didn't even matter.' She couldn't stomach the thought of losing on purpose; the devastation on Ash's face would be too great. She wouldn't be able to live with herself, but what choice did she have?

"Is... is this really the only option I have?" Ash croaked hoarsely. How could he lose on purpose against Mayhem; how could he do that to Latias? His lovely dragoness had fought with every fiber of her being, and now he had to throw that all away? He was sure he wouldn't be able to look at Latias' face ever again.

It nodded, opting to stay completely silent instead of answering.

Latias felt hollow inside, her pupils big and almost lifeless. She stared at Fate as if she was seeing a ghost and looking straight through It. Her lips trembled as she forced herself to accept Fate's offer, but her body refused. Her heart ached and screamed at her. All of her senses resisted; images of Ash flipped through her mind like a notebook, and she was sure she was going to burst out in tears at any second if she stalled any longer.

"It's okay, Ash. I know how hard this is for you," Fate sympathized with him.

Ash was on the ground, a pain he'd never felt before making his whole body numb. It was the feeling of heartbreak; a terrible feeling that had him thinking of Latias while the memories of her burned away like pictures thrown in a fireplace. 'I'm sorry, Latias,' he thought, tears stinging his eyes, 'I'm so sorry.' How could he ever

face her after this? He was going to crush his own dream of becoming a pokemon master by making Latias lose on purpose.

At that moment, Latias became furious. *'How is this fair?'* she screamed at Fate angrily. *'Ash and I fought so hard! We won fairly from Mayhem. Ash should be the champion of the Lily of the valley right now. This isn't fair!'*

Fate cocked Its head, sorrow underlying his next words. "Life is never fair, Ash. That's how the world works. Some people are always lucky and live a long and happy life, other people will die young while having lived their short life in nothing but poverty."

Ash's face turned into a cynical laugh while he wiped away his tears. "That's how the world has always been, hasn't it?" He stood up and faced Fate, shivering like he was cold. He was unable to do anything else but to stare at It, his muscles refusing to cooperate.

"Latias," Fate said kindly. "Think about all of your friends, the rest of the world. All you have to do is to grab my claw."

Fate held out Its outstretched hand to Ash, and smiled. The raven haired trainer was sure he felt his hand move towards It on his own, just like an invisible force had guided his lips against Latias back in the pitch while the whole world watched.

Thinking about that made Latias' body fill up with warmth, a warmth that she so desperately craved that she almost swooned. She loved Ash dearly; she promised him she would always be with him-she'd promised him she would make his dream come true.

' Fate is not set in stone.'

"What?" Fate said, not sure It heard Latias correctly. Her claw had stopped an inch before touching Its, and she was retracting it now.

"Fate is not set in stone," Ash repeated more confidently. "We can create our own destiny if we work hard and believe."

Fate stared at Latias incredulously for a moment, before It grinned. "Is that so?" It questioned, amused.

' *Yes. That's the truth!*' Latias responded, and at that moment, she knew; like an illusion was lifted from her eyes. '*You were lying, Fate. The world will definitely not crumble if Ash wins a league! So, I will not accept your offer!*'

Fate laughed. "And what do you think Latias would say in your position, Ash?"

There was no doubt in his mind. "She would've said the same thing because she loves me, and I love her," he responded.

"Correct, Ash Ketchum!" Fate applauded him with a big smile. "I see now that I won't be able to change your mind. You've bested me."

Fate slowly started to fade, and in Its place, Latias started to appear. "The world is yours, Ash and Latias-embodiments of Love."

It was like Ash could finally breathe again. The moment It was fading, the void melted away too. He was back at the stadium, standing in the pitch while Latias-still in her mega form-was breathing erratically. Her face was just a few feet away of his.

' *Ash.*' She swooned, and before she could steady herself, he had already cupped her cheeks.

He didn't hesitate a moment. He pressed his lips firmly against hers, silently asking for entrance, which she eagerly granted.

The eruption of cheers from the crowd was ear-deafening. Mayhem was gone, and it seemed like nobody had noticed it, but neither Ash nor Latias cared.

Their tongues danced with each other, their Love such a fiery passion that they might as well have been fire-types.

"It's over, ladies and gentlemen!" Son Petertom cried ecstatically. "Against all odds, Ash has defeated Tobias! He's your new, and the youngest, Lily of the valley champion!"

"They did it! They did it!" Dawn cheered exuberantly, hopping up and down much like how her Buneary would do.

'Incredible. He has finally done it. I'm so proud of you, Ash,' Brock thought, his smile conveying just how proud he truly was.

Bianca was watching with her hands clasped together close to her heart. 'Oh Latios, if you only were with us to witness this moment. You'd be the proudest brother on earth!'

Paul eyed his rival with the utmost respect. "Amazing, he deserved this win through and through," he said simply.

Barry and Conway were both nodding their heads and clapping, the former cheering loudly, while the latter just chuckled.

Lastly, Cynthia's eyes twinkled with excitement. Not only because she thought Ash and Latias were extremely cute as a couple, but also because she knew he'd probably defeat the elite four, and then challenge her for the title of Champion. 'I'm very much looking forward to our battle, Ash.'

Meanwhile, Ash had finally broken the passionate kiss with his dragoness, the soft coo from her all he needed in his life. "We did it-together," he whispered.

"We did it..." he repeated, gasping. "WE DID IT!" he now roared at the top of his lungs, like he finally realized the meaning of those words. He threw both of his arms high into the air, his hands pumped into fists while he watched how the crowd cheered him on.

Latias couldn't keep her excitement in check anymore either, she giggled and flew happily in the air, doing loop-de-loops and barrel

rolls for the whole stadium to enjoy while Ash walked around in the pitch like a general who had just won on the battlefield.

He waved at all the people in the bleachers, quickly finding his friends who were as emotional as he was. "Thank you!" he mouthed to them, "Thank you guys so much." He'd never felt as ecstatic as he was now. Pikachu jumped into his arms and he hugged his starter pokemon tightly while going down on his knees as he held him close.

"We did it, buddy. We won!"

"Pika!" the electric-type cried happily. He took his usual spot on his shoulder, and then, Latias picked them both up with her psychic and placed them on her back.

' *Hang on tight,*' she said cutely as she flew over the bleachers, where hundreds of pokemon fans put their hands up to give the new champion of the Lily of the valley a handshake or a high-five.

Ash leaned over Latias and happily shook their hands as the dragoness made a couple of tracks over the bleachers.

At last, the podium was properly put in place, and Cynthia was already waiting in the pitch with a very big trophy in her hands. Her smile was contagious, to say the least, and she had to keep herself from giggling like a little schoolgirl.

Mr. Goodshow was waiting as well with a microphone in his hands. Ash landed safely in front of them and dismounted his dragoness, who then reverted back to her normal form.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Mr. Goodshow spoke loud and clear, "It is my pleasure to announce this year's winner of the Lily of the valley. Please give it up for Ash Ketchum from Pallet Town!"

The crowd roared again; the earth almost shook as Ash took his spot on the podium. Pikachu was sitting on his right shoulder while Latias

floated at his left. Then, Cynthia approached Ash, her smile as bright as the sun as she handed the trophy to Ash.

"Congratulations, Ash Ketchum. You and your pokemon have proven why you are the Lily of the valley's champion today. I can't think of anybody who deserves this more than you," she said sweetly and genuinely. She shook his hand and he could see the competitive fire burning in her eyes.

Ash smiled in return. "Thanks, Cynthia. Make sure you're ready for me. I'm going to give you a battle you won't soon forget once I've defeated the elite four."

Cynthia nodded eagerly. "I'm very much looking forward to it."

She stepped away, so Mr. Goodshow could do his closing words while Ash hoisted the trophy high in the air, receiving all the praise from the crowd and soaking it up like a sponge.

Latias looked at him passionately, her Love for him burning as brightly as ever. 'I did this all for you, Ash. I love you, I love you so much.' She looked up in the sky and gasped what she saw. There, in the clouds, was a perfect image of her brother, as if he was watching her from above. 'Oh Latios,' she thought longingly, tears streaming down her cheeks, 'you've been watching over us all this time, haven't you?'

As if he responded to her silent question, the sun broke through the Latios cloud, making it shine brightly. It was full of life, and Latias was sure he could hear her brother speak to her.

'I love you too, big brother,' she thought back. 'I always will.'

She looked back at Ash and hugged him. 'Ash,' she whispered. *'It's over. It's finally over.'*

In Alto Mare, a young teen was happily strolling through the streets. Under her arm, she was carrying a plethora of beautifully drawn pictures. When she arrived at her house where her grandfather lived, she called out for him happily. "Granddad! Granddad!"

"Over here, Bianca, in the living room," he shouted back.

"The match hasn't started yet, has it?" she replied, quickly pouring herself a drink while taking a seat next to Lorenzo. She carefully put the drawings on the table. Lorenzo shook his head. "It's still another fifteen minutes until it starts," he informed her.

"Oh, good. I thought I was running late. I wouldn't want to miss this for the world!"

Lorenzo chuckled at his granddaughter. It had been three months since Ash had won the Lily of the valley. He'd made a full recovery, and while repairs to his kitchen took a bit longer, everything seemed back to normal.

"Tell you what? Why don't we go over those drawings you made until the match starts?" he suggested.

"Of course!" Bianca said. She occasionally eyed the television screen anyway, wary if she might miss something. So far, there were only two commentators with an Ambipom and Gliscor discussing who was going to win the match. After all, Ash had indeed defeated the elite four.

In the mean time, Bianca showed Lorenzo all the drawings she had sketched and now fully colored; it depicted all the major events that had happened when she and Latias were at the Lily of the valley. As granddaughter and granddad waited, laughed and conversed with each other, their souls were filled with nothing but happiness and Benevolence.

"Ash Ketchum, you're up in ten minutes!" the sweet voice of his agent informed him. She was a pretty young lady who had a total crush on Ash. Her auburn hair bounced and waved smoothly to her back. A faint blush was on her cheeks as Ash gave her a smile.

"Thanks, Audra," he said. He looked at the glass window where hordes of fans were being held back by security, all desperately trying to get a glimpse of him. He chuckled dryly; Ash still had to get used to that he was a massive celebrity know. Since he was the first guy to come out in the open of his relationship with his Latias, he was seen as an example. Needless to say, a couple of other celebrities followed suit after him.

' *It's funny how life can go, isn't it?*' Latias said sweetly, having read his thoughts loud and clear.

"It is, Tia," he agreed. She joined him at *Stargazing*, as they had started to call it. Looking at hundreds of your fans, you always saw a couple that shined a big brighter.

Simultaneously, their eyes fell on a small girl in the front row, maybe not older than six years. She was standing there all alone, her eyes warm, intrigued. She was carrying a Froslass plush in one hand, which oddly enough, was burned. One of its sides was completely blackened, but it seemed somebody had stitched it so it wouldn't come off. It was clear to Ash and Latias that the plush was very dear to her.

Hypnotized, Ash and Latias approached the glass window. The girl smiled, and put one of her small hands on the glass. Ash did the same, as if they touched.

"You were always there, weren't you?" Ash said to the girl, even though it was impossible she could hear him. "We just had to find you deep inside of us."

The little girl nodded, her eyes sparkling.

' We never gave up on you. Not even when we thought you were gone completely,' Latias said. 'You gave us the resolve to go on.'

"Fate is not set in stone," she spoke sweetly.

Ash and Latias nodded their heads as she started to fade away.

"Fate is never set in stone-as long as you have Hope."

The little girl's eyes started to water. "Thank you," she whispered, and then, she was completely gone.

Ash looked at Latias. "Hope... as fragile as a little girl, but powerful enough to defeat Mayhem."

' No,' Latias said. 'Hope alone is not enough. You need Love as well. Hope and Love.'

"Hope and Love," Ash repeated.

He stared deeply into Latias' beautiful amber eyes, and what he saw, was exactly that-Hope and Love. His reply to her came in a gorgeous whisper.

"Then everything I need in my life is you-my Hope, and my Love."

I can't believe this story is done. Two and a half years in the making, and I can finally put a closure to this fic. I want to thank everybody for reading, following, commenting and adding this story to your favourites. It's all thanks to you I kept on writing this story to completion. Seriously, I couldn't have done this without you guys! :D

When I started this story, I wanted to go for something unique, something that was different than the rest of the altoshipping stories out there. A lot of stories I read was Ash visiting Alto Mare again. I decided I wanted to do it the other way around. Now, this story is heavily inspired by Fullmetal Alchemist:

Brotherhood. Back in 2015, I was a massive fan of that anime, so I wanted to create characters that symbolized something.

Thus, Malice, Mayhem, Solace and Benevolence were born as Guardians of Fate. They're counterparts of each other; Malice and Mayhem are the negative emotions and portrayed masculine, while Solace and Benevolence are the positive emotions and portrayed feminine, even though Benevolence didn't appear in this story.

These emotions represent something as well. I think I can safely say most people are pretty disappointed that after twenty years, Ash still hasn't won a single league. It's outrageous, especially after that disaster that was the Sinnoh league. The writers literally had to pull out a deus ex machina to stop Ash from winning.

Then a thought occurred to me: what if Fate represented the writers of the show? Well, they obviously don't want Ash to win a league, because then the story would be over. Even if they wanted that, the executive producers would refuse, and the writers have to follow the orders of the executive producers. In other words, the rules of the universe.

We know that Tobias was created by the writers so Ash would lose. Nothing more, nothing less. In my story, that's exactly the case as well. Mayhem was created by Fate to keep the rules of the universe in check, and in turn make sure Ash would lose the league. From there, I started to make more guardians. Malice, in this story, represents us, the fandom. We're angry that the writers of the show threw in Tobias in the last few episodes of the Sinnoh arc, because we obviously wanted to see him win.

But we always have our creativity and fantasy, don't we? That's our wife, representing Solace in this story. She loves us, because without us, she wouldn't exist. She'd never hurt us, and together, we created Hope. Hope is the child of Malice and Solace, and represents our fanart, fanfiction and fanvideos.

We're proud of it, and we love it as well. As long as we have that, we would never fade.

But Fate is always knocking on our door, isn't it? It's reminding us that it'd never be real. Ash will never win a league, and I'm sure most of us wish Tobias simply wouldn't exist. He killed our Solace and Hope, after all. This whole fic was about redeeming what pokemon should've done ages ago: let Ash win a damn league! XD

I wove that in with altshipping, because I simply adore Ash and Latias together. Did you know that in the first script of movie five, Latias was actually going to be caught by Ash and travel with him? I think that's why they settled with that goodbye kiss in the end, and why I am 100% certain that it had to be Latias in disguise. :D

Anyway, I want to give a special thank you to Storylover and Thor94, who have been with me since chapter one. Really, you guys, your support means the world to me! I also want to give a big shout-out to ARCEUS-master, who was another huge inspiration to me. I'm not sure if he'll ever read this, but thank you for writing the incredible story that is A new chance at life.

I honestly can say that I'll look back on this fic with immense satisfaction. I had never thought it'd be this big. Originally, the story was going to be ten chapters and I guessed around 40k words. Look at it now: 31 chapters and over a 130k words.

I want to thank all you guys again. I thoroughly hope you enjoyed the story, and please leave me a review! Until we may meet again in new and different stories. ^^

Sincerely,

~Syrup-Waffle