

## **Chapter 47: The Tale of the Flaming Vortex Part 1.**

Ramon stares.

Noctis stares.

“...”

“...Well???” Noctis huffs. *This kid’s mouth sewed or something?*

“Um...” Ramon taps his knee. “D-Do you know who...Travis is?”

“The Lucario, right?” Ramon nods meekly, to which Noctis folds his arms. “Yeah. He’s my closest friend.” Sighs. “The fact you know him *further* tells me you’re the survivor Travis was talking about.”

“Wait—” Ramon squints. “If you know who I am, then you’re aware of him wanting me dead over the incident.”

Noctis grunts, his hand against his head. “Yeah.” Ramon’s heart beats fast as he strokes the sofa, trembling. The Charizard looks at the fox, unphased. “I kept telling him to stop going after you, though.”

Ramon’s shakiness fades, ears perking up. “Really?”

“Yep.” Grumbling, Noctis fiddles with his portrait. “The idiot wouldn’t listen: He keeps thinking you’re the cause of Xander’s death and has been hellbent on this ‘revenge’ since.”

Ramon lowers his ears, whimpering. “That’s unfortunate.” He strokes his knees. “Noctis...Do you think I’m the one who caused the incident?”

The Charizard glances at his portrait. “I don’t know if you’ve caused it or not.” Shrugs. “But it’s pointless to kill you over, anyways.” Noctis blinks, turning towards Ramon. “With that said though: Do you know *what* happened while in the institute?”

Ramon shakes his head. “No. I woke up in that dark place with no memories of what happened.”

Noctis tilts his head. “Eh?”

The Zoroark nods. “It’s true. I don’t know anything about the facility besides the journal entry Yvonne wrote.” Gasps. “Oh right, the journal!” He fiddles with his claws, ears lowering. “It’s... probably still with Ada. Hopefully it’s not damaged and all.”

"Huh. Good to know you have his journal, at least." Noctis sighs. "Are you *sure* you don't know what happened at the Prospective Institute?"

Ramon nods. "I'm...very positive about it."

"Hmm..." Noctis folds his arms. "It's a big mystery for us all on what caused the incident. All we know is that a Pokémon survived the incident." He caresses his chin. "I'm not sure if it's you or someone else though. The news wasn't...entirely clear about that part, admittedly." Sighing, the Charizard shakes his head. "Regardless, it makes me not agree with Travis' vengeful thinking even more."

"Right..." The fox's claws twirl around each other, gazing down. "Say, Noctis: Is it true that Project Transvian was formed because of you?"

The dragon raises his brow. "Why'd you ask that?"

"...Because Travis told me two days ago while trying to kill me."

"..."

Silence flourishes, nothing but the fox's nervous twiddling is heard.

"...Yes. The project was formed entirely because of me."

"Oh. So that means—"

"Yep: I hate the shit out of my evolved form." Noctis looks down at his hand. "It's heavy, sluggish, and overall feels uncomfortable as FUCK." He forms a fist. "Evolving into a Charizard ruined my life. My reputation as the Flaming Vortex went down the *drain* because of it, ending my All Star Tournament days."

Noctis sighs. "To be honest, I used to be excited about evolving. Wanting to know how much better I can be the bigger I get, ya know?"

Ramon tilts his head. "Really?"

Noctis taps his leg, setting the portrait back on the table: Staring at the yellow chain Charmeleon. "Yeah. I remember a while back I was training for the next tourney at the All Star Tournament, feeling myself getting stronger and stronger..."

...

The yellow chain Charmelen slid across the ground before dodging the Lucario's Bone Rush, landing in front of his house. Purple flames radiated around Noctis' maw, the lizard grinning. Travis clenched his bone, his feelers twitching.

"I'm feeling reeeaaal close to evolving, Travis!" Noctis said in a hardy yet soft tone, flinging his Dragon Breath. The Lucario spins his bone around, twirling the purple flames.

Travis flew the flames to the side, smiling. "Mhm. I can sense your powers growing stronger." Stroking the side of his arm, he shrugged. "Although, I'm not entirely sure of that being correct."

Noctis waved his paw around. "Ah come on, your aura is entirely correct here!"

Travis shook his head. "You know how *wrong* my aura is, Noctis."

"Look man, if I say I'm close to evolving and you agree, then that means your aura is telling the truth here, right?" Noctis lifted his claw up. "Just relax and admit that your aura is correct."

"Hmm." The jackal looked away. "I'll...conclude it as a hunch, okay?" His ears lowered, staring down. "I don't want to trust my aura because of that incident. You know the one..."

Noctis grimaced. "Yeesh, right." He shrouded his claws in draconic blues. "Let's get back to training me up for tonight's tournament, okay? Don't wanna turn this into a gloomfest now."

Travis nodded. "Fair enough."

The Charameleon rushed towards him, jumping. The Lucario dodged before Noctis smirked, lifting his head back before ushering rows of flames. Travis grunted, twirling his bone as a shield. This was when Noctis got behind him and Dragon Clawed his back, the Lucario yelping.

"Ate too many vanilla cakes before training, eh?" Noctis snorted.

"Sh-Shush!" The cloak wearing Lucario swung his paw around, Noctis jumping back in time.

The two continued as a young man exited out of the house, taking out a remote from his blue pants and clicking it. The garage door opened, the two Pokémon stopping on the concrete and eyeing the man. He walked towards Travis, handing him the remote.

"I have to go take care of an important assignment at the Prospective Institute." Dr. Yvonne smiled, pressing his messy black hair down before the curls sprung back up. He sighed, his black glasses tilting. "My hair will *never* stay down, huh?"

Travis took the remote, snickering. "With how busy you are, your hair will stay wacky."

Noctis poked the man's leg, the late teen blinking before staring down at him. "You think you can make it to the tournament tonight? I feel like it'll be a really good one!" The Charmeleon smirked, his eyes closed, his hand against his chest. "I'm getting closer and closer to being so strong, dude." His fist slammed against his palm. "Like I'm talking *evolution* levels."

The young man smiled. "Really now? That's wonderful to hear, bud! But..." He shook his head. "I'm afraid I can't make it tonight, my friend."

"What? But I thought you were off from work today!"

"I...*was*. But my job is calling me for this one overnight shift today, and I simply *can't* miss such an opportunity." Dr. Yvonne patted Travis' shoulder. "That's why I want you to record everything with your phone. Just so you can send it to me afterwards."

The Lucario nodded. "I can do that."

Dr. Yvonne smiled, his hands nudging each other. "Splendid!" He walked towards his black car, waving at the two. "Have an awesome time at the event, guys!" He got inside, the two Pokémon stepping out of the way before he drove off.

The two stared at the moving vehicle, the Charmeleon sighing.

"Man..." Noctis folded his arms, his cheeks puffing up. "He's ALWAYS busy with that job of his'. I'm happy that he got it, but blagh: It felt like he hardly hangs around with us nowadays because of it."

Travis patted Noctis' back. "Yeah, he really likes his work. Seeing as his job is about helping others in some way or shape, I can't entirely blame him for the business." Smirked. "Hell, he's willing to sacrifice his days off if it means working there some more." The jackal's paws rested behind his head. "Xander means well, Noctis. I'm sure you understand."

The lizard sighed once more, shrugging while forming a small smile. "I guess so."

Noctis then leaped away, sliding on the grass and casting draconic energies around his claws. "Regardless, I'm still rearing myself for this event tonight." The Charmeleon grinned. "Wanna continue this dance?"

Travis grinned back, yellow auras painting his paws. "You betcha."

The two started sparring, laughing while dodging each other's moves.

...

The crowd roared!

The crowd shouted!

Some even tossed their popcorn across the stadium while flailing their arms, jolting up from the bleachers with extreme joy!

Travis dodged the thrown bag, holding his red phone horizontally, pointing towards the battlefield. The field was a wide, oval arena with vivid grass smoothing across for the competitors. Two spectators, an Inteleon named Bond and a light skin individual named Zenith, were in a room above the bleachers: Eyeing the vigorous fight from a huge, wide window.

Noctis brung his head back before shooting an array of spinning flames, engulfing the Butterfree opponent. And then the next match, he snuck up on a Pawmo and Dragon Clawed them, the yellow rodent yelping while flung into the air. Once the Pokémon fell down, the crowd screeched with rigorousness, screaming:

“Flaming Vortex! Flaming Vortex! **FLAMING VORTEX!!!**”

Travis wagged his tail. “WOO! JUST ONE MORE ROUND, NOCTIS!” He stood up. “You got this, bud!” Noctis turned around, smirking at the Lucario before lifting his claw.

After all the matches, the finale arrived: Menacing stomps echoed throughout the stadium. A shadow casted over the lizard, Noctis staring up, his smirk remaining.

“Annnnd the final opponent the Flaming Vortex will face is—” Bond paused his smooth voice: The tall, green armor biped grinning down at Noctis. “Bulk the Tyranitar!”

Bulk cracked his fist. “I heard a lot of things about ya, Mr. Flaming Vortex.”

Noctis chuckled. “Go figure.”

“Heh, yeah.” The Tyranitar cracked his neck. “It’s an honor meeting you in person.”

The Charmeleon caressed his snout, jumping up and down. “Right back at ya, Bulk.”

Bulk rammed his fist against his palm, his tail slapping the ground. “Now to see if your legendary title can truly hold up against a big brute like myself.” His grin intensified. “*Surely* a type disadvantage doesn’t concern someone as famous as you, right?”

“Type disadvantage?” Noctis shoots his flames in the air, the crowd erupting at the sight. Looking back at the Tyranitar, he folded his arms, grinning deviously. “Oh please: I *eat* those for breakfast, lunch, and dinner all at once!”

Cracks casted around Bulk. “Even dessert?”

Draconic auras shrouded Noctis' claws. "It won't even *make it* to dessert, haha!"

"Heh." The Tyranitar nodded, pillars of sharp stones rose up. "We'll see then, Mr. Flaming Vortex."

"Just don't hold back!" Noctis crouched before dashing forward.

"Right back at ya!"

The moment Bulk flung his Stone Edges, the crowd cheered wildly. Even Travis stood up with enthusiasm, keeping the phone up and steady as he smiled.

Noctis clawed several stones before leaping over the others, flipping forward. Bulk's tail encased itself in metallic skin before he twirled, his Iron Tail clashing Noctis' Dragon Claw. The two were pushed back, sliding across the smooth field. The audience roared once more, the Flaming Vortex chants returning.

Bulk lifted one stone from the ground and chugged it. Noctis ducked before the Tyranitar slammed his tail down onto him, the lizard jumping back in time, small dust rising. Noctis ran around, drawing flames around the towering foe. Bulk smirked, cracks forming around.

"I see what you're trying to do. I'm not letting it happen, though." Bulk lifted his hands, the Stone Edges sprung upwards. Noctis jumped off before being hit, groaning. He slid across the ground, one stone jolting towards him. He jumped to the side, slashing it in half.

Spectators commentated the match with zero pauses, but the two opponents didn't care as their eyes were attached to each other, purple flames shrouding Noctis' maw.

"Nice catch: Spoiling my Fire Spin trap like that," Noctis said.

"That tends to be one of your dirtiest tricks in the book." Bulk lowered his head, nudging his nose. He smirked. "Hence why I stopped it before you even *form* that circle," Bulk said.

"Tch." Noctis grinned back. "You're smarter than I thought."

Bulk blinked. "I'll...take that as a compliment???"

Noctis snorted. "Yeah because it is." He brung his head back and flung forward, his Dragon Breath roaring ahead.

Bulk shot one sharp rock towards it, obliterating the breath. A brief smoke rose, clouding Bulk's vision. Soon Noctis jumped out of it, slashing the pseudo's cheek with draconic energy. Bulk grunted, moving back. He looked behind him: Noctis staring back, toothy cockiness ensued.

The Tyranitar laughed. “Good one, Vortex.” His tail shined in metal. “But it’ll take a lot more than your Dragon Claw to knock me down.”

Noctis laughed as well, his purple claws persisting. “Good.” He jolted around, swinging his claws. “Because I *want* my opponent to be hard!” Bulk twirled around, his Iron Tail ramming against Noctis’ Dragon Claw.

BOOM!

The collision echoed throughout the stadium.

“LOOK AT THIS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN!” Zenith shouted through their microphone, their black hair swishing about. “THIS IS *EXACTLY* WHAT THE ALL STAR TOURNAMENT IS ALL ABOUT!”

“YEAAAAH!!!” the crowd yelled.

Noctis and Bulk kept the adrenaline going: The Charmeleon leaping over the sharp stones, the Tyranitar striking any draconic flames with his tail, the small lizard cartwheeling from erupting quakes, the biped giant evading the fiery claws. The two persisted, the crowd wilding.

The opponents soon came to a halt, panting. Bulk wiped sweat off his forehead, sighing. “Phew, you really are good at this. More so than I thought, heh.”

Noctis flicked his snout. “You’re not bad either, big guy.”

“Hmm...” Bulk rubbed his claws together. “Let’s see how you handle this.” Snapped.

“Handle wha—”

WOOSH!

Storm of grains rushed from the Tyranitar, engulfing the battlefield. A forcefield prevented the sandstorm from hitting the audience, everyone gasping.

Travis blinked. “That’s—”

“Sand Stream.” Noctis formed his fists, shielding himself while eyeing around. Bulk was nowhere to be seen, the sands clouding the Charmeleon’s vision. He grunted. “Where did you— GAH!” A stone jolted the lizard back, rolling him around. Noctis clawed the ground, stopping.

Laughs echoed throughout the sandstorm. “Am I finding your weakness, Mr. Flaming Vortex?” Bulk’s voice said, Noctis eyeing around the field, vigilant.

The ground beneath Noctis cracked and thumped like a heartbeat, pulsating rocky debris. Noctis eyed down. “Ah shi—” the Earthquake sent the Charmeleon up.

“ARGH!” He flailed around in pain. *I need to get rid of this sandstorm and FAST!* The lizard tried to cast flames until a huge stream of water splashed him. He yelped, ramming the ground and spiraling all over.

The crowd gasped, slamming their hands against their chests or mouths or even pressing on the stadium’s shield: Concerns everywhere.

“Oh no!” a Flamigo exclaimed, his red tie poking the shield. “Is our beloved Flaming Vortex alright!?”

“I have no clue!” a dark skin woman said, stroking her parasol. “Oh goodness me!”

Noctis grunted, stroking the ground. “Ugh...” He slowly pushed up before stopping, eyeing his shadow: It was becoming bigger than usual. “UM—”

Bulk slammed onto the lizard, red energy engulfing his entire body. Crucial waves vibrated the battlefield, Noctis coughing up blood. His eyes widened, his teeth gnashed, his claws groped.

“Sh-Shit!”

Everyone stared in awestruck, gasping once more.

“WHOOOA! Looks like Bulk has the upperhand, thanks to that sneaky Body Press!” Zenith stated, standing up and gripping the desk.

Bond crossed his legs, sipping coffee from his mug. “Indeed.”

A Cyclizar bit his fingers, his teeth clattering. “I-Is this the end for the Flaming Vortex?”

“Will he be dethroned after remaining the top for so long!?” a woman said, stroking her hat.

“Ngh...” Noctis groaned and grunted, trembling. He soon stopped, his head hitting the ground.

Bulk smirked. “Looks like I won, Mr. Flaming Vortex.” His head bowed. “It was a pleasure battling you.”

Travis frowned. *Come on, Noctis. I know you wouldn’t give up that easily!*

The two spectators looked at each other for a moment before nodding, the first pressing the microphone against their lips. “Alright, folks! It looks like the winner of tonight’s All Star Single

Tournament is—” Noctis glowed blue, his size increasing. Everyone blinked in perplexion, their eyes gluing to the scene. “OH WAIT, SOMETHING’S HAPPENING!”

“Grr...” Noctis grumbled: Wings forming on his back, his voice lower than before, his tail expanding its length.

“Hmm?” Bulk tilted his head. “Are you evolving?” The Tyrannitor got shoved off by the evolution, rolling around as he yelped. “Oof!”

Noctis stood up, spreading his arms out and clutching his fists: He stopped glowing, uttering his menacing roar as his wings flourished.

The crowd shouted with excitement, including Travis himself. “WOOO, LET’S GO NOCTIS!”

Noctis flapped his wings, winds evaporating the sandstorm. “WELL WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT, FOLKS! THE FLAMING VORTEX HAS EVOLVED AFTER ALL THESE TIMES!” Zenith yelled, the audience cheering endlessly.

Bulk brushed himself off, sighing. “I had a feeling this fight isn’t over *that* soon.”

Noctis eyed at his new form. “Hmph.” He clenched his hands. “Well I didn’t mean to evolve this soon, but here we are now.” Snorting, Noctis beckoned the Tyrannitor, casting his draconic claws. “Let’s dance.”

Bulk smirked, bringing his Stone Edges up before dashing towards Noctis. He fired, Noctis slashing them one after another. Bulk jolted his Iron Tail towards the dragon, who countered it with his claws. Noctis flung his purple breath, pushing the Tyrannitor back. He leaped forward, plowing more and more Dragon Breaths at the behemoth.

Bulk grunted, shielding himself. He soon gasped, electricity surging through him. *Crap*. He closed one eye. *Paralysis!*

Noctis smirked. “Gotcha.” He flew around the Tyrannitor, flames ushering from his maw. He flew higher and higher, the crowd gazing in awe.

“THE FLAMING VORTEX IS USING THE CLASSIC OL’ TRICK, FOLKS!” Zenith shouted, slamming their hands on the desk.

Bond snapped his fingers, winking. “Outstanding maneuver from our beloved Vortex!”

Noctis stopped midair, the flames swirling around Bulk. The dinosaurian gritted his teeth, tilting his claws up.

"I just. Got to—NGH!" He was immobilized, the surges springing him. Noctis snapped his fingers, menacing flames closing in and engulfing the Tyranitar. Bulk groaned and screamed, the Fire Spin trapping him like a cage.

The Charizard rubbed his wrist, casting his Dragon Claw. "I know the flames won't be enough, so let's *actually* finish this."

He dashed down, zooming around the furious vortex. He arched his arm, squinting. Swinging his claw, Noctis flung Bulk out of the Fire Spin. Bulk spiraled all over the ground, sliding across. He groaned, twitching.

The two spectators jolted up and down, saying, "AND WITH THAT, THE FLAMING VORTEX REMAINS AS THE WINNER OF THIS NIGHT'S ALL STAR SINGLE EVENT!" The crowd erupted with joy, some whistling being thrown here and there.

Travis formed a fist and pressed his elbow down, holding the phone in his other paw. "Hell yeah, Noctis!"

Noctis descended, walking towards the Tyranitar. Bulk slowly stood, grabbing the side of his arm. "That was a really fun match, Vortex." His hand held out. "I appreciated it a lot, especially the last minute evolution move." Smirked. "You really are the Flaming Vortex everyone hyped up to."

Noctis looked at his hands, glancing. "..."

Bulk blinked. "Is something wrong?"

"..." Noctis shook his head. "It's nothing." A small smile formed. "I liked our fight, too." He shook Bulk's hand. "Thanks."

Noctis' voice of the present says:

*"This is where my regret began..."*