

Chapter 54: Thrashing Tournament and Testing Falls!

Revival Falls Arc.

The Drowzee clings to the front window, staring at the buildings and civilians ahead. The sun is completely gone, the sparkling stars of the blues replacing it. She lowers her ears, her hands held together.

"Hey, Mesmeren," a soft voice says behind the Drowzee. She turns around: Delia eyeing her down. "Is something wrong?"

"...R-Ramon's been gone for quite some time now." Mesmeren pokes her fingers together. "I'm...worried for him."

"Hmm." Delia caresses her chin. "Admittedly, I don't know him all that well. But from what I've seen so far: He seems like a nice guy with good intentions, especially after handing Yvonne's journal to Noctis."

"Y-Yeah." Mesmeren whimpers. "It's why I'm w-worried about him, hoping he comes back from his walk." The tapir points outside. "It's even getting late."

"Makes sense." Delia squats. "I can tell that this Ramon guy is important to you." She smiles.

Mesmeren looks to the side. "Ye-Yeah. He's been so...c-considerate of me, even though I haven't done anything useful for him." She scratches her head. "I-I feel that way about everyone I've met, but I feel this way towards him the most."

"I see." Delia lays a finger on her cheek. "What makes Ramon special to you?"

Mesmeren blinks, her face reddens. "I. Um. Uh." *Wh-What do I even say to that?*

The woman lifts her hands, waving. "No worries. If that question is too personal, then we can move on from it."

"N-No no. It's...fine. Just, um." The tapir's heart thumps. "G-Give me a moment to think about it." She turns around, Delia tilting her head in perplexion. *Okay, me. It's, erm, o-obvious that you feel a lot of things towards Ramon. A-All of it is positive. So...What makes him special to y-you?*

The Drowzee thinks. And thinks...further.

He is a nice person, who always has uplifting things to say to me, even when he's feeling d-down himself. He's even interested in the things I do I-like the twirl hums. Everyone else is nice too, b-but he's...different about it, I guess?

Mesmeren nods. *Okay. I'll tell her that he's a sweet and caring guy, and that's why I I-like being with him. Sh-Shouldn't be hard, right?* She turns towards Delia. "He's handsome."

Delia's fingers press her lips. "Oh?"

"I-I—" Mesmeren covers her maw quickly. *Oh no: IT'S HARD!*

"You have feelings for him, I see. That makes sense." Delia giggles.

Mesmeren's face reddens even more, the Drowzee eyeing away. "I-I didn't mean it like that! I-I mean, I like him, yes. But maybe not in that way. Or maybe it is in that way or—"

"I get it, hun." Delia holds her hands together, sighing while eyeing up. "It's okay to admit your feelings towards him. Perhaps not right away, but...whenever you yourself feel ready to."

Mesmeren's ears perk up. "Hmm?"

The woman pokes her chest gently. "Love comes naturally: It's obvious that you've grown attached to Ramon since you two traveled together for these past few days."

Delia stares down. "W-Well, I don't know if I'd call it...love. M-Maybe not yet..." She covers her face. "I don't know!"

"Hey, it's fine. The natural part about love is questioning it—*wanting* to know why you have feelings for this person, *thinking* about those feelings being correct or not, and then *knowing* when you're ready to tell them if that's how you truly feel."

Mesmeren stares at the woman: Mouth agapes, body remaining still. "I..." She looks down at her hands. "I've never thought of it that way."

"It's something I've learned to do when I had feelings towards my husband." Delia sits beside Mesmeren, spreading her legs. "I was paranoid like you and thought it was pretty abnormal for me to have a crush on someone after knowing them for a few days."

"R-Really?"

"Mhm." She waves her hand around. "I started questioning my feelings after I talked with my parents about it during my late teens." She sighs. "It took me several months to finally realize I'm in love with this man, and eventually tell him about it." Delia covers her lips, snorting.

"Surprisingly: He felt the same way, too."

"I-I see." Mesmeren stares down, poking her fingers together. "Would I t-take s-several months to confess my f-feelings towards Ramon?"

Delia shrugs. "It depends. Like I said, love comes naturally: Folks may love each other within days, some within weeks—months, *years*." She tilts her head, closing her eyes while smiling. "Trust me, it'll all work out as long as both of you truly feel the same way about each other."

Mesmeren tugs on her blue ribbon, jittering. "I...I see then."

Silence emanates between them for a moment.

"..." Mesmeren turns. "So you won't tell a-anyone about this, r-right? Not even Ramon himself."

"Oh absolutely." Delia's hand rests on Mesmeren's head. "Your secret lies with me!" Her finger presses her lips, winking.

"Th-Thank you." The Drowzee blushes, twirling the side of her ribbon.

Noctis groans, catching the two's attention. The lizard rolls his eyes while on the middle couch with Serene and Ethan, clicking the remote. "There's been nothing but boring shows today, huh."

Tears pour down Serene's face in a dramatic manner. "I was about to witness two girls kissing live in Episode 7 of Super Convolutioned Clown Muscle Man." Her ears droop, whimpering.

Noctis sweats, glaring at the Leafaeon. "Probably for the best I changed the channel after hearing that show's title, what the hell."

"It's a weird title, yes! But the characters are pretty decent!"

"Eh..." Noctis stops clicking, the channel revealing Courtney and Sylock walking in the All Star battlefield. "Let's just watch the All Star Tournament instead."

Delia returns to the couch, gasping. "Ooo, watching that big event, I see?"

Noctis shrugs. "Yeah. Might as well since I'm home, plus the shows that's on right now are garbage."

"Gotcha then." She sits on the couch beside the dragon, eyeing Mesmeren. "Hey, wanna come watch?"

Mesmeren turns to the front window, looking out. "N-No. I'm...fine."

"Alright."

Everyone proceeds to eye the TV screen.

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The crowd cheers at the four battlers in the stadium: Courtney and Sylock standing on the opposite side of their opponents. Bond taps his mic, smirking. "In today's match, we have Courtney the Lopunny and Sylock the Blaziken Vs Nia the Espeon and Mace the Drampa!"

Nia and Mace stand before them, smiling. Mace nods. "It's a pleasure meeting you, Ms. Courtney and Mr. Sylock!" he says in a mannerly tone.

Courtney salutes. "Likewise." She brings her fists up, jumping a bit. "Let's give this our all!" She stops, smirking. "Make it the greatest fight it can *ever* be."

Nia giggles behind her paw. "I hope so, too!" She smiles widely.

Sylock flinches, a brief image of another Espeon showing a similar smile. Even her *voice* sounds similar—the posture, too!

What the... He pants, eyes widening. *Why am I...*

Courtney looks at Sylock, blinking. "Um—"

"Let the battle begin!" Bond and Zenith shout.

Courtney yelps before the four rush towards each other, the crowd throwing their arms up with enthusiasm.

"YOU GOT THIS, FAMS!" Justin yells, clenching his fists.

"WOO! GO COURTNEY AND SYLOCK!" X exclaims.

Ada folds her arms, her and Coleo squinting ahead. "So noisy..." they say.

Courtney's fist jabs Mace, the Drampa's arm parrying it before he pushes her. He then flings his draconic breath, Courtney Quick Attacks to the side and slides across. As she dashes forward, Sylock kicks the Espeon rapidly, Nia ducking and hopping over them.

The feline then pushes the Blaziken back with Psychic, the chicken gripping the ground with his claws. He blinks, another image of a Torchic shows up in his head: Struggling in a telekinetic hold. In front of the Torchic was an Espeon, grinning down at him. She said the following words:

"Do as I say."

Sylock snaps back to the present, snarling before unleashing a roaring stream of flames. The Espeon leaps over, the grass being eviscerated as the crowd roars onwards. The four go at it: Evading one move after another.

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Ramon ducks, rolls, and even hops from the guard's Discharges. The ape pants, squinting at the amphibian. The guard clasps her hands, raging electricity twirls forward. Ramon grits his teeth, leaping to the side as the attack rams against the wall.

The guard quirks her brow. "You haven't hit me yet."

Ramon gulps. "Haha, I'm a-aware..." *Jeez, she's aggressive!*

The newt's fist glows bright red, dashing after the disguised ape. She jabs the Infernape, Ramon blocking the Power-Up Punch as he grunts, sliding back. His arms wobble, phasing between his normal Zoroark's ones and the Infernape's.

Ramon's eyes widen. *OH NO!* He turns his back towards the Toxtricity, jittering.

CHANGE YOUR ARMS BACK! Nomar yells.

I AM! I AM! Ramon clenches his teeth, his arms going through the wavy illusions. *I-It's difficult!*

Just try to relax! Breathe and keep the illusion back up and going, okay!?

O-Okay! Ramon takes a deep breath, closing his eyes. Eventually his arms go back to the Infernape's, opening his eyes before he and Nomar sigh.

That was a close one...

Tell me about i— Ramon's ears flicker, the Infernape jumping to the side as the guard hits the wall, her glowing fist fading.

The newt eyes Ramon, her glare piercing his timidity. "Never turn your back on your opponent."

Ramon gulps, nodding. "R-Right." He gets in a posture: Legs apart, arms up and ready. The guard jolts her lightning towards him, Ramon jumping back in time. He gasps at the Toxtricity instantly being close to him, thrusting another Power-Up Punch. He backflips away from the nearly-landed uppercut, sliding across the ground.

M-Man... The Toxtricity crackles her electricity, having it surge throughout her. The illusion Infernape squints. *She's fast!*

. . .

“WOOO!”

Courtney leaps up, white auras casting her. “This fight is awesome!” She Quick Attacks towards the dragon, ramming into him. Mace grunts, getting pushed as Sylock fires his immense flames at Nia: The crowd aweing at it all.

Nia ducks and rolls from the Flamethrower, jumping over the last one. She lands down and uses Psychic on the flames, stopping it before it explodes. Dark clouds cast around Courtney and Sylock, blinding them momentarily.

Merlin squints. “Hmph, can’t see with all this dust cloud.”

Roan rests two hands on his cheeks, gasping. “What could be going on in there!?”

Zenith points at the field, smirking. “THINGS ARE GETTING *NUTS*, FOLKS! ALL OF THAT EXCITEMENT HAPPENING BEHIND THOSE DUSTS!” They snap their fingers, the crowd shouting. “WHAT *WILL* HAPPEN NEXT!?”

Courtney eyes around the dust, smirking. “Heh, must be some trick they have up their sleeves.” Her back soon meets Sylock’s, nodding. “We got this, right Sy?” No response. Before the Lopunny can say something else, a rainbow-colored beam soars towards the two.

They both dodge, being airborne before Sylock is shrouded in pink auras, grunting. As the clouds start fading, Courtney gasps at Nia floating beside Sylock. “Oh crap!” Nia throws Sylock towards her, the two colliding and flailing all over the ground.

Bond sips his tea, eyes widening. The Inteleon slams his cup down. “My my, what an intense comeback Nia did, everyone!”

The crowd erupts with excitement except for Justin and co., the teen shaking his head. “Ah come on, you two! Y’all can do better than that!”

“You guys were lit from the last match! Give them these two the same treatment!” X exclaims.

Sylock jabs the ground, stopping him and Courtney from sliding further. As Nia lands on the ground, the Blaziken books after her, Courtney joining him. The Lopunny summons shaky energies onto herself and Sylock, both Agilitying towards forward.

“Y’all two are going DOWN!” Courtney shouts.

Mace jumps in front of Nia, roaring loud enough to blow his opponents away. The two groan, the Hyper Voice sliding them back. Courtney squints, standing up: Her arms hanging, her pants radiating.

“Heh.” The rabbit smirks. “These two sure are tough, ain’t they Sy?”

WHOOSH!

The rabbit’s smirk fades, the igniting flames rage at the corner of her eyes. She blinks, turning towards Sylock: Red-orange auras coating him, flames sprouting above. He glares ahead, snarling.

“Uh...Sy,” the lopunny tilts her head. “You don’t need to use yer Rune, ya know?”

Flames crackle around his fists, his Blaze Booster heightening with fury. Courtney lifts a finger. “Hey, are you hearing m—” Sylock jolts forward, wind blowing against the rabbit as she shields herself. “WHOA!”

Sylock runs, his eyes fixating on Nia. The Espeon’s eyes glows light blue to use Psychic, but the Blaziken fades. She blinks. “Where did he—ACK!” The Espeon is kicked to the stomach, jolting away from the Blaziken as she flails around.

“AH!” Once she stops herself, she lifts up only to be met by a foot clenching her head. “Huh!” Sylock slams her face to the ground, fiery igniting his eyes.

The audience gasps, confusion rising.

“Hey! I thought this was supposed to be a friendly competition! What’s with the dirty beatings!?” Mace snarls, soundwaves emanating his maw. “Get off from Nia right now!” He unleashes his Hyper Voice, screeching. Sylock flicks his hand to the side, large flames shattering the voice barrier and ramming the Drampa. “ARGH!” He slides across, twitching.

Sylock strokes Nia’s head, blood seeping down. She screams, closing her eyes in pure agony.

“LE-LET ME GO, YOU ASSHOLE!”

Courtney watches the Blaziken, her hand to her lips. “Sylock?”

The Blaziken glares, throwing the Espeon across the field. Nia flails all over the ground, hacking and coughing along the way. Sylock dashes after her, many imagery of a Torchic clouding his vision: Pleading, crying—he was on his knees, eyeing up an Espeon with a sickly smile.

Sylock reaches Nia and knees her to the ground, cracks forming around her as his rage snaps him into the present. Nia grunts, her vision blurred. Before she can do anything, the Blaziken

punches her face. And then he punches again. And again. Sylock jabs her with zero pause, blood spewing out of the Espeon's maw.

Mace and Courtney's eyes widen, teeth jittering.

"S-Stop!" Mace says, his tone weak. "Pl-Please!"

"What are you doing, Sylock!?"

The crowd stares in mortification, hands being pressed against mouths. X raises his brow, warping into disturbance. "What the hell is Sylock tripping on!?"

Bond grits his teeth as Zenith looks at him, cranking their head. Bond nods and clicks on a button. "Guards, get Sylock off from Nia right now!"

Within seconds, many bodyguards enter the field from both entries, jolting after the chicken. The moment they get close, Sylock stretches his arms out: Menacing flames pushing those guards away, all screaming and scattering across the field. Some are knocked out while others become injured, the crowd gasping in horror.

And then Sylock keeps going. And going. More punches. One after another. A neverending bloodfest of pure *rage*. His eyes widen, his veins straining: It is like everything around him doesn't exist. Only him and that bitch of an Espeon, Xen—

"STOP!"

A single scream—a *pleading* one, pauses Sylock. He takes one good look at Nia: Her face is shrouded in blood, deep reds scattering along with a few broken teeth. She hardly moves, only making brief subtle grunts. The Blaziken turns to his side at a tearing Lopunny: Shaking and trembling. A vision of a Torchic takes her place, eyeing the Blaziken in dread.

"Please..." Courtney utters. "Stop."

Once the vision fades, Sylock looks at his hands: Blood dripping down, from the claws to the main hand itself—the cause of this whole disaster. He shakes, eyes quaking. *Oh...* He pants heavily, heart thumping rapidly. *What...have I done?* He turns to the entrance he and Courtney came from, dashing ahead: Tears trailing behind him.

Courtney flinches, eyeing the fleeting bird. "W-Wait!" She follows.

Everyone is speechless, both of the judges staring at the field in mortification. Many medics arrive inside, ushering towards the injured individuals.

Zenith presses their lips to the mic. "...Courtney and Sylock are disqualified from the tournament." They look down. "We'll...take a short break after what happened."

The crowd starts talking about the situation as the gang eyes each other: Dread, confusion—they paint them all.

"...Holy shit." All Justin can blurt out.

X points at him. "Yeah, no: I second what he said there. The hell was that about!?"

Merlin clenches his staff. "I have no clue, but...goodness, was it scary to witness."

"AAH!" Roan strokes his head: His eyes close, his mouth open. "I've never seen Sylock become so...*menacing* before!"

Coleo nods. "Indeed, lad: What blimey all of tha' was!"

"That's one way to put it, fam." Justin sighs. "This isn't the first time I've seen Sylock go apeshit, but like: Shit's still scary to see, though."

Ada jolts up, Coleo clinging onto her head immediately. "Whoa there, lass!"

"Let's meet up with those two quickly before they leave," the girl suggests, maneuvering around the seats.

"Good idea, fam!" Justin follows her along with everyone else.

And over at Noctis' home, Serene and Delia cover their lips in horror as Ethan trembles, gritting his teeth. Noctis lowers his brows, dropping the remote. "What...the *fuck* did I just watched?"

Mesmeren looks behind her, blinking. "Hmm?"

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Ramon keeps ducking the Guard Tester's punches, even dashing forward to slash her with Fury Swipes. The guard grunts, jumping back. She frowns, dusting herself.

"Huh. You actually hit me, finally." The Toxtricity cracks her neck. "But it'll take a lot more than a single hit to prove your worth."

"Figures."

The guard clasps her hands, lightning dashing after the illusion Infernape. Ramon runs forward, jumping over the Discharge as his fingers glow white. The Amped leaps up, clashing her red

punch with Ramon's white claws. Once the two moves propel them, the two rush forward: Unleashing a barrage of jabs they're throwing and dodging simultaneously.

"Tch." The guard trips Ramon, the Infernape yelping. "Gotcha." Her fist coats in purple, sludgy aura: Jabbing forward.

Oh no! Ramon and Nomar think, the former gnashing his teeth. He then jolts his tail towards the ground, flipping himself backwards as the Poison Jab hits the air. Sliding across the ground, the Infernape pants, keeping his fists up.

The Guard Tester lifts her fists, coating them in purple auras. "Nice dodge. Keep it up." She dashes after him, her speed quick and nimble.

The fake Infernape stands there, his eyes glowing red, crimson energy shrouding around. He howls, slamming his fists to the ground and expanding a forcefield towards the Toxtricity. The guard stops, gasping before being thrown towards the wall, groaning. She slides down, panting. Ramon pants as well, lifting his fists.

"Am I worthy now?" he asks.

The Toxtricity lays a hand on her knee, eyeing up the ape. She smirks. "Yep." Standing up, she rubs some dust and adjusts her cap. "You're free to go see the Spell now. Kellie's there too, by the way."

"Sweet." Ramon is about to ru—

"Hold it, though." The guard lifts her hand, Ramon stopping and turning.

"...Yes?"

"How did you use Night Daze?" The guard tilts her head. "I...don't remember any Infernapes having that move before."

Ramon and Nomar gulp.

Oh no. I-I didn't think this through!

Quick! Think of an excuse and fast!

Uh. Um. Uh— "I, erm, was born with a..." He trails for a bit. "Unique power!"

"Unique...power?"

The Infernape nods. "Yes. It allows me to use moves my kind normally wouldn't learn."

The newt taps her chin. "Are you talking about Rune? Something that Nered chick has?"

Ramon snaps his fingers. "Yes! That's what I was referring to!" He shakes his head, laughing. "I kept forgetting the name of that hidden power us Intellicates have. Goes to show how rare that power is."

The guard shrugs. "That's fair, I guess."

With that, Ramon dashes further into the cavern, the guard stepping back in front of the entrance.

Oh my god, brother: She legit saved that lie of yours'.

Y-Yeah! Ramon sighs. *What a relief! ...I-I guess.*

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Many Conjure goons eye their leader, Jester hopping up and down nonstop. "Come on, come on—COME. ON!" He stomps. "When are we ready to go!?"

The cane-wielding woman rolls her eyes. "Be patient. This plan is long, unpredictable, and above all else: *Life-changing.*"

Arthur nods. "Agreed: Have some virtue in you, and understand that we may not even be ready ye—"

"We're ready." The leader smirks, opening her eyes. "He's getting close to the Spell."

Jester grins at the two Conjures. "You were saying?"

"Silence," Arthur and the red-haired woman mutter.

All of Team Conjure roar proudly, Jester whistling in approval. "Hotdog skillet, it's bout time we get this show on the road!" Blue auras sparkle around his hands, the man grinning. "I'm *dying* to drown these nimbwads, haha!"

Lycus squints at the man. *Wow.* He blinks while shaking his head. *He's making that Justin kid look like a masterpiece right now.*

The Team Conjure Leader opens her spellbook, the two admins sticking close to her. She chants two simple words inside: "Teleportation Spell." Blue light casts around everyone, their bodies ascending into it.

Then everything cuts to darkness.