

POKÉMON  
REBIRTH  
**Alliance**

It proves hard to get time together as a family.

For a certain figure known to most as "Giovanni Mortego", it was almost impossible.

Once a budding Pokémon Trainer, his ambitions were fast manoeuvred into more entrepreneurial realms, courtesy of his mother, Hypatia. This enforced leadership was immersion into a world of heaviness...darkness...even brutality. At first, the man had struggled to accept these terms – angered at his mother for even letting them to continue. But business was business, she used to say. He could see that now.

Yes...business was business - a matter in which family life could not be allowed to interfere. As his mother had done before, this figure had crafted himself a persona by which to separate the areas of his existence. To his wife, he was simply "Liam Ketchum" – the bold, adventurous man that had stolen her heart so many years ago. He had striven to make occasional visits under such terms before circumstances had grown too...complicated.

To his son, however, the man was nothing more than a name without a face.

Liam's son was a natural-born traveller, much like himself. For the past four years, Liam had witnessed his son's progress through television broadcasts of Pokémon Contests and League Tournaments. Steadily he had grown from an inept, short-sighted youth - more often relying on luck than skill - into a strong and adaptable trainer with true strategic capability. It had been a satisfying experience, to say the least. Watching his son successfully tread the path *he* had taken gave Liam further conviction that his plans would come to fruition.

The incredible distance the man had forged between himself and his family was not to be in vain. There was much to be done, after all. Much ground to be covered, many to be subdued and reformed under his commandments, far beyond that of the thorough structures of his business network. And when the time was right - when Liam had assumed his rightful place of rulership - then his wife and son would join him as the crown queen and prince of a kingdom like no other.

Yet, under the duty-bound, power-saturated mental aberrations that governed the leader of Team Rocket, something stirred. Something more paternal. A longing to give back to his son - to make up for his absence in some small way. Even if that son were to be unaware of this response.

And thus, during one of his sparse moments of distance from the business, Liam had spent some time poring over the vast selections of lavish outfits in one of Goldenrod City's most famous department stores. It wasn't difficult to find out the appropriate size of clothing - after all, Liam's wife had made all of her son's attire since he was a baby. Sentimental value was the reason Liam knew his son refused to switch outfits for very long, despite the man's wish to see him in something more befitting an up-and-coming young adult.

However, Pokémon Contest Halls were a place Liam knew familiar travelling attire was exchanged for something a little more unconventional. As such, he had selected his purchase and summoned a human courier to ensure its rapid and unsullied delivery to the south-western parts of Sinnoh. Feedback from Liam's long-term tracker operatives dictated that his son had arrived at Valor Lakefront with companions in tow and was intending to participate in the contest organized by Wallace Machery. He had demanded that the gift be made certain to reach its intended recipient.

Unfortunately, circumstances had kept Liam from seeing broadcasts of the prestigious event until the day following its conclusion. Despite this, the moment lost none of its significance for him. Watching his only child enter the spotlight dressed in the very same clothing the man had grasped in his own two hands just days earlier...witnessing his son instruct a buizel with unfaltering authority – executing moves beyond conventional means...all these things drawn together into one pinnacle of advancement gave Liam a sense of contentment, even pride.

He felt no disappointment at seeing his son fail to make it past the quarter final stage. There were still flaws in his performance, naturally. But it was obvious he had come a long way – coupled with the impressive appearance of the outfit, he truly looked the image of assertiveness and maturity that Liam had wanted to see for so long. A decent heir to the business, if there ever was one.

“Giovanni?” a slightly crackly voice forced its way from the desk intercom into Liam’s thoughts. “Two operatives from the logistics department are demanding to see you.”

“Refer them to Ms. Radwell,” Liam muttered, swivelling his plush leather chair to face the window. “I’m busy right now.”

“But it was upon your orders that this particular correspondence be seen to immediately,” the secretary insisted. Liam raised an eyebrow, letting his right hand navigate the length of his persian’s back. The cat pokémon responded with a contented purr, stretching itself further across its owner’s lap.

“Fine,” the man responded in gruff tones. “Send them in.”

The large grey doors at the far end of Liam’s office slid open to

reveal two male figures dressed in regulation Team Rocket grunt uniform – black trousers and overshirt with the unmistakable 'R' insignia, combined with white gloves and boots. Black peaked caps sat upon their heads, casting any recognizable facial features into shadow. As the doors shut behind the operatives, Liam turned to face them, closing the video window displaying the Wallace Cup broadcast footage on his laptop in the process.

"Yes? What?" he inquired shortly.

"A package," one of the grunts announced, motioning to the box in his possession. "Special delivery that looks like it's from a 'Jessie', 'James' and 'Meowth'."

"'Jessie'? And 'James'? And 'Meowth'?" Liam echoed. The surprise was evident – these were the names of the two agents and the pokémon accomplice he'd assigned with the task of keeping an eye on his son during his lengthy travels. Their blatant ineptitude made them the perfect candidates, simply due to the fact that no one would expect a trio of flawed misfits to be undertaking such a mission. Additionally, they had continued to make excellent targets for refining his son's training abilities.

"Team Rocket operatives based in the Sinnoh region, I believe," the other grunt clarified, unaware that his boss did in fact know of their identities and current location.

"Hmm..." Liam took to musing this unforeseen occurrence as he plucked some treats out of a drawer in his desk. "Here, my dear persian," the man smiled contentedly, feeding them to the cream-furred pokémon before rubbing the side of its face. "Like that?"

The grunts shifted uncomfortably at what seemed like complete dismissal of their presence in the office. Their boss seemed more distant than usual, as if his attentions were elsewhere.

"What is it?" he said, after a pause.

"It's a Pokéball, sir," the right-hand grunt replied, opening the box and offering it forward. Liam uttered a noise of vague interest but made no effort to examine the article himself. Somehow he couldn't see the pokémon within being any remotely useful contribution towards his endeavours. More likely than not, it was another of that eccentric trio's attempts to get themselves out of the mission they had been entrusted with.

The Pokéball was placed on the right side of Liam's computer, prompting the machine to eject a miniature scanner device and examine the metallic sphere's contents.

*Pokéball Contents: Yanma, a computerized voice responded. Its usable moves: Wing Attack, Quick Attack, Sonic Boom and Ancientpower.*

Just as he suspected. In terms of usefulness to ongoing projects, this pokémon was undeniably weak. However, it did provide some much-desired information as to the current whereabouts of his son. Data on pokémon capture locations was always recorded alongside their species, nature and attacks, and Jessie, James and Meowth could not have been far from Liam's son when this yanma's capture had occurred.

"Our supply?" the man inquired, without looking up.

"Sir, we recently required a large number of yanma," the left-hand grunt informed him. Liam's persian meowed pleasurably in response – after the stronger and more agile specimens were picked off for trading, research, modification and dissection, there was always the possibility of obtaining a new play toy, after all. However, it

appeared Liam had other ideas for this particular delivery.

It may have been surplus to his requirements, but it didn't mean those who sent it him wouldn't find it beneficial to their own. Besides which, that yanma would use Ancientpower sooner or later, and there was nothing quite like sparring with a yanmega to give his son a bit of a challenge.

"What shall we do, sir?" one of the grunts spoke up, interrupting the silence. A tiny smile emerged upon the Team Rocket leader's face at this point as he stared at the solitary Pokéball, still latched into the laptop scanner.

"Let's see..."

"I dunno about you, Finch," the taller, neater-haired grunt murmured under his breath as the two figures wandered down the corridor, away from 'Giovanni's office. "But the Boss seemed...different today, in my opinion."

"No, no, Rob...you're right," Finch agreed, a slightly worried look in his eye. "We just bought him one, single puny little yanma and he just turned it away without flinching. "Usually, he would've kicked up a proper stink – told us to stop wasting his time, maybe even order that the idiots responsible for sending him such things be punished."

"Uh huh," Rob nodded slowly, looking down at the resealed box. "And there was nothing of that. It was kinda creepy. Wonder what was up with him."

"Maybe he's having a good day?" Finch suggested. A long silence ensued, to which the pair of operatives descended into raucous laughter.

"The Boss having a good day...nice one, Finch," Rob snickered.

"Can't imagine what it might take to put *that* cranky tightwad in a reasonable mood."

Back inside the office, Liam gazed warmly down at his persian and the hand bearing his wedding and Team Rocket alliance rings. Bound to one by choice and another by responsibility, the man turned his mind to the day in which he would be able to bring these halves of his fractured life together in unity...

...and returned to watching the contest broadcast.

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