

MAROWAK DOJO

The chapter opens with a clash of attacks- one from Rune, who is trying to perform Fairy Wind but keeps getting Icy Wind, and one from Inigo, who hits the ground to create a rock shield from the ley line properties of the dojo. He then breaks a chunk of rock and sends it flying towards Rune using Iron Tail¹. Thinking fast, she uses Icy Wind, which slows the rock, but it still hits her. She lands on the ground with a thud.

INIGO

Good. Again.

Rune breathlessly nods and gets up without hesitation. We see that they're both winded as they continue sparring, and pan over to their audience... Dielle and Yohann are watching their efforts from the sidelines. Yohann, walking in with a tray of drinks, hands Dielle her horrible little milk in a to-go cup.

YOHANN

Your affront to god, madam.

Glad to see my accessories are holding up despite the... unnecessary beating they're taking.

DIELLE

I'm starting to get worried... This is exactly what Inigo does when he loses a tournament.

Since the attack in Apple Woods, we've just been training nonstop. And when we aren't *training*, we're stacking multiple jobs in a day.

YOHANN

Speaking of, shouldn't Mac be back with my errand by now?

¹ Changed to Double Kick since Inigo never learned Iron Tail in the game! Not that I'm a huge stickler about it, but I like to follow their in-game movesets when I can.

DIELLE

Give it a few more hours. He probably got a huge backlog of jobs to make up for lost time.

... I miss being able to just spend time together like friends.

Suddenly, Malachi enters the dojo. He narrowly ducks under an Ice Shard from Rune, but recovers quickly.

INIGO

Back so soon?

MALACHI

Ah... Yeah. It's time.

The guild is announcing expedition members.

The team looks nervous at the prospect.

WIGGLYTUFF'S GUILD

Inside the guild, it's packed with all sorts of exploration teams of all shapes and sizes. Team Maelstrom squeezes in, near a Milotic with Finneon features. Chatot enters the room, and quells the crowd.

KEATON

Yes, yes. Thank you all for coming here today.

[Quietly] Though I hope you know you could also just check the bulletin after the announcement...

Details for this expedition are restricted for the ears of our expedition members only. I kindly ask that teams not selected vacate the area while we go over mission details. Now, without further ado, our list.

He begins listing off team names in a montage sequence, and while we see other teams celebrate, Team Maelstrom seems put down. The Milotic bends down.

EILWYN
First expedition?

MALACHI
Huh?

They wink.

EILWYN
You'll do great!

RUNE
Thanks, but we don't have high hopes for getting selected.

There's a beat panel of them processing the information.

EILWYN
Then why'd you come if you suck so bad?

RUNE
H-Huh?

KEATON
-and Eilwyn the Milotic.

EILWYN
Hey, that's me!

RUNE
Of course.

KEATON
Now if all non-participants would please exit the room, I'll deliver the mission briefing-

The Guildmaster crashes into the room in a fury.

GUILDMASTER
-And Team Maelstrom! Hi hi sorry,

I forgot to give you the updated list! And Team Maelstrom.

He smiles and Chatot shoots him a glare, but looking at the crowd, relents.

KEATON

And Team Maelstrom. The rest of you are dismissed.

Team Maelstrom looks on in disbelief. Eilwyn smiles at the team, which is met with varying grimaces. Once the other teams have cleared out, the mission briefing begins.

KEATON

Our expedition will take place on the **Air Continent**. Our mission is to secure a Time Gear that we suspect is located near a small cluster of Mystery Dungeons, and evacuate any surrounding areas to prevent a tragedy like Treeshroud's. To get there, we will need to travel through two dungeons- Turquoise Reef, and Mt. Horn.

Though it may sound daunting, we really only have *one* dungeon to go through. This is because each team will receive one Entercard for their party- it will grant you the ability to travel over Turquoise Reef on foot.

Past Mt. Horn is the edge of Foggy Forest, and our base camp. Once there, you will all receive your assignments, along with any additional supplies needed to carry out your tasks.

Due to our limited stock of Entercards, we will ask some lone explorers to work together with teams. Please check the bulletin

board on your way out to see who you'll be partnered up with. Meet back here in a week and we'll begin our expedition.

Good day to you all.

The teams shuffle out, and Team Maelstrom takes a look at the list.

MALACHI

Wow, we really did get selected! I wonder why the Guildmaster decided on us last minute...

RUNE

Uh, yeah... I wonder...

[To self] I haven't told them, but.. would it really be my place to? I'm not sure they'd believe me anyway...

MALACHI

Oh no...

INIGO

What's up?

The team looks, and sees the name of the explorer they're teamed up with.

THE TEAM

Eilwyn?!

RUNE

Wow. What a delight. I can't wait for all the team bonding we'll have together.

DIELLE

It... might not be that bad! How about we head to the cafe to celebrate, huh?

RUNE

You just want an excuse to drink

more spicy milk.

DIELLE

I'm more sophisticated than that!
I order plenty of other things on
the menu.

Smash cut to the cafe, where a spicy milk is being placed
in front of Dielle.

RUNE

Predictable.

DIELLE

The only other thing I want on the
menu are dessert drinks, and I
can't taste them!

MALACHI

I know we're celebrating, but we
gotta focus, guys. We've got a
week to prepare, and I'm not gonna
squander it.

INIGO

You've *been* squandering it -
Where've you been during all our
training, huh?

MALACHI

Hey, come on, don't be like
that... We've had tons of Guild
work to do.

INIGO

Riiiiight, "work". Well, while
you've been doing "whatever", even
Rune could beat you in a right
with her paws tied up.

RUNE

Hey-!

DIELLE

Don't be like that! We've all been

stressed the last couple weeks.

INIGO

Least you could do is pull your weight.

MALACHI

I organize all the— Okay. You know what? Fine. Let's do some battle training, then. I'm sure fetching items from dungeons can wait until later...

INIGO

(Self-assured) Perfect. I'm gonna make you wish you were never born.

RUNE

Great. You two can beat each other into a pulp, then. *We're* gonna go see what *Eilwyn's* deal is...

DIELLE

Wait, but—! Oh, actually... That doesn't sound so bad.

She takes her spicy milk with her as she and Rune exit.

MAROWAK DOJO

We follow Malachi and Inigo into the dojo for their lesson, cutting directly to Malachi being instructed by Inigo.

INIGO

Hit it *harder!*

Malachi hits it, leaving a small scorch mark.

INIGO

You can aim, but you don't have the vindication to back it up. I want that thing sliced in *half* by the end of our session.

MALACHI

Well technically electricity can't
slice, it just-

He dodges a poison sting from Inigo over the head, and the
bristles dissipate into light as they stick into the sand
bag.

INIGO

Less talking, more violence!

Malachi sighs exasperated, and continues into a montage
sequence. Soon, tired, he and Inigo break for lunch, which
is lovingly brought in by Charlotte.

As they eat thoughtfully, Inigo breaks the silence.

INIGO

Eugh, mama always seasons this way
too much.

Malachi doesn't respond right away, and Inigo looks over.
His eyes look moist.

MALACHI

... I like it.

INIGO

Are you sure? Your eyes are
watering.

MALACHI

Ah-! Oh, that's just- that's um-

INIGO

Are you okay?

MALACHI

Yeah! I'm fine. I just... miss
when my moms would make food for
me.

They didn't use as many spices as
Charlotte, though.

INIGO

Do you miss home?

MALACHI

Sometimes. But my family would save spices for special occasions- now that I live on my own I can put on as much as I want!

INIGO

You could always visit them, right?

MALACHI

Hah, ah, well it's so far away, and um-

INIGO

We're an exploration team now, we're *built* for far away!

Malachi is silent for a moment, and Inigo seems to understand.

INIGO

Well it's no big deal, you've got family here now, right? Team Maelstrom is kind of like a little family.

I call dibs on being the dad.

MALACHI

But I *made* the team! I should be the dad.

INIGO

I guess we'll have to settle on both being the dad.

C'mon pops, let's get back to work!

MALACHI

P-pops??

They get back on the field, and Inigo pauses for a moment.

INIGO

Y'know, you're not bad on your own. Maybe what you need is practice collaborating... And y'know. A good power-boosting move.

How's Dielle do this again? Ah, follow the way I move...

He starts guiding Malachi as we fade to the next scene with Rune and Dielle searching for Eilwyn.

TREASURE TOWN

RUNE

How hard can it be to find a giant serpent thing?

DIELLE

Not too hard, I imagine! Maybe we can start searching in waterways? Since Milotics are water-types and all.

RUNE

A nice refreshing dip at the beginning of winter. What a treat.

They begin a montage where they're searching across town, with no luck. Rune groans.

RUNE

Ugh, this is useless! How can a giant the size of a *tree* be so hard to find??

We may as well use this daylight to do something actually useful with our time.

Dielle nods, and the duo head over to Sharpedo Bluff where a large harvest awaits. Rune's garden has grown to a considerable size since we last saw it.

SHARPEDO BLUFF

DIELLE

Aaah, this'll be plenty of food
for the expedition!

RUNE

I sure hope so. It better not
start frosting before I get the
chance to harvest it, but maybe
it'll all die off first if Malachi
skips another day of watering
duty.

DIELLE

A good thing the Treasure Bag has
that pocket dimension, huh? I
can't imagine trying to carry so
many potatoes across the
continent.

RUNE

Inigo would probably like the
weight lifting. Now, where'd I put
my watering can...?

They find it, and head up the hill to the spring by the
willow tree. However once up there, they find they have an
unexpected visitor. Eilwyn has taken residence in the pond,
and is napping away peacefully.

RUNE

Wh- Hello??

They crack open an eye.

EILWYN

Oh, the Team Maelstrom girls.
Wanna
come in? The water's fine.

RUNE

Dude, this is *our pond!* We drink
out of this!

EILWYN

Oh really? My bad, haha.

They slither out.

DIELLE

We were looking for you actually,
and wanted to ask-

RUNE

What's your deal, huh?

EILWYN

Hmm, my deal?

RUNE

What's up with trying to psych us
out at the expedition briefing,
huh?

They ponder briefly.

EILWYN

Oh! That. I was gonna try being
real encouraging and say "if
you're
so bad, why'd'ja show up? You have
to think you have a chance!" I
guess it did sound poorly worded
huh? My bad.

DIELLE

Oh.

RUNE

That's all?

EILWYN

Yeah, sorry. Not real complicated.

RUNE

Glad we cleared that up.

They stand in awkward silence for a moment.

RUNE

So, are you gonna go home or something?

EILWYN

Home? Nah haha, I don't have one.

DIELLE

What?!

EILWYN

It's okay, I can still get outta your hair. See you guys at the expedition!

Before Rune and Dielle can object, they're gone.

RUNE

So they're still gonna be a pain to work with, just in a different way.

DIELLE

At least we know they weren't being mean! On purpose.

So now that that's out of the way, do you wanna go do something? Like-

RUNE

Oh yeah, we could go train with Malachi and Inigo. I need to perfect some of my ice-type moves so next time we see Skuntank I can hit him in his smelly face.

DIELLE

Oh... I was hoping maybe we could actually go for a walk on the beach? It's low tide right now, there'd be lots of shells to collect!

RUNE

(Still smiling) Long walks on the beach aren't gonna help us get

stronger.

DIELLE

It's not about getting stronger!
It's about... having fun?

Rune's expression changes from pleasant to concerned.

RUNE

We don't have time for fun right now! The expedition is a week away, and I still don't even know how to use fairy-type moves-

DIELLE

But you're not gonna be useful to anyone if you keep running yourself into the ground!

RUNE

Dielle, don't you see? I'm *useless* on this team right now! I'm dead weight! The only reason I go on missions is because I was here when the team was *made*! I have to catch up in any way I can, or I'm gonna be... left behind.

DIELLE

But you've already come so far... Maybe you lost against Skuntank, but that doesn't mean you haven't learned *anything*. When I met you, you didn't know *any* elemental moves! Now you can battle, do that cool "dungeon sense" thing, and... kind of battle bond with me!

Dielle is blushing lightly with the last one.

DIELLE

You're incredible, and you're not gonna lose it all if you take a quick break.

RUNE

You really want that beach walk,
huh? I'm just that charming?

DIELLE

You're wonderful.

Rune blushes.

RUNE

I guess a break would do me some
good. Maybe we'll figure out the
battle bonding thing while
collecting shells?

DIELLE

Only one way to find out!

They head towards the beach, laughing with one another.

We fade into the evening, and a new moon is partially
obscured by some dense clouds. Rune is drifting off into
sleep once again.

DREAM REALM

The dream opens with Rune and Dielle sitting together,
holding hands. However, in this dream, Dielle's eyes are
completely pink, while Rune's are entirely blue.

DIELLE

You're wonderful.

RUNE

But they hate me.

DIELLE

They don't hate *you*, I promise.
What they feel when they see this,
it's scary, but it's necessary so
they can move on.

RUNE

But they think I do it on purpose,
[UNINTELLIGIBLE NAME]! They think
I'm a **monster**, and maybe I *am*! I-
Is it wrong for me to take pride

in it? In hurting others?

DIELLE

You clearly don't take pride in hurting them, or we wouldn't be having this conversation.

A tear falls from Rune's face... but it's an inky black. Dielle flinches as she sees it, and Rune starts to panic.

RUNE

I knew it...! I knew it-! You shouldn't be near me-!

DIELLE

No no, it's okay! It's okay! You-you don't have to go through this alone, [UNINTELLIGIBLE NAME]. Look, I can help you, we can face it together-!

Dielle pulls her in close for a hug, though she's clearly afraid. The two begin to glow in a blinding white light that envelops the panel- and the next panel is completely dark, with only a text bubble.

REQUIEM

Oh... This isn't your dream.

Rune suddenly opens her eyes, back to normal.

REQUIEM

My apologies. You know how slippery those memories can be, eh? Like trying to work with butter!

But no matter, I have cleared my weaving schedule for you tonight! So, what three questions do you have for me?

RUNE

I- we're just gonna ignore the goopy black stuff that just came out of my eyes?

REQUIEM

Is that one of your questions?

RUNE

I- Okay never mind, you're right.
I'm not gonna waste that one on
weird dream logic.

I wanna know, what are you?

REQUIEM

That also seems like a waste of a
question. I'm a dream guardian.

RUNE

Yeah yeah, I got that. I mean what
are you, like what's your species?
Are there more of you?

REQUIEM

I don't think mortals ever decided
on what to call me, so that
doesn't matter. But I am a unique
little snowflake!

Are you familiar with the creation
myth?

RUNE

Amnesia tends to dampen, y'know,
memories.

REQUIEM

Right, right. Still upset about
that.

Well thousands upon thousands of
years ago, a thousand arms of
light and shadow came together to
create the world as we know it.

As Requiem explains this, the dreamscape changes to show
these arms.

REQUIEM

When the world was complete, the
arms split apart to govern over
different domains. Pokemon like
you are far far flung from this
split- perhaps you're best
described as a fingernail. Or
maybe a skin flake.

RUNE

How flattering.

REQUIEM

I'm special because two arms
reunited to create *me*.

There is a visual of two arms coming together and
intertwining fingers.

RUNE

So you're a sort of godly entity,
then.

REQUIEM

You're godly in your own way too
though, aren't you? Magic powers
are nothing to scoff at. Don't
forget that you and everyone you
know were also once part of the
thousand arms.

RUNE

Sure. Next question- who was I?

REQUIEM

Ah, not gonna let that one go,
either. This is going to
disappoint you, but I don't know.
And I also don't care.

RUNE

What?! But you, I dunno, found me
and stuffed me with a new aura!

REQUIEM

And you think I read some
biography about your life before

that? What do you want from me?

RUNE

I want the *truth!*

REQUIEM

Then here's the truth. You weren't supposed to get amnesia, okay? Not like this, anyway.

RUNE

(Terse) What do you mean.

REQUIEM

If you just- if you hadn't lost your aura, I wouldn't have had to fix it. And if I didn't *fix* it and imbue it with a gift, you wouldn't have lost your memory. And while I don't have any plans to do anything about it, we *do* have an unbreakable bond now.

My gift to you is based on dreams, which are based in memories. You can touch an area to see its memory- it's much stronger if its your own memory, so it's unlikely for you to see someone else's memories unless they are intertwined closely in your life.

RUNE

So I go unconscious when I get those visions because I'm... dreaming? And how can I see future events that way?

REQUIEM

Come on, you haven't heard that time doesn't move on a linear path? I feel like that's a well known theory. The past, the present, the future, it doesn't matter. The memories will never change.

RUNE

And how does all of that equal
amnesia?

REQUIEM

To make room for this gift, your
previous experiences are removed.
It's not like I locked them away
just to be evil and cruel- the
impression on your aura has been
erased entirely. Maybe you'll
remember strong memories that
buried themselves deep within your
aura- but mostly, they're gone.
Like a journal stained with tea.

RUNE

So I'll... I'll *never* remember who
I was.

REQUIEM

And this is why I didn't want to
answer you directly about your
amnesia. I hope it's an answer
worth squeezing out of me.

RUNE

And... and our bond. You said we
have some connection now.
(Intense) What does that mean.

Requiem sighs, and their eyes shift closer toward full
blue.

REQUIEM

You're a champion touched by a
hand from the thousand arms of
creation. And we will remain
bonded until you die.

I was generous and offered answers
to your more minor questions, but
I think we've covered more than
enough with those three main ones.
I'll see you in a couple of weeks,

my champion.

RUNE

Wait- the bond wasn't meant to be my third question! I was going to ask if I was a hu-!

SHARPEDO BLUFF

Rune wakes up with a start once again. It's dawn, and Malachi is still asleep.

RUNE

Wait a minute... Champion...?

She looks over at Maelstrom at this realization. She approaches, but then notices Malachi is having a fitful sleep. She reaches over to wake him up, but Maelstrom interrupts her.

MAELSTROM

Don't wake him.

RUNE

Oh, Maelstrom. I didn't know you were awake.

MAELSTROM

I don't sleep!

And my champion sleeps poorly. But he has asked I don't wake him when he suffers nightmares.

RUNE

I never knew... he always wakes up before me.

MAELSTROM

And what brings you to the waking world so early, friend Rune?

RUNE

You call Malachi your champion. I wanted to know more about that.

MAELSTROM

As I have said many a time, I do not recall!

But I do know one thing, and as though it is ingrained in my very being. He will help me remember.

RUNE

You've mentioned before you have amnesia... What does it feel like for you? Do you just feel, fragmented?

MAELSTROM

I feel like I am just a little piece of something much larger! I am missing my memories, but I feel that they will someday be complete once more.

RUNE

... I wish I knew a part of me was waiting for me. I'm whole, just... broken.

MAELSTROM

You're not broken, dear friend. You're **you**. Just as I am me!

RUNE

... Malachi isn't also secretly an amnesiac, is he?

MAELSTROM

I think he would give anything to forget.

We pan back over to Malachi who is mumbling and flinching in his sleep, as the scene ends.

EXPEDITION

We start on a new morning, and the team is setting out on the expedition at last. In a montage sequence, we see them

collect themselves at the guild, and then set outside of town. Near a mountain pass, the team meets with a Coalossal train, and board it. Rune is narrating over this scene.

RUNE

The day of the expedition has arrived. I think we're all nervous, but excited. None of us has ever left the continent before.

Getting to the edge of the continent would usually take a lot of time- but thankfully we ran into a train of Carkol led by a huge Coalossal. They offer to take us close to the Northern coast, and we decide to take any help we can get.

In a few days, we arrive at Driftwood Shores, the settlement closest to Turquoise Reef, the first dungeon we'll traverse.

The team arrive at a coastal village, and wave goodbye to the train as Malachi pays the leading Coalossal handsomely for their service.

RUNE

We spend the night at an inn, and Inigo ropes us all into a card game.

He seemed pretty confident, until Eilwyn won despite not having hands to play.

Eilwyn is seen holding the cards between their tail fins.

RUNE

Then after a night's sleep, it's time to start our journey...

TURQUOISE REEF

The following morning, the team stands at the edge of a shore. Rune is wearing the entercard around her neck.

DIELLE

Are you sure the Entercard will work? I've never used one before... Why can't we just sail over the ocean normally?

MALACHI

Getting that many boats for all the exploration guilds could take too long. Besides, going over the Mystery Dungeon means we can actually use the entercard to walk right over it! Not enough passive ley lines run through normal environments.

INIGO

Magic card lets us walk on water, doesn't have to be complicated, Dielle!

EILWYN

Don't worry, if you start drowning I might save you.

RUNE

Might...?

MALACHI

Let's stop wasting time and get going!

Rune steps forward into the water. At first, the card seems to not work... but as she walks further out, we see she is only standing on a thin layer of water, and is successfully floating above it.

RUNE

Whoa! Eugh... It's still wet.

INIGO

Yeah! Take that, ocean!

Inigo sprints ahead.

MALACHI

Inigo, wait-!

Inigo goes too far ahead, and plops right in the water.

INIGO

Gah!

Eilwyn casually floats over, and grabs him with their tail.

EILWYN

Not a big radius on entercards,
little dude.

INIGO

I'm not little! I'm actually big
for my species.

MALACHI

We gotta stick close to the card,
but it beats going through the
dungeon!

They begin their journey.

MALACHI

Make sure to watch out for waves-
we should go right over them, but
it'll still be rocky while we're
close to shore.

Said waves appear, and though the team struggles with getting over them at first, they get the hang of it pretty easily. Soon the terrain flattens out, and Rune looks down below.

EILWYN

Scared of heights?

RUNE

Does it count as "heights" if I'm
just standing over water?

She notices a huge shadow coming up- and quickly.

RUNE

U-uh, guys-!

INIGO

Finally some action!

The surface of the water breaks, and Inigo lets loose a Poison Sting. However, it hits the string holding the entercard around Rune's neck as she dodges out of the way. The team seems to not notice at first, as the disturbance was a flock of Mantine coming to surface above them. They look on in awe (and Inigo's poison sting has missed), when Dielle notices it-

DIELLE

The entercard!

It hits the water and begins to sink, and the platform the team stood on disappears from underneath their feet. They all splash into the water, and though surprised, are able to swim... all except Malachi, who is struggling.

MALACHI

I-I can't-! Swim!

Eilwyn surfaces beneath him and holds him above water.

MALACHI

T-thanks...

EILWYN

Well that puts a damper on our journey, huh?

INIGO

Why did the card sink? I thought it was magic!

MALACHI

A lot of entercards need to be activated with an aura, kind of like a move. I guess when it came off of Rune it stopped working...

INIGO

And now we're stranded in the

middle of the ocean!

EILWYN

Don't worry, we just gotta grab the card again and it'll be all good.

RUNE

Not sure if you noticed, but most of us aren't built for ocean diving.

EILWYN

Oh, that one's easy. Hold this for me.

They hand Malachi over to Dielle, who helps him stay afloat. A few moments pass by, and the team seems anxious.

MALACHI

They uh, wouldn't just abandon us, right?

Suddenly, Eilwyn surfaces with some oddly-shaped seaweed in their mouth.

RUNE

Seaweed?

Eilwyn takes the seaweed out of their mouth and begins to distribute it to the team.

EILWYN

Not just any seaweed! Put it over your mouth.

Inigo does so.

INIGO

Like this?

Eilwyn slams his face under water, much to everyone's surprise.

DIELLE

Inigo!

EILWYN

He's fine. See?

Inigo surfaces.

INIGO

I can breathe underwater!

EILWYN

Lots of underwater dungeons have this stuff.

MALACHI

What?! That's crazy! What's it called?

EILWYN

I dunno.

Malachi squints.

RUNE

Wow, something even *Malachi* doesn't know about.

MALACHI

Only because I didn't have plans to go in the ocean! But not knowing is gonna drive me nuts.

INIGO

You can look it up later nerd, right now we've got an entercard to catch up with!

MALACHI

Do we all really have to go down there?

EILWYN

I don't think splitting up in the middle of the ocean is the best move, but you do you.

They dive under the water, and Malachi relents.

MALACHI

Uh- wait for me!

They all put on their seaweed masks and dive under. Under the water, there's a beautiful coral reef system. Lots of fish pokemon (and normal fish) are swimming around the area.

DIELLE

Can we talk underwater too-? Oh!
Yep!

RUNE

This feels really weird. There is *definitely* water in my mouth.

EILWYN

But that seaweed helps you pull the air out of it, which is the big thing.

MALACHI

Guys, down there!

The entercard glints in the filtered light, and then gets sucked into a current, getting whisked away. Eilwyn scans the area, and sees some precariously structured coral rings.

EILWYN

I got a shortcut. Grab on, and hang *tight*.

The team grabs onto them, and they shoot through one of the coral rings.

DIELLE

Why do we have to hold on ti-?
Eep!

As they go through the ring, it glows blue and they get a speed boost. Eilwyn shoots through more rings, gaining more and more speed. The entercard is close by, and they open their mouth to catch it. Then, they get it! Having successfully grabbed the card, they begin their ascent. The team looks dazed, but relieved to have the card.

EILWYN

Going up!

They climb through the water, and soon surface. The team is relieved to be back.

INIGO

Now... Which way to the shore?

Malachi looks up at the sky.

MALACHI

Well, based on the position of the sun, I'd say we're-

RUNE

Already there.

They look over, and sure enough they're right next to the shore.

EILWYN

Guess we don't need this any more.

Eilwyn holds up the entercard, which glows and lifts the team above the water anyway. They walk the 20 feet or so over to the shore without issue.

DIELLE

Oh sweet, sweet earth! I'm never getting my fur wet again!

EILWYN

I quite like the hydration. Good for the pores.

MALACHI

You have pores...?

RUNE

And now we just gotta get over a mountain.

As Rune says this, we pan up to see they're at the foot of a mountain.

MALACHI

Let's set up camp for the night.
Looking over the map, I think we
can get through Mt. Horn in a day.

RUNE

You want us to climb a mountain in
a day?

MALACHI

We don't have to go over it, just
through it! If we go through the
valleys it shouldn't be a problem.

RUNE

Assuming the valleys stay in
place.

The team, via montage, arrives at the base of Mt. Horn and
set up camp for the night. Around a campfire, they make
small talk.

RUNE

Do you guys think... we'll make it
to the time gear in time? I feel
like we've spent so much time
prepping for this that the thief
could have gotten it already.

MALACHI

The Treeshroud time gear might
have been easy to find, but all
the other time gears are too hard
for pokemon to find via normal
means. Otherwise I think the guild
would have secured it already.

INIGO

Not to mention the theft of a time
gear is big news. We would have
heard about it.

RUNE

So what's the thief been doing in
the meantime? Sightseeing?

EILWYN

Maybe they just wanted to steal the one time gear to send a message. Or get a ransom.

MALACHI

A ransom from *who*, the world population? I think there's better ways to go about it than threatening a world-ending event.

DIELLE

Whoever the thief is, they sound so dangerous... What if we run into them?

INIGO

I beat them up. Easy. Next question.

MALACHI

We probably won't. The entire guild is on high alert, they won't try anything when there are so many exploration teams around.

We just gotta do our part to keep everyone safe.

The scene ends with the team surrounding the campfire.

MT. HORN

The next day, the team traverses Mt. Horn. Things seem to go smoothly, but pokemon living within the dungeon seem to be avoiding them. Soon the team is travelling through a ravine.

DIELLE

Everyone is looking at us with such hostility... I don't like it.

EILWYN

Maybe they got up on the wrong side of the bed. All of them.

RUNE

I'm starting to think going through the ravine wasn't a great idea.

MALACHI

Nonsense! It's perfectly safe, not to mention *fast*-

Suddenly, an Aerodactyl adorned with tattoos lands ahead of them. The team looks nervous.

RUNE

Any chance that guy is gonna offer us a lift?

The Aerodactyl uses some sort of move- which in turn causes the ravine to begin shaking.

RUNE

Uh, what's going on?

MALACHI

Q-Quick! Take cover!

The ravine begins to close, and the team begins to run. As they dash, Eilwyn spots some caves.

EILWYN

The caves, over there!

They approach the caves, but Rune is hit with a falling rock on the leg. Inigo is close by and stops running.

INIGO

Nuh-uh, I'm not losing my battling partner today!

He runs back and grabs her as Malachi, Dielle, and Eilwyn dive into a cave. He looks around frantically.

INIGO

Guh, we're not gonna make it-!

He looks around quickly, and spots a hidden cave.

INIGO

There-!

He carries Rune over, and they dive in just in time as the ravine closes. As they enter, Dielle turns around and sees them.

DIELLE

Wait, Inigo, Rune-!

And the ravine shuts.

MT. HORN- CAVE SYSTEM A

Safe inside of the cave, Inigo sets Rune down.

RUNE

What was that?!

INIGO

It looks like that Aerodactyl was able to shut us in the ravine just by using some kinda move. Dungeons and auras use the same energy to function, but I didn't know you could go that *extreme* with moving the environment.

RUNE

(Smiling wearily) You should teach me how to do that. Maybe next time I can stop it.

INIGO

If anyone is strong enough to stop a ravine from closing, it's gonna be *me*.

RUNE

Right, right. Even though you can't even battle bond yet.

INIGO

Big talk for someone with a bruised leg.

He grabs an oran berry out of the bag Rune is carrying and rubs it into a paste on her leg.

RUNE

... Thanks for coming back for me.

INIGO

Well duh. We're teammates, we're supposed to look out for each other.

They sit awkwardly in silence while waiting for her leg to heal. Then, they both try to break the silence at once.

RUNE

So you and Malachi-

INIGO

You and Dielle, huh-

They both stop.

RUNE

What?

INIGO

Huh?

RUNE

I was just gonna say, you and Malachi are getting along better.

INIGO

Oh. Yeah. We are. You and Dielle seem close.

RUNE

Mm hm.

They're awkwardly silent again.

INIGO

I guess he's not bad. Y'know, a bit of a know-it-all, but a cool guy.

RUNE

Implying you aren't also a
know-it-all.

INIGO

Well unlike *him*, I actually have
experience to back it up.
(Flushed) But maybe he's taught me
a few things.

RUNE

I hope they're doing alright.

INIGO

I'm sure they are.

A smash cut over to Dielle with the other group.

MT. HORN- CAVE SYSTEM B

DIELLE

We're going to die!

EILWYN

Don't be dramatic, it's just a
cave.

DIELLE

Yeah, and we don't have *any*
supplies! How long are we gonna be
in the cave system? Are Rune and
Inigo gonna be okay?

EILWYN

Eh, they'll be fine. They have the
supplies.

Dielle looks more worried now.

MALACHI

No need to fear, I'm the smartest
pokemon you could have gotten
stuck with! I know a thing or two
about foraging. For example, this
plant here is safe to eat.

He takes a bite out of a few leaves growing from a small bush.

EILWYN

That one is toxic.

Malachi spits out the leaves.

MALACHI

I knew that. I was testing your knowledge.

EILWYN

Hmm... Say Malachi, you know how orbs are made?

MALACHI

Yeah, they're compounds made from mixing different components together and containing them in magi glass. Breaking them activates the items inside.

Eilwyn pulls some of the leaves off the bush and stores them in a scarf or something I haven't decided on yet.

EILWYN

These'll be useful later.

Malachi sniffs the air, and feels a breeze.

MALACHI

C'mon, let's get out of this cave.

They walk outside, and are on the side of the mountain.

DIELLE

What should we do about Rune and Inigo?

MALACHI

We'll try some of the other caves to see if we can find them. It can't take that long!

We begin a montage sequence where the two separate teams

explore Mt. Horn in search of each other. Eilwyn continues to collect materials, and time passes. Soon, night falls, and the teams go to bed. When they wake up, they start right up again. For this day, we start by following Rune and Inigo... Who wake up to find their bag being rummaged through by a Venomoth and a Natu. The Venomoth has a singed wingtip.

MT. HORN- EXT. CAVE SYSTEM A

RUNE

Wh- Hey, stop that!

She unleashes powder snow, and the Venomoth blows it back with whirlwind.

RUNE

(Thinking) Gah, I'm too slow to react...!

Inigo uses fury swipes at the Natu, but misses when he gets a sharp pain in his shoulder. The Venomoth grabs some of the items, including an orb, and they make an escape.

NATU

Tell your smelly friend this is what you get when you mess with us!

RUNE

Smelly...?

Inigo starts to try chasing after them, but falls down.

INIGO

Ugh! I'm too stiff right now!
What'd they take from us, anyway?

RUNE

Some food, a stun seed, and...

She remembers the orb the Venomoth flew away with.

RUNE

And a rollcall orb.

A beat panel.

INIGO

We had a rollcall orb?

RUNE

Ugh, Malachi's better at keeping track of everything! Why did we have to end up with the bag?

INIGO

We just gotta keep moving. I'll keep an eye out behind us for pokemon that might be a problem.

He's rubbing his shoulder when Rune remembers Dielle saying that they've been working too hard.

RUNE

Hey, maybe we should take a break?

INIGO

We don't have time for a break.

RUNE

But Dielle said-

INIGO

I don't care what Dielle says!

Rune is taken aback.

INIGO

I- I mean. She only ever sees me as a "baby brother". Emphasis on the *baby*. But she doesn't realize I'm strong enough to stand on my own.

RUNE

Why would she see you as weak?

INIGO

When we were kids, she liked to chase me around. One time though, she took it too far, and used

Thunderbolt on me. I was knocked out for a day or two, and it scared the living daylights out of ma and mama.

Since then she's been treating me like I'm made of paper. If I get sick, if I sprain an ankle during a tournament, she tries to drop everything to take care of me. It's infantilizing.

RUNE

Maybe you need to talk to her about underestimating your abilities, but she does have a point about pushing yourself too far. You won't be useful to anyone if you hurt yourself.

INIGO

So you just wanna take a vacation in the middle of the dungeon?

RUNE

No! Just avoid unnecessary fights. Would it help if you thought of it as a sneak mission? Develop those sneaky skills?

Inigo seems stone-faced, but breaks into a snicker.

INIGO

Okay. Sneak mission it is.

RUNE

But you gotta promise me you'll talk to Dielle about how you feel.

INIGO

I will. When I'm ready.

They continue on their way.

MT. HORN- EXT. CAVE SYSTEM B

Meanwhile, the rest of the team is continuing their excursion.

DIELLE

Hey Eilwyn, what else do you need for the orb you're making?

EILWYN

Hmm, something that can make pokemon warp.

DIELLE

The badges can warp pokemon, right?

MALACHI

I don't think we want to sacrifice a badge for this.

They hear a bleating, and see a small herd of mountain goats. Dielle lights up.

DIELLE

Oh, oh! What are those?

MALACHI

Goats! This is perfect, we can hunt them and stock up on food, blankets-

DIELLE

(Comically teary) You wanna eat them?

MALACHI

Ah- are you okay with that? I've seen you eat fish so I thought...

DIELLE

We can't! There's a baby with them!

She points at a kid following some of the adults.

MALACHI

If you really don't want to hunt

them, we won't. But I know a way
they can still help us.

He beckons the pair to follow him, and they do. They keep a safe distance from the goats, and follow them to swaying rock pillars that stretch across a gorge. The goats skillfully begin to cross by jumping on the pillars as they sway.

DIELLE

Any chance you can just float us
across, Eilwyn?

MALACHI

Fish pokemon can only levitate a
little off the ground, their auras
aren't built for flying.

EILWYN

Tell that to Gyarados.

MALACHI

Those are different!

All we have to do is jump like
those goats.

DIELLE

I'm more worried about *landing*
than jumping.

EILWYN

That's an easy fix.

They go over to a nearby tree and pull off some bark,
exposing the tree sap underneath.

EILWYN

Lather up!

DIELLE

Not liking how sticky this is.

She rubs it on her paw pads.

MALACHI

Well I think I'd do fine enough

using just my claws, thank you.

EILWYN

Your funeral.

The gang head over to the gorge, and Dielle jumps first. She lands, and the sap helps her keep her grip as she scrambles up. Then, Eilwyn goes next, jumping gracefully. They catch the pillar with their body coiled around it, and slither up. Then, it's Malachi's turn. He gets a running start, and tries to land with his claws extended... but can't get a good grip.

MALACHI

Gah!

Eilwyn thinks quick and grabs him with their tail, pulling him up.

MALACHI

Thanks...

EILWYN

You can hitch a ride on my back for the rest of these, buddy.

MALACHI

Right...

The team crosses the gorge bit by bit, catching up with the mountain goats. Once they're on the other side, they the goats scaling the rock face and jumping down somewhere on the other side. The team uses some vines growing on the rock's surface to follow them, and then see an enclosed area where the goats are gathered. In the center of the area is a tree with seeds.

MALACHI

That's-

EILWYN & MALACHI

A warp seed tree!

They climb down, and the goats aren't bothered by their presence.

EILWYN

With all these seeds I can make a
really good rollcall-

MALACHI

We can collect these and try
warping closer to Rune and Inigo!

DIELLE

Huh? But why should we bother with
random warping when we could make
a rollcall orb?

MALACHI

Well, uh, maybe they lost their
badges! Without them, they won't
be able to warp to us! Or maybe
one of them fainted and it outside
the dungeon now! Or-

DIELLE

Malachi, is this really about the
best way to find them?

MALACHI

What do you mean? Of course it is!
I...

Malachi hesitates.

MALACHI

I know more about this. I have to.

Knowing things is all I'm good
for.

DIELLE

Malachi...

EILWYN

But you still know plenty.

MALACHI

What do you mean?

EILWYN

Well you knew to follow those
goats, right? And you knew how

orbs are made. Even if you didn't know what to put in 'em.

MALACHI

Yeah, but it's not enough! I'm supposed to be the team leader, but I'm not doing a good job at *leading* you guys. I should have made sure we all stayed together, I should know how to get us out of trouble-

DIELLE

Maybe you should also know when to let someone else lead? It's okay not to know *everything*, nobody's able to know what's going on *all* the time.

Malachi is quiet for a moment.

MALACHI

You're right. Eilwyn, I'm sorry I didn't trust your judgement.

EILWYN

You've taught me a lot too, little dude! Here, I'll show you how to make the rollcall orb. Then, you can say you know how for next time.

Malachi smiles.

MALACHI

Sure thing.

Eilwyn lays out all of the components- the leaves from earlier, the warp seeds, some crystals, and whatever else I decide on later because I don't want to try thinking of everything right now.

EILWYN

So first thing, we gotta mash everything together.

They take a large flat rock, and a smaller rounded one

nearby and begin grinding the ingredients between them like a mortar and pestle.

EILWYN

Stuff made for exploration teams uses a lot of each item to make sure the orb works well. The more warp seeds we use here, the better.

Now, we gotta make the magi glass. This stuff is made out of aura, so any move that can contain the mixture and then make it solid will work. I like to use my linked move, lovingly called "Protection Dew".

MALACHI

So Life Dew and Protect?

EILWYN

Less cool when you say it like that.

They use their linked move, which contains the ingredients and solidifies the mixture into an orb.

EILWYN

And ta-da! Rollcall orb!

DIELLE

Wait, the linked move thing you did- was that using two moves at once?

EILWYN

Sure was. You need a link box to do it.

MALACHI

Probably so you can teach your aura how to execute two moves at once!

DIELLE

And you thought you weren't smart enough.

MALACHI

Just a minor setback.

DIELLE

Inigo's gonna burst when he finds out there's another battle technique he doesn't know about!

MALACHI

He won't have to wait long to find out. Let's bring our team back!

Malachi activates the rollcall orb, and in a flash of light, Rune and Inigo manifest.

RUNE

- don't know if she likes me back.

The team stares at the two.

DIELLE

If who likes you back?

RUNE

(blushing) U-uh, nobody!

MALACHI

It worked!

EILWYN

Welcome back.

MALACHI

Now we just gotta find a way out of here.

RUNE

You think we can get a good vantage point from that peak there?

Rune points at a nearby peak.

MALACHI

Let's do it!

They scale the peak in a short climb, and at the top they see a large, foggy forest sprawling at the base of the mountain.

MALACHI

Down there! Let's get g-

They're interrupted by a large shadow flying overhead. With a gust of wind, the Aerodactyl from earlier lands before them. She's covered in intricate tattoos.

AERODACTYL

So you weren't just useless guild whelps. I don't think you'll be surviving much longer, though.

She preps a hyper beam, and the team flinches- but Rune steps forward.

RUNE

Wait! Did a Skuntank pass through here?

The Aerodactyl stops.

AERODACTYL

Yes. And he poisoned six of our pokemon. Why? Are you here to finish the job?

RUNE

No, no. Some pokemon that live here tried to steal from us, but I noticed one was singed and the other talked about a foul smell. They, uh, probably were just scared we were gonna do the same to them.

AERODACTYL

And are you?

MALACHI

We're here to help evacuate the Foggy Forest region! We heard that

the Time Gear there is in danger,
and we're trying to keep everyone
safe.

We're sorry that another explorer
took advantage of you all, but
there's something bigger at stake
here. We need you to let us
through so we can help pokemon.

AERODACTYL

Hurting pokemon to help pokemon.
Typical guild rhetoric.

MALACHI

Please. We want to help.

The Aerodactyl eyes him carefully.

AERODACTYL

Then you have to promise me no
harm will come to our neighbors.
Make sure that Skuntank doesn't
hurt anyone else.

INIGO

If we see him, we're beating him
to a pulp.

The Aerodactyl nods, and begins to leave to take off, and
then stops.

AERODACTYL

Do you need a ride down?

We cut to the team riding down on the Aerodactyl. They wave
at her as she takes off, and they turn to the forest ahead.
Walking through, they soon find the base camp, where Chatot
is waiting for them.

KEATON

Welcome. You're late.

END OF CHAPTER 7

DELETED SCENES

MALACHI

Nonsense! It's perfectly safe, not
to mention *fast*-

Suddenly, a bunch of boulders begin falling around them. The team exclaims suddenly at the surprise attack. Eilwyn thinks quickly and shoots above the team, using Protect to create an umbrella over them. A boulder lands on the shield and rolls off as the Protect wears off. Eilwyn grabs an evasion orb from the bag and breaks it, and then puts a seed in their mouth. A faint glow envelops the team members.

EILWYN

This way! Watch your step!

The team quickly scampers deftly out of the way.

INIGO

My footwork has never been
fancier!

MALACHI

Don't get too cocky, it's just an
evasion orb.

Suddenly, a large Aerodactyl lands in front of the team.

AERODACTYL

And another one of those
"exploration teams". Are you here
to steal from us too?

The Aerodactyl prepares an attack, and Eilwyn wastes no time biting down on the blinker seed they put in their mouth. The Aerodactyl is blinded for a moment, and they keep leading the team on.

*(I wish I kept this! I actually wonder if I might've just

lost this when moving different versions of files around?
Though Eilwyn is being a bit too epic here, it seems like
the team wouldn't have been separated.)

We begin a montage sequence where the two separate teams
explore Mt. Horn in search of each other. Eilwyn continues
to collect materials, and time passes. Soon, night falls,
and the teams go to bed. When they wake up, they start
right up again. For this day, we start by following Rune
and Inigo.

RUNE

I'd suggest asking someone for
help, but everyone's been looking
at us like we're the plague.

INIGO

Hey, you don't think Skuntank had
something to do with it, do you?

A beat as they consider it.