

MALACHITE FALLS OUTSKIRTS

The chapter opens on a bright day, with Team Maelstrom strolling alongside a river towards their appointed mission as they idly chat.

DIELLE

Hot springs here we come!

RUNE

Huh?

DIELLE

Don't you know? Malachite Falls is an ideal vacationing spot. Pokemon come from all over to soak and rejuvenate themselves.

YOHANN

It's also a total tourist trap.

RUNE

Rejuvenate, huh? I could really use the relaxation after all the pokemon we've had to fight lately... What's up with that anyway, all the pokemon in the dungeons wanna fight at the drop of a hat.

MALACHI

Is that not normal where you're from?

RUNE

Huh?? What do you mean?

MALACHI

I-I don't mean anything by it! It's just that maybe it could be a hint about your past? Pokemon that live in the wilds usually like to settle minor disputes with battles. Sometimes they do it for fun, other times it's a way to

show who's in charge.

INIGO

If it worked that way in towns I'd be the mayor of Treasure Town. Too bad pokemon there don't like broken windows from stray punches.

But given your *social eloquence*, I'd wager a guess that you're not from a settlement either.

RUNE

So I'm not from the wilds, and I'm not from a town. What a *productive* conversation.

MAELSTROM

Perhaps you are like me, friend Rune!

RUNE

A rock?

MAELSTROM

Haha! No! I just started existing one day! All I know is that I have chosen Malachi as my champion to help me remember my purpose!

MALACHI

Hey, so if *you're* and amnesiac, and *Rune's* an amnesiac...

RUNE

I don't think I like this train of thought.

INIGO

How does a rock get amnesia, anyway?

DIELLE

We've been over this already, she's not a rock, she's probably a Spiritomb! Who's *stuck* in a rock.

INIGO

Hey Rune, wanna use fairy wind to test that theory?

Rune looks irritated at this request.

MAELSTROM

No need! I am fairly certain I am not that, but instead a greater power! I think.

MALACHI

Don't worry Molly, I'm sure we'll find out what you are soon enough!

MALACHITE FALLS

The team then arrives at MALACHITE FALLS. It's a beautiful community with waterfalls abound, and many homes tucked away in coves. And it's completely deserted.

RUNE

So much for "tourist trap", huh?

DIELLE

Where is everybody?

MALACHI

Didn't Chatot say that everyone was getting sick?

The team spots a Barboach struggling to levitate before collapsing.

MALACHI

Sh-She's in trouble!

The gang rush over to her, and Inigo places her on Rune's back.

INIGO

She's burning up- Sorry Vulpix, but you're the living ice pack of the group.

Which way to the infirmary?

YOHANN

Perhaps that big medical sign near
the words "infirmary"?

They dash over, and the Barboach groans.

BARBOACH

Guh... T-Thanks...

The team arrives at the infirmary, and a Quagsire nurse
comes out from the back, and is surprised to see the group.

NURSE

Another one?!

She quickly scoops up the Barboach from Rune's back, and
carries her to the back. We catch a glimpse of the
infirmary's beds, and almost all of them are full of
townsfolk afflicted with a similar ailment. She comes back
out, concerned, but thankful.

NURSE

That's the fourth one today...
Thank you for bringing her in
though, the fevers can really hit
out of nowhere.

MALACHI

Oh, it's no trouble! We're just
glad we got her in.

NURSE

I hope you're not here for
vacationing, the water
contamination has *never* been this
bad before. We're running low on
medical supplies, I just had to
send in a request to the guild for
assistance.

MALACHI

Oh, we're actually with the guild!
Team Maelstrom, at your service.

NURSE

Well *Team Maelstrom*, our town certainly appreciates any help we can get. Just stay safe out there, alright?

MALACHI

Will do! We'll get to the bottom of this, I promise!

They exit, greeted by the many waterfalls cascading down the area.

RUNE

You know we're just here to collect samples, right?

MALACHI

W-Well! Maybe we can spend some time to try finding what's wrong with the water in the meantime? It can't hurt to do some investigating, right?

RUNE

I guess not.

They begin a montage of collecting water samples around various pools, while Malachi tries inspecting them to see what's wrong to no avail. After some pools they find some cattails, which Dielle eagerly pounces onto and tries to bite, which expands rapidly on impact in her mouth. She looks dejected as Yohann collects some stalks and puts them in the Treasure Bag. They soon come to a large waterfall for the final sample.

DIELLE

Bleh! I sthll got stheeds in my mouth...

RUNE

That's what you get for trying to eat random garbage.

MALACHI

Already collecting the final sample, and we still haven't found

even a hint towards what's
tainting the water... All the
pools look fine.

INIGO

Cheer up, Shinx. Maybe the real
exploration teams will figure it
out.

MALACHI

The *real* exploration teams...
Yeah.

Rune frowns at how dejected he looks, and goes to collect
the final sample. As she sticks her paw in the waterfall
with the vial, she experiences an all-too-familiar
sensation- a Dimensional Scream has triggered, and dizzy,
she begins to fall forward-

DIMENSIONAL SCREAM

As the scream initiates, we see the Guildmaster looking
around the area in the dark. He inspects the waterfall very
thoroughly, before jumping through, much to Rune's
surprise. She sees his silhouette behind the waterfall as
he gets up and continues walking. Darkness billows away as
the scream ends.

... And Rune comes to in Dielle's arms, only a few inches
away from a dangerous drop. She flinches and exclaims-

RUNE

GAH!

And jumps back.

DIELLE

Are you alright?! You almost fell
right in!

INIGO

With a waterfall that big, you
would have been pulverized. Watch
your step, yeah?

RUNE

Yeah...

Malachi turns to the team, looking a little dejected.

MALACHI

Well, I guess we should head back,
huh?

He starts to walk away, when Rune calls out,

RUNE

Hold on. I'm- I'm gonna try
something first.

She looks around, but still can't spot the ledge Wigglytuff jumped onto. She takes a few steps back.

RUNE

(To herself) If I go fast enough,
it shouldn't be an issue, right?

She takes a deep breath, and then goes for a running start, surprising everyone. She jumps over the ledge, with Dielle reaching out to try catching her to no avail. Rune crashes through the waterfall, and tumbles through to the other side. She opens her eyes, and finds she's inside of a cave. She tries to call out to the team and tell them that she's safe,

RUNE

Hey, there's a cave back here!

But the waterfall is simply too loud, and her words don't carry through. She frowns.

RUNE

It's too high to jump back... How
can I get their attention?

She looks around, and spots a rock. She uses her tail and a feint attack to kick it through to the other side. On the other side we see Malachi, Inigo, Dielle, and Yohann looking over the edge trying to find her and freaking out.

DIELLE

Rune!

MALACHI

D-Did she die?!

Suddenly, the rock she kicked comes through the other side, and hits Malachi on the head.

MALACHI

Ouch! -Wait, did that just come from the waterfall?

INIGO

There's something over there?

Inigo leaps through without a second warning.

MALACHI

H-hey!

Dielle also leaps through, followed by Yohann.

YOHANN

And you all thought I was silly for wearing this.

MALACHI

Guys, you can't just-!

MAELSTROM

ONWARD, MY CHAMPION! INTO THE UNKNOWN!

MALACHI

Guhhh, alright...

And finally, Malachi jumps through. On the other side we see the assembled team and Rune. They're chatting with one another.

INIGO

How did you know there was something back here?

RUNE

Um, I saw the ledge.

MALACHI

You could see through all that water? What if you didn't make the jump and got hurt?

RUNE

Hey, I didn't though. I've got that natural intuition.

No need to be a... *Wet blanket* about it.

Dielle and Inigo snicker. Malachi takes a moment to look around, and suddenly lights up.

MALACHI

Wait a minute... This is-

He walks a little further down the cave, and the cave suddenly manifests a forked path.

MALACHI

A mystery dungeon! An undiscovered mystery dungeon! Everything makes sense now- the unexplained water contamination must be coming from the dungeon! These here- they're malachite crystals! The townsfolk have copper poisoning! Oh my god. This is huge.

He starts laughing giddily.

MALACHI

A rookie team has discovered a new dungeon, I don't think this has ever happened before!

We *have* to keep going. Maybe we can find the source of the contamination!

INIGO

That's all fine and good, but... Which way do we *go*?

As Inigo says that, we look at the team through the fork in

the path.

RUNE

I think we'll have to split up.

INIGO

Good idea.

WATERFALL CAVE

Rune and Dielle head off in one direction, while Malachi, Inigo, and Yohann go the other. We see two large panels of the team splitting off in their different directions through the cave, and then transition to following Malachi, Inigo, and Yohann around.

YOHANN

Since I imagine we'll be at this for a while, do you have any buffs in mind for your accessories, Nidorina? I know your line is good defensively.

INIGO

Offense is the best defense for me. Anything that buffs up my moves.

Yohann pulls out a notepad from Malachi's pack and writes something down.

YOHANN

So probably a Power Band... I wonder what berry fibers I should use them with. Liechi?

He winces from a headache, and quickly uses Confusion on a nearby rock, sending it flying.

INIGO

Whoa!

YOHANN

Gah! I knew I shouldn't have skipped my Persim Latte this morning, how dreadful.

INIGO

You sure you needed an escort?
Seems like you could hold your
own.

YOHANN

Hmph, I'm quite certain. My
headaches- and psychic energy-
aren't well controlled if I don't
take Persim or Payapa berries. The
curse of being a Psyduck.

INIGO

Why not evolve then? Golducks
don't have that problem, do they?

YOHANN

And start my closet from scratch?
Ha! No thanks. Yellow's my color.

INIGO

And what about you Shinx? Any
plans to finish evolving?

MALACHI

H-Huh?

INIGO

You know you won't get any of the
power buffs for your aura until
you complete it, right?

Malachi gets bristly.

MALACHI

Maybe I *like* being a Shinx.

... It's not like I can go back
anyway.

MAELSTROM

AND YOU ARE LOVELY THE WAY YOU
ARE, MY CHAMPION!

MALACHI

... Thanks Maelstrom.

In the background, Yohann is picking up small chunks of malachite he's finding on the ground. We cut to Rune and Dielle's trek through the other tunnel, where there's considerably more malachite formations.

DIELLE

Who would have guessed a cave this pretty could cause the town so much trouble?

RUNE

I'm still not used to the whole... "mystery dungeon" thing. Isn't it weird that they can just pop up next to someone's house and ruin their life? Even if we clear the water, won't it just come back?

DIELLE

Well they didn't use to do this. Maybe the stolen time gears are making them grow like crazy.

RUNE

Time gears... Everyone keeps talking about those, but I barely remember what they are. They control... Time? In isolated areas?

DIELLE

Sort of! I think they all used to be part of the same, uh, thing? Lemme see if I can remember the story...

In an age long gone, time had... Fingers? And it's wearing rings. On all of its fingers. There's a ring of ambition, and uh... Wait... I think I just made that up...

While she's saying this, we see visuals that struggle to capture her words into images.

RUNE
Time has hands?

DIELLE
Not literally! Or maybe it *is*
literal, I didn't think the rings
were literal. I think those were
supposed to represent the time
gears.

Maybe Inigo has the myth
memorized. I never bothered
because I didn't think it was
real... Nobody did.

Dielle takes a step forward, and suddenly malachite spikes
shoot up from the floor. She and Rune jump back as the
spikes recede

RUNE
Are you okay?

DIELLE
Y-Yeah...

She tries to step forward again, and the spikes come back.

DIELLE
It's like the dungeon is trying to
stop us from going forward...

RUNE
But there's nowhere else to go.

She thinks for a moment, and approaches. She tries
squeezing through the gap, but the malachite forms small
spikes that catch on her fur and scratch her.

RUNE
Ouch!

DIELLE
Stand back.

As Rune gets out of the way, Dielle claps and shoots a
thunderbolt at the spikes, shattering them.

DIELLE

It worked!

They start to move forward, but suddenly the floor gives way, and Dielle falls through. She deftly grabs the side of the walls as she's falling and pulls herself back up. Rune in the meantime jumps over, and they dash into the next room, which is a cove covered in waterfalls. Ahead on the path they're blocked by a small river of water.

DIELLE

How are we gonna get across?

RUNE

Um, let me try...

Rune takes a deep breath.

RUNE

(To herself) Alright, think about... Cold?

She blows out and...!

Nothing happens.

RUNE

Gah! Why can't I get my body to do what I want?!

She suddenly senses something.

RUNE

Wait- I think I have a weird hunch...

She looks into the water, but can't see anything. She looks hesitant, but sees some spots that don't churn the same way as the rest of the water, and carefully steps on them.

RUNE

Follow me! Just watch carefully where I step.

They get across safely, but arrive at a steep incline where water pours over, not unlike a water slide.

RUNE

A dead end...?

Suddenly, the floor beneath gives way, and they tumble onto the malachite slide, both screaming on the way. On their way down, they fall through a hole (refer to thumbnails for reference), loop around, and suddenly the track gives way ahead of them, breaking apart.

RUNE

J-Jump! On a count of three- One,
two- Gah! Just jump! Jump!

They make it over, when some spikes jut out ahead of them. Rune is freaking out, and Dielle cries out,

DIELLE

Aiming-!

And hits them with a Thunderbolt, and they break and schluff away. However, danger is still imminent as we see spikes further below. Dielle screams, and Rune thinks quickly.

RUNE

G-Gah, keep a cool head-!

She breathes ahead of them, and creates some ice floes! But unfortunately they aren't enough, and just make the track even more slippery.

RUNE

No- no- no-! I ruined it, we're
gonna die-!

She gets a reaffirming pat from Dielle.

DIELLE

You didn't ruin it! We're gonna be
okay, trust me! Grab my paw- You
see that ledge? We can make it.
I'll break the track into a ramp,
and you ice it over, okay?

Ready- set- **go!**

At "go", Dielle shoots a thunderbolt at the track, breaking it up as promised. Rune ices it over just in the nick of time, and they soar through the air, still holding onto each other- and we see the fur on their paws shift slightly.

Their landing, though clumsy, has kept them safe from harm's way. They groan as they start to get up- when they notice their paws.

RUNE

H-Huh??

Rune looks over at Dielle, whose eyes are closed as she's getting up.

RUNE

Dielle, your hand-!

Dielle looks down, and notices it's pink with a heart marking.

DIELLE

Wah! This-!

It fades away on both of them as quickly as it came.

DIELLE

Rune, do you realize what we just did?? We *battle bonded*!! Oh my gosh Inigo is gonna be so jealous, he's never been able to do it, eee!

RUNE

B-Battle bond?

DIELLE

We coordinated! So good that our auras synced with each other! But only for a few seconds. But it technically counts! Oooh, I wonder if we did it again if I could freeze something with my thunderbolt-!

RUNE

I think I need a nap.

They continue through to the room ahead of them, and find a room covered in Malachite and waterfalls, with a large jewel in the center.

DIELLE

Is this the center of the
dungeon...? It's so pretty...

They approach the center, where they see water very slowly welling up around the jewel.

RUNE

Do you think the water comes from
here?

She begins to step in the pool, and Dielle stops her.

DIELLE

Wait! Is it poisonous?

RUNE

I'm pretty sure it's only if you
drink it.

DIELLE

Oh, right!

Rune touches the gem, and suddenly feels dizzy once again. Darkness billows in and we're transported to the center room, where a dimly lit Guildmaster is seen inspecting the gem. He looks at it thoroughly, touches it lightly, and then simply leaves. The vision ends and Rune wakes up being carried by Dielle, who is leaving the room.

RUNE

Huh- W-wait, the gem-!

DIELLE

What do you mean *the gem*?? You
passed out again, what if you have
copper poisoning?! We need to get
you help!

RUNE

I-

She sighs.

RUNE

I haven't been completely honest
with you guys...

Rune climbs out of Dielle's arms.

RUNE

See, the reason I knew where
Azurill was, the reason I knew
what was hidden behind the
waterfall... Is because I
sometimes get visions when I touch
things. And just now, I had a
vision about that gem, but I don't
know what it means and now you
probably think I'm weird or crazy
or-!

Dielle reaches out to her.

DIELLE

What was the vision?

Rune seems stunned at her compassion, and continues.

RUNE

I think I saw the Guildmaster? I
saw him in my vision earlier when
I touched the waterfall, but this
time he just walked up to that gem
and... Left it alone.

Dielle thinks hard.

DIELLE

What if we tried changing the
future?

RUNE

Huh?

DIELLE

Let's destroy that rock! Maybe
it'll help clear out the water!
Then maybe your vision will
change!

Rune nods.

RUNE

It's worth a shot!

They go back in, and Dielle claps her hands together, shooting a thunderbolt at the gem. Like the spikes before it, it shatters. Clear water starts to bubble up as the malachite pieces disappear.

DIELLE

I think we did it!

Rune notices the water bubbling more violently, and looks up, noticing there's a hole in the ceiling.

RUNE

Um, Dielle? I think I know why the
Guildmaster didn't move the gem-

Suddenly, water comes gushing out as Rune quickly creates an ice floe for her and Dielle to grab onto. They shoot up, up through the cave on the geyser...

MALACHITE HOT SPRINGS

Everything is dark, and Rune starts to stir.

RUNE

Eugh... Who cracked a rotten
egg...?

She opens her eyes, and sees she's next to Malachite Hot Springs. She looks in the distance and sees Malachite Falls.

RUNE

Wait- Dielle-?!

She turns around, and sees Dielle grooming the water from her fur. Rune looks relieved as Dielle looks over at her.

DIELLE

You're up! Torkoal said to let you rest, otherwise I would have woken you up sooner!

RUNE

I guess I'd rather wake up next to a hot spring than a bucket of cold water on my head.

DIELLE

Hey-!

Suddenly, they hear the other group from afar, and look over to see a soaked Malachi, Inigo, and Yohann, the latter of which looking particularly disgruntled.

YOHANN

Well ,that certainly was *one* way to get to the hot springs.

RUNE

You guys also got flushed out?

MALACHI

Wait, *you* did that?

MAELSTROM

MY CHAMPION NEEDED THE BATH!

RUNE

Oh, yeah. Dielle and I found the heart of the dungeon, I think.

An elderly Torkoal chortles nearby.

TORKOAL

Oh, to be young again. So by what your friends told me, it sounds like a new dungeon has formed near our little town. What a shame. A proper excavation team could help with the remaining malachite, but

I'm afraid the dungeon will manifest it again in short time. We may have to relocate to the other side of the river, since the hot springs use a different well of water.

MALACHI

Maybe not, couldn't the guild supply the town with entercards to ward off the malachite formation?

TORKOAL

Perhaps, but young folk like yourself shouldn't worry yourself with minor details. Just relax and enjoy yourselves for a bit before heading home.

Malachi frowns, but walks over into the water to soak for a bit and everyone else joins.

INIGO

So psyduck, got everything you need?

YOHANN

It seems like it'll be tough to spin, but I'll certainly give it a shot. So one attack band,

RUNE

What about something for Dielle?

DIELLE

O-Oh! You don't have to-

RUNE

It's up to you of course, but I think you're already a perfect fit for Team Maelstrom.

Dielle is flushed.

DIELLE

Yeah-! Something for accuracy would be nice!

YOHANN

I'll draw out some plans then.

MALACHI

I still can't believe it- We
discovered our first dungeon!

Rune tries to offer a smile, but looks wracked with guilt.
The scene fades with the team idly chatting.

WIGGLYTUFF GUILD

We return with an establishing shot of the guild at sunset.
Inside, we see the team reporting back to Wigglytuff.

MALACHI

... And we found the source of the
copper poisoning was a
newly-developed mystery dungeon!

KEATON

Well this is surprising news
indeed. Good work, rookies. This
sort of discovery will easily take
you up to Normal Rank from the
Guild Apprentice rank.

Rune looks uncomfortable during this, and Dielle nudges her
encouragingly.

RUNE

Actually... Guildmaster, I have
something to ask.

GUILDMASTER

Oh? Go ahead, friend!

RUNE

Have you been to the waterfall
cave before?

Everyone goes quiet.

KEATON

Why do you ask?

RUNE

Um... I have an ability that lets me see into the future when I touch certain objects... But when I thought about it some more... I think it lets me see into the *past* too. In my visions I saw Wigglytuff at that same cave. At first I thought it was weird that he didn't do anything, but maybe he decided to wait for a proper excavation team to dig out the gem?

Everyone is quiet, when the Guildmaster breaks the silence.

GUILDMASTER

Wowee! That's incredible!! So you can see events in the past or future?? Ohh, this is amazing!

He jumps around in glee, before composing himself.

GUILDMASTER

Well I guess ya caught me! See, we have this super important expedition coming up, and I wanted to test you guys to see if you'd be a good fit!

MALACHI

An expedition? Where to?

A frown briefly flashes across Keaton's face before he continues.

KEATON

We'll be travelling to the Air Continent to find the Time Gear of Knowledge. We suspect the time thief will be going there, next, and we want to be ahead of schedule.

GUILDMASTER

And thanks to your good, good work, you're now eligible to come with us!!

MALACHI

Oh that's... That's great! It's such an honor!

GUILDMASTER

Keep up the good work!

The gang leaves the chambers, and we see the Guildmaster and Keaton watch the door close. Breathing a sigh of relief, Keaton breaks the silence.

KEATON

You can't give them vanity work forever.

GUILDMASTER

I know-!

KEATON

They're going to end up seriously hurt.

GUILDMASTER

It'll be fine-!

KEATON

It's **not** fine! Your little obsession is just filling their heads with fantasies, and you were practically *caught in the act*! Whether you like it or not, they're a real exploration team and need to be treated like one **Alphonse-!**

GUILDMASTER

... That's not who I am anymore.¹

And just as quickly as it began, their argument has ended.

END OF CH. 5

¹ This was changed in the final page, since the Guildmaster actually clings quite tightly to his humanity!