

Alph

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Long ago, the tribe of Alph flourished. However, a war between them and Ecruteak was destroying the habitat for the Pokemon and disrupting their lives. Suicune, Entei, and Raikou intervene, and a quest ensues. isuckatsummaries.

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1 - Prolouge to Fantasy

alphchp1Kiichi: o.o I love Alph, it's so mysterious. This was a random idea I had a while back, and I had started writing it. When sorting through appleworks, I noticed it was here, sooo... I spiffed it up some and decided to post it and stuff. =D Enjoy Alph!---

AlphChapter 1: Prolouge to Fantasy---

1,500 years ago, the Ruins of Alph (although definitely not ruins at the time) flourished. Alph and the tribe of Ecruteak have been at war for almost three years now, fighting over the trade route. (think where Sudowoodo was.) However, this has caused damage to and problems for the Pokemon in the area. Ho-oh has tired of the fighting, and resurrected the three legendary dogs of water, fire, and thunder. However, Lugia interjected, indicating the humans shouldn't become used to legendaries stepping in and saving the day. Thus, the great psychic bird and the fire bird came to an agreement: Suicune, Raikou, and Entei would each choose a human partner, their guardian. They wouldn't catch them, however: Just... lend their powers to them. However, while using their powers, they would take on an appearance resembling a mix of the two. No, no. Morph-happy trainers, don't get excited. They simply gain the tail of the pokemon, and the headdress. Oh. And the powers, to stop the fighting and resort the land back to the way it was. Only a handful of people had the potential to be picked. But, only three of them will be. They must journey to Olivine, however, to reach where the two birds and three dogs are waiting....

*|||You.||A bird appeared in front, hard to make out. It was awfully blurry....||Girl. Squirtle.|| Nope, still couldn't make out the shape.||The region is in danger. You may be one of those who can stop it. Tomorrow, at evening. You and the others, they will gather at the edge of the town... and leave.|| Whaa? What was this... this white birdy thing saying? LEAVE Alph, in the midst of a war!?!||You shall all leave. Leave, without hesitation, and make way for Olivine.|| Olivine.... where had she heard that before? Her memory, as well as her vision, was blurry. And what was what appeared to be a white birdy blob doing, telling her what to do?||Tomorrow. ... Tomorrow, the group of you will embark to the seaside town.|| Oh yeah! Seaside! Now she remembered what Olivine was....The blur started to dissipate, and she opened her mouth and took a step forwards to stop it and ask it more. But no sound came out. The darkness then seemed to fade, giving way to light...“Waah!” She tumbled out of her bed, a hammock. She groaned, scratching her head, on which was set mass of golden tangles. She rubbed her misty cerulean eyes, then sat up and looked around, half-asleep, dazedly. “..... What wazzat about?” She mumbled to herself, untangling her lower half from a mess of blankets that had fallen with her. What a strange dream... and unlike most dreams, she could remember it clearly. She gazed around her room: It was basically a stone cube, with a rectangle cut out for a door into her main house, and small squares for windows. All in her room was a hammock which served as her bed, and her clothes were folded and stacked neatly off to the side. On a pile of blankets snoozed her newest friend. “Oi, Zeni. Time to wake up!” The girl called, tossing a feather-stuffed sack, stitched tightly at the open end, at the blue Pokemon. ::Wack! Squirt, don't do thaaat... I was dreaming of breakfast.: The turtle rubbed its eyes with one hand, and pushed the pillow off with another. The girl, Squirt, smirked at him. “Glad to hear /you/ dreamt well...” She mused, sorting through her clothes to pick out what to wear that day. Of course, clothes were nothing much. At all. But the citizens of Alph still came up with ways to make them look better.:Mm? You mean to say you didn't?: The Squirtle, who had been nicknamed Zeni, picked up the pillow and placed it back in Squirt's hammock. The girl had changed quickly into a fringed tanktop of a tan shirt, and a deep brown skirt, the ends worn and torn. She picked up her blanket and spread it over the top of her hammock as she conversed with her pokemon. “Well, I wouldn't say it was

Squirt, Zeni, and Pi jogged over to see, and Squirt stood on her toes, looking through the crowd. Cleffa, however, would take the low road. She crouched down and crawled through the legs of the watchers, and stood up again in the front, content with her position. Squirtle, now with an excuse, pushed her way through the crowd. "Ah, excuse me, pardon me..." She murmured as she caught up to her sister, who had her hands clapped together merrily. "Squirt, LOOK! It's the Great Priestess!" She squealed excitedly. Squirt raised an eyebrow as two string men walked by. There was a small space before a threesome walked by: The chief, a great bearded fellow, his son, and the Great Priestess herself. The Priestess, Latias, was what every girl Cleffa's age fantasized about. To them, she was a magical fairy princess to cast a fancy spell over them to keep them safe from the inhabitants of Ecruteak. But those Squirt's age merely scoffed at the fame Latias had gained, believing her powers were nothing more than wild guesses. Good wild guesses. The great priestess had long blonde hair that trailed to the end of her back gracefully, and dark, dark blue eyes. Her hair was tied back into a semi ponytail, held in place by a red ribbon. Two white and red feathers were tucked into the ribbon. Another red ribbon was around her neck, a necklace of sorts. Her outfit was without sleeves: A thin red ribbon woven through the top so as to keep it up. Around her waist was a thick red sash. The end of the dress was short, and incredibly jagged and frayed, though mostly done for decoration. Her outfit was a stunning white for these times, and the end of the dress was a vivid red. Off-white wraps were around her thighs. Separate sleeves hung from where her arm started, also with red ribbons woven through the top. Again, it was a bright white with red ends. Her shoes were loose leather boots of a pale brown, with white tops. Red ribbons were wrapped around the top to prevent them from falling. In general, she was what the little kids looked up to, teenagers envied, and boys idolized. Cleffa squealed once again, waving her arms excitedly. "Squirt, Squiiiiirt! Can I talk to heeer?" "Uhh... She's busy right now." "She's talking to the boring old chief. I'm much more exciting." "But that's more important." Squirt responded smugly, hypothesizing. "Interesting, an odd dream indeed." The chieftain remarked, scratching his beard in thought. "Yes. I do hope you'll let me go, it'll make a huge difference~!" The girl smiled honey and sugar. The chieftain nodded reluctantly, clearing his throat. "Very well..." Squirt looked as if she was deep in thought. How convenient, they had been talking about /this/ as they walked by... Well. This would prove very interesting... VERY interesting indeed.

sweatdropped up at Latias, and responded with a simple, {Hiya?}“Awwwww!” Latias squealed, picking up Zeni and hugging him. “You’re so lucky to have a Pokemon, Squirt! As Great Priestess,” Latias answered dramatically, stressing the ‘Great Priestess’ part, “I get no Pokemon friend! Waah! Oh well. That’ll change in this journey, I hope!” She exclaimed peppily, putting a confused Zeni down.“Hey, hey, lookit! Two people are up ahead!”Squirt and Latias turned in the direction of the voices. A figure appeared from the darkness of the night.He was a tall, hotheaded looking boy with short silver hair. The bangs were up into three spikes, and his eyes were icy, cold blue. A Snorunt hurried after him. {Wait for meeee, Yuki!} The pokemon called after his trainer, who stared down at him. “... whatever. Wara, go... mingle with their pokemon, or something.” {Suit yourself.} The Snorunt, Wara, waddled over to Zeni and began to converse with him as his irritable trainer leaned against a tree, arms crossed, waiting for the others to catch up.A girl came scurrying over. Her long purple hair was let down, and her ruby eyes observed Squirt and Latias. A fluffy yellow pokemon skip-hopped behind her. “Okay..... Uhh... so we have that hyper girl from that farm, and the Great Priestess? Joy... Can’t forget Mr. Sunshine over there.” The girl ‘hmph’ed and crossed her arms, nodding her head to the silver-haired boy. Squirtle sweatdropped, and raised a finger. “Ahhh.... who are you two?”The purple-haired girl stared at Squirt like she was an idiot. “Mareep. and Happy-go-lucky over there is Yuki. He said Snorunt was far too weird a name, so he used part of the... some-language name for it. I forget. And who might you be?” Mareep turned to Squirt, already knowing Latias’s name. Of course, there wasn’t a person in Alph who didn’t know.“Um.. well, I’m Squirtle, but call me Squirt... and my Pokemon is Zeni!” Squirt announced cheerfully, then sweatdropped at Mareep’s piercing stare. “Righto... Well, I guess there are... what, two more of us? Yeah... That seems right. Then we go.” Mareep nodded sagely.“LAAAAAATIIIIIIIAAAAAS~” A loud cry filled the air, and the four winced that they might be caught. A boy came running over to where they stood, stopping near Latias. His hair was blue and naturally very spiky. He wore a headband made of dark blue wraps. “Helloooo, Latias! Remember that dream you were talking about? I had it tooo! I didn’t want to say anything in front of my dad, though, he’d spaz.” The boy explained. This made /perfect/ sense to him. Latias sighed, hand in forehead. “Articuno, stop talking.” “Buuuuut-” “Pleeeaaase?” “Fiine.” “GOOD.” Squirt racked her brain for a moment, then smirked triumphantly. “Articuno? Then you’re the cheif’s son?” “Yup!”“Figures.” Yuki snorted, obviously not thrilled by the way this group was turning out. Mareep counted on her fingers for a second. “Soooo... .. In my dream, the blob told me that our last member would be gained somewhere on our journey. .. Any idea where we’re going?” Squirt looked surprised. “Really, mine said to go to Olivine. It didn’t say anything about finding another member.” Latias spoke up cheerfully. “Mine said that we’d have all sorts of trials to overcome on the journey, and to be prepared!” Articuno folded his arms and nodded sagely. “Mr. Blob told me that our Pokemon would instinctively know the way there!” Yuki looked up at the group. “... Move quickly, and don’t stay in one place too long.”Mareep thought for a moment before slamming her fist into an open palm in realization. “I see! The creature told us each something different and important, too make sure that all of us came: if any one of us didn’t, we wouldn’t know what to be doing.” Squirt nodded in agreement. “Yes.. And judging by what Yuki said, we shouldn’t stay here too long. Let’s hurry up and go.”And with that, the five humans- Squirt, Latias, Articuno, Yuki, and Mareep- and their three Pokemon took off into the dark forest, lit only by the moon’s silvery glow.

3 - Pressing Forward

Chapter 3: Pressing Forward

Dawn had begun to spread its warm light through the forest, reaching even the smallest nooks and crannies of the region. Somewhere, little children were waking up to their mothers' soft voice. Somewhere, Pidgeys were chirping merrily to greet the morning. This was not one of those 'somewhere's. SERIOUSLY, THOUGH. I really really really wanna stop and sleep. Latias moaned loudly, stumbling through the woods after the others, who were equally zombie-like. Squirt, Mareep, and Yuki were carrying their Pokemon, who had fallen asleep. Squirt yawned. 'I wouldn't mind either... It's been, what, 24 hours now since we last slept? Mareep nodded, too tired to bother arguing. Articuno whined and clung to Latias. 'Sleep is good, I want sleep. NOW. LATIAS, YOU'RE GREAT PRIESTESS~! MAKE US STOP AND SLEEP. Latias turned to Yuki and opened her mouth to issue a command, but the boy spoke first. 'No. We have to keep moving, we're in dangerous area. See over there? He pointed off at a cliff in the near distance. 'Just below there is the trade route. No doubt there are guards from both sides watching there. He remarked, using a free hand to brush aside a branch and ducked under it. However, he didn't anticipate what would happen upon letting go. 'Ow! Squirt yelped as the branch thwapped her on the forehead, sending her falling down. It wasn't long before she began to cry. 'UWAAN~ I'm so tired, please, PLEASE can't we stop as sleep? Sniff, sob... Yuki sighed and put a hand on his forehead. 'Fine... The rest of the group broke out into tired smiles and curled up together to sleep. Squirt fished out the blankets from her and Zeni's packs, and Latias and Mareep unpacked a blanket each as well. Wara, Squirt, Zeni, Latias, Articuno, Mareep and her pokemon, named Piima, were all huddled together under the blankets. Within moments, they were deep asleep. Yuki, however, remained awake. He sat on a rock next to the sleeping group, keeping guard. He didn't want to admit, though, that with his blurred, tired senses, guarding was pretty much useless. Oh well: in his opinion, a sucky guard was better than no guard at all. Even if said guard's head kept drooping tiredly...~*~ 'KEEEYAAAAH!! MOOOOOOOM~! A shrill and panicked cry rang through the stone halls. A woman with short blonde hair came running frantically through the door to where Cleffa was kneeling in horror. 'Cleffa, what is it? 'Mom, Mom, Squirt's gone! She's gone, mom, she's not here! 'WHAT!? The older woman grabbed her freaking out daughter by the shoulders and stared at her blankly. Meanwhile, an older woman shrieked out and fell over. 'Mareep, where's Mareep!? Oh, no.. If your mother was alive, she'd never forgive me! No! No, Mareep, where did you go!? A younger man, about 20, poked his head around the door curiously. 'Hm? What's the matter, Grandma? 'Oh, Electrike, your sister! The man jumped out from behind the door, eyes wide. 'What? What happened to Mareep!? 'She's gone, I can't find her! Electrike quickly ran over and tore through Mareep's room frantically, before finding what he was looking for; a letter. He read it aloud, voice quivering. 'Dear Grandmother, Dear Brother... I must go. I had a vivid dream last night. A white figure appeared to me and told me that I had to go and stop this war. If you're reading this.. I've already left. I'm sorry if I made you worry. I'm sure that, up in heaven, Mom knows that it's not your fault. She would have wanted me to go. ... I'm sorry. - Mareep. Loud warning drums pounded through the cobblestone town square of Alph, and an enormous amount of inhabitants were gathered around. The chief stood up on a makeshift stage, and his powerful voice boomed out to the audience.

“Quiet, quiet! I have received three reports of missing children since this morning. My son is also missing. However, Electrike supplied us with a note from one of the missing children, Mareep. The Great Priestess spoke to me of a mysterious dream she had, telling her to journey and save us all. This is very similar to what Mareep had written in her letter. I strongly believe that this is the cause of the missing children. Latias, Articuno, Mareep, Squirtle, and Yuki have all disappeared last night. We assure you that this is the best; dreams have not lied to us before, especially as a phenomenon as big as this. I am sure that they are all fine wherever they currently are. This does not mean we should lessen on our efforts to defeat the Ecruteak; instead, we should strengthen it. As the chief stepped down and walked off with his advisors and guards, the crowd dispersed and began chattering away again excitedly about this event. ~*~||Your home knows of your departure. They are worried.|| Yeah, sure. No one was ever worried about her, personally. They were just trying to keep the Great Priestess from harm, because, of course, SHE was the one the entire tribe depended on. They never cared about her personal desires, just what they wanted for her; what they thought was best. ||Do not look down on those who protect you. You have a lot to learn about those around you. You are not on this quest just to save Alph. You must save yourself from your burden, as well...|| What? What was that supposed to mean? Before she could ask the question burning in her mind, the silvery shape opened its mouth to speak. ||Wake...|| ~*~ Latias was brought back abruptly from the realms of sleep by a loud bark. “... Up! Yuki finished his sentence as he looked over his shoulder at the stirring group. In front of him were three armored men carrying heavy spears. Five Poochyena stood in front of them, growling fiercely. Yuki hissed out an explanation to the stunned group behind him. “I told you sleeping was a bad idea... If we had kept going, they wouldn’t have found us. Squirt quickly jumped up and picked up Zeni, clutching her friend, who clung to her as well. “Y-yuki, who’re they...? The silver haired boy took a step back as the guards advanced. “Ecruteak guards. I told you this place would be heavily guarded... One of the guard turned slightly, issuing orders to the other two. “You, go back and report on this. You, seize the priestess. The first guard ran back into the forest, and the second raised his spear and charged forward at Latias, who shrieked. “Hiyaah! I’ll save you, my Latias~! Articuno blocked the attack with a branch that had fallen from one of the trees previously. Mareep was just now awaking, and she took one glance at the scenery before turning slowly to Yuki and remarking calmly, “What did you do now? The icy boy didn’t respond, as he was running through the forest after the first guard. “Squirt, c’mon! We have to help! Zeni looked up and tugged on Squirt’s shirt. The girl bit her lip and nodded slowly. “All right.. Let’s go! The two jumped forward, in front of what appeared to be the higher-ranked guard and his two Poochyena. “... Z-zen! Bubble! The turtle took a deep breath and blew out a powerful stream of bubbles which struck one of the Poochyenas. The bubbles popped all over it, stinging its eyes. It howled in pain and took off blindly into the woods. Meanwhile, Wara (Yuki’s snorunt) had frozen the feet and hands of the guard that had tried to attack Latias to the ground. Mareep’s Piima had thundershocked the Poochyenas, and the three Pokemon now lay swirly-eyes alongside their immobile owner. Squirt turned her attention back to her own battle. The remaining Poochyena launched forward for a powerful tackle; it sent Zeni flying backwards into a tree. “Owooww.. That was very.. Not-fun.. The turtle complained as he stood up and dusted his front off, regaining his battle composure. “Bubble, Zeni! The Squirtle nodded, hearing his trainer’s command. He took a deep breath and unleashed another flurry of bubbles toward the Poochyena. The dog-like pokemon stumbled, but quickly recovered. “Tackle! With a loud bark, the Poochyena jumped forward, pinning Zeni to the ground. It growled a threat as it was about to end the battle with a scratch, but it was stopped by a beam of ice. Wara stood behind a surprised Squirt, grinning and hopping. “Aw yeah, I’m cool. No pun intended, though! The commanding guard cursed under his breath and began to retreat into the woods,

but a thunder wave from Piima stopped him in his tracks. Mareep walked proudly over to Squirt, patting her on the back. "Well, we did it!" Squirt smiled and picked Zeni up. "Yeah, you guys did great!" Latias and Articuno sweatdropped. "You see, this is why it seriously sucks to NOT have pokemon... You don't really get to do anything," Articuno explained. Latias raised an eyebrow at him. "Oh? You did a pretty good job protecting me when that guard tried to take me..." Articuno grinned widely at the compliment, rubbing the back of his neck and chuckling. Squirt walked over and rubbed Wara's head. "You did great too, Wara! Where did your trainer go?" "Yuki went off after that man who left to go tell the others." Mareep bit her lip. "What? That idiot..." Squirt tilted her head to the side worriedly. "But... he didn't have Wara to protect himself... And as far as I know, he didn't get much sleep, if any..." She stood up quickly, picking up Wara. Zeni climbed up on to her shoulder. "Oh, we really need to go find him!" Latias nodded as she packed up the blankets. "I wouldn't be too worried, though. I heard the Chief say that Yuki is in our military." Mareep looked surprised. "Really? I didn't know that..." Articuno nodded, proud that this was a subject he was knowledgeable on. "Yup, yup. He's a spy, so that's why he doesn't really talk about it much..." Squirt looked surprised for a moment, but blinked it off. "... R-really...?" "Mhm!" Articuno replied cheerfully. Latias slung the backpacks over her shoulder. "Well, whatever. We should still probably find him anyway. It's not really a good idea to be separated in this forest... I've heard bad things about it. Plus, the Ecruteak will realize their guards are missing, soon." Wara wiggled anxiously in Squirt's arms, smirking. "Let's go, let's go!" The girl sweatdropped and nodded. "Er... Yes..." Piima looked up, her fluffy fur shading her eyes mysteriously. Electricity crackled through her woolen coat. "... We should move forward." Zeni stared at the mareep and shivered, clinging to Squirt's shoulder. "Let's go before Piima kills us." Zeni leapt off of Squirt's shoulder and marched into the trees, Piima trotting sullenly after him. Squirt, Mareep, Latias, and Articuno stared at the Pokemon and sweatdropped, then ran to follow them.

4 - The First Challenge: Trial of Fire!

Quick note first. I shortened Articuno's name to Arti, because Uma and Mishiga got confused over whether he was a human or Pokemon. -----

Chapter 4: The First Challenge! Trial of Fire

The four humans and three Pokemon continued pressing through the woods. Piima sniffed the ground occasionally to make sure they were going the right way. Squirt looked around cautiously, clinging to Wara. The snorunt seemed to be enjoying himself immensely. "Oh, are you sure this is the right way, Piima?" The mareep stopped and slowly turned her head to Squirt. "... You doubt my judgement?": Zeni frantically answered for his trainer. ":NONONO, of course not, Piima, Squirt would never doubt you, please keep going, dontkillmeeeee...": Mareep couldn't help but smirk at the feared reputation her pokemon had gained. "Keep going, Piima." Cleffa stood on her toes and reached upwards. Her small hands clasped around an apple, and she triumphantly twisted it, breaking it loose. "Catch, Pi!" The short-haired girl tossed the apple to her timid cleffa, who caught it and placed it in a basket beside her. Cleffa hopped off the stool she was standing on and strode over to her Pokemon. She knelt down in front of it, and smiled sadly. "You know, Pi, apple-picking was more fun with squirt around..." But Pi didn't seem to be paying any attention. Her gaze was riveted on the tree. "Cleffa, what is that?": She questioned, pointing up into the leaves. Cleffa looked back over her shoulder, and a glint caught her eye. "Eh..?" She hopped back up on the stool and grabbed hold of a branch, hoisting herself up. She balanced herself on the wood and reached up with one hand while holding another branch for support. "I almost have it...!" Cleffa's fingertips brushed the edge of it, and she pouted. She jumped slightly, knocking it down. The object fell down into a bush.... along with Cleffa. "Eee!": Pi quickly shut her eyes, and Cleffa halted in midair. She was turned upright, and slowly lowered back down. "Phew... Thank you very much, Pi-chan!" Cleffa smiled and picked up her Pokemon, then trotted to the bush to find the object. It was a smoothed square-shaped stone. Strange letters were carved clearly into it. Cleffa blinked twice and turned it around, studying it. "... What does it say? Do you know, Pi?" The timid pokemon shook her head. ":No....": Cleffa shrugged and put it in the basket of apples. "Well, I'll ask mom about it tonight. We'll see if she knows." "Yuuuuuuuuki. WAKE UP." Squirt knelt on the ground, poking the sleeping boy's forehead. He was slumped over a rock, dozing peacefully. Against a tree nearby, the guard who had ran was pinned by his spear to the trunk- the spearpoint was driven through his sleeves, above his head, deep into the wood. Mareep chuckled, smirking. "That idiot. He doesn't know how much of a fool he is, acting all tough and then falling asleep like that." Latias clasped her hands together, eyes wide. "Oh! We should draw on his face!" "Yeah!" Arti chimed in his agreement merrily. Squirt sweatdropped. "Er... Well, we'll stop here for now, I gue--": "... No. The guard's still there. He may be unconscious now, but he will wake up eventually.": Piima interrupted. Latias nodded. "Yeah. We'll just take Mr. Sleepy here somewhere else and set up camp." Camp came in the form of a small clearing, about an hour's walk from where the guard was pinned. The sky had smoothed into a chilly afternoon, and puffy white clouds drifted gently through the sky. The group had managed to get a small fire going, and Squirt was currently cooking lunch over it. Latias and Arti had been the food-packers of the journey, and their haversacks were loaded with bread, canteens, potatoes, onions and carrots. Squirt had taken a small pot that Mareep had packed, filled it with water, and begun to boil potatoes and onions in it. Yuki was sleeping near the fire, under a blanket. Arti sat against a tree with Latias, and the two chatted energetically.

Meanwhile, Mareep was guiding practice battles between Wara, Zeni, and Piima. :.... You cheated.: Piima hissed to Wara, who sweatdropped and hid behind Mareep's leg. :I didn't cheat, honest!:: :I saw you. You did cheat.: Zeni pointed out, folding his arms. Squirt smiled at the group and prodded at the soup with a wooden spoon. It didn't seem like it would take very long to finish cooking... Yawn... Yuki slowly opened his eyes. As soon as he realized that he had been asleep, he shot up, sweatdropping, and shoved the blankets off of him. Squirt chuckled. Latias and Arti wanted to draw on your face, but I told them not to. You woke up just in time, the soup's almost done. She remarked cheerfully. Maybe Yuki was better-tempered after sleeping? She knew that she herself was. Whatever. The boy shoved the blanket even further away, and looked up to the sky. From what he could tell, it was about 1 or 2 o'clock. Squirt sweatdropped and went back to tending to the soup. Eh? She rubbed her eyes and stared back at the fire. She could've sworn something was in the flames... Suddenly, a ring formed around the flames and expanded rapidly, pushing everyone far back from the small campfire. A square forcefield formed around the campsite, and the object that had been in the flames floated upwards slightly. It was a tiny, yellow orb (about the size of a marble). Around it was a swirling silver substance formed into the shape of a Lugia's head and wings. The bottom part faded out. The voice that the five had heard in their dreams boomed throughout the area. ||The time for your first trial has arrived. You will face several more trials similar to this later in your journey. These shall help you to find which shall be your partner: Suicune, Entei, or Raikou.|| This is the Fire Trial. You must get to the Idol before the smoke fills the entire area. In each trial, one will win, one will lose. Once someone has completed the trial, then it will disappear. Let the Trial commence.|| Suddenly, the fire exploded in size, rapidly filling the area. The camping materials and their Pokemon disappeared. When Squirt cried out Zeni's name, the voice responded: ||Your pokemon cannot help you with the trial. They will return once it is completed.|| Squirt whimpered and slunk behind Yuki, who was staring around as the fire crawled up bushes and trees. Mareep winced as fire shot up in front of her, and she stumbled back. Gyah... it's really friggin' hot... She peered through the smoke at the still-glowing Idol. Flames flickered around it protectively. We have to get that, then, right? Then this will all go away? Yuki nodded. Don't talk if you can. Smoke is filling quickly. Conserve air. Squirt, Mareep, and Latias nodded. GAH! Arti cried out- his shirt collar had gotten stuck on a small tree branch from the trunk he had been leaning against. Branches from other trees had begun to fall, flaming, as they were burned off their trunks. One landed near Arti, and he yelped and stomped on it to try and extinguish it. Latias bit her lip and darted forward through the flames, despite Mareep calling after her. The Priestess squinted through the rapidly-filling smoke, trudging through the flaming grass to find the Idol. Meanwhile, Yuki and Squirt had split up and were trying to find the idol. Smoke was consuming more and more of the air, and the group was now coughing and choking on the foul-smelling air. More flaming tree branches were collapsing around Arti, and the boy was frantically trying to extinguish the fire and free his collar from the tree. A loud crack sounded through the area, and everyone stared in horror to where a burning tree had begun to fall.... Directly towards Arti. He closed his eyes and waited for the worst, but when he opened his eyes, everything was gone. All the pokemon were back, as well as the camping supplies. The trees and bushes were all back to normal, and the barrier was gone. Pidgeys were chirping brightly as if nothing had happened... What the..? Arti scanned across the now peaceful site, awed. And there, in the center, stood Latias, her arms wrapped around the Idol, which was glowing. ||The winner of the First Trial is Latias. The loser is Arti.|| The Idol dissolved into Latias's body, and she glowed with a warm light. The brightness faded and she straightened up, blinking, and looked to everyone else. Blank stares coated everyone's faces. THAT WAS THE SINGLE WEIRDEST FREAKING THING THAT'S EVER HAPPENED TO ME! Arti cried out, tugging at his hair. Squirt nodded rapidly to prove her

agreement. "Yeah. That was.... weird. How did you do that, Latias?" The Great Priestess looked surprisingly bright and strong. "I don't know... I just saw Arti like that, and I wanted to help... I knew I couldn't help him in any other way than to make this fire disappear." She blushed slightly, shrugging. Night had fallen, and the group had set out on the move again. Latias had announced proudly that she now had bragging rights, and the Pokemon merely went along with it. They had no idea of what had happened... To them, they had just blinked, and then everyone was somewhere else, with shocked expressions. Squirt had tried to explain what had went on, but she wasn't to sure of it herself. As they trekked through the forest, they chatted amongst themselves. However, the conversations were interrupted as Squirt spoke out. "It said there would be more trials. What do you think it meant by that? Would they all be the same?" Silence fell over the group. Squirt was about to apologize, but Mareep spoke. "I don't think so. Otherwise, they'd just be testing our ability to handle that one thing. There'll probably be all sorts of tests." Arti nodded. "Yeah, I hope so. That was unpleasant." Yuki, who was leading the group, stopped walking. "This will be good for camping out tonight." At the silver-haired boy's command, everyone grouped together under the blankets, falling asleep immediately. Although they wouldn't have minded dinner, they were all too exhausted from their first trial to try making any. Besides, none of them would want to look at fire for a while after that, anyway.

5 - Back Home

Alph5AlphChapter 5: Back Home Mom! Cleffa burst through the door, panting. Pi was perched on her head contentedly. In one hand, Cleffa waved the tablet she had found in the tree. She brushed her bangs from her face with her free hand. The basket of apples was looped on her elbow. Hm? The older woman looked up from a piece of parchment she was scribbling on with a charcoal stick. As a scholar, Bellossom was always studying, writing things down. What is it, Cleffa? Cleffa thrust the tablet to her mother, grinning proudly. I found it when I was picking apples. She fell from the tree while getting it, too. Shoosh, Pi. Bellossom took the smooth tablet from her beaming daughter and eyed it curiously. You found this when you were picking apples? Where on earth was it? It was in a tree! Cleffa announced brightly, pointing upwards for emphasis. Bellossom raised a quizzical eyebrow, then turned back to the tablet. Really. It was never there before... I know; Just yesterday I had to climb that tree to get you down from it. The woman smiled slyly. In any case, I'm afraid I can't help you with this. From what I can see, it's written in the ancient Ecruteak language. Cleffa looked crushed for a moment. Oh.. Really? Do you know anyone who could translate it for me? I'm afraid not, Bellossom began, I don't know of anyone that knows this language... Oh! Perhaps you could ask the Chief if he knows anyone. These are the sorts of things he keeps records of... Cleffa stared at her mother like she was insane. You expect me to go see the CHIEF!? The head guy of the tribe? But, but, I'm just a FARMER'S DAUGHTER~! I can't just waltz in there and ask him to tell me about the other members of the tribe-- The ranting little girl was stopped as her mother placed a hand on her head. Tell her that Bellossom sent you. He's helped me with my research before. Just tell him that you're playing messenger. Cleffa looked at the ground in thought for a moment. Okay. Gotcha. I'll be back in time for dinner, Mom. Hopefully. Cleffa placed the basket of apples on the rough wooden table and scooped up the tablet. Let's go, Cleffa. I have never seen the Chief's home before. Pi mused, sliding down to Cleffa's shoulder. As Cleffa skipped out the door, Bellossom turned back to her work, chuckling to herself. Knock, Cleffa. It's not that easy, Pi~! This is the MAIN LEADERMAN of the entire TRIBE. Cleffa whined, hand resting on the door. If you won't, theeeen // will! Pi hopped off of Cleffa's shoulder and body slammed the door. It swung open on its hinges and slammed into the wall with a thud. Who's there? The chief's voice came from the room, a slight hint of anger detectable in his tone. Cleffa poked her head around the door, sweatdropping frantically. I'm SO sorry about that... I'm Cleffa. Mom-- Bellossom sent me. I need your help with something. Very well then. Come on in. Cleffa took a sigh of relief before casually striding into the room. The Chief was seated at a low table which was stacked with parchment covered in charcoal, most of which was relatively smudged. Cleffa sat down at the other side. What is it, then, Cleffa? He asked, leaning forward in a businesslike fashion. Er, um, I found this when I was picking apples.. It wasn't there before, and it was really weird, so I brought it to my mom-- Bellossom. She said it was written in ancient Ecruteak language, and that she couldn't read it. She told me to come here and ask if you knew of anyone in the tribe who could translate it. The Chief scratched his beard in thought. He stood up and walked to a shelf in the room, where even more stacks of parchment were. He sweatdropped, an odd thing to see on someone of such high status. Well, these are the records of everyone in Alph. It lists things like

their family, birthdates, languages, and other important things like that. Unfortunately, over time, it's gotten a bit.... Unorganized, let's say. He turned back to Cleffa. I'll arrange for my guards to transport the files somewhere where you could sort through them. Cleffa stared blankly at the shelf of parchment. ... That'd take hours upon hours, though! ... Er, I mean, can I request the help of my friends.? The Chieftain (A/N: x.x Wow, this is sounding redundant. His name is Zapdos, So I'll start calling him that...) chuckled. Hahah, of course. I'll have my chefs bring lunch to you, too. Where would you like to sit? Cleffa had blurted out the answer without even thinking. The orchards! Um, well, that was where I found the tablet in the first place, so I thought maybe it would be a good idea to sit there to study and stuff. Cleffa stammered, poking the tips of her index fingers together. Zapdos nodded. Alright then. You may gather your friends to help you. I'll have my guards bring the papers to the orchard, and order my chefs to prepare you lunch to eat there while you work. Does that sound good? Cleffa stood up and bowed. Yes, very. Thank you very much, sir! Cleffa smiled and picked up Pi, then hurried out the door. ||*||

The afternoon was warmer in Alph than it was in the woods. The sun was bright and there were no winds. Cleffa lead her friends to the orchard, where she sat down on a blanket. Piles upon piles of parchment lay next to her. Cynder, Lithe, come! The first one to join Cleffa on the blanket was a girl about a year younger than Squirt- she was 12. Her light brown hair was pulled back in a loose ponytail. The ends of her bangs and hair were a natural blue. Her emerald eyes were wide and bright with curiosity. A cyndaquil waddled behind her. This one was Cynder, and her pokemon was names Quilda. The next one was the same age as Cynder, but a bit more mischevious-looking. Her brown hair reached about mid-back, and was tied loosely at the bottom. Her soft brown eyes stared in dumb shock at the stacks of parchment. A growlithe playfully hopped around next to her. We have to go through all that! This would be Lithe and her pokemon, Gard. Cleffa sweatdropped and nodded. Yeah, but... at least we get food! Lithe sighed and sat down between Cynder and Cleffa. Yeah.... Cynder smirked and held up a piece of parchment, scanning it. And, we get to read all about everyone at Alph. Lunch was brought to the three shortly afterwards. Cleffa, Cynder and Lithe happily dove in to warm bread, crisp salad, and tomato soup as they skimmed over each of the pieces of parchment. By dusk, they had sorted a little more than half of the papers. Cynder had gotten bored long before, but pressed on. Lithe was taking the oppurtunity to complain loudly. Gard and Quilda, accompanied by Pi, had taken a break from their ongoing game of tag to help sort through the papers. I got it! Lithe held up a piece of parchment triumphantly. Some girl named Onyta. Apparently, she lived in Ecruteak for most of her life, but when they waged war against Alph, she moved here. Says she was against the war, but mostly supported the Alph point of view. Lithe explained, reading about it, So, she can read the ancient Ecruteak language. Okay then, we gotta find this Onyta person. Lithe handed the parchment to Cynder, who folded it and stuffed it in her skirt pocket. But where would we find her? She questioned, standing up and dusting off her knees. Cleffa stood up as well. Well, we can ask the chief where to find her... No doubt he'll know. He'd probably be keeping a close eye on someone from who we're fighting against. Lithe nodded, and Cynder turned to the guards who were relaxing under a peach tree. Can you carry these parchments back to the Chief when you have the chance? Thanks! The guards sullenly tossed aside the peaches they were munching on and each grabbed an armload of parchment. Onyta, hm? Yes, I've heard of her. I can faintly remember being told where she lives. I believe she's currently residing south of the Town Square. You can't miss her house, though; it's a ranch of Ponyta and Rapidash. Zapdos mused, stroking his beard thoughtfully. Lithe nodded. Mmh, I see. Ponytas, Rapidash, got it. Thanks. Bye! Lithe storde casually out the door, followed by Cleffa. Cynder bowed to the Chief respectfully, then quickly followed her friends. ... Well, here's

the town square. Um, Cynder, Lithe? ” “Mmh?” “Yeah?” “... which way is south?” Cleffa asked, looking around at the Town Square. “Well, since it’s dusk,” Cynder pointed out, “and the sun sets in the west, it should be..... That way. South is that way.” Cleffa followed where Cynder’s finger was pointing. Lithe walked in front, backwards, so she could converse with the others. “So, I wonder what this Onyta lady is like?” “She’s probably old and wise and stuff!” Cleffa exclaimed happily, flailing her arms. Lithe chuckled, and turned around. “Hey, look! I can see the Ponyta’s and Rapidash’s flames from here!” Lithe broke into a jog over to the door. Cynder quickly stumbled to follow, and Cleffa skipped after them.... running right into them and sending the three colliding through the hole in the stone walls that served as a door.“.... Hello?” A voice called out through the house, and an older girl stepped up to the pile of the three girls. Her hair brushed against her shoulders, and curled slightly inwards. Her vivid green eyes eyes the three like they were crazy. She seemed to be about 16. “.... Can I help you?” Cynder quickly jumped up and dusted herself off. “YES. Are you Onyta?”“That’s right, I’m Onyta.” Onyta smiled and leaned down, helping up Cleffa from under Lithe, who quickly stood. “What is it that you need me for?”Cleffa waved the tablet in onyta’s face. “Help us translate this! You speak the ancient Ecruteak language, right?” The older girl nodded. “Yes...”Cynder’s eyes lit up, and she clapped her hands together. “Oh, so you’ll help us?” Lithe raised a fist in determination. “Help us translate, help us translate!”Onyta tilted her head and stared at them. “Um... okay. This is a little strange, though... Where did you find that?”Cleffa sweatdropped. “Well... Sit down, and I’ll explain...”

6 - Rememberance - The Trial of Wind!

alph6(@__@ Aaaand Arti had another name-change, at the request of Ankari... It’s now Articu. Sorry about this.)AlphChapter 6: Rememberance-- The Trial of Wind!||*||The afternoon was warm and dry. Winds blew through the trees, ruffling Yuki’s silver hair as he lead the group through the woods. Squirt was holding her hair back with one hand from the wind. “Egh, I hate the wind. It always makes my hair explode.”Yuki sighed. This morning was rather uneventful. The group had eaten apples for breakfast, as they were still afraid of fire. Squirt had tripped over a rock, and then Latias had tripped over her.Yup, the normal morning.:l’m bored.... Where are we going to next?: Zeni piped up from where he was trudging behind Squirt.:... l’ve heard that there is a rest-stop for traders near here....: Piima stated sullenly, lagging behind.Latias clapped cheerfully. “Oh, we should stop there! Isn’t there a lake near there, too?”Squirt nodded. “Yes, I believe my mom said that once... Also, we could probably get something to eat at the rest stop too. I wouldn’t mind.” Articu raised a fist energetically. “Food! I bet they have lots of good food!” Mareep nodded, looking at the sky. “Well, it’s noon, so the sun’s overhead. But, in the morning, it was over there, so..... that way’s south.” She announced, turning on her heel and walking south.Yuki, Squirt, Articu, and Latias, as well as their pokemon, followed her through the trees.||*||“Oh, god, that was good~!” Squirt flopped back onto a pillow, having eaten her fill of the meal. Articu was still attacking the food, tearing off bread and shoving it into his mouth, then finding room to jam in cheese. Mareep and Latias ate slowly at their food, dabbing at their mouths with napkins after each bite. Yuki was picking solemnly at his food. “Especially that soup. It was good.” Squirt added, rolling over on her side and clutching the pillow. Mareep nodded, swallowing a mouthful of food. “Yep. The bread’s good too...” She winced slightly, catching sight of Articu. “.. But watching him is making me lose my appetite. l’m going to take a nap.”Latias picked up the cloth napkin from her lap and placed it on the table, shoving her plate forward. “l’m gonna sleep, too. I need my beauty rest~!” Articu burped, then sighed contentedly. “l gotta agree with them, nothing’s better after a big meal than a big nap!”And with that, the three exited the dining room and went off; the girls to one room, and Articu to another.Squirt sweatdropped at them, then turned to Yuki, who was still picking at his food. “Ah... You should eat more. We probably won’t be able to eat like this until we get back to Alph after this journ--” “l’m fine..” “Oh, but...!” Squirt persisted, looking sad. Yuki sighed, shoving a boiled potato in his mouth. “Habby mow?” Squirt cheered up instantly. “Yep! Well then, l’ll go off and take a nap too, then... ” She remarked, standing and stretching. Yuki quickly swallowed the potato, and stood as well. “.. Wait..! .. Uh, well..” Squirt looked over her shoulder, back at him. “Hm? What is it, Yuki?” “... Nothing.” Squirt smiled and turned back, facing the doorway. “Alright. But, if you ever do need to tell me anything, l’ll listen.” And with that, the girl skipped into the room.||*||Just as the group lay down on the cots to sleep, the same mysterious voice rang out through the rest stop; however, only the five heard it. ||The time for the Second Trial has come.||Everything about the rest stop disappeared: The people, the Pokemon, the building, the furnishings... everything.Articu screeched and wrapped his arms around himself. “Not this again, I don’t wanna catch fire.”||The Trial of Fire has already passed.||This is the Trial of Wind.||The stiff breeze began to blow harder, harder, and harder, until everyone began to slide backwards. ||This will test your endurance in the wind. You must reach the Idol to end the Trial. The same rules apply.||The glowing idol appeared

several feet away. It looked exactly the same as the last, but instead of the yellow stone in the center, this one was white. Suddenly, the wind increased in speed and force, picking up everyone into the air and blowing them back. Yuki was the first to grab hold of something; a tree branch. He struggled to pull himself up, but the wind was amazingly powerful. Articuno grabbed hold of a tree branch, and caught Latias's hand as she flew back. The priestess hung off of his arm, while he wrapped his free arm around the branch. Squirt and Mareep had both attached themselves to the branch behind Articuno and Latias, and clung to it for dear life as dirt and leaves were blown into their faces. Meanwhile, up closest to the idol, Yuki had managed to lift himself past the branch and on to another, closer one. Eep! Latias yelled as she felt her hands slipping from Articuno's. Within moments, the wind had torn her from her friend, and the priestess felt herself flying back at a rapid speed. She stumbled around and shot her hands out to grab anything she could touch. Latias finally felt the satisfying grip on a branch from another tree, bending with the pull of her in the wind. Yuki, meanwhile, was making astounding progress up the tree branches. His hand grasped another branch, but a strong gust of wind pulled it free. He flew back into another tree branch, but it had caught him. He squinted through the dust and pressed on. Squirt was completely content with the safety of her branch, but Mareep tried to climb further, calling back to Squirt. "If Yuki doesn't make it, then what?" She was silenced as a large rock that had been caught in the wind blew past. She ducked her head as it flew over, and Squirt slid to the side to avoid it. The rock continued to hurl past, headed straight for... Latias, who was still clinging to her branch. She squeaked in fright as the boulder neared her face, but suddenly, everything stopped. The boulder froze in motion, and then fell to the ground, along with everything else. Latias thudded to the ground and winced, rubbing her rear. "Oww... I have dirt in my eyes." Articuno, Squirt, and Mareep also fell from the branches, yelping as they did so. "Ah! Look, Yuki reached the idol...!" Squirt shaded her eyes from the sun and looked to the sky, where Yuki, clutching the idol, had floated up. The idol glowed a pale green, then swirled into translucent wings which appeared on Yuki's back for a moment. They then swirled around the area, and the rest stop and its inhabitants reappeared. Yuki gently floated to the ground as the world returned to its state before the trial. ||The Trial of Wind is completed. The winner is Yuki. The loser is Latias.|| Latias looked horrified. "I only just gained my bragging rights, and now Yuki gets them!?" Mareep couldn't help but chuckle as she stoof up and dusted herself off. "Yes, yes... There they are~!": Zeni came bursting out of the door and zoomed into Squirt's arms. "Was that another of those weird trial things?": The girl laughed and nodded, hugging her worried Pokemon. "Yes, yes, but it's okay..": "No it isn't~!": The turtle protested. "Here...": He untied something from his tail and stuffed it in Squirt's hands. "You gave this to me a while ago for safe-keeping. You said that your old friend gave it to you before they disappeared... I think you should have it back. For good luck during the trials. Then you can show your friend what you're doing...": Squirt blinked down at her Pokemon and opened her hands. In them was the shell that Zeni had packed. It was delicately carved to look like a flower, and hung off of a thin strip of black leather. "Oh...": She closed her hand around it and smiled. "Thank you, Zeni..": Piima and Wara came running out of the door soon after. "Mareep, tell me about these trials..": Piima began, looking up at Mareep. "They sound... intriguing.": Mareep smiled and began her story. "Well, the first one was the Trial of Fire: Everything burst into flames, and then we had to get this Idol thing...": Mareep went on. Latias joined Mareep to help describe the Trials, and Articuno cheerfully sat down and listened, occasionally adding dramatic details. The mareep seemed interested in the story they were telling. Wara waddled over to Yuki. "You look different.": Yuki tore his gaze from the others, and shook his head. "No, I'm fine. I'm just, um... glad that I won that trial, is all...": Wara looked excited. "What was this trial?": "Wind.": "Ooh, oooohh! Tell me about it, tell me!": "Listen to Mareep's story...": Yuki

solemnly trudged inside. Wara stood there and stared at his trainer, blinking. ::Yup, there was something very different about Yuki... I wonder what's wrong with him NOW?:: The snorunt shrugged and waddled over to where everyone had joined in the storytelling.

7 - Coming Back to Me - Trial of Water!

Chapter 7: Coming Back to Me- Trial of Water

After the Trial of Wind had finished, the group had slept like logs. The nighttime stars danced in the black sky like diamonds embedded in velvet. And, at the rest stop, someone had just returned from the realm of dreams. Mareep's silhouette climbed up onto the roof of the rest stop. Her ruby eyes observed the night sky, and she couldn't help but smile. Being out here, like this, with friends, doing what was previously thought impossible... It was exhilarating. She had never felt like this at home, before. Her heart felt so full, it seemed like it would burst. Mareep jumped as she heard footsteps behind her. "What're you doing up right now, Mareep?" Spiky blue hair poked up from the hole in the floor that served as the exit to the roof; a rope ladder hung from the edge. Artico pulled himself onto the stone roof and sat beside Mareep. The purple-haired girl scowled. "I could ask you the same thing. Aren't you a really heavy sleeper?" Artico shrugged cheerfully. "I dunno! Some say that, but weird things wake me up. Like, if it starts snowing, I wake up. Or, if someone's walking." Mareep grumbled, crossing her arms. "There goes my quiet moment on the roof..." Artico chuckled. "Admit it, you like my company." Mareep stared blankly at him. "What makes you say that?" Artico flinched under her cold stare. "Ah, fine, fine. If you want me away so badly..." He yawned. "I'll go back to sleep." And with that, the chief's son climbed back down the rope ladder, leaving Mareep alone on the stone roof again. In the secrecy of the starlight, Mareep smiled to the moon.

"Good morning everyone!" Squirt shoved open the door to the boys' room, shouting them into consciousness, very similarly to how she had done with the other girls. Latias peeked cheerfully over Squirt's shoulder, holding a plate and stick high in the air. "Don't make me have to gong you guys awake!" In one side of the room, on one cot, Artico was sprawled out, blanket and pillow flung across his area. One leg hung off the cot, and his arms were in either direction. He snored loudly. Then, in the polar opposite side of the room, Yuki was curled up in a blanket in the corner between the cot and the wall. His normally spiked bangs were dropped across his face, and his pillow was wedged under the cot, blocking his ear-- no doubt to prevent the sound of Artico snoring from keeping him awake. In the center of the room, Zeni lay on the ground, the blanket pulled up to the Squirtle's chin. Wara had taken over and dominated Yuki's cot, and was smirking in his sleep. No doubt he was dreaming things no young person would ever think of... Squirt sweatdropped. "UP, UP!" She called, snatching the plate and stick from Latias and banging the two together. Zeni rolled over and sat up, rubbing his eyes. "Why the fuss so early?" Wara rolled over and grumbled, "Five more minutes..." Artico acted as if nothing had happened; in fact, his snoring just got louder. Yuki mumbled something under his breath and tore the pillow from his head, hurling it at Squirt, who quickly blocked it with the gong-plate.

"Shut up! Leave me alone to sleep." "GWAH!" "Eek!" Squirt and Latias fell to the floor as Mareep kicked them aside and marched into the room. She was obviously in a morning-bad-mood. "EVERYONE GET YOUR LAZY BUTTS OUT OF BED RIGHT NOW, OR I SWEAR, PIIMA WILL COME HERE AND ZAP THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS OUT OF YOU-- AND I PROMISE BACON WILL BE INVOLVED!" Yuki, Wara, and Artico almost literally shot up out of their beds, flinging their blankets and pillows onto the cots and shoving on their footwear.

"We're ready...?" Yuki suggested, sweatdropping. His bangs still flopped over his forehead. Mareep grumbled and stomped off, muttering something about "lazy, good-for-nothing people." Within the hour, the group had recovered from their morning episode

and were now on their way, continuing to Olivine. As usual, Yuki lead the way. Articu followed behind, walking with Latias: The Great Priestess had been stuck carrying the perverted Wara, as Squirt had insisted that she already took a turn, and Mareep in the morning was not one to do something against her will.... Peacefully, anyway. Mareep and Piima were next, both giving off an aura of 'stay away'. For Mareep, it was explained by her morning bad mood. For Piima... Well, she was naturally like this. Squirt followed behind them, with Zeni, who was cheerfully riding on her shoulders and humming a cheerful song. Suddenly, Latias stopped walking, '... I have no idea where we're going.' Yuki, who was ahead, stopped as well. '... Well, I don't know where we're going...' Squirt pointed frantically. 'But but but you were LEADING! You should know where you're going if you're LEADING!' Yuki sweatdropped turning. 'Okay, well, if I didn't lead, who would?' Mareep and Piima strode casually by the others, who were freaking out still. 'Remember? If we're lost, our Pokemon will know the way.' She smirked triumphantly, resting her hands behind her head. The purple-haired girl looked down at her pokemon, who returned the smirk.... But in a creepy, gothic-pokemon way.: Springs... we have to go to the springs...: Squirt looked up cheerfully. 'Eh? Hot springs? Is that where the next trial is? It must be water then...' She mused, playing with her seashell necklace. Piima looked over her shoulder to glare at Squirt. ':... Not hot springs... just springs.: Eh? .. alright then... I'm still confused, but sure.' Squirt shrugged, walked forward to join them. Latias pondered for a moment about the Trial. If Squirt's guess was correct... how would one be tested on the water? She continued to ponder as she took a step forward to follow, grabbing the confused Articu's shirt collar and dragging him along. 'Ah, ow, ow, choking me, Latias...' Yuki blinked and sweatdropped. '... water. Great.' Oh no, it wasn't that he was afraid of water or anything... He just hated it in general. ||*|| Piima stopped in front of a bush, then turned to face the others. ':... These are the springs...: Zeni hopped down from Squirt's shoulders, and piped up to continue explaining. ': Water pokemon thrive here! This place is usually kept secret from all humans, but... Since you guys are gonna help us, we'll let you see. Besides, we're being told to bring you here.: Oh, yes! Wara-chaaan~! Squirt knelt down to Wara, who (once Latias had gotten fed up with carrying him) was now walking on the ground. ': Hmm?: Can you identify the pokemon that's telling us to do this? Being a pokemon, do you have any idea? ': That's easy, every pokemon knows this one's name!:: ... Lugia. Let's move on.: Piima interrupted, pushing through the leaves of the bushes. 'Wuahh...! A beautiful scene unfolded as the group pressed through the veil of trees and bushes. A clear, crystal blue spring was in the center of the area. A small waterfall poured from a ledge into the spring, which seemed very deep. Bright grass grew all around, with colorful flowers sticking up all over. As it neared the water shore, the rich soil slowly faded into white sand. 'Wow, wow, this is where we'll be doing our trial!? I can't wait, it's beautiful.' Squirt clasped her hands together, her blue eyes wide with excitement. She spun around to share her joy with Zeni, but none of the pokemon were there; they had all vanished. Articu groaned. 'Aw, shi--' || Now begins the Trial of Water. || Suddenly, the entire area began to glow with a blue light. Latias, Yuki, Articu, Squirt, and Mareep found themselves floating in the air. The group were pushed forward by an unseen force, until they were hovering directly above the spring. || This Trial is a bit complicated, so it will take a bit more explaining... || The voice began. || The spring, although small, is very deep. Many tunnels run into its side- and, in four of them, there are air pockets where you can restore your breath. However, once you use them, the air pockets will disappear. || Mareep spoke out. 'But... if there are only four... What will happen to the fifth..?' Silence filled the area. || Then they will be dubbed the loser. ... However, I shouldn't say there are only four- There are actually five. But, the fifth is in the same tunnel as one with an air pocket. There would be two air pockets in that one tunnel, and the second would have the Idol. Once the

Idol is found, then the top will open and you will be free to go to the surface. ||None of the group seemed to be pleased with this trial. 'So, we'll all have to split up, right?' Articu asked, stepping forward on the invisible area on which they stood. ||Yes. Each of you will take a different path. If you reach the end and there is not the Idol, you must go back and explore another tunnel. Your instincts will usually tell you the correct way to go, but they could be incorrect. Now, with that out of the way... Let the trial commence. ||The floating five immediately found themselves falling into the water, and once they had all gone under the surface, an invisible shield coated the top, preventing their escape. Mareep immediately dove for the first tunnel, while Articu took the one across from it. Yuki hesitated a moment before heading for the one below Mareep, and Squirt took one below that. The tunnel that Latias explored was in between the depths of Yuki's and Squirt's, but across from them. Mareep swam slowly, not wanting to waste her energy and oxygen. The tunnels seemed like they should get darker, but some force lit them up. She looked around the tunnel for a moment before bumping her head on something- the end of the tunnel. 'Darn it...' She cursed mentally and quickly turned around and swam out of the tunnel before heading to a lower one. Articu had better luck. While the Idol was not at the end of the tunnel, he had found an air pocket. He quickly poked his head into it and took a few deep breaths before diving back down. The air above his head was then engulfed by the water. A voice rang through the caverns. ||One air pocket has been found. Three more and the Idol remain. ||As Latias explored her tunnel, she couldn't help but wonder, 'Is it going to tell us every time someone finds an air pocket?' The Priestess grinned triumphantly as she found an air pocket. Quickly taking advantage of it, she swelled with confidence - this pocket wasn't at the end of the tunnel. The Idol might still be at the end! ||Two air pockets have been found. Two more and the Idol remain. ||Squirt bit her lip as she progressed further into the tunnel. The water was heavy, pressing down on her and everyone else as they made their way through. '... oh!' Squirt almost called out as she saw an air pocket ahead. She quickly took a deep breath of the air, and remained there for a moment, catching her breath. With that, she dove back down and ventured further into the tunnel. ||Three air pockets have been found. One more and the Idol remain. ||Meanwhile, Yuki was slowly progressing through the tunnel. Ugh, how he hated water.. It brought back bad memories... As the thoughts came flooding into his mind, he quickly shook his head and pressed on, cursing himself as he heard that only one pocket remained. He had to find it soon... Mareep squeezed her eyes shut, pulling herself through the cavern. How she missed air... Air. How nice the word sounded! Cool, crisp, fresh oxygen.... She opened her eyes and charged forward, trying not to think of it. She could make it a little further... There was still one more air pocket left, maybe she could find it... Her ruby eyes lit up and she swam rapidly to the bubble of air that floated in front of her. As she broke into the cool air, she coughed and took deep breaths. Ah, that felt good... With a mental, 'I'm sorry,' she dove back under the water, continuing on into the tunnel. ||Four air pockets have been found. Now, only the Idol remains. ||Yuki's icy eyes widened. Well... this seriously SUCKED. He swam further into the cave, and, nearing the end, peered deeper in. There wasn't the Idol... The idol wasn't here. The boy quickly turned and propelled himself off the wall with his feet, pulling himself along the wall. His lungs burned inside of him... Articu blinked once, twice. Had he seen a blue glow in the tunnel..? As he paddled forward, he felt immensely disappointed- the blue glow had been nothing more than his imagination. And he was starting to run out of breath, too... Latias continued down her cave, brushing aside her hair from where it had floated into her face. She reached the end of her tunnel, and, saddened, floated there. The Idol wasn't here. And, with the length of this tunnel, it wouldn't be wise to try and go out, just to waste energy. She might as well save her breath and wait here for someone else to find the Idol. Mareep cheerfully exited her tunnel, then dove into a wider one to the side. She had been the last one to get breath, so she was pretty well off... Yuki, meanwhile, was indeed panicking. His vision was starting to blur with the lack of oxygen, and his throat burned. And, for some reason, it hurt to move.

But, if he just waited here... While he had the energy, he might as well move. Squirt closed her eyes for a moment. Oh, would this tunnel ever end? She didn't know what to do... she thought about everyone else, who was probably still exploring their tunnels; but here she was, not doing anything. How could she betray her friends like that? And using up an air pocket too, just to sit around and do nothing... She opened her eyes slowly and sadly. She blinked in surprise as her shell necklace floated in front of her face. She smiled at it, remembering what Zeni had said.: Then you can show your friend what you're doing....: Squirt clenched her fist determinedly. ‘That's right! I have to do this to protect Zeni and everyone who's been kind to me! I gotta keep going forward!’ She smirked, punching the cavern wall in determination. ‘... Eh?’The dirt crumbled away and disappeared, and in the indentation she had left... Was a glowing blue orb in the center of the Idol. Squirt smiled proudly and quickly reached out to touch it. As soon as her hand came in contact with the Idol, it immediately exploded in an array of blue light, wrapping around her legs in the shape of a translucent mermaid fin. She powerfully zoomed out of the tunnel and into the main spring. ||The Idol has been found. The Trial has ended. Return to the surface. ||The glowing shield that had covered the top of the spring dissolved into the water, and Squirt swam to the surface. She spluttered and took deep breaths of the air, grinning proudly. Latias, with a new hope and happiness, swam out of her tunnel quickly- time seemed to go a lot faster with the knowledge of something good at the end... Articu had been waiting at the end of the tunnel, and immediately kicked off of the edge to join Squirt at the top. “You.. won?” He asked, smiling, between breaths. Mareep quickly paddled from her tunnel, seeing Latias crawling slowly from hers. She swam over and assisted the Great Priestess to the surface. They were greeted by the smiling Squirt and Articu, who both seemed overjoyed to see them. ||The winner is Squirt. The loser is Yuki. ||“Eh..?” Squirt tilted her head, then felt worry overcome her. By the rapidly melting smiles on everyone else's faces, she was pretty sure that they were all thinking the same thing. Why hadn't Yuki surfaced, where was he..? Almost instantly, the entire group dove back under, searching the first entry areas to each tunnel. Squirt, with the help of her translucent tail, was swimming rapidly in and out of each of the tunnels. Finally, reaching a narrow tunnel, she found what she was looking for. Yuki hovered slightly in the water, a few feet into the tunnel. His hand floated limply above him, where it had been extended to the surface. His eyes were barely open, hovering between consciousness and unconsciousness. He could just make out the blurred form in front of him with a glowing tail, grabbing him arm and pulling him out of the tunnel before everything went black. ||*“Come on, this way, Shiyu!” Shiyu.. that was when I still went by that name..“This way, this way!” The silhouette of a little girl kneeled on top of a rock, overlooking a waterfall which poured from a mountain nearby. “Isn't it pretty Shiyu?” “Yes, it is...” I tilted my head confusedly at her.. why had she taken me here? The silhouette turned to look at me, her eyes sad.“.. Don't you remember? Tomorrow, you have you be taken away... You have to start training in the army. Remember, last year, how everyone had been very scared about the war that started?” Oh. Yes... That evening, I was going to be drafted into the army to train, already. Even 10-year-olds had to train to fight... Was the Ecruteak army really so strong that Alph needed every person they could get?“Well...” My friend turned to look over at the waterfall. A cool breeze blew by, and her short hair ruffled forward. “Since you have to go, I thought we should come here. I mean.. if this might be the last time I see you, we should make it special... So, I brought you here! I love waterfalls, don't you?” I looked back over at the cascade of tumbling blue water. “Yes...” She kept her gaze at the water, but she hugged her knees. “I'm scared.”“Why are you scared..?”“I'm scared that you'll die.” I smiled sadly. “I won't die. I promise I'll come back one day, stronger than anyone else! I'll be a war-hero. I'll save Alph for you!” She chuckled and nodded. “Yes.. I bet you will.” I was about to say something when a harsh bark

interrupted me. YOU! You two are from Alph! We've told you time and time, that the Union Cave is our territory! She and I looked up in shock to see an Ecruteak soldier standing on the ledge above us. In the blink of an eye, he had jumped down on our ledge, spear raised. If you like these caves enough that it'll be your grave... Then let it be so. I didn't even know that I had done anything. In a minute, I had pushed her off the ledge and into a bush, calling to her, Run, and don't stop until you're in your house! She nodded, and went forward, but hesitated. B-but what about you, Shiyu..? I'll be fine, go home, get help! I saw her go off, before I turned back to the guard above me. His spear was raised at an angle, and soon, I felt the wood of it hit my head, then everything was black. When I woke up, I was in a dark place. My head hurt, and the ground was cold. As I later learned... I had been taken as a prisoner of war. Ecruteak was keeping me as a prisoner for trespassing on their property. I remember staying there for two years. When I was finally saved by two dozen Alph guards, dressed in their great armor, I was overjoyed. I couldn't wait to get back to my family and friends. After the long trek back home, I wasn't greeted by my sobbing and smiling parents. They had killed themselves after I disappeared, assuming me as dead. Were they ashamed of me for getting caught like that? Everyone must have been ashamed of me. Even though the next thing I wanted to do was run to my friend.. I knew that she would never forgive me. I lied to her, then left her. She was probably ashamed of me too. I changed my name from Shiyu to Yuki. I started over a new life, working as a spy for the Alph armies. But, even as ashamed as she would have been, even as angry or disappointed in me.. I wanted to see my old friend again. ||*|| Yuki slowly opened his eyes, coughing. I hadn't had that dream in a while... It's probably because I had to be in the water.. Ever since then, I've hated water. I hate that waterfall. It's what ruined everything... it killed my parents and tore my friend from me.. He sat up, but dizziness overwhelmed him and he lay back down. What happened, was the trial over? Above him, the stars were shining again. How long had he been asleep? Yuki slowly sat back up, blinking twice to clear his vision. The glowing embers of a campfire were in the center of everyone, and Articu, Latias, and Mareep were all huddled together under the blankets, sleeping. Piima, Zeni, and Wara sat on top of the blanketed mass. Next to him, however, Squirt had fallen asleep sitting up. Her head lolled forward, and she snored slightly. .. Was she waiting for me to wake up? He coughed again, and Squirt's eyes flickered open. ... Mm, good morning.... Oh!! Yuki!! You're up! Her sleepy eyes instantly shot wide open. You should lie back down! You still have a fever... Soon, her cries had awakened the other, and Articu jumped up, clutching a stick, as if he expected someone was attacking. Unfortunately, while doing so, he shoved Latias into Mareep, who flew into a tree, and sent Wara flying off of the blankets... straight into the hot, glowing embers of the fire. ::EEEYAAH! OHMYGOD, that's HOT!:: The snow hat pokemon ran around it circles as Zeni shot a water gun at him, which sizzled on his burning back. ::Ahh~. Thank you.:: Mareep rubbed her eyes, seemingly unaffected by all this. .. Eh? Mr. Anti-water's awake! Latias clasped her hands together, smiling. Oh! You were asleep for... How long was it, guys? Articu scratched his chin. Hm... I'd have to say about 10 hours. Yuki sweatdropped. ... That long? Mareep nodded. That seems about right. The Trial started pretty early in the morning, actually. Judging by my instinct, it seems about 8:00-ish right now. Squirt had been cheerfully going through her haversack during the whole conversation. She cheerfully shoved a slice of bread at Yuki, who blinked. Um... No thanks, I'm not really up to eating anything... Squirt scowled. No! If you don't eat anything, you'll get sick! Just have this one slice of bread, and I'll leave you alone. Ahh, we should have a late-night party! Who would we invite, idiot? Latias chuckled, smacking Articu over the head. Yuki smiled mentally as he gnawed absentmindedly on the bread. On the outside, however, he kept his usual, I could care less;

expression.