

Octopath Traveler: *insert good subtitle*
～八人の旅人と四つの道草～

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Chapter 1

Professor Albright's Hands-On Learning

Month of Sealticge, Week 1, Windsday

So much time has passed already since I first set out on my journey. I left home all alone, but before I knew it, it was like I'd become part of a big family! Every day is so lively.

Professor Albright and I seem to get excited about a lot of the same topics – the Flatlands and the Coastlines are right next to each other, after all. Professor Albright isn't a really sentimental kind of guy, but it's not that he's cold or distant, really. In fact, his unusual level of composure and maturity has been a huge help on more than a few occasions.

That said, though, there are some things about him that remain a mystery to me... It all started on our way to Stonegard, a few days after we left Atlasdam –

The eight of them varied wildly in birthplace and upbringing alike, making their journey unconventional, to say the least. To start with, the only ones among them that could really be considered experienced “travelers” were Therion, the wandering stranger, H'aanit, ever so particular about their camping arrangements, and Olberic, the seasoned warrior. As for the others, they had hardly left their hometowns, much less gone on a grand journey like this.

“If we proceed at this rate, we should reach the Coastlands by nightfall,” Olberic announced, spreading out the map as he walked along the main road.

They were proceeding faster than normal today, making good time to leave the Flatlands before long. It was with all this in mind that H'aanit, walking in the middle of the group's formation, turned to look back at the rest as she muttered, “Everyone's tenacity far outstrippeth my expectations.”¹ They'd been walking nonstop for a considerable time since departing Atlasdam, yet she'd not once felt

¹“I'm surprised. The others are keeping a better pace than I'd thought.”

even short of breath. Linde, her snow leopard, sat down by her side with an unbothered expression.

"Quite so. It seems neither Alfyn nor Ophilia have known little of travel at all, but despite that they've kept up quite nicely, without any show of complaint." Leaving the others in the back a few paces behind, Cyrus expressed his agreement as he approached. He, too, had managed to match their steady pace without even a hitch in his breathing. As for the rest of the group, Primrose and Therion led the group with Olberic, while Tressa, Alfyn, and Ophilia trailed behind. H'aanit raised her eyebrows, bemused.

"Thou art no less included when I say 'everyone,' Cyrus."

"Oh, is that so?" he asked breezily, not raising so much as an eyebrow to indicate any kind of offense being taken. "I'm sure you have an image in your mind of scholars cooped up in their studies, doing naught but reading dusty tomes all day. Naturally, that kind of thing is important, but as for myself, I'm not the kind of person to neglect the value of field work, you know. One's body is a precious resource. My muscles are hardly carved from stone, but I do believe I can handle a little walking."

"Speakst thou true, I wonder..." H'aanit murmured as she craned her neck to look past the back of the group. There, further down the slope, a small figure with a massive bag strapped to her back continued to climb, weakly gasping for air. It was Tressa Colziona – though a bona fide merchant in both willpower and way of speaking, she still hadn't quite grown out of her teenage looks. Right behind Tressa were Alfyn and Ophilia, who called out in concern as they kept moving.

"Tressa, if you'd like, I can hold your luggage for a bit...?"

"Grrrr.... I'm alright, Ophilia...." Tressa gasped, her voice strained through gritted teeth. "Don't.... Don't take us merchants lightly, you know...! A hill... like this... is *nothing!*"

It was a beautiful day, and the travelers and road before them baked in the Flatlands sun. Sweat beaded on Tressa's face as she continued to limp down the main road step by step.

"She's got quite the burden there, hasn't she?" Cyrus mused, stroking his chin as he gazed back at the little merchant. "It'd be easy to think she isn't particularly strong, but judging from the size of it, carrying that baggage of hers all this time must be no small feat." One's eyes couldn't help but be drawn to her luggage, even from such a distance. She'd strapped those bags to her back ever since she left home in Rippletide. It was natural that she had far more to carry than her companions, given she also had to carry everything she had for sale. They'd proposed she borrow a mule to help carry at least some of it, but she insisted on carrying it all on her lonesome. If she wanted to carry her own merchant's burden by herself, there wasn't much any of the others would say to object. Cyrus, as a scholar, and H'aanit, as a hunter thought perhaps someone should object. The group of eight carried on amidst this strange dynamic.

"H'aanit, I propose we take a short rest here. What say you?"

“Aye, perhaps that would be best.” She looked towards the front of the group and nodded slightly as she watched Olberic fold up his map. This wasn’t Cyrus offering his wisdom as a scholar, nor H’aanit consulting her expertise as a hunter. This was simply two traveling companions watching Tressa, against all odds, take that last laboring step up the slope and offering her time to catch her breath at last. Perhaps at that proposal, at least, the others would be in agreement.

“Finally... I made it!!” A wide grin split across Tressa’s whole face as she raised her arms in celebration of her achievement. “This is it... it’s actually the top of the hill! You can see the whole ocean from up here! It’s so beautiful... Alfyn, Ophilia, come see!”

“H-hey, Tressa!”

“Tressa, maybe we should rest a little first...” But seeing the girl’s exhaustion begin to melt away into pure excitement, Alfyn and Ophilia nonetheless ran to catch up to her. Cyrus, watching this lively scene play out before him, merely shrugged.

“Do you think our worries were perhaps unfounded?”

“Certainly not. ’Tis absurd to think I would not agree she worketh herself too hard. The sooner we maken camp, the sooner she can taken some well deserved rest.”

“Indeed.” Cyrus nodded at her. It was hard not to feel some kind of pride, watching Tressa excitedly show the other two the scenery from the top of the hill. Cyrus remembered something. When they had first departed Atlasdam, Tressa had told him she had come up from Rippletide, taking the northern road. In that case, she should have passed across this slope once before on her own already. It musn’t have been a pleasant climb then, either, yet it seemed she’d nonetheless discovered something valuable on the way – namely, the picturesque scenery before them. Past the plains and beyond the hill were the Coastlands from which Tressa hailed, a land of salty sea breezes and the roar of the waves, of endless clear skies and the deep blue ocean, where the wind carries the aroma of the shore as you approach. The profound impact of seeing this scenery for the first time must have been something for her and her alone. Now that he thought about it, Cyrus realized he wanted to know more about the reason she had set off on her journey in the first place. He, too, knew the thrumming and ringing in one’s chest that comes with crossing the threshold into worlds yet unknown, how moving and exciting that sense of discovery could be. He walked over to Olberic, who stood in the shade of a tree, unfurling his map to study it once more, and asked, “Olberic, are we proceeding favorably?”

“Indeed. In fact, we may even be going somewhat too fast. I believe we should slow our pace a little.”

“I see. I was thinking of proposing the same myself, actually.”

“Well, when you see how Tressa is faring...” Olberic’s line of sight settled on Tressa, who was now sitting on the ground, monolithic luggage still strapped securely to her back. She had been practically jumping up and down with excitement a moment ago, but now she was making no effort to hide her exhaustion. Taking

her into account, as well as the others who were not yet accustomed to travel, it was a reasonable plan Olberic had proposed. Looking at the group as a whole, though, there wasn't any urgent need to worry too much about their pace from here on out.

"Olberic, do you perhaps know anything about why Tressa began traveling in the first place?"

"Hm? Now that you mention it, I don't believe I've ever asked her. I get the impression that it differs from the reasons you and I have, though. The experience of traveling itself seems to be part of her goal, I believe."

"That very well may be. I know she frequently refers to a journal she received from someone, but I don't believe it draws her towards any particular objective." To this, Olberic simply offered a "Hm," as he closed the map once more.

"I take it you haven't simply asked her directly either, then."

"That's right. I can't help but find myself taking some interest in it, though."

"If you're so curious, just go on and ask her. That would save you a good deal of time rather than trying to do your usual roundabout method of investigation."

At this, Cyrus stopped. This idea was so brilliant that it was as though he had been slapped upside the head with it as he nodded with deep satisfaction.

"I do believe you're on to something. All this superfluous enquiry is somewhat of an unintentional bad habit of mine, I believe."

"Have you even the slightest self awareness...?" Olberic muttered, too quiet for Cyrus to hear.

Chapter 2

Trust and Betrayal

Chapter 3

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Chapter 4

The Dance Comes After

Chapter 5

Epilogue