When exactly is a Pokemon’s birthday? It’s hard to know unless you know its parents or if you witnessed the hatching yourself. Most trainers just avoid celebrating birthdays and instead try to celebrate the day their Pokemon joined their team, judging that far easier to know with certainty. Brannon was no exception, especially when it was about the star of his team, the one that tended to hit the hardest. More often than not, his Walrein was who gave him the victory. Brannon always insisted in calling it ‘birthday’.

Walrein didn’t really care what the celebration was, though. All he cared about was that it was a celebration in the first place. That it was in a public beach made it even better! Walrein liked people, he liked Pokemon, and he wanted nothing less than to play and have fun with them! And over all that, he liked the thought of partying with his fellow teammates.

Brannon placed a cake on the mat, right where Walrein could see it. “Okay, here it is. Happy birthday, champ,” he said fondly, admiring the cake. How did bakeries specialized for Pokemon manage to make cakes that looked so good? They even had generously given him all sorts of decorations to add onto the cake. “These have been some great times, right?”

Walrein beamed with pride. They sure have been. He also looked around, expecting to see the rest of the team somewhere nearby, but they weren’t anywhere on the beach. There was a crowd of strangers and Pokemon, relaxing and enjoying everything the beach had to offer.

“They’ll be here later, don’t worry about it,” Brannon said, knowing very well where the rest of the team was at: all of them in their Pokeballs in his satchel, right to his side. Walrein probably never knew he had them. He wasn’t the most observant Pokemon ever.

Five other Pokemon, all of them important members of his team, waiting to be released once his preparations were over. It all should have been ready ages ago, but Brannon kept getting distracted people-watching – or, as it’d be more accurate to say: staring at anyone attractive enough to catch his eyes. Walrein flopped towards the sea, having decided to distract himself with the water, while Brannon reached for the satchel with his stuff.

Looking inside, he saw the little bag with the decorations. Brannon stuck his hand into the bag, taking them out and placing them aside. There. Now all he had to do was—

A happy cry from Walrein made Brannon look up. He was fine, just playing around with someone else. “Oh...,” Brannon’s train of thought derailed when he saw who Walrein was playing with. How could a beach be full of so many attractive people, he thought. Whatever he was thinking was left forgotten for a few minutes while he watched Walrein play with that person, simply enjoying the sight. It wasn’t that much of a big deal he was staring like a creep right now.

Once that person had enough of playing around, Brannon decided to continue what he was doing. He still had yet to place the decorations onto the cake, cake that had been left there in the open for a bit already. He really should hurry to get this done. The decorations...those were still in the satchel, right? Looking inside, he saw Pokeballs. Ah, there they were. Brannon reached and grabbed the Pokeballs, holding them in one hand. Once he had the cake in front of him, he started placing the Pokeballs onto the frosting. Before long he had all the decorations placed in circle right at the center of the cake, with an empty space right in middle. If only he had a Walrein decoration or something to place in there...

He didn’t remember he had already taken the decorations out of the satchel a while ago. He didn’t notice the Pokemon inside the real Pokeballs he placed on the cake.

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Garchomp made a derisive comment once she saw where she was on right now. Pokeballs were strange technology: even though her surroundings showed an arid desert, she also could see outside. Above there was a red-tinted sky, to the sides there was a muted image of frosting and cake. Did she really just get placed on a cake? As if it wasn’t bad enough Walrein had taken over her spot as the trainer’s preferred Pokemon, now she was forced to sit on the food?

*“You’ll sour up the cake with your attitude!”* she heard a melodious voice from the speaker located on the wall of the enclosure -- Dewgong. It was good to have an easy way to communicate with the rest of the team when they were all in the Pokeballs, but right now it wasn’t welcome at all.

“You have fun sitting around on the cake. I want out,” she said grumpily.

*“Just have patience and imagine yourself biting into the cake*,” Cramorant suggested. Garchomp could already picture him drooling.

“Not everyone’s a glutton like you and Walrein”

*“It’s cake!”*

*“So...how long before we’re out?”* Buizel wondered. Truthfully, he thought the same as Garchomp but he didn’t voice it aloud. “I want to go into the sea”

*“Weeeell...I do want that too. Just give it time”*

Garchomp curled on the sand, sighing. Ridiculous. This day was such a headache already. “Bad day already. It’s not even Walrein’s birthday...,” she muttered, closing her eyes. If they had to sit around on the cake for a while then at least she could catch some zzzzs. Sleep didn’t come, though. She was forced to listen to everyone else’s ridiculous comments. Why couldn’t they all be like Empoleon, who hadn’t said anything at all?

*“Oh, the trainer’s going somewhere else,”* Buizel said.

*“To try to hook up with someone, most likely,”* came the weary voice of Empoleon. Garchomp sighed – she had hoped at least someone would do the same as her and refuse to engage.

She decided to not be the only one not talking. “We’re stuck here for at least one hour!” she said. Once Brannon went to hit on someone he never returned quickly.

*“It’s not so bad,”* Dewgong said.

“Weirdo...”

*“He left the cake. Someone will eat it before our party starts,”* Empoleon noted.

*“Before I can even take a bite?”* Cramorant complained. *“If someone takes it they better let me come out!”*

*“Someone’s approaching”*

Now that Empoleon mentioned it...Garchomp could feel it too. She opened her eyes, seeing the sand vibrate a little – proving someone far larger and heavier than the Pokeball approached. A bit hopeful, she looked upwards, expecting to see a human.

It wasn’t. She would recognize that blubbery mountain anywhere. He already was a large Pokemon, seeing him while being inside the Pokeball at its smallest size was a different thing altogether. Garchomp was far taller than him, but now the tables were turned. She just laid her head down again, trying to rest. The less she saw of this usurper, the better.

“I bet he’s going to munch on the whole cake even though we’re not out there yet,” she muttered. He was that much of a glutton...and she’d have liked the sugar, admittedly. Sigh.

Such a thought was more accurate than she’d have thought. Indeed, once Walrein saw the cake – and Brannon was nowhere to be seen, most likely trying to hit on someone somewhere else – he had only one thing in mind: taking a bite out of it! Just one bite. It was his cake, anyway, it’d be taking a portion in advance. Without even trying to be subtle or stealthy, Walrein flopped to the cake and, brazenly, went to take a bite from it.

Garchomp’s Pokeball was the one closest to Walrein. She blearily opened her eyes, hearing an unnerving squelching noise way too close to her. Raising her head, she saw a pair of very large tusks, digging into the cake, one of them almost piercing the Pokeball. She could see him biting the cake, just as she expected. “Of course. I knew it,” she said. Garchomp wasn’t worried at all about the proximity of Walrein to her Pokeball, though.

Others seemed to be, though. “*Close call, Garchomp*,” Empoleon said while Walrein lifted his head.

The dragon simply groaned, far more annoyed than upset. “Only a moron would eat solid decorations. He’s a glutton but he’s not an idiot”

She was right about that much, at least. Walrein knew very well those weren’t supposed to be eaten. Right now the walrus was enjoying the bite of cake, pleased. It was so good! The rest of the team didn’t know what they were missing out? Where were they, anyway? At this rate someone would take the whole cake before they arrived!

...or eat it. It was his cake. It’s his right to eat it, right? It was their loss for not arriving quickly enough. They didn’t have to know there even was a cake in the first place. Still, if he left the decorations around they’d figure it out. He had to get rid of them. Into the sea, maybe? No, wait, someone still could find them and find out there was once a cake around here. Same if he tried to bury them. The best way he had of making sure nobody would find them...

...would be to eat them, right? They were round and kind of small. Swallowing them would be easy, and nobody would figure out he ate these. Simple enough! Having taken his decision, Walrein decided to eat the cake and its decorations as quickly as possible. Time to devour this delectable cake!

Garchomp had buried her face under an arm while she snoozed, trying to block the sight of Walrein’s towering figure. She didn’t even look up when she heard the sound of that giant Pokemon taking another bite of cake, resigned to not getting even a bit of the baked good. Only when she heard someone else’s shout of alarm she raised her head.

*“That tusk almost impaled me!”* Empoleon exclaimed. It must have truly freaked her out – she tended to avoid talking much.

“Get over it. It happened to me too and I didn’t complain”

*“These things won’t break, right? Right?”* Cramorant cawed. He sounded really panicked, the doofus.

“Obviously—oh, right,” Oh. She had forgotten: Cramorant’s Pokeball was made with an apricorn. It was structurally weaker than the rest of the Pokeballs, fully made of plastic and metal. Perhaps he was right to be concerned.

Well, it wasn’t like Walrein was going to bite into the decorations, no?

Still...all those worries managed to bother Garchomp. She stayed attentive, listening to the increasingly worrying sounds of Walrein eating the cake. She tried not to listen to the anxious fretting of her teammates, but it was hard not to get worried when Walrein kept eating and getting closer to her Pokeball. Sometimes he’d get out of sight, presumably being on the other side of the cake. “Come on, stop eating already...,” she pleaded with a low voice.

It wasn’t going to be okay.

*“Oh!”* Empoleon’s surprised cry sounded through the communicators, followed by sounds Garchomp had never heard before. Wet slaps, scraping against plastic, what sounded like mush squelching under the weight of something...what was going on? The answer came quickly:

*“Empoleon’s Pokeball got eaten!”* Dewgong’s alarmed shout made Garchomp look up. She could see the silhouette of Walrein a bit away. Were they serious...?

“You’re joking, right?”

The response was a panicked scream before the unnerving sound of tusks against plastic sounded once again.

“Dewgong? Come on, Dewgong, say something!”

*“She got...she got...,”* Cramorant whispered, as if he was afraid Walrein would hear him and gobble him up. Garchomp stood up, alarmed. Two had gotten eaten. If Walrein was going to eat the whole cake, it was only matter of time before everyone else did as well!

Crossing over the warm artificial sand enclosure of her Pokeball, Garchomp slammed against the ‘horizon’ – the painted wall of the Pokeball. Each Pokeball had an artificial pen designed to the tastes of each Pokemon, but that didn’t change it was a small capsule, with shrunken inhabitants. If she could roll it away...perhaps she would be spared! “I’m not going to stay to get eaten! All of you, try to roll your Pokeballs away!”

*“But what about...Dewgong and Empoleon...?”* Buizel asked.

“We can help them once we’re out!” They hardly could help if they got eaten as well, after all!

Garchomp couldn’t see if Buizel and Cramorant were doing the same as her, nor the communicators picked up the sound of them slamming against the walls of their Pokeballs, but she hoped they were obeying. Trying over and over, she attempted to make it roll, to get away from Walrein munching on the cake, inching closer, closer with every bite!

But it was useless. The frosting of the cake was too thick, trapping all the Pokeballs. They couldn’t roll at all! They didn’t move not even an inch! And Walrein never looked through the red surface of the Pokeballs, never realizing his teammates were in what he thought were decorations! Relishing on the sugar and the joy of his own special day, Walrein went for another bite – one that’d include Garchomp.

Walrein was in a hurry to eat all of the cake before someone would see him and stop him. That meant gobbling everything up, luckily for the Pokemon in their Pokeballs. That was of little consolation for Garchomp, though! It didn’t make any less scary how she saw Walrein open his mouth right above her Pokeball, making her freeze! She didn’t even shout to try to get the big lug’s attention, terrified for her life!

The walrus’ teeth aren’t made for chewing. They usually eat everything whole, meaning Walrein shoveled as much cake in his mouth before swallowing, not even bothering to taste it much. Garchomp crossed the threshold into his mouth alongside a generous heaping of cake. It all immediately soaked Walrein’s saliva, turning mushy cake into even mushier substances, the frosting melting. Garchomp wasn’t being tossed around because of the technology of the Pokeballs. Everything was stable, allowing her to have a good look of the inside of Walrein’s mouth without any trouble!

Look she didn’t want to have, of course. She’d so have preferred not to see any of it.

The view was already tinted red, the see-through plastic being of that color. The pinks of the inside of Walrein’s mouth looked even redder. The quivering tongue, holding the Pokeball without even realizing what it was, wasted no time in making it roll, ironically just now it being able to move. Walrein, ever the glutton, didn’t even waste any time trying to savor the cake or its decorations, he simply shoved everything towards his throat!

“Stop it! I won’t ever forgive you if you eat me!” Garchomp yelled, her tone betraying how terrified she was starting to feel. Not only he had taken her spot as Brannon’s favorite, now he was eating her! Speaking of that, where was Brannon right now?! This was the most careless he had ever gotten!

But it was useless. Even if her voice had managed to get through the outer casing of the Pokeball, it’d still be too low to be heard. Walrein was completely focused on his food, he wouldn’t hear anything unless it was right in front of himself. Garchomp was powerless, unable to stop the yawning throat from claiming the capsule she was in, ushering her into the esophagus, to a one-way trip to her teammate’s stomach.

Her shouting was heard only by the two remaining teammates who were still outside, right before the connection was severed by the thick layers of fat and flesh separating her from everything else. Garchomp heard Buizel and Cramorant’s calls until their questions got drowned by static. “Run!” Garchomp tried to tell them, as if their situation was different to how hers had been like – but no, they were both just as trapped as she was, she knew it.

At the pace Walrein was eating that cake, he was going to finish the meal in a minute.

Despite everything, the Pokeball isolated the worst parts of the experience...for now. The noxious scent of Walrein’s breath, the wet saliva, it all was kept outside of the capsule. The ball was sturdy enough to not be cracked open by the constricting tube, and was smooth enough for the peristalsis to push it along without any difficulties. All things considered it seemed that, as long as she stayed in the Pokeball, she’d be okay. Garchomp felt her own stomach drop the more she dropped towards Walrein’s stomach.

Suddenly, the wireless communication crackled to life. Garchomp wasted no time in responding. “I can hear you! Get me out!” she begged, but whoever she was talking to were too busy with their own pleads to pay any attention to her. That’s when Garchomp noticed how panicked they sounded and, more importantly, they were female voices, not the male voices of the teammates that remained outside.

Garchomp realized she was inching closer to the ones that had already been swallowed. She was far past the point of no return.

The dragon could see decently well in the dark. Even through the red-tinted plastic, she saw in the distance a round, pursed wall, pulsing and beckoning. There it was: the entrance to the stomach. Garchomp tried to stay calm while she was pushed closer, until that valve was larger than the Pokeball. Passing through would be no problem. The valve yawned, receiving the Pokeball and letting it fall inside. Garchomp’s throat felt like there was a knot on it when she rolled down until she splashed into a swampy, thick concoction: the contents of Walrein’s stomach.

It wasn’t like she wanted to figure out what her Pokeball was swimming in! Garchomp simply glanced at it and decided that was enough, instead looking upwards, at the hole she had just come through. She didn’t have to examine the stomach contents to know what it all was: prawns and raw fish, mixing into an abominable gruel that would be enough to gross-out even a Poison-type Pokemon! She was pretty sure if she touched that, her soul would melt! Followed by her body melting as well shortly afterwards.

Dewgong and Empoleon’s panic hadn’t stopped at all – in fact they probably had gotten even more scared. “Both of you shut up now!” Garchomp shouted. She wanted to focus on the entrance of the stomach, waiting to see if maybe, just maybe, at least one member of the team had gotten lucky.

No such thing happened. Cramorant’s screeching heralded his arrival before a heap of moistened cake splashed through the valve. She didn’t have to look: Cramorant’s Pokeball had to be there, somewhere in that cake. Buizel’s was gobbled up shortly afterwards, coming in without any cake. Had he managed to get off the cake? If he did, that sure didn’t save him – unbeknown to them Walrein had been serious about eating the decorations to keep his gluttony a secret.

Having finished the cake, Walrein made sure to leave right away, as far as he could from the scene of the crime. Brannon still was nowhere to be seen, probably flirting with someone somewhere else. Nobody knew Walrein had just consumed all of his teammates. Nobody would be able to help them.

“Okay, we can’t just sit around and wait for something to happen. Let’s try to get out ourselves,” Garchomp said. It was her job to help them stay calm, as the former star of the team.

*“He ate us! He ate us as if we were food!”* Dewgong was shouting, panicked.

“Shut up! We’ll be okay!” As long as the Pokeballs endured the acids it’d all be fine, she supposed. “We’ll make him cough us up”

“*At our size and without leaving the capsules?”*

“Yes! Obviously!”

The stomach rocked its contents back and forth. Given the way Walrein had to move, everything in the stomach was in constant movement, tossed around and forming waves resembling an irate ocean, even if it was as thick as gruel, as unforgiving as quicksand. Garchomp could see bits of prawns getting stuck to the surface of her Pokeball, grossing her out. The sooner they managed to leave, the better!

Five Pokeballs floated on the concoction, buoyant. They couldn’t do anything to stop the movements or even direct the Pokeball anywhere else, but at least they were safe...for the time being.

*“I’m not sure we can get out, but at least we don’t have to breathe the air outside,”* Buizel commented.

*“Right. These capsules are made of all sorts of sturdy materials”*

*“Why did I have to be inside the one made with a fruit?! Fruit gets digested!”* Cramorant definitely sounded worried.

*“You’ll be fine. Most likely”*

“*Don’t say most likely*!”

Cramorant had a point. Unfortunately for him, he was inside the Pokemon most likely to melt and leave him vulnerable to the stomach first. Garchomp still tried to figure out what to do, but there just was no idea at all yet. Looking upwards, as if the roof of the stomach would reveal something soon, she considered her options, but got to no conclusion at all.

Until a noxious, horrible smell started leaking into her Pokeball.

She knew the smell very well, being around her Water-type teammates. It was fish, it was prawns. Even through the fog of the acidic atmosphere, she could sense those. It could only be the stomach contents right outside, and if she could smell them...

Garchomp launched herself onto the wall of the Pokeball. “Mine?! Mine is malfunctioning?!” She couldn’t believe it! Why was this happening to her! She knew it was matter of time before more stuff leaked inside – if air got in first, soon liquids would follow, and she didn’t want those liquids near her at all!

*“Are you okay?!”* Buizel’s concerned voice could be heard through the communicator.

“I’m not! Let’s get out of here already!”

*“Oh...oh no, the smell...”*

One by one, the other Pokeballs got corroded enough to allow the air to seep in, like a cloud of toxic gas. For the first time it dawned on all of them: digestion was a real danger. If they didn’t hurry, they would be dissolved into mush, and Walrein would be none the wiser!

*“Stay calm! We don’t*—,” Garchomp heard Empoleon say, but a sudden impact against a wall threw her to the floor. Garchomp managed to stand up despite the uneven terrain, and felt the sand vanish around her claws. The surroundings were reverting to the neutral, smooth inside of the Pokeball, the scenery malfunctioning. The acids were already damaging the inner workings of her Pokeball, coming closer!

Garchomp ignored the cries of her teammates, how they all announced their surroundings were beginning to warp and turn into an empty slate. Instead she ran, slamming her body against the wall. The Pokeball wasn’t on cake frosting anymore. Even though it was floating on gastric soup maybe she had a chance now! Her heart leaped to her throat when she realized the Pokeball did move. Encouraged, she kept slamming it, intending to drive the Pokeball against the wall of the stomach. She just...had to irritate the organ enough...and everyone would get out!

It didn’t help at all. The Pokeball hit the wall, and all it achieved was to bounce back into the porridge of the stomach, Trying over and over, Garchomp ignored the overwhelming smell as much as she could, she ignored the pleas of help of her teammates and how they were trying the same, and focused on trying to hit the stomach.

She ignored the bits of half-digested fish that started leaking into the capsule, piling on the far end of the Pokeball, liquids splashing and coating everything with a layer of acid.

There wasn’t much time, though. The chunkier, larger pieces of fish didn’t leak into the hollow capsule, but the acids certainly did. The Pokeball started to tilt, slowly turning into an incline, while on one end of the Pokeball acids gathered, threatening to bathe Garchomp if she made a wrong move!

*“I’m having trouble over here!”* Empoleon said. Garchomp, starting to have trouble standing up, shouted, starting to feel as afraid as the rest.

“We’re not going to die!” she shouted and, weakly, hit the floor in front of her, trying to right it all up, hearing the gloopy, thick sound of half-digested prawn and seafood leaking in. It sounded so loud, right behind her. Only in matter of seconds, she couldn’t stand anymore, and slid down towards the contents until, without even a sound, she reached the acids.

The stinging sensation was immediate. Her tough scales meant she didn’t feel pain right away – it’d be a while before she did – but it was a hint of things to come. If her scales felt the attack of the acids...how would everyone else fare? They didn’t have tough defenses like she did!

...no, wait, worse than that: it took no more than a few seconds for her to feel how the outer covering of her body was beginning to hurt. Walrein’s stomach was *deadly*. If anyone fell into it...

Slop tricked more, more. Garchomp tried to climb on the smooth surface of the Pokeball, but without its simulated environment it was too slippery for that. She couldn’t get a grip! She could feel the Pokeball tilting further, about to begin sinking. She...she was...

“I’m not going to die! I can’t die here, I can’t—!“

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Dewgong hoped this all was a big nightmare, but it wasn’t. No matter how much she told herself it was, it did nothing to diminish how oppressive and lethal Walrein’s stomach was.

The environment of her Pokeball was still active, filling everything with a pool of icy water, platforms made of ice peppering the surface. She was on top of one of them, watching outside, trying to assess the situation through the red dome above. She felt a shudder down her spine when she heard Garchomp’s shouting, her reassurances she wasn’t going to die.

Those reassurances shattered like glass when Dewgong saw some distance away Garchomp bobbing out in the gruel outside, still alive, but...probably not for long. Not in the midst of the stomach! She was...she was done for...

“Okay, let’s get out of here,” Dewgong said, hoping everyone else’s communications still worked. “We’re going towards the front hole”

*“I’m on my way!”* Empoleon said. Indeed, Dewgong could see a Pokeball floating in that direction, riding the waves caused by Walrein’s movements. Dewgong dove into the water and began pushing as well in the same direction, resurfacing every once in a while to check on everyone else. They all had the same plan, mostly because by now it was the only choice. It was either this or getting digested!

Empoleon got first to the right end of the stomach, hitting the wall. The entrance valve was high up, but a Pokemon with good climbing skills should be able to reach it. It wouldn’t be easy, though! And Empoleon wasn’t a natural born climber! But she had to try*. “I’m going out”*

*“Wait, what about us?!”* Buizel shouted, afraid of being left behind to die.

*“If he throws up you could all get crushed,”* she pointed out. Oh, right! Empoleon was part Steel-type. She should be fine.

“Can you get out of your Pokeball by yourself?” Dewgong asked.

*“I’ll figure that out,”* Dewgong heard Empoleon say...or at least that’s what she thought she said. From above, there was a strange sound – the sound of Walrein swallowing. He couldn’t be eating again, could he?!

He was. The opening above Empoleon, well, opened, shoving inside a strange mass of half-melted light blue and pink substance. It all splattered on the wall right below the hole and onto Empoleon’s Pokeball, covering it with a sticky film. Unbeknown to them, Walrein was eating cotton candy, enjoying the sweet treat. It wasn’t so sweet for the current occupants of the stomach.

The Pokeball’s colors were muted under the far brighter cotton candy. Since it was sugar, it began melting quickly, jamming the components of the capsule. Dewgong could see the Pokeball shake, Empoleon probably trying to get it open so she could get out, only for it to roll down to the pool of gruel once again, pushed away by the stomach movements. “Empoleon?” Dewgong tried to find out how she was faring.

*“It’s breaking”*

“What?”

*“It’s getting in. I can’t get out”*

Indeed! Dewgong couldn’t see it, but Empoleon’s Pokeball was filling like Garchomp’s had. The cotton candy made sure it didn’t fall apart, though, trapping Empoleon inside a cramped, spherical space that would get full soon. Desperate, Empoleon tried to keep calm and managed to climb the inside of the capsule, going upwards, towards the top. If she could just...crack this open! But no, the sugar was too sticky, and it wasn’t melting as quickly as it should. Empoleon looked down at the rising level of the stomach juices inside the Pokeball.

*“I don’t think I’ll make it,”* she said.

*“What do you mean you won’t make it?!”* Buizel shouted.

*“Keep trying. Don’t—“*

Empoleon’s Pokeball’s communication system stopped working. At the same time, Dewgong saw her Pokeball sink, disappearing under a sea of half-digested food. Times like these would remind anyone of their own fatality. So far Dewgong didn’t see any damages to her own capsule at all, but it was matter of time before hers started getting corroded too. She had simply gotten lucky.

“How are you all doing?” she asked, hoping everyone else’s capsules were just as sturdy as hers.

*“I’m fine, I’m fine, I’m...I think I’m fine!”* Buizel said, although he didn’t sound very sure of that. What if at any moment he got submerged into the acids as well? He wouldn’t last long there!

Cramorant didn’t say anything. No...had he already gotten digested? “Cramorant?” Dewgong asked, afraid.

The shouting that came from the speakers meant he still was alive, but he wasn’t doing too well: *“We’re all going to die! I’m going to fall and melt into goop and then I’ll just disappear and Walrein won’t even know I was turned into--!”*

“Cramorant!”

*“Why did I have to be inside a fruit?! This is going to fall apart at any moment! Someone help me!”*

“Cramorant, yours is fine! Calm down!” Indeed, from what Dewgong could see through the plastic and the constant swaying of the stomach, Cramorant’s capsule still was intact. How ironic! Despite being made with a fruit; the outer shell was very resistant to the enzymes. Maybe it was even more resistant than any other Pokeball! Yet Cramorant didn’t realize how lucky he was. He was panicking badly, hollering and ranting about how everyone was close to death now.

“Is that...true? Are we all going to die?”

“Let’s stop talking about this and just get out—“

Of here, she was going to say. She didn’t get to, because all of a sudden the stomach started rocking strongly, almost like someone grabbed the organ and started shaking it up and down, left and right, from side to side. The remaining Pokeballs floated around, getting thrown by waves, jumping in the air, making them all feel like if they landed the wrong way the Pokeball would fall apart! Chunky, thick dollops of batter splattered over them, threatening to sink them, the only reason why they didn’t was because the gastric contents were too dense. Just what was going on out there that got Walrein moving so much?!

It was beach volleyball, that was what was going on. Despite his almost complete inability to jump, he was trying his hardest, batting the ball with a flipper, bouncing around and shaking everything inside him. To him every movement was no big deal, but to anyone inside him every single movement was cataclysmic, launching them around in his stomach, tossing and mixing the stomach contents far more than its natural contracting would. Dewgong fell into the icy water of her environment just in time to see it all disappear, the acids seeping into the inner workings.

“What’s he doing?!” Buizel shouted.

“I don’t know but we can’t do anything about it!” Cramorant shouted. “We’re done for! There’s no way our capsules will withstand this! It’s over!”

“We have to try something once he stops moving so much!” Dewgong exclaimed, trying to give some hope. How long would this last? Probably not too long...! She hoped!

Looking outside of her Pokeball was truly dizzying. She couldn’t tell up from down, feeling like a capsizing boat amidst a raging sea, one that both refused to let her sink but also denied her freedom. She barely saw the other two remaining Pokeballs, trying to not break in the mess.

There were moments of reprieve sometimes, moments Dewgong used to look around and keep track of her remaining teammates. Empoleon and Garchomp had long disappeared in the acids, probably getting digested under the surface of the soup. She had no idea how the other two were doing, but they probably were not doing too well.

“I’m stuck!” Cramorant’s shout during one of those calmer moments made her look around and try to locate the Apricorn Pokeball. ‘Stuck’ didn’t mean he was currently getting digested, but unless something was done...!

“Where are you?” Dewgong asked.

*“Right here! Up here! Here!”* the bird tried really hard to indicate his location. Ah, there! Dewgong looked up, finding Cramorant’s Pokeball stuck on a wall. It was on a fold, far from the surface of the acids. Oh, good! He was far away from the stuff that’d dissolve him!

*“Are you okay?!”* Buizel asked.

Dewgong heard a groan, but at least it seemed he was fine: “*I’m okay. That was some air”*

“You said you’re stuck?” Dewgong wanted to make sure she had the situation right. She saw the apricorn Pokeball move, but it didn’t dislodge. It was really jammed between the folds of the stomach, up there. Even the stomach itself seemed to be trying to get it out, judging from the way the nearby areas convulsed and trembled. Maybe that was good news! It could mean Walrein was feeling him!

*“I can’t get out of here,”* Cramorant said. He sounded far calmer now.

Suddenly, the stomach leaped once again. Dewgong laid on the floor, trying not to bounce around inside her Pokeball. It took several seconds for it all to stop, but thankfully, that was the last time Walrein did anything so active. Dewgong dragged herself to the center of the Pokeball, exhausted.

Only then she noticed Buizel was screaming. “What’s wrong...?” Dewgong asked, having a horrible feeling.

*“Cramorant! Cramorant is...”*

Cramorant...where was he now? Why hadn’t he said anything yet? She spun around, looking upwards at the lining of the stomach, but she couldn’t see any spherical capsules lodged anywhere. Only at the third try looking around, she noticed something, enough to make her blood run cold.

There were pieces of Pokeball on one of the folds. She recognized them as Cramorant’s. Walrein’s activity must have led to Apricorn cracking open, the fruit being structurally weaker than the rest of the Pokeballs. If any other had gotten stuck there, it probably would have all been okay, but the bird, exposed to the air of the stomach, probably had gotten thrown into the stomach contents.

No sign of him anywhere.

Dewgong couldn’t stop staring at it, at the remaining pieces falling. Took a moment to hear Buizel’s voice. “Sorry, what did you say?”

*“I’m getting out of here”*

“What? How?!”

*“I’m going to release myself, full size”*

Ah. Buizel certainly was small enough to fit inside Walrein’s stomach. At full size it probably would take far longer for him to get digested, and any acid damage would be on a smaller area than it would if it was on his current size. Still, how did that help?

Buizel told his plan: “I’ll save you. We’re both going downwards”

“...are you sure about that?”

*“If I go upwards Walrein’s throat probably will squeeze me to death...and I could hurt him too! If we go downwards then we’ll stay unnoticed and we won’t get digested. I’ll push you in first, and then follow you”*

“Maybe you would get stuck”

*“We’re going in there either whole or melted into goop! You tell me what’s better!”*

He had a point there. Dewgong had no choice but to accept, even though she didn’t like that Buizel was putting himself in danger. “Can you get out of your Pokeball by yourself?”

*“I do it all the time! At night to sneak food and—“*

“Let’s not speak about food right now,” Dewgong requested. “Be careful, please. I don’t want to be the only one left...,” Even if Buizel got digested too and she survived, though...she was pretty sure she wasn’t going to live. Her life depended on Buizel now.

Dewgong instinctively curled into a ball when, in the middle of the stomach, appeared Buizel. He was a smaller Buizel than average, meaning that even at full size he didn’t even reach the ceiling of the stomach, but in Dewgong’s eyes he was a giant too. Buizel struggled to get a grip on the quivering surroundings, wincing when a lot of his body immediately got soaked with harmful substances, prawns, fish, pieces of Pokeball and...

...and the...remains of everyone else...

Dewgong closed her eyes tightly.

“Yuck, this is awful!” Buizel exclaimed, futilely trying to shake off the goop. “Don’t worry, I’ll get you out of here!” he said. Dewgong felt herself get pressed to the bottom of the Pokeball – Buizel had lifted it pretty quickly. She opened her eyes and saw him touching the bottom of the stomach, looking for the hole that’d lead to the intestines. “I’m never going to look at Walrein the same way ever again!”

“How do you feel? Does it hurt?”

“Not right now, but—,” Buizel gasped and turned Dewgong away so she wouldn’t see the way orange fur started to float in the pool of acids. This was some potent digestion!

It took several disheartening minutes to find the sphincter he was looking for. Buizel grit his teeth, not wanting to complain or make any noise that could alert Walrein and make him accidentally drown him. On all fours, rubbing the bottom of the stomach with his forepaws, Buizel searched, not even sure how it was supposed to feel! He just suspected it’d be round and...and that was it! The tissue was wrinkled, full of folds, making it hard to locate it, and it didn’t help that he had his own Pokeball in one paw and Dewgong’s on the other.

He intended to find the hole, push Dewgong’s Pokeball through and then push his own. He had already memorized how his Pokeball was like, so while he had his paw through the sphincter, he’d activate that Pokeball’s recall function, getting himself into safety. A simple enough plan, one he felt guilty of not having come up with it before. If he had...maybe everyone else could have been saved...?

Any thoughts that could have sent him spiraling into a lot of guilt were discarded when he finally felt something weird – and he was pretty sure it wasn’t because his paws were starting to ache. “There...!” Buizel exclaimed and, without giving Dewgong time to even ask if he had found the way to the intestines, shoved Dewgong’s Pokeball in. He felt it leave his forepaw, it getting sucked by the duodenum’s hungry walls. Oh, good! She would be okay...he hoped! Nothing gets digested in the intestines, right? Buizel wasn’t entirely sure, but even if it did happen, the Pokeball should protect her. He didn’t let the sphincter close, he shoved his other forepaw inside, and looked for the button that’d recall him. Ah, there! Buizel pressed the button.

Nothing happened.

“Huh?!” Buizel pressed it again and again, over and over, a dozen times. It wasn’t working! The recall function wasn’t working! His Pokeball must have been more damaged by the digestion than he thought! “This can’t be happening!” He had come this far! To get digested after that...!

No. No, he couldn’t let that happen. He already had his paws inside the tube, he had to crawl inside. So what if it felt like it was so tight it could crush him? This was his only chance! Buizel took a deep breath without inflating his swimming sac, shoving his face into the hole, smushing it between his arms.

All around him the stomach convulsed, definitely not liking that something inside it was trying to force its way into the intestines. From a side, the stomach bulged inwards – Walrein noticing the disturbance in his insides, pressing a flipper on his belly. Thankfully, it wasn’t anywhere near Buizel, or else he’d have been in trouble!

It was like trying to crawl into a very narrow burrow. Buizel tried to grab onto the walls of the duodenum, attempting to use it to propel himself downwards. He could feel the stomach contracting behind him, trying to hold him down, he could feel the walls around his upper half, trying to push him back into the stomach. He couldn’t see Dewgong, probably already ahead of where he was. If he didn’t manage to power through, he’d get tossed back into the stomach and, almost guaranteed, he’d get digested.

For a moment he pictured himself, soaking in the aggressive stomach juices, slowly losing his fur, his skin, slowly breaking down—

No, he couldn’t let that happen!

The walls felt bumpy, not yet studded with villi, but these little bumps were enough to get a grip. Buizel fought against the flesh and muscles trying to push him away until, with a slurp that sounded a lot like a drain getting unclogged all of a sudden, he dragged himself fully past the stomach, his tails getting slurped through the opening like noodles. Buizel collapsed for a minute, breathing heavily. There wasn’t much fluid in the intestine, but that was fine – as a Water-type, he could hold his breath for a long time. He would be okay.

Once he rested enough to feel somewhat recovered – and liquid started to appear in the small intestine, warning him of what was to come – he decided to reach Dewgong. She had to be deeper into the bowels but not by much. Buizel dragged himself forward, feeling the bumps under his body. Ahead of him there were red, wet walls. Finding the Pokeball wasn’t going to be easy, especially if the water level increased and it got submerged. Where was Dewgong...?

There! Buizel reached forward, grasping the Pokeball, and brought it close to him, gazing inside. “It worked...!” he whispered to her. Dewgong tiredly gazed up at him before flopping over, passing out. “Oh, I want to do the same...,” Turning over, Buizel managed to get belly-up, letting Walrein’s guts carry him downstream. It was like the worst lazy river ever, but he couldn’t do anything about it. Making sure to hold Dewgong’s Pokeball, Buizel closed his eyes, falling asleep almost right away.

Dewgong had no idea how much time passed. All she knew was that suddenly she was in the air, about to slam onto the bottom of the Pokeball. “Ow!” she complained once she hit it. “What happened...?” Looking around, she was able to figure it out.

Buizel was hanging from a sphincter on a curved wall. He seemed to still be asleep, being pushed slowly through it and into whatever organ they were both at right now. Less roomy than the stomach, roomier than the small intestine...it didn’t take long for Dewgong to figure out what location she was at. The horrid color of the walls, the swampy substance her Pokeball was lying on right now – of a disgusting ochre color – and the ribbed shape of the walls of the tunnel ahead said it all.

She was so glad her Pokeball was still intact enough to not let anything in.

Buizel woke up when the entrance bulged and pushed him facefirst into the muck awaiting for him. The Pokemon pushed himself up, trying to get some distance between his face and the horror sloshing around in the cecum. “Ugh...what—what’s...ugh, no...!”

“What happened with you going back into your Pokeball?”

“It broke! I can’t—,” Buizel’s forepaws hovered in the air. It was obvious he wanted to cover his nose, but all it’d achieve was smear liquid crap on his face – his paws were covered in it. “This is so gross!”

“We’ll get out of here. Keep going”

“You don’t have to tell me twice. I’m glad you’re alright, Dewgong...,” five Pokemon got swallowed, only two survived. Unless something drastic happened, such as Buizel asphyxiating with the fumes of feces, they should be able to finish their trip safely.

Although...given how awful and thick the air felt, Buizel felt as if getting asphyxiated is not something so unlikely.

It’d be so much easier to crawl if he could bite onto the Pokeball and use his forepaws to pull himself forward, but there was absolutely no way he’d get into his mouth anything that was in contact with the inside of Walrein’s colon. They were forced to be in close contact with a bunch of feces, but that was no reason to take any stupid risks. Dewgong always watched forward, looking at the environment, paying attention to the surroundings in case anything happened. Since she couldn’t get distracted by getting overloaded with horrible stimuli, she could keep her eyes on everything, warn if anything went wrong for any reason.

There didn’t seem to be any dangers, though. Buizel was lying around, just letting the large intestine carry him, not wanting to make much effort. Perhaps dreading what maybe could be found further down the line? Dewgong certainly hoped they wouldn’t encounter a crammed rectum, but after everything that had happened, she didn’t keep her hopes up. Everything had been awful enough she wouldn’t be surprised if Walrein’s digestive system gave them one last horrible experience for the road.

Besides, Buizel was fitting a little too snugly into the tube. The large intestine was supposed to be, well, *large*, but clearly the darkest recesses of Walrein’s body weren’t made to hold anything the size of Buizel. He could get stuck if he wasn’t careful, and after coming this far, they didn’t want to risk accidentally harming Walrein or screwing up--

“Dewgong...I think...Dewgong, D-Dewgong...!”

Buizel sounded panicked, eyes wide and pushing away the solidified bunches of digested waste and poop around him. “What’s wrong? Buizel?”

“It’s—I—Dewgong, it’s—“

It took her a moment to see what had him so panicked. There, in the middle of the muddy, grody substances, was a metallic object, three-pronged like a trident. It looked like it had gotten corroded, softened, attacked by a lot of acids. Before long, she realized where she had seen it before:

On Empoleon’s face.

Buizel was currently lying on the digested remains of their teammates.

“Don’t think about it...Buizel, don’t think about it...!” Dewgong shouted. She was feeling very ill about this thought as well; shouting at her surviving teammate was pretty much her way of trying to ignore the truth of what was going on right now!

“I can’t not think about it!”

“Keep going and don’t look down! Please!”

Spurred, Buizel wormed forward. No way he’d wait and be carried, not if it included what little was left of the rest of the team. He didn’t want to look around and maybe encounter bits he could associate to any of the digested Pokemon. The sooner he was out of here, the better! Surely Walrein by now was feeling something big and solid moving through his innards, with some luck that would lead to him and Dewgong getting released very soon!

Walrein didn’t feel them, though. He was too much of a heavy sleeper to sense the considerable discomfort Buizel must have been causing. The survivors didn’t stop, though, they kept going, slowly making their way down the bowels. The digested food now turned into refuse was ever present, and the drier it got, the closer they were to the end, Buizel know.

Disgusting. No matter how far they went they could never say it had gone dry or brittle. It always had a gross wet quality that made Buizel feel like he was withering and melting, and it didn’t help that, at the end, there was some of it lying around in the rectum, welcoming him. Buizel wormed his way into the rectum, looking for any pockets of emptiness, trying to settle on any place that wasn’t coated with waste.

It was futile.

Buizel laid there, eyes half-closed both from exhaustion and from not wanting any of the undesirable roommates he was sharing his space with right now, feeling more trash finish the trip through Walrein’s body, piling behind him, pushing him forward as if piles of it all were literally pushing his bottom to cram him closer to the tailhole. In his paw he held Dewgong’s Pokeball, with its occupant who was far better rested than him. Completely destroyed emotionally, reduced to staring forward and back at Buizel every once in a while, waiting for the long nightmare to be over. How long would they have to wait? She wanted this to be over, and, hopefully, to turn out to be some messed up nightmare, something caused by some Ghost-type giving them nightmares to feed on, or something!

It was hard to keep up such thought when in the back of her mind she always had to keep present that...every other teammate was keeping them company right now, and not in a way she wanted.

When Walrein woke up, the rectum trembled, trying to accommodate the larger than expected load within. It was obvious the big walrus’ body wasn’t used to whole Pokemon being nested inside his ass! The walls mashed and compressed, rubbing its clammy walls all over Buizel, making him groan with disgust. A few inches ahead of him, the tightly closed anus pursed and trembled, as if it was waking up as well and noticing there were Pokemon waiting to be released. Before long, said message was sent up to Walrein’s brain, informing him there was an urgent need to take care of this.

“I think we’re almost out of here,” Dewgong encouraged, watching the rectum prepare everything for its eventual expulsion. “Just a little longer...!”

“I want this to be over now...,” Buizel said softly, clutching Dewgong’s Pokeball closer to his chest. This was either going to be absolutely disgusting, he knew it. Last thing he wanted right now is watch himself be pooped out of his teammate, especially knowing what had happened inside him.

Somehow, it was as if the place they were at was well anchored, not moving all that much even though they were pretty close to Walrein’s bottom, near his tail. Buizel focused on breathing – even though doing so meant huffing gases and smells he’d rather not experience again – and awaited Walrein to stop moving.

Outside, Walrein dragged himself through the beach, towards the coastline. He wasn’t in a very good mood – nobody else in the team had come to the celebration, and Brannon had no idea where they had gone, apparently. Partway through, the trainer had left to talk to the police for who knows what reason. Walrein didn’t really care about that; he cared that his so-called friends didn’t even come to the celebration! Garchomp, he could understand, what with her being upset with him overtaking the starring role in the team, but the rest...? He thought they were better than this.

Oh well. It was a new day, and he wasn’t going to get all upset today. They had to continue being a team, after all, he thought while he reached the water, the salty liquid welcoming him. Walrein went further inside until he was almost covered by water, enjoying the fresh sensation of the sea, and started defecating.

Inside, Buizel shut his eyes tighter when he felt the walls embrace him, rubbing globs of poop all over his fur. Dewgong could only watch with bile fascination how they were both pushed forward, until Buizel’s face was in contact with the way out. Buizel reflexively took a deep breath before he started being shunted outside, accompanied by more waste than he’d have liked.

Ah...water, he felt. Good. This would help get rid of this mess. As if he would feel clean ever again. Buizel stayed completely still, not wanting to alert Walrein with sudden movements that could reveal he was expelling two living Pokemon. The grip of the anus around him loosened once his waist passed through, so he carefully kicked forward, separating from the cascade of refuse behind him. As stealthily as possible, he swam forward, until he judged he was some distance away.

Indeed, he was, he found out once he opened his eyes. The coast was over there; Buizel could see a light blue and white form on the sand, having finished his business. Buizel, floating on the surface of the water, raised Dewgong’s Pokeball, scrubbing it clean with a paw. It really was fortunate they were in the sea – he wasn’t rubbing filth over it instead of cleaning it up. Inside, Dewgong waited, unsure what to say.

At some point she had to speak, though: “Are you okay?”

“No,” Buizel answered honestly. “What are we even going to say? We can’t tell him he ate and digested half of the team...”

“I don’t know,” Dewgong said. No matter what excuse they came up with, it’d be a hard conversation.

“We need to say something...!”

“...just...say someone took them away with the cake or something,” Dewgong laid her head on the floor, gazing up at the sky through the red translucent dome of her Pokeball. “Let’s not go back yet. For now I just want to lie down and just...forget this ever happened”

“Same”