

Guiding Document

“The Last Iceberg Harvest” | John Beumer, 2021

A group of travelers are on a quest to find an ancient plant – the iceberg seed. Thought to be extinct for many years, legend says this full-grown plant can be used to purify water. At one time these plants were plentiful but with deforestation their ecosystems vanished. However, in the last few months there have been reports of clean rain, odd clouds, and streams in the north ... but no creature knows why.

Our travelers are intrigued and once again there is a glimmer of hope that this could be the iceberg seed. A crop like this could bring great favor and reliability to the health of their villages. They must cross hazards of jungle, snow, woods, deserted human cityscape – and the bosses that inhabit them. Their abilities to trade goods, negotiate, and move quickly will determine their fate. Clues from each location will lead them closer to where the seed is said to exist. Along the way they will be confronted with critical questions and plot twists. Who does this plant belong to? How will they share it with all villages? Are they poised to protect it? Can it be exploited?

Environments

The City of Silo

An abandoned settlement with prominent industrial features such as a train switchyard, concrete mixing plant, and scrap yards.

The Strawberry Islands

A set of tropical islands with rare fruits, subtropical overgrowth, and deep-water reefs.

Winter’s Mouth

A frozen desert of heavy blizzards and biting cold winds.

The Great Needle

A lush woodland realm that circumvents Winter’s Mouth - rich in plant diversity and a tree canopy that blocks out the sun.

The Inspiration

This creature series is years in the making. It was a chance for me to push my boundaries – create a large character set, something fantastical, and add more dimension to my work.

Ground zero for this study was exploring a subject that I know well. For me this started with drawing “home”. Pulling from my nostalgic experiences, my environment, and places that I enjoy. Things like a heavy snow in the dead of winter, the comfort of orange streetlight, or the industrial yards on the city’s edge. This framework allowed me to come up with a lot of different visual ideas and tie them back to a central narrative. One challenge in this was creating inanimate objects. Adapting life to an originally lifeless figure takes time to think through the parts and make it full bodied.

For reference in this study, I looked at the Pokémon franchise, specifically the first series – Pokémon Indigo League. As a kid I collected the cards and watched the TV show religiously. It had all the best

protagonists, characters, and vivid watercolor scenes. It was the perfect narrative to get lost after long days in school.

Developing Interest

I needed a story. A simple one-page narrative to inform why the creatures existed. What they do, why they look a certain way, and why they matter. Something Pokémon does well is build upon themes of evolution and relating creatures to their natural environment. It was intuitive to me that whatever I created it should also be surrounded by something that would inform their bodies and abilities. I didn't know much about creating stories so I visited a local game development hub [Glitch](#) for advice. They advised me to think more about how the creatures interact. How they do/do not relate to each other and how do they function day to day? Those questions will have a spiral effect on meaning for the creatures. With that in mind, I was interested in skills of transportation, navigation, and communication. I decided to dig deeper into skills and problem solving - which I felt were just as engaging as a traditional fighting storyline.

Coming to Life

Once I had the visual framework and short story together all I had to do was keep developing the creatures. My process entailed mentally developing the creatures, translating them to paper, the digital illustration, and then filtering them into a stronger set. This went on for many months. A stretch goal for me was adding more physical dimension to these creatures as well. Over the last couple of years, I've been teaching myself 3D modeling. I waited to release this set to realize this vision too. A cool side effect of modeling was actually printing a few of these creatures. It is a slightly different process to make models airtight but within reach if you know how to do the digital modeling.