

Rough and uneven breaths sound throughout the last stretch of cave that lay before the entrance gates to Poni island's trial, their distinct shapes and bright pops of color immediately distinguishing them from the rugged surroundings. Really, it wasn't as if Bibi had to hike up the path the old fashioned way, Koraidon's unparalleled mobility could have allowed her to bypass it all by climbing right up the sheer cliff faces to the trial entrance, or better yet fly there. But it felt against the point of the experience, so she only called upon her trusty partner when the road turned a bit too perilous for human feet to handle. She didn't know whether to be glad she bought new boots for the occasion or lament the fact that they'd totally wear down by the end of it all. Poni canyon made for no easy trek, its paths turning into patches of jagged rocks that threatened to cleave apart hikers, bodies of water littered with boulders prevented easy passage through its caverns, and stones the likes of which could only be moved by fighting types blocked off routes.

'I never thought I'd say this but thank goodness for all those times I had to hike up Oni Mountain...' She thought to herself as her boots lazily scraped against the ground.

Before she can dwell on whether or not Naranja's obscenely long staircase was also of any merit her eyes flicker up from behind her glasses, catching a glimpse of a figure steadily approaching. Stepping towards Totem Kommo-o's cave after a grueling trip through all of Poni Island, she locks eyes with a boy, clad in Kommo-o scales. His eyes are sharp, yet his smile is warm.

"Alola! Name's Koa. I'll be yer -- ehem. I shall be your Trial Captain for today -- the last arbiter before you face Kahuna Hapu and complete your Island Challenge. You must have come a long way, so please, take a rest before we begin. If I may ask... What's your name?"

She blinks once, twice, at his rustic fashion and mannerisms, recalling with affection the outlandish looks of the team star admins, and makes a mental note to ask Atticus whether or not he'd ventured into the idea of scales on clothes. Meeting his warm smile with a canine bearing grin, her fists clench by her sides, fighting spirit lit anew with the promise of challenge ahead.

"Awww c'mon now no need to be all formal and stuff! But Alola! It's nice to meetcha Koa, one Bibi Montero's at your service! You can just call me B if you want though."

A brief nod follows as he continues his line of questioning.

"Where do you hail from? How do you feel about your home?"

A hand moves to rest on her hip while another taps a finger against her chin as she ponders for a second, what was it exactly that made home "home"?

"Oh I'm from a ways away, the Paldea region, and I really gotta say Alola's been amazing so far, black sand beaches, all those beautiful meadows full of Oricorio,

heck you've even got jungles where the canopies are thick enough to block out all the sunlight you guys get. Thing is, I think anywhere can be home, so long as you've got someone to hit you with 'welcome back' when they see you. While Paldea and Alola can totes go toe to toe when it comes to the views, that's a difference that can't be made up for."

She wonders if the glint of recognition in his eyes at the mention of her home region's name called to mind the likes of Hassel, dragon trainers did seem to be awfully close-knit.

"What's your family like, if I may be permitted to ask?"

While still finding herself anticipating the battles up ahead Bibi couldn't help but relax more and more as the conversation continued, the topics conjuring fuzzy feelings of home.

"My folks are great! Dad's a little much, but mom always gets the last say so she reigns him in whenever he's getting too overprotective. Otherwise I think I'd still be stuck in a sterilized room all day. Blegh!...They're both super cool though, dad researches Pokémon related medicine, so his Arboliva and mom's Lucario are always in tip top shape. He's like a walking x-ray, can tell what's wrong with a Pokémon just by looking at it sometimes! Mom works for a Pokéball production company and does field tests on new models, so she's got a good throwing arm and her senses are super on point."

If her responses are on the rambling side, Koa proves patient and doesn't seem to mind, satisfied to continue his line of questioning.

"How strong is your bond with your partners?"

"Ehehe~ Super strong, like Z-power level!" She brags, emphasizing the statement by making the associated gesture, arms crossing in a Z-formation before she calls forth her starter. Despite the flames that wreath its jaws billowing away, it comfortably settles down at her feet, curling around her as its tail drags lazy patterns in the dirt, a welcoming nightlight in their dim surroundings.

"Skelly's- er, Skeledirge's been with since the day I became a trainer. Come to think of it, it's been so long, weird to think I used to be able to just pick him up and hold him back when he was a lil Fuecoco. See, it's customary for Naranja students to start off with either a Fuecoco, Quaxly, or Sprigatito and it was like a Dustox to a flame for me! Fire types....I guess what immediately strikes you about 'em is their intensity yeah? Grass and water, well of course they can hit just as hard, but they're kinda like....Subtler about it I guess? Nobody ever underestimates how destructive fire can be though, even if it's wrapped in a cute lil package." She kneels down and boops Skeledirge on its snout affectionately, even if the bulky creature now falls outside the realm of what most consider cute.

"I grew up surrounded by nothin' but Blissey, Chansey, and Audino, and Fuecoco was the change of pace I'd always wanted. I don't think I could've made any other choice! He's also real reliable, but nobody ever seemed to think so since Fuecoco have such goofy little faces. So really, I guess meeting each other was a lucky break for us both!"

Over the course of her travels she'd made various companions and she wondered which to hype up next. Hatterene and her love stabs (y'know, like how some Skittys give you love bites, but worse), Toxicroak and her constant mischief making, Palafin and her dramatic transformations. Of course, it was undeniable that as a dragon type trainer he would be interested in Koraidon, its imposing form and ties to the ancient past setting it apart even amongst its powerful and terrible brethren, but her mind is made up as her eyes trace over the scales adorning the young man's form.

"I'd wager if anything gets taken more seriously than fire types it'd be dragons, like Koko here!"

And as Skeledirge returned to his ball, Kommo-o took its place, where one curled the other loomed, commanding attention, shoulders tensed as he leaned forward on his talons, posture communicating a barely restrained violence. He positions himself in front of Bibi almost instinctively, his protective scales flaring in anticipation of a strike, and a sharp, keen sound rung out as they moved.

"If anyone on the team can be called proud it's this one!"



She makes to playfully rap her knuckles on his scales but the Pokémon gently swats away her hand and grunts, his eyes never leaving the stranger in front of them.

“He’ll never take a challenge or insult lying down! Or kindness for that matter actually.”

A snarl briefly interrupts her.

“Aw cram it Koko, you know it’s true. Heck, back when I first met him he was in the middle of a spar which I maybe kinda sorta interrupted by siccing my Cutiefly on his opp. And then on him. I didn’t realize they were in the middle of their own match til after the damage was done, so I felt kinda bad about it and used the last couple of items left on me to patch up the first Jangmo-o. I wanted to

help this guy out too but had nothing else on hand 'cept for this" she remarked, waving around a pink and yellow healball adorned with stickers that were worn and scratched in some places.

"He was still BIG mad about it though, first thing he did when I called him back out was try and headbutt me. It took a while but he came around after we both realized we wanted the same thing out of our journey. Hitting the road means seeing sights you've never seen before, fighting battles you never thought you could. Why settle for being king of the hill when there are entire mountains to conquer?"

She pauses as Kommo-o withdraws. "I guess if I had to say, even if I really love all my Pokémon, it's probably our understanding of one another that's carried us further than anything else."

Koa patiently listens throughout all her rambling, not seeming to be horribly put off by her chatterbox tendencies.

"Why did you take the Island Challenge?"

'Ah, this is an easy one.'

She smiles and jingles the island challenge amulet hanging from her choker. One familiar with Konikoni city might recognize the handiwork as something from Olivia's shop, as apparently, Bibi's attempt at these long practiced rites had to be done in style.

"Why does anyone? To prove themselves and their Pokémon, right? I chose to venture out into Alola because, well, the place is pretty gorgeous, but most regions have gym challenges and I've already completed Paldea's. The island challenge is similar in some ways, but it's still a pretty unique experience, of course I'd set my sights on completing it! It's kinda like why Koko decided to come with me, it's an opportunity for new sights, sounds, sensations, battles. Plus the Z-move dances are like, totally my thing~" she explains weight shifting from one foot to another, rhythmically swaying in place.

As Koa takes in her words his welcoming demeanor turns a bit pensive.

"If it's not intrusive of me to ask, who exactly are you trying to prove yourself to?"

The swaying stops. It's a reasonable thing to ask, and while her smile doesn't leave her face, it falters just a bit as Bibi's eyes drift to the gravelly floor below.

"Good question. At this point I guess it's myself" her eyes drift back up to meet his, though who can tell if Koa can feel them pierce through her swirly lenses "but you're in charge of making yourself happy y'know? Nobody else you should worry about satisfying more."

Whether or not he accepts the answer, there are trials to get to and rites to honor, and so Koa continues.

"Very well. For the first part of your test... Here's my partner! Mo-o, come out!"

A massive, lumbering creature, stumbles forward with loud stomps and chiming scales. It's a Kommo-o. If this one is so large, easily dwarfing Bibi's in height and build... How big will the Totem be?

Mo-o stops just in front of her, and with a scowl, presents his forehead scale.

'*Mierda*' her breath hitches for just a second, and she stops her hand from flying to her left side. She breathes in and out slowly, willing herself to calm down.

'Relax. Just because it's *not mine*, just because it's *huge*, and *growly*, and *absolutely mean-mugging me* doesn't mean I'm in trouble.'

"All you have to do now is show you're not afraid. Come on, give it a go!"

A reckless run had always carried her farther than an unstable walk. If the abyss was something to be feared, better not look at it at all before making the leap. Focusing on the scale and only the scale she hurriedly closes the distance, all but flinging her hand out and making a desperate grab at it, completing the very first part of the trial. Her eyes rapidly flick back and forth between Mo-o and Koa, not willing to withdraw even as she feels a bit of sweat trickle down the back of her neck. As a few long, agonizing seconds pass she lets her free hand gently sweep over Mo-o's snout, in the way she knows her own Kommo-o enjoys (though tries to deny).

Mo-o proves to be the first to back out, huffing a bit as he assesses the trialgoer before him before returning to Koa's side. While the challenge was completed, he appeared a little unsatisfied, though no longer actively trying to intimidate her. Mo-o's astute nature is something one might expect of a fairy type, seeing plainly the conflicted emotions humans do their best to hide, but he seemed to respect her refusal to turn her back on him at the very least. Bibi sighs out in relief, her shoulders sagging as she misses the words exchanged between the boy and his dragon, waiting until they finish before making her proposal.

"Tests of courage are no joke huh? Fights are a lot more my speed, pleeeeee tell me you're looking for some good ol' fisticuffs between dragons."