

POKÉMON
REBIRTH

Developments

Todd Hammond had encountered many a curious sight in his short time as a photographer, but none as baffling as what he met one early morning while strolling through Totto's Nashgri Forest.

He had originally set out on this excursion in search of unique and fascinating pokémon, spurred on by the words of someone whom he had once thought rather bitterly of. Yet, following their reunion at the bustling Coalef Compendium with its many challenges, Todd overcame a challenge of his own that day. That of self belief.

Having leapt into the world with high hopes and wild ideas, the thirteen year old boy with the goal of documenting a cornucopia of species had found himself descending into manhood with crushed dreams and a shattered confidence. He'd taken up commentating for sporting events to earn his keep, and tried to put the past behind him - attempting a separation between what he still secretly longed for, and what he had.

But then, someone reminded Todd of what he'd been missing out on.

The reminder came from a most unexpected source, too. A visitor to his commentator's box - someone who, in the past, would have been the last person Todd wanted to see. After all, this man and his two companions had tried to manipulate him into stealing pokémon, cheated on tests, even tried to snatch an articuno from its duties. But time changes much, and it seemed that with the passing of the years, Todd had not been the only one to alter. This visitor had made some bold progression with his life and was equally resolved for Todd to do the same.

"Don't give up" he'd murmured, just before leaving the commentary box. "That's what they *want* you to do."

The guy was right. Following some deep thought on the matter, Todd had taken the encouragement to heart and salvaged his old camera from the case it had been stored in for the past three years.

It was a perfect morning for the revival of a once-buried expression of creativity. The rays of bright autumn sunlight penetrated between the leafy canopy over Todd's head as he strolled through the forest with a bag slung over his shoulder and a determined expression in his eyes. He wasn't looking for any old picture. He was looking for the *perfect* picture.

Naturally the perfect picture wasn't going to just pop out of any old where. Todd would have to track it down like a hungry staraptor.

Taking a few moments out of his vigilant search to rest, the young man propped himself up against a tree and opened his bag to rummage through the contents within. He was just about to sink his teeth into a slice of home made Chilan Berry cake when the bush next to him let out a horrendous groan.

At first, Todd couldn't believe his ears. In fact, he refused to believe his ears and continued eating. But the bush refused to be ignored either, letting out another troubled noise and twitching slightly. Todd paused in mid-mouthful, looking somewhat unsettled at the foliage's persistence, and the twitching became shaking, until the bush seemed to be trying to escape from the very spot it found itself in.

But instead of escaping, the clump of leafy growth slowly toppled over sideways and landed heavily upon Todd's legs. Unfortunately for Todd, his legs also happened to be where his lunch was at the time. The photographer winced as he heard the other slice of cake and sandwiches he had yet to consume end up as a disconcerting squelchy splat.

Todd reached forward and thrust the foliage away from him in annoyance, a second before realisation hit him. Since *when* were bushes that weighty? The answer came in the form of a quick glance at what he had just shoved off his person. At the base of the leaf ball, where Todd had expected roots to be, were a pair of stubby legs clad in odd socks and messily-laced brown shoes - one bearing a hole in the toecap.

The bush proceeded to roll over and swiftly grow two equally-stubby arms which reached up to pull away at some of its leafy mass. From the sight of the diminutive limbs, Todd had been expecting to be met with the face of a small child. However, much to his surprise, he found himself staring into the pained eyes of a man in his mid fifties who had now sat upright and was rubbing his left leg furiously with both hands.

"Are you...okay?" Todd blinked, wondering if this sort of question was really the right kind to be asking someone who was disguised as a bush.

"Just a spot of cramp," the man grinned sheepishly, speaking in a pronounced Tattoan accent. "Nothing to be concerned about."

"How long have you been standing there?" Todd inquired, a little nervously. His conversee stopped rubbing for a moment, looking quite puzzled.

"Well let me see now..." he began ponderously. "4am I woke up... had a nice spot of tea with a couple slices of honey on toast... ... think I've been out here for five hours now."

"Good grief!" Todd spluttered, attempting to clean the bread and cake mess from his jeans. "No wonder you've got cramp!"

"Oh its nothing I'm not used to," the man waved away the disbelief. "I'm out here every day, I'll have you know."

"How come?" Todd found his curiosity beginning to gather.

"Same reason *you're* out here!" the man chuckled, motioning towards the camera dangling around Todd's neck. "To get the perfect shot."

While one of his hands dictated the means for his presence, the other of the man's hands dipped down inside his foliage cocoon before reappearing with a camera of his own. It was notably more high-tech than Todd's, and also appeared to double up as a pair of binoculars. Upon seeing Todd's impressed expression, the man lowered his free hand for him to shake.

"The name's Basil Chamerion," he smiled. "I'm a watcher."

"I'm Todd Hammond," he replied, before doing a take. "What, a Pokémon Watcher?"

"Nothing so common as that," Basil smirked, looking down at the equipment in his other hand. "I'm a bird watcher."

"Oh! A Pokemornothologist!" Todd exclaimed, only to receive a shake of the head.

"Nothing to do with pokémon," Basil insisted, wagging a finger. "My daughter Rosebay takes care of that field more than amply. No..."

I watch *birds*."

An unsteady silence ensued while Todd stared in bewilderment and a hint of worry at his older, yet shorter companion. He was

starting to get the impression that Basil happened to be a few snaps short of a full reel. Yet, his curiosity and good courtesy forbade him to leave.

But...birds *are* a kind of pokémon!" he tilted his head to one side.

"Indeed they are," Basil agreed. "But bird pokémon aren't the only kind of birds in the world, y'know. The other kind have been around even longer...before pokémon even existed! And they're still here now." The man appeared to freeze at this point, his eyes rolling upwards toward the branches overhead. "Listen for yourself."

And Todd did. At first, he could hear nothing but the rustling of the leaves caught by a soft gust of wind. Then, it came – a light, melodic chirruping which sounded nothing unlike the raucous cries uttered by most flying type pokémon. It was followed by another line of tuneful song, and another, all different in their own ways yet blending together with remarkable harmony. The result, something so simple yet so beautiful. A sound Todd had been taking for granted all this time – never questioning just where, or what, it had originated from.

"That, Todd...is the sound of birdsong," Basil told him, with a smile.

"It's awesome..." the young man breathed in awe. "I can't believe I hadn't noticed it before."

"Most people don't," Basil shrugged. "It has been woven into their lives so deeply that it is simply background noise to them now. But I...I am a man who longs to seize it."

"To take a photograph of one of these 'birds', right?" Todd



asked.

"That's right," Basil nodded. "And it's not an easy task I've set myself by any means. You know how difficult it is to capture a pokémon on camera, don't you?"

"Yes, I sure do," Todd glanced down at his camera.

"Well imagine that, only a hundred times harder," Basil described. "And that's without exaggeration. Birds are painfully cautious critters, y'see. In all my years as a bird watcher, I have yet to take a shot of one.

"But if you haven't been able to take a picture of one, how do you know they exist?" Todd said. "I mean, sure...*something* is making that noise. But maybe it's just a long-undiscovered species of pokémon."

"Oh I *know* they exist," Basil frowned. It was hard to tell whether he was annoyed by Todd's doubt or simply lost in deep thought. "Birds were one of three different types of animalia to exist on this planet. Those of the water and land have since died out, but those of the air live on, if but in hiding."

"Whoa..." Todd found himself momentarily caught up by this man's wealth of information. "How do you know all this stuff?"

"I went into a lot of study after I came into contact with it," Basil explained, scratching the top of his head where there happened to be an absence of shaggy, violet hair. Todd put the juice-stained tissue aside and leant forward, enthralled.

"With *what*?"

"Something that happened a good few years ago, admittedly," Basil said. "I was a bit closer to your age then. Had spent all day working in the steel mines and had come out to get a spot of fresh air and sunshine. Thing is, a bit too much of that can knock a working man right out. I hadn't even managed to finish my lunch before I was fast asleep under a tree. When I came to, I'd slept so heavy that it felt like someone had pulled the plug to my body - I couldn't move a single limb! But it was a good thing I hadn't been able to, I can't imagine I would have seen what I did had I moved even a little bit."

The man gazed out amongst the trees at this point, eyes wide with distant recollection.

"It was the smallest and most beautiful creature I had ever seen," he murmured. "It was green and yellow, not much heavier than a handful of rice - perching upon my open hand to peck at some leftover crumbs there. Those were the most incredible five seconds of

my life.”

“And you’ve been looking for other birds ever since, huh?” Todd concluded. “What are the chances of that...to actually see one for yourself.”

“People would say the same of legendary pokémon, wouldn’t they?” Basil chuckled. “Yet somehow, I find birds so much more fascinating. Maybe it’s all in their elusiveness.”

“Maybe...” Todd trailed off. “But I have to admit, they do sound spectacular.” He let out an amused utterance of his own at this point. “In more ways than one! I’d sure love to see a photograph of a bird, if anything.”

Basil glanced at Todd for a moment, a warm and thankful expression in his eyes.

“You’re the first person to really take an interest in my work, Todd,” he remarked, in slightly saddened tones. “Even Rosebay thinks I’m off my rocker! So I’ll tell you what. If I ever get that perfect snap, you’ll be the first to know about it.” The man confirmed this statement by bringing out a PokéGear and flipping it open.

“Wow...thanks!” Todd grinned, promptly giving Basil his home number. The two figures parted ways shortly afterward, but not without Todd jokingly advising his new friend to not let the obsession cramp his style too much. The young man then proceeded onwards with renewed enthusiasm.

There was something to be learned in Basil’s forthright determination. Sometimes, even a dream no one else could see the worth in was still worth chasing. If Basil were ever to capture it, a

picture of a bird would be more valuable than *any* pokémon shot Todd could hope to grasp. But that no longer deterred the photographer. It wasn't about money – three years in an unfulfilling 'career' had already taught him that much.

It was about sharing something with others.

Sharing from a different point of view.

Sharing with the world, or just between two.

Because when it came to inspiration, one was all it took to make a change.

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