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World Bio - *Ang Gagamba Ko*

Ang Gagamba Ko takes place in the world of Viazio in the nation of Vale. Viazio is a world reminiscent of that of Earth with magical realism. Myth, faerie tales, and folk tales passed down from generation to generation—retold time and time again. There are ballads of birds commanding the weather at will, sagas of primates shaping the land, epics of lizards of epic proportions that roamed the land in search of treasure, lullabies of sea creatures imparting knowledge onto others. A majority of these tales do not hold water, as much as the kids in Viazio would like to believe. However, there are a few stories related to insects that hide a hint of truth beneath their words.

Records and stories dating back to the rise of civilization tell of insects “infused with magic” that not only lived among humans, but worked alongside them as well. They do not indicate the origins of these insects, or why mentions of them start to drop off going into the modern day. Some scholars speculate these insects came and went to Viazio via portals and at one point decided to not come back. Others say industrialization started to kill them off, and a majority of those that survived went into hiding. It’s a hot debate that will continue well into the future as neither side has the irrefutable evidence needed to back up their claims. These magical insects can still be rarely spotted in different parts of the world. It is only in Vale in particular where a subspecies of these insects, called gagamba, are thriving and numerous in numbers.

Vale is a multi-island. Its geography is shaped by volcanoes and fault lines. The people tell stories to the children of dragons slain to make volcanoes and people turning into mountains as a form of love. Its flora, fauna, and geography is similar to ones located in Southeast Asia. Vale’s towns and cities thrive in retro-future tech much like the other nations in Viazio. It’s old mixed with the new; a reminder of their yesterdays and the promise of tomorrows.

In greater world politics and history, Vale has been burned more times than it can count, scarred by the marks of greater nations with far more influence than it. These days it tries to remain neutral. Since the people cannot change its past, it looks towards the future to become a nation built by and for its people first and foremost. They call valentians, the people of Vale, resilient. These days they try to remain friendly when trading and communicating with the other nations. But through its scars in history, you can see its beauty and the nation’s values. Common holidays Vale celebrates include a new year’s holiday, the summer solstice, and founding day of the nation.

Gagamba and their partnerships with humans in Vale are a tale as old as time. It was a harmonious and beneficial relationship both in work and play. In the nation's early days of

developing towns and cities, the gagamba aided binding wood and stone together using their magical silk. Its binding properties are as strong as concrete, if not stronger. Some gagamba also have silk to protect wounds, and some that can slow down even the strongest of humans. The humans repaid their kindness with food and shelter, declaring them a nationally protected species.

With the gagamba came another magical element in the form of trees. These trees have an energy to them, and stand out very easily from normal ones. They are sacred species. Myths say that these trees spawn from the roots of the world tree, but that is simply just myth. At least records indicate it as such. When the gagamba walks across these branches to activate the cultivar's properties. These effects vary, such as healing or temporary growth in size for the gagamba. The branch effects also did not harm humans in any way.

Now the relationship "in work" is long gone as Vale became more industrialized. The world has changed. Machines and advancements in other fields meant the people of Vale did not need to rely on the gagamba as much anymore. The relationship between humans and gagamba started to drift apart.

Perhaps it was this unsure transition in time that led to a breakthrough discovery; a reason why they will forever be intertwined. Through careful observation of gagamba in the wild, they found that gagamba loved to play-fight with each other using these branches. People were amazed by their carefully calculated movements in turn. Gagamba would walk along the magical branch, passing twigs to activate different effects. The order of which twigs they pass by matters as one wrong sequence can mean losing the fight. It was almost like a dance. And it was an inspiration to the people of Vale.

Those that formed an especially strong connection with humans started to challenge each other to battles, recreating what gagamba did in the wild. This is how the *laban ng gagamba* came to be. Humans and gagamba working in tandem, just like the days of old. First, it started as a cult following. But then it grew into something larger. Bigger. More grandiose. There was fanfare and teams; festivals and tournaments. Technology started to come out of nowhere just for the gagamba. Matchboxes that were much larger on the inside than their appearance makes it out to be for gagamba to be comfortable. Botanists experimented, breeding and grafting different magic cultivars to make infinite combinations in battle. For the past couple of decades, Vale has hosted yearly *laban ng gagamba* grand tournament with continued support from businesses in Vale sponsoring the event.

The grand tournament starts around the time summer break does for a majority of schools in Vale. The first phase of the tournament consists of local tournaments hosted in Vale's numerous islands where players are seeded through a round-robin format, then the top 16 competitors are

placed in a bracket. All players get points based on their placement. The 16 players with the most points are then qualified to participate in the grand championship tournament bracket. The winner of that bracket, is then to face off with the previous year's champion to claim the title. The cash prizes that are handed out in these tournaments are enough that some people can even have a career just around being a *laban ng gagamba* competitor.

In the year that *Ang Gagamba Ko* takes place however, things are being run a bit differently than usual in Vale. A company called Engineered Automatons Incorporated from the nation of Constanza, owned and run by CEO John Cumulus, has strong-armed their way into the nation of Vale, mostly through money, because there is nothing this company cannot buy. Cumulus is interested in the gagamba and the magical branches, and believes that there is a way to make robotic versions of them. By the time the tournament rolls around for the year, they have already constructed a large office and factory in Vale's capital city, Thom. Not only that, but Engineered Automatons Inc. paid—or scared off—enough money to be the sole sponsor for the tournament. While his true intentions remain hidden to the public eye, he hopes to use this tournament as an opportunity to prove robots are the future.