

Can't draw, ain't Japanese.

This is now a semi-finished chapter. While **Tomon** has yet to get back to me on the the last 2/3rds of the chapter **Hiryo** has seen it, and corrected a lot of little One Piece related mistakes. At this point it is doubtful Tomon will get back to me about the rest of the chapter, but in the future he should have more time to go over the chapter before I post it.

Beyond that, I've decided that that to simply things: Resolve is the ship, Resolve is the Klabautermann.

## Chapter 23: Finding Proper Service

The next day, was what could be called a typical Grand Line day. That is, the weather and the ocean tried its best to confuse and batter the Resolve, keeping the crew hopping. With the Resolve's Klabautermann spirit now awake and able to help out, this should have been much easier than normal, but the Straw Hats quickly discovered there was a limit to the little spirits powers.

For one thing, the parts of the ship had to have time to, in Resolve's words, "Settle into me for me to really use well. So I'm not going to be much help with the masts for a bit longer. I, I might be able to concentrate on one at a time but that would take all my concentration."

The same could be said for the Jet Dials, but there, Resolve said it was also like "Someone just put a new bone in my body, and I can sort of feel it there, but doing anything with it is again going to take a lot of my concentration."

Worse in a way, was that by its very nature, the Klabautermann was not used to doing anything major. Nothing that could be noticed. "We're supposed to be felt, not seen or anything like that. I, I like being out and about, and talking to you all but my nature is sort of fighting against that."

When Resolve had mentioned this as everyone else was running around getting ready for an incoming storm, Luffy had shrugged his shoulders. "Could concentrating on multiple things at once be something you could train yourself on? Like, you know, mind games or training your mind? Same with working on helping in larger ways."

Resolve had paused at that, wondering.

And when the storm began, Nami was ecstatic to have the Klabautermann around. She asked if it could keep them on course and the Klabautermann simply saluted, shouted "Yes ma'am" and hopped to it, disappearing from sight into the wheel. And suddenly, the ship was sailing on precisely the course needed for the log pose, operating both the wheel and the jet

dials once Makino had turned them on. This left Nami to join Robin and Sanji on the sails, while Luffy, and the others concentrated on keeping the deck clear of the hail coming down on them hard enough to crack the wood of the deck.

Resolve was even able to shout out its own observations occasionally, which helped, although it seemed that when following orders or in a 'serious' setting, the Klabautermann devolved back to marine speak. "Navigation Officer, there is a strange current about to come across our beam, should I ride it, or try to fight it?"

Nami looked up at the sky, and shouted back, "Fight through it Resolve! This storm's breaking!"

Not five minutes later the storm did break, and the heavy current that had been trying to pull the frigate into a new course gave way. The ship soon righted itself, pulling back on course as the crew released the sails, which began to fill with wind once more, the underwater jet dials shutting down under Makino's direction.

As the now-walking older woman came back on deck and the sun began to break in through the clouds, Resolve appeared once more, coming out of the wheel. Standing next to it, the Klabautermann shook her head as she stared in awe at Nami as she walked up the stairs to the aft deck, seeming to be somewhat exhausted if its body language was anything to go by. "Since my awakening, I have slowly been recovering memories of my previous crews, and I served on the Grand Line several times. None of the navigation officers could read the Grand Line as well as you do!"

Nami smiled as the rest of the crew nodded in her direction, but Luffy put a slight damper on things. "Yep, Nami's good like that. But can you tell us how long we'll be clear of the horrible, horrible weather for?"

"Enough time to have breakfast, I think," Nami said, staring up at the clouds and all around them. "I think we should have about two hours or so before the next blow, although I am wondering where that current that Resolve reported came from."

All of them had felt the shift in the ship, as it fought against some great current. But what had caused it was anyone's guess.

"That might have been caused by a group of animals I saw in the distance. They looked almost like sea monkeys, but they were too far away for me to make out details," Robin said, having leaped down from on high to join the conversation. "They seemed concentrated on another ship, so I did not pay them much mind."

"There was another ship out there?" Sanji asked. "I didn't see it."

“I saw the ship’s masts, and even that was only because I was using the spyglass,” Robin reported. “As I said, it was too distant to do anything else. Moreover, the ship didn’t have any flags and only a single sail.”

Luffy frowned in confusion, looking at the others for an explanation. “What kind of ship sails without a flag?”

They all shrugged ignorance, but then Zoro groaned. “Wait a minute, don’t pirates who play Davy Back Fight lose their flag?”

At that, Luffy and the others all looked at him and out in the direction that Robin obligingly pointed. “Idiots. Well, if they are that far away, and they were the target of those sea monkeys, then I suppose they’re too far for us to help.”

“As if losers like that thought that kind of the game was a good idea would be a threat to us anyway,” Sanji snorted. He then lit up a cigarette from among the packs they had taken from the supplies of the Foxy pirates, thinking, *As if anyone on this crew would be stupid enough to gamble with our ladies! The other shits though, they could go away.* Luckily for Sanji, he had gotten far better at internalizing that kind of statement since coming aboard.

Instead the cook said aloud, “So, do you want to eat first, or try the fruit first?” He frowned then, cocking his head to one side thoughtfully. “Does cooking the fruit do anything to it?”

Luffy shrugged. “Who knows, but I figure since it’s just a fruit, I’ll chop it up and eat it like that, like it’s a pineapple or something. And I think I should eat something real first. Who knows what eating that fruit is going to do to me, Robin, Chopper?” He looked over at the two Devil Fruit users. “What can you tell us?”

After exchanging a glance with Chopper, Robin began. “From my own experiences, Devil Fruits taste horrible. I talked to a few of the Baroque Works agents before on that point, and even asked Crocodile once what his fruit tasted like, just as a conversation starter. To my surprise he answered and said it tasted like eating rotten sand.”

Everyone there cocked their heads to one side in unison, echoing, “Rotten sand?”

Robin shrugged. “That is what he said. For my part, it tasted foul, like meat that had been put in a sour brine almost, but, not quite.”

“You are really making me look forward to this, you know,” Luffy grimaced before looking over at Chopper.

Chopper looked a little hesitant, but eventually he said. "For me, I don't remember much about the taste. I remember thinking it was kind of disgusting, but I was a deer at the time, and I was starving so, well, any food was good food."

The crew nodded at that, but didn't press him on why he had been starving, causing him to smile slightly in relief. He had told them a bit about his past, and had filled them in entirely on Doctorine and Doctor Hiriluk but hadn't gone into details on his life before the crazy doctor (the male one) had taken him in.

"So good meal before, and a something to take taste out of my mouth after," Luffy scowled. "How soon did your powers manifest?"

"You may or may not exhibit your powers immediately, I know I did, but Mr. 2 did not, nor did Mr. 3. I believe that Mr. 1 did, but that could be a difference between the types of fruit. I have long thought that the paramecia label is too broad and the logia label constricting."

Chopper nodded. "The Devil Fruit is going to have some kind of immediate impact I think. It changed me instantly. I mean I went from being a really scrawny young reindeer, to being I human reindeer with a built body the next second and I didn't will that or anything. The same may be the case for you."

"So, I'm going to become lightning, oy, again, not looking forward to this," Luffy muttered, staring down at where he had pulled the Devil Fruit in question out from his ki space. "Suddenly this doesn't sound like a good idea."

"Still, for the amount of power eating it is going to give you, is a bit of hardship too big a price to pay?" Laki soothed mockingly, although she was still looking to be of two minds about anyone having the same power as Enel.

"WAIT!" Sanji bellowed, his eyes widening. Everyone looked at him, and the cook pointed at the Devil Fruit. "We're assuming that it impacts him right away, right? Luffy's body becomes lightning?" When Chipper and Robin nodded, Sanji went on. "In that case, wouldn't Luffy fry his clothing off? If that's the case, I vote he eat it in his female body...."

"Is that really the most important thing to you, baka-cook!?" Zoro shouted, smacking Sanji upside the head with one of his sheathed swords. The cook stumbled, turned and the two started one of their daily fights before Nami interrupted them with her fists of fury.

"Actually, I believe that we will be spare the captain's nudity, alas," Robin remarked, giving Luffy a small leer that set his pulse racing for a second before she went on. "I believe that Devil Fruit powers also effect the clothing of the individual. If you recall, Crocodile's clothing also changed to sand, as did Aokiji to ice and Enel to lightning. Otherwise, I daresay given how hard Luffy was pushing him, Luffy would have at one point or another gotten the full-frontal experience."

“Right, and on that grateful note, let’s set this idea to the side and get some food out here, Sanji,” Luffy ordered, a faint shudder going through him at that image.

The cook nodded but looked at Resolve quizzically. “Do you want anything specific?”

The Klabautermann blinked at that, then looked at Sanji in surprise. “You mean I can eat? All of my crews spent a lot of time doing that, but I never understood why.”

“Then I think you’re in for a treat, Resolve,” Chopper laughed.

Chopper was right too. Indeed, the Klabautermann gorged herself on the pancakes and fish sausage links that Sanji cooked as part of their breakfast meal. While for his part, Luffy kept to simple fair, bread and fruit for now.

After the meal, everyone else looked on expectantly as Luffy cut the pineapple that was the Goro Goro no Mi into several pieces before chomping down on the first. His face scrunched up, although nowhere near as much as the two Devil Fruit users had expected. “You don’t find the taste as disgusting as we thought,” Robin observed.

“Bah, I’ve tasted worse. My Grampa’s cooking for one, and my big brother’s for another,” Luffy replied, although in reality it was the memory of Akane and her attempts to cook that had helped him.

Soon the other pieces of the Devil Fruit had disappeared, and Luffy, groaned, one hand on his stomach, the other reaching for a glass of lemonade, dumping the whole thing into his mouth. “Okay, that was a nasty but it coulda been worse...” Luffy began then he twitched, his words cutting off. A second later he twitched again and then lightning started to spark all over him and he stood up. “Um, ya might wanta move away.”

Before the others could do anything, Luffy’s entire body erupted into lightning, shivering with energy, the energy crackling off him and scorching the wood of the table, setting his chair alight. He still vaguely looked like the captain, but one now made of lightning that was quickly flash-frying everything about him.

The others gasped, backing away rapidly, while Luffy tried to control himself. But then as he turned away from them, wanting to get some distance, he flashed forward, crashing into the aft-most mast exactly like a runaway lightning bolt.

The mast groaned, the wood shattering enough for the mast to list badly and Resolve shouted “Hey, don’t wreck my deck!”

Luffy, still looking like a human-shaped lightning bolt with smaller bolts sizzling and popping in every direction, tried to moves to one side, only to blast across the intervening

distance into the side of the kitchen area, shattering some of the wood there as if by a small lightning strike. *Not as much damage as the first, come on, control, you're good at that, right?!*

"Hey! What did I just say?!" Resolve shrieked.

Barely in control of his own body at the moment, Luffy tried to turn away from them all, looking out beyond the prow. Instantly he flashed forward again, a faint "Oh shiii..." dopplering out behind him along with the crack of lightning before he smashed through the far edge of the outer bulwark, and out across the ocean.

"Well, that was something," Sanji muttered, frowning thoughtfully.

"Hmm, it was like he was just teleporting to wherever his powers were facing, weird," Zoro answered.

Laki chuckled forcefully, shaking her head, as she fought down shivers from the sounds of the lightning and seeing someone else use that foul power. "Er, and the whole turning into lightning thing also seemed a major issue. I mean, Enel wasn't lightning all the time, or else he'd have never needed to eat or um... play with some of his attendants."

"You idiots! Don't you remember, if he strikes the water, he'll become a hammer!" Nami shouted.

"Actually, I've been wondering about that," Robin, cupping her chin thoughtfully with one hand as if she was watching an experiment, rather than her lover suddenly transferring into a wild lightning bolt.

"What?" Laki asked, quizzically.

"I mean, he also has that curse, doesn't he? Are we assuming that the Devil Fruit would cancel it out, or that both his bodies would become infused with the curse from the Lightning Fruit?" Robin asked. "I am uncertain."

Growling, Nami turned, and was about to bark orders to Zoro and Sanji, ignoring the crazy archeologist. When she did so, she saw they were already in the air, racing towards where the lightning bolt had crashed into the ocean.

While Robin had been talking, Luffy had been discovering the answer to her question. The lightning bolt version of Luffy crashed into the top of the ocean, the lightning dissipating as it did, leaving only the man behind to fall ignominiously under the waves. And upon that touch of seawater, Luffy's body lost all semblance of energy, becoming almost entirely unable to move. At the same time, Luffy felt intense pain, the pain of being hit by hot and cold water at once, his very atoms pulled in two different directions, the heat of the lightning bolt he had previously been having heated the water directly around him.

However, against the backdrop of the entire ocean, that didn't last more than a millisecond and Luffy's pain faded instantly as his curse fully activated. And with it, Luffy was able to regain control of herself, kicking up and out of the water to wade there for a time.

"Okay, so I have become one thing that no other Devil Fruit user can be, utterly immune to the touch of ocean water. That's...okay, I really, really like that, it's a massive advantage, but fuck! This means that I have to be thankful to that bitch Urd for making me keep my curse. Ugh," Luffy grumbled, even as she smiled widely.

Back aboard the Resolve, Luffy requested some hot water, and even as Resolve had yammered at him for damaging her, Sanji obliged, watching with interest as Luffy transformed into his male body. That interest admittedly was partly because Luffy's shirt had been scorched off him and Luffy had been unwilling to sacrifice any of his other clothing just in case he couldn't control the transformation. But the rest was simple interest infused with wariness, wondering what was about to happen.

But Luffy this time kept control of himself. He still morphed into lightning, but he was no longer zooming around every time you glanced direction too long. Instead, Luffy had closed his eyes. He then settled into the lotus position, putting his hands together in his waist, scowling in irritation as he began to think of his body, bringing it to mind slowly, superimposing it over his current lightning form.

For most logia type users, this would've been incredibly difficult. Indeed, several logia users over the decades had never been able to fully reform themselves in their original bodies, instead creating ones for themselves, super perfect images they then created out of their element prior to shifting back to flesh and blood. But Luffy was a martial artist. He knew perfectly well what his body was like from one end to the other and further how to meditate to work with his ki.

Now Luffy used that knowledge now to reshape to his lightning form back into his body. A second later, Luffy was looking down at himself thoughtfully, clenching one hand, and then allowing it to transform into lightning, only from the wrist up. "Well, I can work with this I think, but it isn't going to be easy," Luffy announced, showing a true mastery of the art the art of understatement.

With that in mind, Luffy decided to slow the ship down, going at half-sail towards Water Seven, and Luffy spent each morning over the next four days before they arrived working with his new Devil Fruit. Not so much trying out attacks, just getting used to his new reality, shifting from solid to normal so that it became second nature to be in his regular body rather than the logia form. Luffy didn't want his normal body to be the unusual one, knowing that slipping up then would both reveal his new abilities and cause issues whatever the scenario.

Thankfully, this training took relatively quickly, and by the morning of the fourth day, Luffy was confident enough to start working with the Lightning power in different ways. One of which he showed the crew that afternoon, asking Zoro for help.

“A logia clone, an ingenious idea,” Robin murmured wondering perhaps with her ability to create body parts if she could create a similar clone like this, only fully articulated. Of course, it looked like a Luffy made entirely of lightning, and Luffy couldn’t duplicate his flesh and blood body like that. So he wouldn’t be able to, say, use the lightning clone to do his work, or switch out with the lightning clone unless they were in physical contact. But he could manipulate the lightning clone in a few different ways, so long as he was concentrating on them. And that, well, that opened up a lot of possibilities.

Luffy was well pleased with that, but what pleased him more at the moment was that all around him, his crew was showing signs of their own training over the past four days. Nami was holding the weapon she and Laki had created. It was still the same visually, a somewhat childish looking series of small clubs which combined into one staff. The rest though, was entirely different, and one of Nami’s gauntlets which had previously contained an Impact Dial, now carried something else entirely. And the staff too had changed dramatically.

Sanji now could use Geppo with his legs while holding Tekkai with his upper body and had even started to show quite a bit of Busoshoku in his kicks. Chopper had started to use Tekkai too, and Robin, Makino and Nami’s Kami-E were very good. The odd one out was Laki, since she had a lot of time to make up for. But her use of Dial combat, and sparring with the others, had gotten her used to fighting Rokushiki users, and she had come about as far as could be expected.

Zoro, though, was the one who had come the longest, and he stood across from the lightning clone. He was glaring at it, crouched, one of his blades, Sandai Kitetsu on one side, the other two swords set against the mast beside him.

“Alright, Zoro, do it,” Luffy said, holding the clone in place.

At Luffy’s order, Zoro pulled out his blade in a quick I-Ai strike. As it left the sheath, his blade glowed black, bisecting the lightning clone, instantly dissipating its power. When the electricity of the blow shot down his sword it dissipated instantly, unable to travel down the Busoshoku-enhanced blade.

“Well done!” Luffy clapped, grinning cheerfully at this first mate. “That’s pretty damn amazing Zoro. You’ve learned how to infuse your Busoshoku into your blades better than I ever thought you would this quickly. Now, show me the full body Busoshoku.”

“I can only use it for about a few minutes in a fight though,” Zoro warned.



Luffy nodded that he understood, which he did. After all, they had been working on this for the past two days. But then, Luffy had Zoro use the Busoshoku on his arms and legs. Now he was demanding that Zoro use it on his full body.

Grimacing, Zoro stepped back, sheathing the white blade, then concentrated, putting his hands together. "Tekkai!" he began and then, a few minutes later as the others watched, black seemed to seep out from the center of his chest, covering him from head to toe. Soon he stood there, glaring straight ahead, then turned to look around at the rest of the crew as they moved to surround him. "Do your worst, shit cook."

Sanji smirked, moving over to stand directly beside him, one leg already raised. Chopper, who wore a far more regretful look on his face took his other side. There was, after all, only one real way of training the Busoshoku, just like there was only one real way of training Tekkai technique: by taking punishment.

"You are going to regret saying that," Sanji quipped, his foot lashing out and smash with devastating force into the side of Zoro's head. But Zoro barely even blinked, and certainly didn't move. He grinned, and even his teeth were black, something that had taken Luffy more than a month to get right when he was starting out but which he had warned his crew about. Indeed, all of his crew were benefiting from the mistakes that Luffy had made in his training, both on his own and with Shanks and Garp's 'help.'

"That the best you got Love Cook? Maybe if you spend more time training, then thinking thoughts below the belt you..."

Sanji twisted, landing on his feet, as he shouted out "Anti-Manner Kick Course!" His feet lashed out like a hurricane crashing into Zoro's side, chest and head. Then, at Luffy's nod, Chopper joined in from his other side. After he did, Laki started up, followed by a smirking Nami with her impact dial-infused club. Makino held back for a second before joining in, while Robin watched, unwilling to join in for fear her limbs might be accidentally hit by one of the others.

Luffy also didn't join, instead he waited, watching. Then, as he started to see patches of regular skin beginning to appear, he launched his hands forward. 'Launch' was the correct term as Luffy's arms turned into lightning, but his hands remained normal flesh and bone as they flashed forward far faster than even Luffy could move normally. One hand grabbed Sanji's leg, the other Chopper's arm holding them in place. "That's enough."

Ducking under a late blow from Laki, Zoro opened his eyes, having closed them halfway through this torture training. He stared at Luffy, then let the final vestiges of the technique go, gasping in air and dropping to one knee. "Th, that is freaking hard!"

"Yeah it is," Luffy said with a nod, calling his hands back to him, and then holding out one fist, clenching it, and coating it with his own Busoshoku. "But eventually it will become

easier, and you'll be able to hold it for longer periods of time. Once you can, you'll be a match or better than most Vice-admirals out there and certainly most pirates."

Zoro grinned, cracking his neck and moving his shoulders this way and that. "Bah, they are just more stepping stones on the path to the strongest swordsman in the world."

'Good! Ten-minute break, then we'll do some speed training before coming back to this."

Later that day, Sanji took a turn training on Busoshoku. Watching him in action, Luffy sat with Robin and Zoro, who was utterly exhausted from his training. Using your Busoshoku like that was just like running a marathon at a full sprint. At first it was like doing so while overweight and with heart troubles. Later it became easier.

"I think Sanji is going to need a remedial lesson in treating female enemies as actual combatants" Luffy murmured. "He's come a long way, but every time Makino, Laki or Nami try to hit him he tries to flirt with them and his eye does that heart thing. I don't want us to have another 'Hina moment'."

"I agree," Robin stated firmly watching as Sanji kicked out hammering aside a series of cannonballs that Chopper was throwing at him, before kicking out at the end of the staff in Nami's hands, apologizing as he did so. Not that Nami cared, since at the moment she wasn't using the Impact Dial's stored energy. Instead, Nami was using it to soak up as many impacts from Sanji as possible. "Worse yet, the honey trap method is an extremely effective tactic of spies, the world over and the World Government could certainly attempt such on us."

Resolve was on navigator duty, while Laki was above them in the crow's nest, finding the range after the latest change to her sniper rifle. It was a real sniper rifle now. Laki had started to go through the books that Robin had taken from the Rainbow Mist, and had found a picture of a gun which she had started to copy in a few fashions, replacing the scope and adding a better magazine system. She had also started working on pistols for Makino, which added Dial tech to the previous South Blue pistol that as Makino's favorite weapon.

Grumbling, Zoro agreed. "The Love Cook needs more discipline. Heck, make it a weekly thing, all you ladies," he sent a smirk at Luffy who rolled his eyes, "Spend half the morning wailing on him like you did after we escaped Hina in the first place."

"That's an idea. But overall, I think both of you have made pretty good progress," Luffy chuckled quietly. "If we ever meet up with another Logia-type, and we probably will, either of you would give him a very bad day."

"And you," Robin said, smirking slightly.

Luffy shrugged. "I'm not a master with this lightning thing yet, but you're right. It certainly opens up a world of possibilities. With that remark Luffy reached over to a pile of small musket balls, holding one between two fingers. As the other two watched, lightning ran between his fingers, so hot that the pug iron of the musket ball slowly melted shaping it to Luffy's specifications. Robin's eyes narrowed as it became long and cylindrical, tapering to a point. "A bullet from South Blue."

Luffy nodded, clicking his fingers the air, before grabbing it, and holding it in his palm, while more lightning ran through his fingers. He then pushed it forward into the lightning other hand, and watched as it zoomed across out into the distance, smirking slightly. "Yep, I think that I quite like this. And I can use it in a few different ways rather than the overpowered version Enel used."

"That's cool, but why are you concentrating on different attacks like that one?" Zoro grunted.

"I still don't want to use it like every day or anything like that. Heck, ideally, I want to keep it a secret right up until we desperately need it, and I hope we don't need it until we're all in the New World. This crew is still vulnerable, as is Resolve itself, until all of you can do at least the Rokushiki."

"Speaking of which," Robin began, just as an alarm nearby went off.

"Change out!" Resolve shouted, cheerful and happy. The Klabautermann had been put in charge of when to shift the training schedule for the day from one individual to another. "Nami and Robin, you're up!"

Nami groaned, and Robin frowned in annoyance, before sitting up, languidly, letting her hand slowly trace across Luffy's side and chest as she did, winking at him. As she walked away, Luffy's eyes traced down to her rear, watching as it swayed. *Damn woman, I'm gonna lose it at this rate!* Robin had taken to doing that kind of thing ever since their moment when he had initially woken up after his fight with Aokiji. Luffy enjoyed it, but beyond posing and hugging and occasionally giving her massages, didn't know how to reply.

Watching the two women take their places and place blindfolds over their eyes, Sanji pouted, although he was also limping, and reluctantly obeyed the captain's gesture to step aside. The rest of the crew bar Laki formed a circle, taking up several of the small musket balls in their hands. Seconds later at Luffy's "Begin" both of them started to Kami-E or Tekkai as Luffy shouted out for them to switch.

Later that day, Robin and Nami were waited on hand and foot by an extremely guilty-sounding Sanji. Even Luffy got into the act a bit, getting Robin her coffee, and giving her a shoulder and back massage. As an exercise however, Luffy was having Robin's arms and hands

doing the same thing to Nami, who complained volubly, yet jokingly, about the secondhand treatment, even as Sanji finished making her an orange margherita.

“You know,” Robin murmured slowly becoming aroused as Luffy’s massage turned into a caress, “that Devil Fruit changes not only your combat ability but what we might want to do with the ship. Do you think we can re-create that system that allowed the Arc Maxim to run?”

“That’s partly what I’m hoping to do yeah,” Luffy said, shrugging his shoulders behind her, then kneading at one particular part of her right shoulder, where Robin had been hit several times in a row as she had lost her balance from Kami-E before being able to activate Tekkai.

She groaned under his hand, and Luffy smirked slightly, but continued to talk. “But to do that, we’ll have to speak with the shipwrights, and create the correct...I’m not certain what to call it. Engine, maybe? What do you think Resolve?”

Resolve shrugged her shoulders although her face showed her appreciation of being asked. “I’m afraid that I don’t have any memories of this Arc Maxim you’re talking about.” The little dual-natured creature touched her chest, right between her asymmetric breasts. “Although, are you thinking about me actually flying, or something else, like a steam paddlewheel type of system?”

“You remember seeing one of those?” Chopper questioned, cocking his head to one side as he moved over to the Klabautermann.

Resolve nodded. “Several Marine battleships are paddle wheels. They are somewhat rare, but I served alongside one when I was first commissioned.” Then she frowned. “Strange. I remember that, and... a lot about other ships I’ve been around but can’t recall the name of any of my actual crewmen. Weird.”

“Meh, maybe that’s just how Klabautermann remember things. But what do you think about it?”

Stroking her chin Resolve paused, then reached out for some of the candy that Sanji had placed in front of her and Chopper so fast that Sanji blinked before smirking a little, a smile on his face. “I think, that is, I think it could work, but exactly how much of my hull are we replacing? I wouldn’t mind being a little faster in a straight line, but I think the added weight of the wheels and the engine would make me slower to maneuver.”

“It wouldn’t be a full paddlewheel system, not with the dials we have. Still, you’ve got a good point on the difference between straight line speed and responsiveness. But the real question is, do we want to be able to take more damage or dance around our opponents?” Luffy asked, looking around at the others. “What kind of build are we looking for here.”

“To my mind, not being hit is always a better idea,” Robin said, gesturing between herself and Nami. “Or else, almost of the training Nami and I are doing today was pointless.”

“No training is ever pointless, Robin,” Luffy announced in an extremely pompous tone of voice, fully deserving the elbow that Robin gave him, as she twisted around, before she kissed him on the cheek and snuggled in a little a few seconds, before shifting out of his arms and sitting next to him.

Knocking his shoulder against hers, Luffy looked back at the Klabautermann. “Resolve, you’re the only one that can answer that. While Robin, Makino and Laki will act as our gun crew, you’ll be the one actually taking damage, and if you can eventually do it, manning some of guns too.”

“Do you have memories of any of the fights we’ve been in? that could help you make the decision,” Zoro suggested.

“...Hmm...If we’re not going to mess with my size, I think that it’s better to dodge than to take hits,” Resolve opined, then added, “but I also want one powerful weapon, at least!” the Klabautermann bared her teeth and crouched her hands miming pistols, her tone changing from the one used by her former marine persona to the one used by her pirate one. “At least one. Ooh, and on a turret! Bam, Bam!”

“I’ve already got some ideas there, like I said before. Several actually, I’m trying to figure out a way to make them longer-range, so you’re going to have to wait a bit on that,” Laki replied.

“We’ll see what Iceberg or Cutty Flam can do for us, if we can find him” Luffy shrugged. “I also have a few ideas of my own too, Laki, and heh, trust me when I say distance is not the problem.”

“In that case, I think a system like our existing jet dials only better and more responsive would be great. Something that can make me go fast, ooh, a sprint mode!” Resolve nodded firmly.

Nami looked quizzically at Luffy. “You do know that Kokoro had said that Cutty wasn’t around. Why do you want us to look for a guy who might be dead?”

“Because according to Shanks, he was the man to go to for weapons. I think that making weapon out of the stuff from the Rainbow Mist and the dials is going to be crucial to make the Resolve the baddest ship afloat.”

The Klabautermann cackled at that, with her pirate persona going, “Ohhh yesss...” ecstatically while the other half was pumping her arm up and down before shouting out, “Yes sir! We’ll take it to those pirates!” causing everyone to laugh.

Very early the next morning, Robin was in the crow's nest, at present the nest covered by makeshift parka, with several slits in the side. Despite those slits, it was nice enough to keep Robin relatively dry, and more importantly, the book she was reading and her coffee free from the somewhat oppressive rain that had begun to fall about forty minutes ago. As most of her attention was on the book, a group of hands and a single eyeball kept watch, while she used her other eye to read.

Now however, she set her book to one side and picked up the spyglass, staring ahead at what she had seen a moment before. Despite the distance, the brown smudge was distinctive through the sheets of rain. As soon as she was certain of that, Robin patted the Resolve on the top of the crow's nest's banister. "Pass the word Resolve, I think we're nearing Water 7."

The rest of the crew roused themselves quickly, life on the Grand Line was not kind to those who could not do so. Even Zoro, who could sleep on the fly anywhere at any time with the ease of someone sitting up, could wake up just as quickly. Soon all of them were up in the rigging, including Resolve, watching as the island they were approaching grew up out of the horizon.

And it was a worthwhile site for certain. At first, it looked as if the entire island was a mountain, but as details clearer, it became obvious that the entire island was instead built that way. Indeed, from a distance, it more resembled a kind of water fountain than an actual city. This image was helped by the fact that there seemed to be a water spout shooting up from the center of the city. The only other things they could see from this far away was a large outer wall, or rise, with several large outer gates letting loose water out from underneath the main portion of the city, which continued to rise in segments up to the main fountain-like construction.

All in all, the site was amazing and everyone there gasped in delight. "Have I mentioned I love the Grand Line," Luffy muttered.

"Frequently," Robin chuckled, tapping him lightly on the back of his hat, which Luffy wore more often than not when he was not fighting for his life.

Luffy ordered the crew to bring down some of the sails, halving their overall speed. He wanted to take in the view, and moreover, to make certain that they didn't seem to be closing with the island too fast, like they were coming in to raid it. They were pirates, and most people didn't like pirates for good reason.

Soon they were nearing the edge of the actual island, although that still put them four ship-lengths away from the outermost buildings, those situated below the water gates. Those water gates each lead to different rivers coming out of the center of the island, and Luffy had the ship move in the direction of the nearest one. Moving against the current would be a drag, but it seemed as if that was the way to enter the city.

Near the entrance to this river sat a trio of elderly men arguing about something or other, several fishing rods in place in front of them. As the Resolve came into site though, heading for the river to take them deeper inland, one of them turned in the frigate's direction, cupping his hands around his mouth. "Hey, pirates are you here to pillage, ship work, or just tourism?"

The pirates, most of whom had moved to the prow, looked at one another, and Luffy shrugged. "Ship work!"

The man shouted back, "In that case you can't dock here. You need to go around to the east. You'll see a series of deeper inlets there. Find one that's empty, then set up your flag on the large poll you'll see there! That's where the Galley-la Company wants all large pirate vessels berthed."

"I'm not large!" Resolve shouted, pouting with half her face. Then her face shifted, and her marine side drawled, "Really? Look at your chest and say that." This was followed by, "Oooh, you said what!?"

Robin carefully restrained the Klabautermann from attacking herself once more, shaking her head with a chuckle as Luffy rolled his eyes and shouted back, "Thanks for the advice!" He then turned back to his crew, shouting orders to turn the ship away from the river, and moving them around the ship eastward.

OOOOOO

"Huh, I wonder what that was about? Did one of them think I insulted her or something?" the old man who had been shouting at the pirates muttered, shaking his head.

His friend chuckled. "Meh, most female pirates are a few planks short of a hull. It wouldn't surprise me if they took offense at any little thing."

As they watched the Resolve twist around, heading around the shoreline, taking soundings as they went, the third old man spoke up. "Well, they were polite at least. What are the odds that they'll try to get out of whatever agreement they make with Mayor Iceberg?"

"Ten to one they'll try to get out of it. They are of pirates for all."

"Hmm, that pirate flag, that mark looks familiar, I think the owner of it actually has a bounty, a big one."

“That’ll up the odds from ten, so long as they actually have anything approaching honor, and how likely is that?” the second old man said tartly. “Unless he’s affiliated with the Whitebeard or Red Hair Pirates...”

Rustling through a series of bounty posters until he found Luffy’s bounty poster, the first man shook his head. “Doesn’t say anything about that here.”

“In that case, yeah, one out of fifteen they tried to renege on the deal, run away after the ship is repaired, or some other pirate activity. Not like it will matter,” the second man guffawed. “Not with the Galley-la Company foreman around.”

OOOOOOO

True to the old man’s word, around the curve of the island the Straw Hats found a series of artificial docks jutting out into the water. The water was also deeper on this side of the island, than on the initial side they had approached. There were a series of large poles set near each of the docks. And surprisingly there were a few pirate ships already there, all flying different pirate flags. Five of them were being worked on as the Resolve started to slow down, while one of the others looked to be having its cannons removed for some reason and its flag taken down by another group of carpenters.

Luffy’s eyes narrowed as he looked at the pirate ships, then asked, “Resolve, would you estimate most of those ships are in your firing range from that dock?”

“Yes Sir,” the Klabautermann replied, his pirate sites once more subsumed by his Marine side which smiled widely. “Do you want us to engage? Rather than docking, we should swipe across their bows. Cross the T and send them all to the bottom!”

“Not yet my bloodthirsty little friend,” Luffy snorted. “But pirates don’t often get along with other pirates, and it’s always good to have options. However, with that, and all of the secrets we have aboard you, I think we will need to plan this out carefully.”

Soon, the ship had been secured against the dock, and Luffy moved a copy of their ensign over to the nearby pole. No one came towards them though, so it wasn’t a signal to anyone currently on the dock, and Luffy wondered what it was for. Then he turned back to his crew, gesturing them back to the table, which had been brought out earlier for their lunch after the rain had stopped. “Crew meeting guys.”

To everyone’s surprise Robin sat across from Luffy, making no move to look up from the book she was reading. The book was about natural disasters, but Robin had mentioned that she thought the book mentioned Water 7 somewhere, which while not a nice introduction to the island, could give them some information on it. No one, not even Luffy saw her eyes flick up to Luffy, a small smile appearing on her face as she turned the page.



Chopper came down from the crow's nest where he had taken over from Robin, the last to join the crew, sitting down next to Nami, practically vibrating. "This island looks so cool! The water goes all around the island streets and everything else and there even looks to be some kind of strange area where the people can go up on the water rather than down! I'm not certain how that works, though?"

"Perhaps the water is pumped up behind them somehow, or an elevator? Fill a barrel with water, the elevator on the other side rises the water goes out, the elevator falls," Laki mused, also looking excited and exchanging a high five with Chopper.

"Focus," Zoro grumbled, tapping his hands down deck. "What's the plan, Captain?"

Chuckling at Zoro's moment of formality, Luffy leaned back, thinking. "Nami, Makino, you two have the best idea of the amount of money we should be able to get for that gold in our hold. You'll be in charge of getting the best price for our gold, that's obvious."

"How much money do we need for what we want? How much should we keep as a reserve?" Sanji questioned, puffing on his cigarette.

"Depending on what we want and how expensive it will be to get it how we want it done, we might not be able to keep a reserve. Do you think we have enough for, say, four hundred million?"

The two women looked at one another, then leaned been talking quietly and gesturing as if they were describing some of the pieces of gold artwork they had gotten from Skypiea and before that. Makino was an extremely good trader and knew exactly what they had, while Nami knew about jewelry and gold. She was better at estimating the real prices of the various bits they had than Makino. After a few moments, they nodded. "We should be able to do that and have a few bits of jewelry left over. Is that the target goal?"

"I wish we had been getting the papers recently," Nami grumbled. "Part of my subscription is the market segment, but we haven't seen a single news bird since we came back down from Skypiea."

Chuckling at Nami's annoyance, Luffy asked, "Do we have enough money as it is to buy supplies?"

"We've got enough liquid cash to buy what I would say is enough for two months at sea. That is the amount I started at the island where we ran into that straw-man and his weirdos. But we need a lot of supplies. We're down to pastas, fish, no real meats since we didn't really get a chance to fill up our supplies at Long Ring Long Land."

"Right, so continuing what I was saying before, we're going to split the crew into three. Chopper, do you want to explore?" Luffy asked, then twitched.

The Zoan nodded rapidly as Luffy frowned, raising a foot to ward away what he thought was a fly. "In that case you go with Sanji, and Laki, you go with them, since I know you want to buy some clothing. Robin would you..."

Robin still didn't look up from book which she had been reading as the others talked. "I am perfectly happy here Captain. I would much rather stay aboard the ship if that is all right?" Behind her book, Robin smiled, and the hand that Luffy had tried to ward away with his foot moved upwards, her fingers stroking up Luffy's inner thigh.

Luffy jolted a bit in place, feeling the hand touching him like that. As the others looked at Sanji bemoaning the loss of hanging out with Robin, Luffy looked down very quickly, and saw Robin's hand waving up at him before going back to run her fingers up and down his thigh, then moving toward his crotch, and Luffy's quickly rising erection. Then, another hand appeared, slowly starting to stroke his thighs, then up to where his shirt began, moving underneath it.

When he tried to ward her hands away, one hand caught Luffy's hand, batting his hand aside before wagging one finger at him admonishingly. Then the hand went back to her fun, and feeling the sensations rising, Luffy gulped, keeping his face expressionless with an extreme amount of difficulty. But he didn't try again, not wanting to bring any more attention to what might be happening underneath the table.

"Furthermore," Robin said, interrupting Sanji and speaking as if she wasn't currently using her Devil Fruit powers to give Luffy an over-the-clothes a hand job, "I believe the captain should stay aboard the vessel as well, to meet with the shipwrights we make an agreement with. We will want to impress upon them that we do not want to share any of the secrets about this ship, either from the Rainbow Mist or the dials."

Gritting his teeth, Luffy nodded, as if she had brought up an important point. In reality, he was having trouble controlling himself from jumping over the table and grabbing her. "Y, yeah, you're right about that Robin," he got out, his voice a little higher than normal. We, we need to also make certain that we can keep the secret of Resolve getting out. You're an important part of this crew, Resolve, and we need to make certain that whoever works on ship knows about you before work begins."

"Or it's someone we have leverage over," Nami interjected, smirking a little. "Fear works just as well as trust, you know."

"In the short term," Luffy answered concentrating on Nami in an effort to not think of the hands that were now slowly undoing his breaches in order for one of them to reach inside.

"Should we also look to add a carpenter to our crew?" Laki asked. "I can service any weapons you actually make, but I don't know enough about carpentry and stuff to help keep the ship floating. And in battle, won't we want someone to be able to patch the ship up on the fly?"

To one side Makino cocked her head, watching Luffy, seeing the slowly rising color on his face. She was wondering what was going on, and her eyes slid to Laki, sitting to one side of Luffy, then over to Robin, a suspicious eyebrow rising.

“I’d like to add a ship’s carpenter yeah, but he’s got to be tough as well as good at his job. And he has to have a dream, he can’t just come aboard this ship. He’s got have a greater goal, or else the New World is going to break him. Only pirates who can dream big will be able to push on with us to Raftel. Anything less, money, power, fame, all that won’t be enough to go that final distance,” Luffy said firmly, able to push through Robin’s ministrations on his now turgid manhood with a surprising amount of force.

So much so that she paused in her efforts as the crew fell silent, thinking about what they had been told about the New World by Ace back on Alabasta. Before she could begin again though, Makino elbowed Robin in the side, giving the younger woman a quelling look. Robin chortled and stopped but let one hand in Luffy’s lap. Only instead of playing with his penis directly, she trailed her fingers up and down her lover’s abs where they tapped down to his waist, taking delight in how incredibly toned he was. Robin could basically feel every muscle and bone twitching as she touched it and there was something decidedly sensual about that feeling.

“Right, so I’ll stay aboard the ship with Robin,” Luffy began again, sending a nod toward Makino that had nothing to do with his actual words as he went on. “Zoro, you go with Makino and Nami. Whatever happens, you guard them and the gold, with the priority being them, of course.”

Zoro nodded. “How lethal can I get?”

“Non-lethal against any of the locals, regular townsfolk or underworld types. If any pirates make trouble though, go full bore if you have to.”

At that, Zoro smirked, but Nami shook her head. “I thought you just said that fear wasn’t a long-term tool.”

“For someone we’re making an agreement with,” Luffy laughed. “For possible enemies, Fear is a very good way of keeping them from bothering us.

“Or those like them anyway,” Zoro snorted.

Luffy laughed, nodded at his first mate, but then clicked his fingers, turning to Resolve. “Resolve, bring out our Den Den Mushis. I am not forgetting them again!”

The Klabausermann returned quickly, and Luffy handed out communicators to everyone bar Laki, Chopper, and Makino. They didn’t have enough to go around, and Luffy made a note

to see if they could try to pick up more. Regardless, this way they would all stay in touch, with Sanji and Zoro and Luffy contacting the others every hour on the hour.

“Why am I not going with the ladies! Sanji shouted, banging his hands down table, actually crying tears. “That’s unfair, unfair I say!”

“Two reasons. One, most of the supplies we need to buy are food and cooking supplies, which you’re in charge of,” Luffy drawled. “Two, this way, we have two women able to direct Zoro if he gets lost.”

“Oy!” Zoro shouted, to much laughter.

“And three what am I, chopped liver?” Laki added.

So Sanji hastily began to apologize to her, but Luffy turned to the rest of the crew, smiling slightly as something occurred to him now that most of his blood wasn’t being sent south. “In fact, while we’re here I think we should spend at least a month here, maybe more. And while Laki and I are working on the ship with the workers, the rest of you can be training.”

“What would our goals be then?” Zoro asked, interestedly.

“A few I can think of off the top of my head, in particular for you Zoro, sparring with me and helping your speed.” Zoro’s eyes lit up with literal unholy delight at that, while Luffy went on. “But mainly I want those who aren’t yet to be able to Geppo by the time we leave, and that’s not negotiable.”

While Robin frowned but nodded, the other three women had a problem with that, with Laki protesting that she didn’t need to use air walk given her skates.

“And what if one of them is destroyed while you’re high up in the air, or both of them?” Luffy asked tartly. “Besides, Geppo also helps with kicking strength, and you need the help in hand to hand.”

Laki scowled at that, but Nami and Makino were both adamant that they didn’t want it. Makino’s fear of heights was a very real thing, and the idea of putting herself in that position was frightening. And Nami just didn’t like the idea of the amount of training it would take. Luffy’s droll look at her gave his own opinion of her reaction, and Nami scowled, but subsided, admitting that her own objections did not have nearly the weight that Makino’s did.

“As for you, Makino, there are a few ways I can think of we could train you to be able to do with Geppo if we had the space available. Without forcing you up high in the air. I won’t do that to you but I want you to be ready just in case. Plus, the added mobility can be a major help in a fight,” Luffy almost wheedled, smiling at his older sister figure.

To everyone's surprise, Chopper also spoke up on this point, reaching forward and touching Makino's hand with one of his hoofs. "And actually, learning to use Geppo could help you and your fear of heights. After all, why be afraid of heights if you can just bounce your way down to the ground?"

"I don't think it works quite like that, Chopper, but thank you for the support," Makino smiled at the little Zoan in thanks, before throwing a mocking salute towards Luffy. "Aye, aye, Captain."

Luffy nodded, then looked over at Resolve. "I wonder if you could learn it?"

"OOOOH..." The spirit of the ship laughed. "That sounds awesome! Being able to take on enemies on my own, that would be so cool. Or could you imagine, if I could air walk with the ship, maybe with the help of those dials we have?" The little creature hopped up off of his chair, thrusting out his fists in a series of martial arts moves that he must have picked up from Luffy. "Hai, yah! Take that you...other pirates you!"

"Hah, that would be kind of cool," Luffy nodded, while Zoro, Chopper and Sanji all grinned.

The ladies were not amused, and Nami took it upon herself to show their anger. "Don't corrupt her, darn it!"

That stopped the Klabautermann in her tracks and she turned to look to the women, blinking before she smirked up at them with a look straight from Luffy's face when he was at his most teasing. "I've had a lot of seamen in me for most of my construction, don't call me young, or think that I'm the age I look like. I might be a little naïve and seem young at times, but I'm still going to look like this when you're old gray and wrinkling."

"How dare you!" Makino and Nami shouted, while Robin chuckled, although her eyes were glinting dangerously and Laki was reaching for one of her prototype pistols.

Before violence could be done upon the not-so-innocent, Sanji shook his head, twirling all around the women saying that, "Even if you might age, your beauty would never fade in my eyes!"

Nami laid him out with a punch, roaring "Don't talk about women aging!" while Makino reached to grab the quickly retreating spirit.

Shaking his head from where he now sat on one of the masts, Luffy just laughed watching the chaos.

**OOOOOOO**

As chaos erupted on the *Resolve's* deck, a sea train had just arrived on the island, bringing many tourists from several other island. Among them, were a few who could not help but stand out, for all that they might have tried to not to do so. One was a tall Asiatic-looking man with a scar on his face, a long Fu-Manchu mustache, a long, well-groomed beard, with hair going down to the small of his back. Several large balls were tied into his hair.

He was scowling currently, which did nothing to add to his looks, although he was dressed in a very nice-tailored suit. The suit was white with yellow highlights and he was wearing a large hat for some reason, while listlessly looking through a tourist book of Water 7.

Next to him was a large man, equally as tall as the first, and equally as odd. He too was obviously a Tourist and seemed to be taking pictures of everything as he passed by, muttering to himself. He had with a very wide, almost ovoid body and an equally wide mouth.

Nearby, but not with the first two oddballs, were two other people moving through the crowd on their own. One of them looked almost like he could be Nezumi, the Marine that the Straw Hat Crew ran into after dealing with Arlong who had attempted to take advantage of them. Although this guy was far better built. And much younger, taller and stronger looking. The fact he was winking at a nearby woman showed that he was aware of these facts.

The last man who couldn't help but grab the attention of many of the crowd stood at ticket office of the train station, asking where he could find a hotel, making arrangements to leave Water 7 for another island nearby. The locals who noticed him heard this, and knew the island in question was famous for its plays. The man even struck up a conversation with the man at the ticket office about how he was waiting for his big chance. This completed the image that his body had started, that of someone who was method acting a Noh dancer with a full face mask and the wandering monk motif.

As he exited the rest of the train station and walked up the steps to the main portion of the island, the man with the long hair and the scar glanced through the crowds at the other three, his gaze twitching from one to another to another, before shaking his head. *Why am I with these freaks again? Infiltration isn't any of our specialties! Especially not so spur of the moment. I'll give you Kumadori has some skill, but he can only play a few different roles. Although,* he thought as he watched the mouse guy flirt with a few of the other passengers before leaving them giggling, *at least Nero's got some ability to blend in.*

Soon though, all of them were blending in far better thanks to the locals having a celebration which included wearing mask and anonymous checkered cloaks. With those, all four of them could blend in somewhat better, moving out from where the normal tourists and other sorts would stay and into the back alleys.

They met up quickly then, with the long-haired man taking charge of the others. "Right, Fukurou. You have the map, where is this bar Blueno runs?"

His companion from before nodded his head. "Right follow me chapapa!"

Once more, as the others affirmed right, Jabra thought to himself that even with the mask and cloak, Fukurou stood out too much. *Still, he's the one who memorized the map.*

They soon found themselves at a dingy little bar in the back alleys of the city. Inside the bar, thanks to it being early in the day, there weren't many patrons. Indeed, there were only three people, two young women sitting on either side of a man. They were striking, the two young women being dressed in bikinis, wearing swords at their sides, and having their hair done in large squares for some reason.

The man was more interesting to Jabra. He sat almost as wide in the shoulders as Fukurou, with massively powerful arms. In comparison his waist and legs were tiny. The stranger was wearing a Hawaii T-shirt open at the front, with long blue hair sticking up from his head and sunglasses despite them being inside.

Jabra took all three in at a glance, then pulled off his mask, and pushed his hair back saying, "Oy, can we get some drinks? It's been a long time on the sea-train, and I would be damned if I paid the additional cost for their small ass bottles. Honestly, I thought it was only hotel managers who were that freaking stingy!"

In comparison to the three in the corner, the barman was almost normal-looking except for his hair which was done up like an ox's horns. He seemed to have a kindly, if somewhat lugubrious face, with laugh lines around his large mouth. He nodded amicably at the four newcomers. "Surely strangers, pull up a chair."

Jabra was impressed. He couldn't even detect a flicker of unease or suspicion in his fellow agent's gaze. *Then again, he and Kalifa are our best infiltrators. That's why they were sent here with Lucci and Kaku.*"

The rat faced man looked over at the girls, as he too removed his mask, his eyebrows wagging expressively. But both of them sniffed and turned away, and the man in the middle stood up, putting his arms around the girls. "Come on, it's nearly lunch time anyway, let's get back to the house."

He glared at the man with the rat-like face, who backed away, holding up his hands. "Sorry, I just saw two girls and one guy that's all, no harm meant."

The man in the middle pushed up his glasses and glared at him, but then smirked, nodded and led the two ladies out of the bar.

The 'actor' stood by the doorway staring out a small porthole for a second, watching the three of them move away through the alley, then when they turned a corner pointedly turned

the sign to close on the door, looking over the bar man. He looked at them, and Jabra scowled angrily. "Verification code CP zero-zero-nine-five-two."

The barman scowled but snorted acknowledgement. "Verified. What's going on? Why the heck are you here Jabra?"

"We've been ordered to back you up. And more..." Jazz grumbled.

"What do you mean more?"

"We've been ordered to help you, and your overall goals have changed," Jabra growled out, shaking his head. "Anyway, this isn't the kind of thing I want to say twice. Get the damn cat, the bitch and his holy-noseness here. Tonight. I'll tell you all then."

Blueno blinked. "You don't normally bother with cursing out Kalifa. You're either in a bad mood, or you're worried. Which is it?"

"Chapapa! You would be in a bad mood too, if on the day you got dumped by your girlfriend, you also got called into Admiral Akainu's office, chapapa!" Fukurou said, unzipping his mouth once more.

"Fukurou, you bastard!" Jabra shouted, grabbing at Fukurou's face and trying to rezip his mouth closed.

The sight actually amused Blueno enough to help him calm down, Blueno chuckled, shaking his head. "I see some things don't change. Fukurou still can't keep a secret to save his life. And you still have no game, Jabra." But then the mention of Akainu registered, and Blueno's eyes widened. "Wait, Akainu!? What does he have to do with this?"

"Yoyoi. You'll learn tonight. We have been given a mission of much import for Justice, YOYOI!!" Kumadori said.

"Shut up!" Jabra shouted back, turning away from Fukurou and thumping the bar in front of him with one hand. Then he sobered a little and then looked back at Fukurou. "Bring them out."

Once released, Fukurou reached inside his mouth, pulling out two large boxes around the size of a man's forearm, setting them down and opening the lids. Blueno stared at the contents, his eyes wide with shock. "Are you serious!?"

"Very much so," Jabra answered grimly. "One of them is to go to Square-nose, and the other is to either go to one of these two idiots or the bitch. So, you can see that we are taking this very seriously and so is Akainu. Which should tell you the stakes we're going to be playing for..."



OOOOOO

At first, the two groups going into the city stayed together, heading to a store set right by the docks where you could rent a local animal called Yagara Bulls. These animals looked like they had donkey-like faces mixed with that of a seahorse, with S-shaped necks and bodies that flowed back parallel to the top of the ocean, with four flippers propelling them forwards.

They were apparently necessary to get around the island at any speed, since most of the city's roads were waterways. But with Chopper able to speak directly to the animals, it was easy to choose which ones.

Nami patted the Yagara on its head, then as Chopper directed, scratching it under his chin, smiling tenderly. For just a moment, as Zoro watched, he thought the Yagara's eyes turned into hearts like Sanji's occasionally did, and he shivered, having flashbacks of the ero-camel back in the desert kingdom who Nami had names Eyelashes.

"That's disturbing, seriously disturbing," he muttered to himself, shaking his head. "So, this creature will know how to take us to the bank then?"

Before the elderly man who ran the shop could reply, the creature neighed like a horse and moved over to take up one of the cards nearby, sliding under it so that the boat rested entirely on the Yagara's back, neighing again to Chopper. "He says he's ready to go. All he wants are scratches from Nami and Makino..." Chopper announced, shaking his head. "Er..."

Again, Zoro shuddered but didn't pursue things.

"Do we rent these by the day, or can we procure the services of a few for a month and get a discount?" Makino asked, patting the Yagara on the head for a moment as Sanji began to load in the large bags they were taking with them.

When he did, the owner of the establishment blinked at how low the Yagara was now riding in the water. "My word, that looks heavy."

"Ah, that's becauuubhgh!" Chopper mumbled as Nami clapped a hand over the reindeer Zoan's mouth.

"Chopper~ I know you weren't just about to blurt out about our gold to a complete stranger, right~?" Nami whispered, her tone a singsong, but for some reason, Chopper felt he was in the presence of a predator ready to tear him apart should he do or say the wrong thing.

Thankfully the wild shaking seemed to be enough, and Nami turned away, smiling politely at the local. "You didn't answer Makino's question."

*Nami's so scary, Nami's so scary!* Chopper trembled.

"I'd recommend you wait until you make a deal with the Galley-La company first," the owner of the rental place answered, pouting slightly at not having his curiosity sated. "But if you're able to, then yes, you can rent a specific animal for as long as a week and only pay for four days out of seven. So long as you're able to feed it and everything else anyway."

"Ah, ah, I can help with that," Chopper recovered enough to stammer then as the Yagara nudged him, he laughed, even though he kept one eye on Nami, ready to bolt at the first sign of shark-like teeth. "We'll take good care of them."

"Indeed," Sanji said with a smirk. "We're getting used to taking care of strange people and creatures."

The rest of the crew laughed, while back on the Resolve, the spirit of the ship scowled. "Why do I feel as if I just got insulted?"

Laki stretched as she sat down in the small boat's forwardmost chair, with Chopper standing on the prow, ready to direct the Yagara. "This should be fun! This'll only be the second island outside of Skypiea that I've ever been on. And remember Sanji, whatever else we're doing, I want some clothing." She pulled at the shirt she was wearing, shaking her head.

The Shandian had taken to wearing portions of Nami and Robin's clothing since coming aboard, glad to have so many different types of clothing. But she didn't exactly have the same build as either of those two. The shirt was far too loose, and the pants far too tight in odd places.

Sanji bowed grandly towards her before hopping in himself. "But of course, milady. Your **needs** are paramount in my mind."

"Heh, just keep it in mind," Laki chuckled, although she noted that that had actually been a very good line. *No wonder he was able to get with that Conis girl. I'd bet she was just bowled over by his attitude.*

The second group took a little longer to get ready since Nami wanted to buy a newspaper and was shocked at how much it cost. "That's the same price as my subscription, for one measly newspaper!"

"I know, Miss. But apparently, someone on an island somewhere in the Grand Line killed several of the news albatross. Big News hasn't yet been able to shift any of their other birds to cover the area," the local answered. "We're lucky to have printing presses enough to spread

them around ourselves, but they are still expensive. Buying our local news is much less expensive, only two beli.”

“Gahhh.... Fine. Give me a copy of the local then.”

“Nami...” Makino shook her head at her young friend’s skinflint attitude. “I’ll buy one of the international news, please.”

“Ugh, can you believe that?” Nami grumbled as she got into the boat, tucking the paper underneath her rear.

“Hmm, I wonder who was silly enough to kill the albatross. Some pirate for certain, but why?” Makino murmured, looking at the headlines. “Hmm, says here another rookie is making a name for himself, Eustass Kid. Rather a brutal fellow from this picture.”

Zoro grunted at that but kept a wary eye out, the bundles of gold and jewels next to him, his swords at his side. But even the swordsman was looking around them, taking in the sights. This segment of the city was full of new and old houses, small three or four-story affairs for the most part, with colorful pendants and flags fluttering between different streets. There were a lot of people moving about, some of them wearing masks and long, checkered cloaks. The others seemed to be locals, old and young, going about their business. And several other Yagaras were moving around as well.

They waited at a stop for another Yagara to pass ahead of them, then continued on before stopping again. There, a man on the third floor of a house above them shouted, “Oh, beautiful ladies, let me sing your praises!”

A second later, another man shouted, “Oh my! Please let me paint you, my orange-haired goddess!”

“Whaaa...” Nami said, shaking her head, a sweatdrop on her face.

“Oy, you old bastard, what did I tell you I’d do if I found you flirting with young things again, huh?” Shouted a voice behind the man on the third floor. He yelped and then disappeared from sight, to be replaced by the face of a jolly-looking, if a somewhat annoyed middle-aged woman. “Don’t mind them dears, the men around here are always so passionate, but you’ll learn that all they do is spout off like that, no substance the lot of them. If they had substance, they’d be working at Galley-La.”

Every man within hearing cringed, grasping at their chests as if dealt a mortal wound, though a few were laughing as they did.

Waving back understanding at the woman as their Yagara started to move again, Nami shook her head. "I think this is one of the friendliest islands I've ever seen and I've seen a fair number."

"Indeed." Makino smiled happily, waving at the man who had said she he wanted to paint them, wondering idly if he was serious despite what the woman said. *A portrait sent to Shanks might be an amusing thing to do. Along with the line, 'I'm coming for you!'* she thought, snorting in laughter at the idea.

"Don't let your guard down," Zoro said, coming out of his meditation and looking at the two women. "Remember, this place also caters to pirates. Stands to reason that they might have their own underground too."

The women both nodded seriously at that, and the trip continued. Soon they came to a large bank, with its own water elevator, where the Yagara entered quickly, twisting around inside to allow his burden to bump up against the far end. The door closed, and there was a bubbling sort of noise, and the water shot them up words in the tunnel, causing Nami and Makino to both to whoop in delight and even Zoro to smile faintly.

Up top, the bank had a small dock of its own, where the Yagara backed into. To one side, a door led into the bank, which opened as the Yagara's boat bumped against the back of the dock. In the doorway stood a middle-aged man, thin, with a thin mustache and a monocle in one eye. "Greetings pirates, as you have come through the main entrance, can I hope that you are not here to attempt anything violent?"

"We're not here for violence unless someone else starts it," Zoro answered, taking charge as the first mate. "We're here for an assessment."

The man nodded as if he did this every day and gestured them to follow him. "Please, come this way. Have no fear about your Yagara. If you are within our establishment for longer than an hour, we will see to feeding him. And I have to say that I am happy that you came to us directly, instead of heading on to try to make an agreement with the Galley-La company first. Galley-La company is fair-minded, but if you don't pay what their work is proven, they will take your ship as recompense and capture you for any bounty you might have."

"Shipwrights able to beat up on pirates?" Zoro questioned, interest flaring in him.

The man smiled proudly. "Exactly. All of Water 7 is proud of our shipbuilders, and every one of them is both a magnificent shipwright and a strong fighter. That is why you do not see a strong Marine presence here. We see to our own defenses."

"I like that too," Nami murmured, as Zoro hefted all of the bags onto his arms before moving after the women into the bank. "The last thing we need to is have more marine-type trouble."

The man quickly led them through the main area up to a smaller office. There he gestured them all onto one side of a two-sofa set, asking politely if they could please show him what they wanted an assessment on. A second later, his eyes bulged, and his monocle fell from his eyes as Zoro opened the large bundles onto the table, revealing the gold and jewels that they were selling here.

“Oh, my word! I might need more hands for this,” the man whispered, scrambling for his monocle.

“We’ll help,” Nami chirped, hands already moving into the pile, her face flushed a bit at the sight and feel of their gold. “We’ll put the actual gold coins to one side, and the jewels here, and...”

Makino also moved to help. Zoro left them to it, moving to where he could watch both the door and the windows to one side, resting his hands on his swords. As two more bank workers came in, Zoro shook his head. This was going to take a while, he could already tell.

**OOOOOOO**

Laki smiled, standing up and posing for a man who had just shouted at her, laughing as Sanji hopped out of the small boat, lashing out with a kick not against the man but against the windowpane, slamming it shut into the man’s face. “Deny! You smarmy bastard, Laki’s beauty is not to be wasted on the eyes of such as you!”

“Oh, come on, cooky!” Laki chuckled, shaking her head. “You can’t really complain about the locals when you’re acting just about the same whenever you see a pretty lady. In fact, are you certain you weren’t from here originally?”

Sanji pouted, but the logic of her argument seemed to sway him for a moment until he saw a food stall run by a somewhat pretty young woman. He instantly hopped out of the boat, bowing grandly over the woman’s stall. “Miss, could you please allow me to peruse your wares for a few moments and perhaps give me a moment of your time...”

The woman astonishingly didn’t take any umbrage. She simply smirked at him and pushed at his face as he got a little too close. “You’ll fit right in here,” she said dryly.

“A little too well frankly,” Laki added from behind before asking if she knew where Laki could find some clothing stores.

The woman replied quickly, still pushing Sanji away and the group was on their way. But at one point, the Yagara stopped, sniffing the air. Before Chopper could ask what was wrong, the Yagara raced down the street, heading towards a single stall at the far end.

There it slammed to a halt so abruptly that all three of his passengers were drenched with water. Chopper yelped as he was sent right off the prow and over the Yagara's head, bouncing right up until he smacked into the stall. "Gah, wh, what was that about!?"

The man manning the stall laughed, shaking his head. "Hahaha, not a day goes by without a seahorse smelling my wares and going a little crazy. It's always fun to see the reaction of his or her passengers, though." He held out what looked like some kind of water-bathed meat on a stick. "This is what he's after, Mizu Mizu Meat."

The meat looked incredibly soft to Laki's eyes, and though they had eaten before they left the ship, all three pirates decided to buy one with Chopper sharing his with the creature. "Oh, my word! It really is soft," Laki gasped.

"Indeed. How do you make it, and what kind of beast does it come from?" Sanji plied the man with questions. But eventually, Laki was able to pull man and Yagara away and they were off once more.

Soon after, Laki smiled happily as she entered the clothing store, already eager to try things out. "You two go shopping. I'll be fine here..." she began.

But Sanji interrupted her quickly. "Not at all, Laki-chan. We will be staying together, the captain so ordered it. Besides," he smiled and winked, "don't you think you would like a man's opinion on what you're buying?"

"I honestly don't think I'd be missing out on much there, Sanji," Laki drawled. But then she sighed and grabbed up a blouse and a skirt that would come down to just below her knees. With that, she frowned and then picked out a few leggings. The sheer amount of different clothing around her was startling even after several weeks of having access to Nami and Robin's repertoire. And Laki didn't honestly know what her own style would be like now that she had access to so much. "...Maybe, maybe I do need another opinion Sanji..." she muttered, scratching at her hair thoughtfully. "I don't suppose you know anything about clothing styles or anything, do you?"

"Madame, I will be delighted to help," Sanji enthused, his eyes turning into hearts. Seeing that, Laki groaned, wondering if she really understood what she was getting into here.

At the same time, Chopper shook his head and moved over to a nearby chair, leaning back in it and pulling out a book he'd been able to buy earlier.

OOOOOO

Hours later, the bank manager and his fellows had finally finished tallying up the pirates' somewhat ill-gotten gains, mumbling and muttering to one another as they did so. After hasty consultation, the manager smiled at the ladies across from him. However, before he could speak, Makino began starting the proceedings with all the speed of a martial artist taking the initiative in a match. "So, now that you have looked it over, I believe that a good starting price for the jewels alone would be around two hundred million. Adding in the gold we come to... let us start at five hundred million."

The man gasped, shaking and shivering for a moment with them, but Makino could tell it was an act. "Surely you jest! Some of these are not exactly well-made pieces in comparison to modern works. The pieces are far too grandiose for the modern style. Further, the gold coins might well have some added value to collectors, but as it is..."

"I'm not talking about reselling the pieces of jewelry as is," Makino replied firmly. "I am talking about the base value of the material. Both for the jewels and the gold."

Nami leaned in, her eyes almost feral as she tapped her hand very lightly down on the pile of jewelry and other things in the center of the large table. "This is pure gold," she said, emphasizing the words with a tap. "Undiluted and perfect. That means it is extremely valuable, and that value is not determined by style or currency," she mimicked the word back at the manager. "I fully agree with my companion. Five hundred million, even six hundred million is a pretty good starting price."

"Madam, I could buy most of this for less than more than two hundred million at most," the manager began.

"And further, perhaps we should introduce our first mate," Nami continued, speaking over him. "This is Roronoa Zoro. He has a bounty of eighty-five million which he earned by massacring a group of several hundred bounty hunters and helping our captain, Monkey D. Luffy, defeat a Shichibukai." That was an oversimplification, but a good one, in her mind. "So please think about how pirates such as that who think they have been cheated would react?"

The manager looked over at Zoro, who glowered back on cue and the man quailed a bit. For all his pride in the Galley-La company shipwrights, he knew that they might not take the bank's side if they thought that the pirates had a point about being cheated, regardless of the bank being an internationally accredited bank or not. But he wasn't about to back down entirely.

The haggling began at that point. The man tried to squirm out of it, tried to imply things about market fluctuations, about how some of the jewels might be fake, while others were of low quality, but the two women were not backing down.

Between Nami's brute force approach and Makino's voice of sweet reason and their haggling skills, the manager stood no chance. He was only able to talk them down to four point

three hundred million rather than the initial five hundred million, and even that was because they agreed with him that dumping all of that gold all at once into a market was not a good idea.

Soon, they were on their way once more, the Yagara moving up and through into the raised portion of the city. And the instant they were away from the bank, Nami instantly lost it, grabbing up bushels of the cash large bags of luggage they had been given to keep it in. She threw it up into the air, shouting out, "Oh my God! Look at all this money! Look at it, beli, beli, beli, beli!!! HAahahahahh!"

"I thought you were more of a gold-loving girl than a paper girl," Zoro snorted, although he too was staring at the cash in some shock as he let his stoic mask fall away.

"Gold's better to rest on and prettier. Money is better to play with," Nami answered as if it was the most natural thing in the world, rubbing her face against a handful of the money. "Mmmm, you're going to buy momma a whole new wardrobe, aren't you, yes you are, yes you are...." she cooed.

Zoro blinked, looked over at Makino, who also looked a little faintly disturbed by that first line, and both of them resolutely shook their heads. *Nope, not going there.* "What do you think, Makino?" Zoro asked resolutely, turning away from the sight of Nami going money crazy. "Should we return to the ship and drop off the money there, or take it with us?"

Makino shook her head quickly. "We'll take it with us. No doubt the shipwrights will need some manner down payment. And remember, we're pirates. Paying upfront will put them at ease, as will seeing the fact we have enough money to do so." Then she shook her head, a faint green tint entering her face. "Besides, I don't think we want to return to the ship just yet."

Nami looked at her in question, and Makino winced. "Er, Robin had a certain...look, shall we say, in her eyes when we left."

That caused Nami to frown, putting the handfuls of beli she had playing with away, staring at Makino before she too remembered the small, almost sinful smile on Robin's face. This caused her to flush a little, rubbing at her nose. "Right um, Robin was looking a little thirsty when we left, wasn't she?"

"Exactly, and she had her eye on one particular glass of water," Makino quipped, trying to use humor to get over the somewhat icky feeling of talking about her little brother figure's sex life.

Nor was she the only one uncomfortable about this. A visibly uncomfortable Zoro looked around for anything to talk about other than Luffy and spotted just the thing. "Oy, Nami, you're losing some of the cash there."



Nami's eyes widened, and she whipped around, grabbing at the two Beli notes that had been about to flutter away on the wind. "NO! Mine, all mine, none of you will escape!"

"None of you will escape?" Makino blinked.

"Er, more importantly, that money's the crews, you know that, right?" Zoro questioned. A question that was not answered as Nami ignored him, going back to rubbing random handfuls of beli against her cheek. *Meh, still better than talking about someone else getting laid.*

Trying to shake that thought out of his head, Zoro reached forward with one of his sheathed blades, patting the Yagara in the back of the head. "Anyway, let's get some food. I'm kind of hungry. And if you find us a good place, you can eat too."

A brief stopover for food later, the Yagara began to take them up through the streets towards Dock 1, the area where Mayor Iceberg and the best of the shipwrights were. As they went, Makino and Nami, now over her earlier beli overdose, had begun to talk about the news. It turned out that there were several other rookie pirates making names for themselves in Paradise right now, and some of them had bounties almost as large as Luffy's.

Eustass Kidd. A pirate of the more violent school apparently, whose bounty was the closest to Luffy's at a hundred and twenty million. He was followed by Scratchmen Apoo and Trafalgar Law. Both of them had pictures in the papers, along with a female pirate named Big Eater Bonney and Capone Bege. Although the only one who had anyone else on the crew to have a bounty was Eustass. The fact, many of the Straw Hats had bounties, meant that they were still ahead.

When he said this, Makino and Nami looked at Zoro as if he had lost his mind. "Only you meatheads think like that," they drawled as one, causing him to scoff and look away.

But soon, Zoro stopped paying attention to the discussion, instead looking around them thoughtfully. The streets in this area had widened significantly from the area they had first passed through before getting to the elevator that took them up to the bank. But for some reason, Zoro's instincts were flaring, telling him something was off.

A series of waterfalls and water elevators later, Nami had gone back to running her fingers over the bills of beli. Beside her, Makino was seriously wondering if maybe they should seek therapy for the younger girl when they passed underneath the bridge.

As they did, ropes fell down towards them, and men down towards the rented boat, weapons in hand.

One of them landed near Nami, threatening her with a sword, while three more landed, on the front of the boat, one moving to threaten Makino, the other moving to attack Zoro. "Hahaha, sorry pirates, but around here, you're just prey to the Franky FamilyYYYY!!!"

The man barely touched down on the boat before Zoro's sheathed blades took him in the center of the chest, hurling him backward into his fellow and sending them both into the water. "The weak should know not to grab the attention of the strong."

For her part, Makino pulled out a gun and shot the last one who had attacked the back of the boat. They were blunt seed bullets from Skypiea, not real ones, but they still stung when they slammed into your forehead and the shots dumped the man over the side instantly.

This left their leader, who'd grabbed at Nami, but her elbow took him in the balls as she shouted out, "No one tries to takes my gold and lives!"

The man screamed in pain and then more pain as his lowering head met Nami's rising knee as she leaped up from her seat. This was followed by a mule kick that hurled him off of the ship to slam into the side of the canal, where he slid slowly into the water, unconscious.

"Right, no more losing myself to money madness," Nami grumbled as they passed out from beneath the bridge and into the sunlight again.

"Thank you," Makino muttered, shaking her head, while Zoro snorted, pushing the gold under his legs and Makino's.

They soon were on the topmost level. Here the buildings rose up high all around them, at least seven stories higher than the canal they were in. Some had signs shouting they were hotels, others a few local banks, smaller than the one they had dealt with, two others had signs advertising they were casinos. Here too many other tributaries were merging into the canal they were already in.

From one of these side streets came another boat carrying eight more thieves, all of whom wore the same colors of black and pink as the first group. They were moving faster than their own, much faster, and a second later, as the Yagara pulling it twisted to swim alongside the one pulling the Straw Hats, several of the thieves attempted to attack them, leaping out over the intervening water. "Give us the money and you won'TTTT!!!"

"12 Pound Air Cannon!" Zoro grumbled, using one of his still sheathed blades to create a wave of air rather than a cutting attack. *God, these people are so weak I have to come up with weak-ass attacks just for them.* The blast of air grabbed at the thieves, hurling them away. The next second Zoro, performed an I-Ai strike, slicing the ship they had come from in half, leaving the front of it to continue on its way pulled by the speedy Yagara and the rest of them flailing about in the water.

"Are thieves really that much of a problem, or is it just that Nami put a particularly large target on her back and she was playing with that money so much?" Makino muttered.

"Probably that, yeah," Zoro answered with a snort.

Nami glared at Zoro. "Are you saying this is my fault?"

She wilted as both of them said, 'Yes.' "Ugh, all right, I'll admit it is my fault." Then Nami started to wave her arms to either side. "But can you blame me? I scrimped and scrounged and lied and stole and did almost everything I could for years to raise enough money to buy my town from Arlong-aho. Now I have several times that much money at my fingertips! That's just amazing!"

"I understand," Makino soothed, reaching forward to pat the other woman on the head, causing Nami to scowl at being treated like a child. Makino continued on, still amused. "But that doesn't mean you should lose all of your common sense."

Nami sighed but nodded, acknowledging that it was her fault and then thanked Zoro for the help. She then pulled out the parts of her staff, connected them together, and resolutely leaned it against her shoulder, staring out all around her.

Makino smiled at that, and when next trouble arose, it was Nami who repelled it first. Once more, another ship attempted to pull up alongside this time while several other thieves were trying to shoot at them with guns from the other side. Nami instantly blocked the bullets, shouting out, Dial Staff, Iron Wall!"

With a few clicks of her fingers over the staff's central portion, Iron cloud boiled out, rapidly forming into a wall. Unlock the Seastone-infused Island cloud, the Iron Cloud could survive on the blue Sea for short amounts of time.

The attackers gaped at the sudden wall of steel-colored cloud that appeared in front of them, blocking their musket balls. The wall didn't last for long afterward, Nami having to retract the iron Cloud back into the Dial, but it was long enough for Zoro to deal with their fellows. Then, as the wall fell, Makino was there. In her hands were two pistols and she smiled wryly at their attackers.

Nami was also there, her staff now in two pieces, each piece sending up hot and cold balls into the air, where it condensed into a cloud, while she posed, smiling winsomely at the attackers. The combination of the wholesome and kind-looking Makino and the sexy, bikini-clad Nami caused every attacker to blush, staring. By which time, it was all over. "Sorry, boys, but the third time is not your charm. Better try your luck with some other pirates, hmm? Lightning Storm!"

From the cloud above them, lightning flashed down. Simultaneously, Makino started to simply shoot them, her seed bullets slamming into forehead or hand, forcing them to drop weapons or just fall back. In contrast, Nami's lightning was more indiscriminate.

By the time the Yagara had pulled their boat away, both attacker's boats were so much flotsam and the Straw Hat Pirates continued on their way. "Nice, Nami. That weapon of yours is nasty."

"Hehehe, you haven't seen all of its features yet," Nami caroled.

Behind the ship, one of the attackers pulled himself up to a small walk path next to the canal, gasping as he leaned down to grab up some of the others. "Damn it! Come on, we're getting nowhere with this lot. Let's see if we can find something on their ship. Or can at least dismantle it out of revenge. They'll regret messing with the Franky Family!"

Several streets later, after passing through quite a bit of traffic, the trio of pirates began to see the entrance to Dock 1 ahead of them and thought they were home free. But Water 7 had one more person to drop on them.

High above them, a window broke as a voice shouted, "Stop him, Paulie is trying to run out on his debts again!"

As the trio of pirates turned their attention up to the noise, several knots at the end of long ropes appeared in midair, having apparently been what shattered the window, causing Zoro's eyes to narrow slightly. "Rope combat? Huh. Never seen that before."

Seconds later, the man wielding them followed the ropes out into the air. He was a blonde man with a scruffy face wearing a blue worker jacket and jeans and a yellow shirt with a white target sign in the front. He fell towards the pirates, landing easily on their boat. The man, apparently named Paulie, turned and shouted out, "Thank you for your fine hospitality of casino gentlemen. I will be sure to visit your establishment again when I have money."

Paulie then looked around at the fellows whose boat he had landed on, smiling politely at them and bowing his head in apology. "Apologies for this, I'm just passing..." Paulie stared at Nami first, then Makino and the two women watched in confusion as his face was suddenly suffused with red as he shouted, "Indecent! Why don't you put on a shirt, woman! And you, my god, why are you wearing a skirt that's so short!?"

Nami shook her head, gesturing down at herself. She was wearing her normal clothing style on a summer or spring island, which consisted of a bikini top paired with long, body-hugging jeans or a skirt. Today, she had opted for the short jeans. "This is the fashion, you prude. If you don't like it, don't look so hard."

"I'm rather proud of my body, thank you," Makino quipped, leaning back and leaving her legs crossed. Unlike her young companion, Makino had put on a skirt and blouse combo. The blouse was a button-down green and cream-colored number, which should have looked almost blasé compared to Nami, save for the body underneath. And the skirt was a decent

length too, a frilly skirt that fell to just above her knees. But the skirt had ridden up her thighs as she sat there, with her legs cross and placed on the back of the chair in front of her.

Paulie stammered, shaking his head, "So indecent!"

Zoro rolled his eyes and kicked out lightly, sending the man stumbling. "For someone who you just use our boats to escape from the casino debt, you're awfully pushy, man."

The other man grumbled a bit at that but subsided, looking at them all inquisitively. Then Paulie looked at the bags, and his eyes widened in surprise as he recognized them. His hands, almost without conscious volition, moved towards them, but Nami's staff slammed down, right in front of his fingers, her voice like sweet poison and her smile dark. "You touch, you die."

Gulping, Paulie pulled his hands away. A second later, he took out a cigar, taking a deep puff of it as he looked back at Zoro, trying hard not to look at the two sexy women with their indecent outfits. "Um, r, right, sorry about that. Um, would you three be pirates here for some ship-work?"

Nami nodded and smiled at him much more normally now. The smile and Nami's outfit caused the man's face to suffuse with red again, and Nami carefully hit a snicker as she replied. "Do you work for the Galley-La company? And is Paulie your name?"

"Y, yes," the man mumbled, shaking his head. "Er, that is, yeah, that's my name, and yeah, I work as a shipwright for Mayor Iceberg. He's the one that taught me all I know. I'm a foreman at Dock 1."

"Oh, excellent. We met an elderly woman named Kokoro, who gave us a letter of introduction for Mayor Iceberg. Do you know where he is?"

"Heh, not in his office, that's for sure. Iceberg hates being in his office any longer than he has to be. He's probably somewhere in Dock 1. I'll show you," Paulie answered, internally hoping that maybe by doing so, he'd be given the job to work with these pirates. *I need the cash. Damn my luck, can't believe I lost that last bet!*

At Zoro's nod, Paulie took over the Yagara's reins. Moments later, they passed under a last walkway before entering a large pool-like area, where several other Yagaras appeared that were milling around. But Paulie directed the Yagara past it, right up a smaller canal that led directly to a pair of giant doors with the number '1' on it. There, Paulie hopped out and gestured them to follow him as he moved towards doors, putting his hand against one. Muscles straining, he pushed it open and gestured them inside.

On the other side of the huge door was a massive construction yard. Drydocks laid out on either side of a large path leading into the distance, grates and canals on either side so that

each drydock could be filled with water at need. Everywhere the three pirates looked, construction was going on, with more than a dozen ships occupying the area. There were more than a dozen ships of all sizes, all manner of material, guns, steel frames, everything as far as any of them could see.

Despite the amazing view, Zoro was concentrating on something nearer to them, as near the massive dock's doors, there was a band of pirates being tied up by a group of workers. Several of the shipwrights were extremely large, powerfully built men. One was an older-looking shirtless man with tattoos and massive muscles and wide shoulders, booming out a laugh as he finished tying up a few of the pirates. Another man was built more like Sanji, thinner but extremely fit, wearing a pair of sunglasses and having a black mustache and goatee.

Two more men were much more interesting to Zoro. One was a slightly taller, slightly better-built man than the one with the sunglasses. He had a muscle t-shirt on paired with worker's pants, a very short beard, and fluffy black hair and eyes. His face was impassive, almost completely expressionless under a hat, and he had a small bird sitting on his shoulder.

Nearby, another man watched the others dealing with the pirates. He was an equally tall man and was dressed the most like a traditional shipwright of all of them. His face seemed to remind Zoro of a series of books that Kuina had used to teach him how to read, bar the massive, long square nose that dominated his face.

Nami also stopped looking at the work going on to concentrate on the nearer view. But in her case, she was more interested in the older man who wore a good, pinstriped suit rather than worker's clothes standing among the rest of the dock workers. He had light blue hair, going to gray around his temples, a thin, serious face, and, for some reason, a mouse in the breast pocket of his suit.

Looking at him, Nami knew that this man was Iceberg without the need for Paulie's waving introduction. Instead, as Paulie moved forward to the group of Galley-La company workers, Nami and Makino looked at one another, then whispered as one, "I am so glad that Sanji isn't here," before giggling.

The reason for this was the young blonde woman standing next to Iceberg. She looked around Nami's age, maybe a bit older. The woman, dressed in what Nami and Makino could only think of as a sexy secretary look, with her hair done up in a severe bun that only served to emphasize her pretty face and the arch of her neck. She also wore glasses and gloves and was currently carrying a clipboard.

The group had looked up as the door opened, and as Paulie walked forward, a few of the men laughed at the sight of him. "What's the matter, did you run out of money again at the casino, Paulie?" bellowed the large, shirtless man.

“Shut up, Tilestone!” Paulie barked back. “It was only a momentary thing. My luck’ll return eventually.” With that said, the rope wielder moved over to one of them, nudging the man with sunglasses in the side. “But hey, Peepley you mind if I borrow some money? Only, I don’t think I’ll be able to go home without running into those casino guys if I can’t at least send them some money.”

It wasn’t the man with the glasses that answered, though. Instead, the answer came from the pigeon on the other black-haired man’s shoulder. “Furufuo, you’d only gamble it away again immediately.”

“Gah, you know that I hate you pigeon bastard! Besides, I wasn’t even asking you, Lucci.”

The man with the pigeon shook his head, holding up his arms in an X as the bird answered without any seeming communication between them. “Furufuo, I’m not bailing you out again, Paulie. If we keep doing that, you’ll never learn.”

Makino and Nami blinked, staring in surprise at the ventriloquism act, which seemed to be a normal thing. Zoro also kept his eyes firmly on the man, but his gaze wasn’t nearly as impressed. Instead, it was wary. Indeed, Makino suddenly realized that his hand had fallen down onto the hilts of his three blades as he looked at the man.

“What’s wrong?” she whispered, turning away from the ongoing drama as the woman also got involved, as Paulie shouted at her about how short her skirt was. *Not that I disagree with that comment. It’s certainly short and quite form-fitting too.*

“One thing that Luffy and I have been working on is being able to feel out, call it the fighting spirit of a person. It’s the starting phase of Kenbunshoku, or at least Luffy’s personal version of it. That man? He’s strong, at least twice, maybe as much as three times as strong as any of the others here.” Zoro whispered, keeping an eye on them and on Nami and Makino, both of whom were carrying two of the travel cases the bank had given them.

Makino shrugged her shoulders. “Remember what we were told about these Galley-La shipbuilders. They are as much a fighting force for this island as they are dock workers. It makes sense that they are strong.”

“Maybe,” Zoro grumbled. “That doesn’t mean that I am going to trust them.”

She shrugged her shoulders, and then moved forward to join Nami, as she followed Paulie over to the others.

As she got closer, Nami smiled at them, concentrating on the man in the suit. “Would you be Iceberg? We were told that you are the greatest shipwright on the island and the mayor

too. I'm Nami, of the Straw Hat Pirates. We were given a letter of introduction to you by, Kokoro. We met her and Chimney at the station."

Iceberg nodded, stroked with one hand finger as he looked back at Nami, nodding his head. "I am indeed Iceberg. You say you have a letter of introduction?" When Nami handed the letter over, Iceberg took an instant to read it before tearing it into pieces.

"Whha..." Nami stumbled, concerned for a second.

"Mah, I just objected to the kiss mark. I'm fully willing to do business with you, I suppose." Iceberg chuckled, then gestured to one side to the blonde woman. "Ah, and this is my secretary, Kalifa."

Kalifa stared back at the older, taller man, one hand rising to push her glasses further against her eyes. "Iceberg-san, that is sexual harassment."

"So harsh! Just saying your name?" Iceberg exclaimed.

"Sexual harassment," Kalifa announced once more.

"So harsh!"

Makino snorted, examining the woman from head to toe. There was just something fake about this woman. "Seeing you dressed like that, methinks the lady protests too much. That, or is just in denial."

The secretary looked at her in some shock and some anger, her eyes widening behind her glasses. "I assure you I am not!" She shot back in an even frostier tone. "It is simply that as a woman among all of these men, I must keep control of them at all times."

"Again, that makes me think you're just protesting too much. Women don't need to cry wolf to keep coworkers in line," Makino retorted. "A more nuanced approach would work better, as could the idea of, I don't know, treating them kindly but then smacking them down when they honestly flirt with you. Shouting sexual harassment, again when you are dressed in a short skirt and tight blouse, just makes you seem incredibly repressed."

The workers around them were now treated to the sight of Kalifa actually losing her cool a bit. A foot stamped down as she launched herself forward, her other leg kicking out. "You insolent pirate, how dare you say such things!"

Before anyone else could do anything, Iceberg stood in her way, only to be kicked a few times himself. This caused Kalifa to stop, as Iceberg slowly pushed himself to his feet. "Mah, mah Kalifa. The pirate Miss doesn't know you or how we have fun."



“Iceberg-san, that’s sexual harassment,” Kalifa muttered, but she calmed down as laughter abounded all around them, the workers laughing at Iceberg’s misfortune and Kalifa’s control slipping.

“Gah, so harsh!” Iceberg gasped, waving Makino to silence, not wanting the catfight to continue. *Not without a mud pit and bikinis at least*, the older man thought, holding back a nosebleed with difficulty.

“Well, um, as interesting as this was, erm we did have some actual work to discuss with you,” Nami interjected, sweatdropping as Iceberg stared over their heads, his mind on something else entirely.

“Ah, right. Kalifa, what do we know about the Straw Hat Pirates? What resources do they have?”

The man nodded and then looked over at Kalifa. “Kalifa, what information do you have on these pirates?”

“Yes, Straw Hat Pirates, led by monkey D. Luffy, bounty, a hundred and thirty million. First mate, Pirate Hunter Zoro, bounty eighty-five million. Other bounties included Devil Child Nico Robin, seventy-nine million, Cook Sanji, eighty million. Unknown female pirate, ten million. According to Mr. Greco, the Straw Hats exchanged gold for beli in exceeding four hundred million. Their ship, the Resolve, is docked in the large-ship berths and is a frigate class, formerly a marine vessel.”

Something in Iceberg’s face changed a moment for as he heard Nico Robin’s name, but no one caught it, the expression covered by his sudden surprise, as his mouse seemed to almost escape skittering down his chest. He picked it up again and put it in his pocket, nodding his head faintly as he heard about the resources the bank had reported. “In that case, I suppose they do have the money to pay. I believe that we can then come to an agreement, but what manner of service are you asking for?”

While the pirates were a little surprised that the locals knew about them, Nami and Makino overcame that and instantly began to negotiate. “We actually wish to do two things. One, we want to see if we can recruit someone into our crew to be a shipwright for us. Up to this point, we have gotten by with our captain’s skills in carpentry, but going forward, having a dedicated shipwright is a necessity.”

One of the other men there muttered, “You should already have had a shipwright in your crew! On the Grand Line, it’s as necessary as having a ship’s doctor.”

“Yes, well, our captain has never been one to plan ahead. We actually picked up our ship’s doctor once we got to the Grand Line,” Nami drawled. “Before that, I was doing what I could, and my medical knowledge was limited at best.”

“Your captain certainly sounds amusing, but why isn’t he here? Surely if you are signing a contract, then he should be here to speak for your crew,” Iceberg questioned.

“He decided to stay back on the ship, which is partially in keeping with our requests,” Makino spoke up once more, knowing this was going to be a hard sell. “You see, while we want our ship renovated, we have some very specific requirements and a lot of resources of our own that we want you to work with. We have among our crew a weapons designer who has a very specific skillset. Laki will be involved in the weapons side of things. Further, we want someone willing to work with us, let some of us take part in the shipbuilding and keep our secrets. And... we wish you, Mayor Iceberg, to be the one doing the work.”

“You’re asking for a lot,” Iceberg shook his head as his foremen protested this. “We normally don’t do that kind of thing. And I certainly don’t work on ships myself any longer. As Mayor, I’m past that.”

Before Makino could reply, he looked speculatively at the bag that Zoro was carrying and the large pieces of luggage that Makino and Nami were carrying, recognizing them for what they were. He had a few projects that liquid capital would be a major boon to. “And the rest of it isn’t exactly usual either. Still, I can assure you that our foremen are the best shipwrights in the world. If we can come to an agreement, they can do anything you want them to, so long as it isn’t literally impossible, anyway.”

Zoro spoke up now, interjecting into the conversation for the first time. “Our captain wants the Resolve to become as famous and as powerful as the Oro Jackson, Gold Roger’s ship. He got it into his head that means he should have someone related to Tom’s Workers build it.”

At that name, Iceberg’s eyes widened, as did the faces of the other shipwrights. But Iceberg shook his head. “I’m afraid he’ll have to be satisfied with my own apprentices, Paulie, Tilestone, Rob, Peepley and Kaku. They are the best I could train, and I don’t have the time to work on a single project any longer.”

Then he changed the subject back to what was most important to him, pushing aside memories of Tom, Cutty and the rest, as well as the smile of pride on Tom’s face when he told them about building the Oro Jackson, the ship that had seen the entire world. *No, such things are behind me now. I have my own dreams to pursue.* “Exactly how much of that money are you willing to spend?”

“Without asking my captain about it I can say we’d be willing to spend up to three hundred million beli. Anything more, Luffy will have to sign off on, especially if you’re not willing to do the work yourself, Iceberg-san. That is a rather large disappointment,” Makino admitted.

“Very well...” Iceberg hummed thoughtfully, trying hard not to let a smile appear on his face. “I think we can come to an agreement. We have a type of contract already that includes

some of the points you mentioned, so we can start from there. As to specifics, we will need to see what damages your ship has taken and what material you're talking about as well." With that, Iceberg turned to one of his workers, asking, "Kaku, could you go and assess their ship?"

As Kaku nodded, Zoro reflected the man's nose really was long, and if not for the fact that that guy was the second strongest one there, Zoro might well have dismissed him. "Would you like one of us to show you our ship?" Zoro asked although he'd probably have to send Nami along to do it. Nami was the weaker of the two, but Makino was the bursar and had to stay to help create the agreement.

"No need. I can see the docks we use for large pirate ships from here. And once I get some altitude, I'll be able to pick out your flag among the rest."

The man leaped upwards, landing on the outer wall and then performed what Zoro called a Luffy move in his mind. He leaped off, his hands and legs outstretched as he plummeted downwards.

Iceberg watched the three pirates, but none of them evinced any surprise or even interest in Kaku's antics, yet Kalifa still explained, "Kaku is one of our finest shipwrights, and is the best at house-calls and diagnostics. He will be one of the men working on your ship."

Watching this, Makino sweatdropped. *I do hope that Luffy and Robin have concluded their activities. I really don't want to know what Luffy would do if someone walked in on them while they were, ahem, getting it on.*

Iceberg's voice brought her back to her own surroundings. "Now, let me show you my way to my office, and we can work out the details. He paused as he did so, gesturing them to the side of the wall and a much smaller door set there, which would eventually lead them down into the mayor's office, which was but a segment of the Galley-La company. "As he led the way, he kept his voice mild as he asked, "By the way, is it true you have Nico Robin among your crew?"

"You might say that," Nami drawled, sharing a laugh with Makino before Nami went on. "And if this is about her being the 'Devil Child,' or your contacts at in the World Government having left a standing order to pass on information on her, we will take our business elsewhere."

"The truth is often much stranger than fiction, and those reports on her are the purest fiction," Makino added, with Zoro nodding firm agreement.

"No, nothing like that. It's just surprising, is all." Iceberg tried to downplay his interest as they got to his office, where he sat down, gesturing the two women into a chair. He was about to do the same to Zoro but didn't as Zoro moved to lean against the wall, watching Iceberg and the two foremen and Kalifa who had come with them.

The two foremen looked back at him but didn't say anything. Instead, they talked quietly among themselves, as they speculated on the resources aspect of what Makino had mentioned earlier.

"Now, let us talk. What you're asking for is called an NDA or a non-disclosure agreement and it is in keeping with some of our old agreements with pirates and certain segments of the World Government. However, none of those ever covered resources available on the ship themselves that would be put to its reconstruction, nor have they covered the stipulation that your crew wishes to be part of the work. That is going to be an issue, unskilled hands and all that, so what I propose is..."

OOOOOOO

### **Lemon Start:**

The moment the others had left Luffy and Robin, who had remained seated due to not wanting to show his arousal, were all over one another. Luffy pulled Robin over the table as the woman tried to stand up, and their lips crashed together hungrily, their hands lost in one another's hair, Luffy's hat being tossed aside to land on the kitchen counter as Robin sat on the table, her mouth open and her tongue dueling with Luffy's in his mouth. The arm that she had conjured had remained in place throughout this activity, and as Robin began to pull at Robin with her real hands, the conjured hand began to work at Luffy's belt buckle.

As he started to reciprocate, tugging at Robin's side-button short-sleeved shirt, a thought occurred to Luffy. Frowning, Luffy started to pull back, tapping her arms lightly, and then, when Robin didn't stop kissing him, he started to tickle her. Robin stopped, twitching away from his fingers and letting loose a breathy little laugh. Not a full-on giggle, she wasn't all that ticklish but Luffy certainly had gotten her attention.

"Resolve, could you take your personality out of whichever room we're in currently?" Luffy asked around the kitchen area.

That startled Robin, and she gasped. "Of course! This body is something like the Resolve's original physical form, which means that she sees everything! How could I have forgotten that." That thought somewhat shamed her, and a bit of Robin's ardor cooled instantly. She most decidedly did not want to emotionally scar a child, and, despite what she had done earlier, Robin was not an exhibitionist.

But Resolve spoke up as the spirit appeared, her marine personality in control, even as it made fun of the marines who had manned her. "Captain, you don't have to worry. It's nothing like I haven't seen before. I told you, I am now remembering some bits and pieces of my life when I was a Marine ship. If you think that Sandy is a pervert, you really don't want to know what kind of magazines marines read on long voyages."

Then the Klabautermann shook her head, the pirate persona taking over again. “Despite how I act sometimes, I have to remind you I’m not human. I’m nothing close to it. I’m not at all interested in your mating, except maybe in terms of making fun of you all. Still, if it makes you feel better, then I will comply. I’ll move my personality up into the crow’s nest for now.”

With that, Resolve disappeared, and Luffy kissed Robin while the archaeologist resumed her work to undress her lover, her lust returning with a vengeance as Luffy slowly ground his still-clothed cored against Robin’s panties, her skirt had ridden up her thighs to the point it was shorter than even Nami would have approved of.

The two of them had been dancing around one another too long. They had been stopped from going too far by various things for too long. Romance was fine, but at times, one just needed a good seeing to, and right now, Robin needed this. And from the feel of him and the way his eyes began to gleam as he pulled away from their kiss, Luffy did too.

However, that didn’t stop Luffy from speaking up as he pulled away slightly, ignoring his pants falling down to below his ankles. “How far are we going here? I mean, I’m... I’m...a...”

Robin tapped Luffy’s lips gently with two fingers, smiling and shaking her head. “I am not going to judge you for that Luffy, and all the way. I feel we’ve, I’ve waited long enough. One must, after all, learn on the job for things such as this...” purring the words, watching as Luffy’s eyes narrowed, his body shuddering at her tone. “You’ll learn as we go, I’m sure. After all,” she smiled wickedly, “isn’t that one of your specialties? Just think of this as another kind of wrestling match.”

Luffy grinned and then opened his mouth and took the two fingers that she had pressed against his lips into his mouth, twirling his tongue around them. Meanwhile, one arm pulled Robin against him with the other moving deftly to her bra, unlatching it with a speed that made her eyes narrow, before she pulled her fingers out of his mouth and kissed him hard, the two of them making out again, their cores rubbing and grinding against one another right there at the kitchen table.

As he remembered where they were, Luffy made a note to clean up afterward. No one would want to know they had gotten up to anything in the kitchen, after all. Although, the idea of stopping didn’t occur to Luffy despite that thought.

Indeed, that was about as far as that thought went before Luffy felt several hands tear his boxers to shreds rather than going to the trouble of asking Luffy to step back enough to remove them naturally. While Robin kept on holding Luffy around the shoulders, one of these conjured hands went to work, one of them moving up and down Luffy’s chest and stomach, moving up to pinch one of his nipples, while Robin slowly pulled away from the kiss, watching his face.

Instead of being idle, Luffy moved down to her neck, nuzzling and licking there, causing her to do the same, biting at his earlobe, which caused him to shudder once more.

The nipple pinching hadn't seemed to do much, and Robin ran her fingers down Luffy's back experimentally, then began to try and scratch his back. As strong as she was slowly becoming thanks to their training, Robin's nails would have to be made of a lot stronger stuff to scratch Luffy's skin, though.

With that failure, Robin moved one of her own normal hands down, gripped his rear before staring down between them past the twin hills of her breasts to his cock. Robin hadn't seen in in the light of day before, and once again, she breathed out a sigh of delight, shaking her head. It wasn't the biggest she had ever seen pictures of, but certainly was among the biggest Robin had ever seen in person, standing tall and proud, the shaft of it already rubbing against the folds of her pussy, which were now extremely well delineated by the wetness soaking her panties. Seeing it now, Robin giggled, a breathy little noise as two of her conjured hands, the others having disappeared when they were no longer needed, began to play with Luffy's shaft and balls.

Luffy had not been idle as Robin lost herself in her brief experiments. Instead, Luffy had been working on her neck, leaving little hickeys here and there along her collarbone, just below where they would be visible in a shirt, then moving up to Robin's ears. Their ears were an erogenous zone the two of them shared, and when he began to lick and nibble at her ear, Robin's slow, almost rhythmic hip movement ceased being slow and started to become a little bit forceful.

Then, as Robin leaned back, he had stopped, staring between them at Robin's breasts. Like Robin, he had never seen her naked body in the light of day, and the light of the moon was no real substitute for the light of day. They were as tanned as the rest of her as Luffy had noticed that night, but the sight of them was just mesmerizing, like light coffee-colored mountains Luffy literally ached to explore.

Leaning back away from Luffy as he moved down to do just that, Robin continued to use her conjured hands to work on his length, pumping it up and down, while her original hands were busy with his rear and hair. The idle thought that his hair was just a little too perfect for a man entered her mind then as Robin wound her fingers through it, luxuriating at the touch, but there would be time enough to tease him on that score. Right now, though, she was a little busy.

And Luffy's mouth found one of her nipples, and Robin threw her head back and moaned so loud that it might well have been heard on the deck if anyone was around. "OOHHhhh ...."

One of Luffy's hands moved from around Robin to up between them, massaging the other breast, his fingers moving languidly, rubbing at her dark red, almost maroon-colored,

nipple one moment, then hefting her breasts the next, before squeezing. They then moved along the side of the breast, trailing the fingers along just lightly enough to cause a feeling of sensation, light as a feather, all while Luffy continued to lick and kiss her other breast and nipple. When Luffy's fingers did that same feather-light touch to her nipple, Robin shuddered from head to toe, aroused and deeply impressed at how quickly Luffy was learning to read her after only a single session before this one.

Robin had been underselling Luffy's ability to read her earlier. Thanks to their night on Skypiea, Luffy already had an idea of how Robin would react. Now, every time she shuddered, every time she moaned, every time Robin's eyes fluttered, Luffy noticed a seriousness on his own face despite the fact he was still licking and kissing one of Robin's large nipples.

Just before Robin began to think that maybe she wanted Luffy to be a little more forceful, Luffy's grip on her breast tightened, and the gentle nibbling and suckling he had been giving her other nipple stopped. Instead, he began to suckle at it hard.

Robin moaned aloud again, thrusting her head back and moaning, "FUCK!!!"

In turn, Robin's conjured hands now acted almost as if they were a part of her body rather than simply a conjured tool. They squeezed and fondled Luffy's cock, the touch and flesh over steel feel of it, the pulsing, the faint veins, all fascinating Robin as she moved them up and down, up and down. Then one of them began to play with his head, coming away wet with pre-cum, which Robin used to moisten the rest of his shaft, allowing for greater speed.

Now it was Luffy's turn to start humping against her in more earnest. They ground against one another, Robin on the kitchen table, Luffy standing inside her legs, both of them now wrapped around him.

"Mmm... feels good," Luffy mumbled around the large, almost maroon-colored nipple in his mouth, his hips moving without any volition from his brain in reaction to Robin's playing with him.

As she heard that noise, Robin slowly regained control of herself from Luffy's own ministrations and started to try to concentrate through them, even as she began to let out little yips moans as Luffy continued to play with her breasts and up to her collarbone and neck. "Eee, ee, Lu, Luffy..."

When Robin started to feel her release starting, she conjured a mouth on one of her Hana Hana No Mi created hands. With that done, Robin raised that hand up above his cock, letting the tongue out to lick at Luffy's cockhead.

Luffy's eyes flew wide, and he backed away from her breasts slightly, staring down between them in shock. In turn, Robin chuckled breathily, watching him for any distaste or disgust and seeing none. She'd tried this trick on a few of her other lovers, and only one of

them had really enjoyed it, the others thinking it creepy, hence why even after using her hands to give him a hand job before, Robin was a little wary about using her powers further.

But thankfully, instead of disgust or revulsion, Robin saw shocked delight on Luffy's face and some amused curiosity too when Luffy turned his face up to look at her. "Really?" He whispered, kissing her on the lips and then the cheek and ear, where he continued to whisper, "So, where exactly would my shaft go if you..."

"I have no idea," she murmured, stumbling over the last word as Luffy's lips found her earlobe. "I've not done that particular activity with any of my lovers before. Let's find out."

Luffy chuckled, then kissed her hard on the lips, their tongues dueling for a second in her mouth. Robin actually whimpered a bit in need when Luffy pulled back, licking the underside of her tongue as it continued to quest after his own. Then he moved down to her collarbone, eyes lighting up with a bit of challenge as he looked up at her.

She laughed throatily at that. Then, as Luffy went back to working on her breast giving her tiny aftershocks of delight and pushing her back up towards sweet release, Robin concentrated once more. A mouth appeared on her palm again and then opened wide as it started to take Luffy's head into Robin's mouth.

Instantly, Robin's own mouth felt full, and she gasped at the sensation. It was almost as if she had two sets of lips, but only one mouth, which was strange. She had never eaten with a conjured mouth before and wondered if this was what it would've been like. *Regardless, the sensation isn't unpleasant, simply unusual.*

From where he was once more nibbling and playing with her breasts, Luffy groaned, his eyes fluttering as he now leaned against Robin's breasts, shuddering at the sensation. "Holy shit! Robin I, I don't think I can..."

Even with her mouth full of the first few inches of Luffy's shaft, Robin giggled at how oddly cute Luffy sounded just then. That sensation, through Luffy over the edge, suddenly Robin's mouth filled with cum. She gulped it down, thinking it might be disgusting but having no other recourse. Yet Robin was surprised when she gulped the first load down. It was strangely tasty, tangy almost, with a hint of grape and cherry added into a meaty background flavor.

But she had to cancel out the mouth technique after a few seconds, her mouth just too full of Luffy's cum. She gulped a second, then a third load down before being able to cancel the Hana Hana no Mi reaction, panting a little, as Luffy continued to shoot into her hands and between them, coating her thighs and abs with his seed.

As Luffy leaned back and away, the two of them looked between their bodies at the goopy white covering their lower halves, and Robin shook her head in some shock. "Well, that is quite a mess."



Reaching down, Robin ran her fingers through the viscous liquid, then scooped some up and licked it off her fingers, surprised again at the flavor. "Interesting, I was right, it is somewhat tasty. So, I suppose that old wife's tale about diet affecting how your sperm tastes is accurate."

"Yeah, well, I've always tried to keep a normal diet," Luffy muttered, shaking his head. "And can I just say, that was the freaking hottest thing I've ever felt, and what you're doing right now is the freaking hottest thing I've ever seen? Two for two, Robin."

"Even with the extra arms?" Robin quipped.

"If I thought multiple limbs is going to bother me, I would never have started to be attracted to you, Robin, let alone enjoyed this or our time in Skypiea," Luffy answered bluntly before smiling and picking up a drink from nearby which had been left out earlier, and had, miracle of miracles, not been shaken off the table. It was a kind of orange lemonade, using the last of their lemonades along with some of Nami's mikans.

At first, Robin thought Luffy would offer it to her, which would've been the gentlemanly thing to do, and she actually pouted as he took a drink instead. Then he leaned forward to kiss her, and Robin's mouth opened in surprise, allowing Luffy to pass the liquid passed between them.

She giggled into his mouth, gulping the lemonade down, and then their tongues were dueling again in her mouth. *So evidently, Luffy doesn't have all that many issues with kissing my mouth after that. Good to know.*

By the time Robin became aware that she had more of a body than just her mouth, Luffy had already pulled off her panties. She looked between them in something approaching up shock again, her eyes widening. "You're already hard?"

"Meh, never went down, really," Luffy shrugged, then smirked as he tried to talk a bit like some of the men in the old hentai comics he had read back in his original life did. "I might not last long per shot, but I can keep going for a long while."

Robin shuddered, and her now revealed pussy lips pulsed with her arousal. She laid back, resting her back fully onto the table, opening her legs even wider. "Let's test that endurance," she whispered, one of her normal hands beckoning, while she concentrated, conjuring a pair on her lower legs to either side of Luffy. They then pushed Luffy forward and remained there, gripping his rear in delight, urging him on as Luffy slowly, almost torturously entered her.

Realizing he was fighting back against her hands, Robin growled. "Luffy, I'm not a virgin, and you're not going to break me if you go faster."

Luffy chuckled wanly, gritting his teeth as he continued to slowly work his length into her. "I, it isn't for you. I'm going slowly!" he grunted, shaking his head from side to side like a poleaxed box for a moment. "Jesus!" the feeling of Robin's soft, moist hole pulsing and gripping his cock like this was like nothing Luffy had ever thought it could be, so powerful a sensation that Luffy was in danger of losing control of his body again.

"Oh, is it that much better than my mouth?" Robin whispered into his ear. She had occasionally used dirty talk before this, and from the shudder that ran through Luffy's body, it seems to be doing the trick. "Well, I wouldn't want you to finish all too soon, but there's taking things slowly, and there's torturing your partner. Besides, I always pictured you as a dive into the deep end to learn how to swim sort of person."

With that, Robin lifted her hips up off the table to match Luffy's thrusts. But to her shock, Luffy put his hands on her hips, holding her still. "None of that, Robin. This is hard enough without you teasing me."

"Oh, really~?" Robin drawled before conjuring several dozen hand and mouth pairs. They started to kiss Luffy all over, trying to distract him enough to let her start to lift her hips again. But Luffy leaned down, making out with her as he shifted his hips forward another inch. Robin lost the ability to concentrate on her Hana Hana no Mi constructs for a moment.

She watched as Luffy slowly got used to the feeling of being inside her, thrusting another inch forward. Then forward again. The sensation of that and Luffy's ongoing attempts to ravage her mouth were getting to Robin too, and she began to writhe on the table, a continual moan escaping their joined mouths. But Robin needed more, **more**.

Slowly she got used to the sensations enough to push some of her concentration out. Several arms appeared on her legs, and all of them pushed at Luffy's back, pushing so abruptly that he was taken by surprise. The next instant, he was fully sheathed inside of Robin, and Luffy pulled his mouth away from hers to gasp aloud at the amount of sensation he was now feeling. "GAaaHH!!"

Her normal self-control having long since fled her, Robin shrieked, "YESSS!!!!!" as the previous sensations were suddenly doubled, throwing her over the edge for the first time that day as her entire body spasmed her back arching, her legs tightening around Luffy as her toes curled and she screamed her release, her pussy clenching around the delightful intruder.

This apparently did it for Luffy too, who abruptly pulled himself out of her, breaking her leg grip around his waist with an ease that would have startled most. The suddenly empty sensation caused Robin to shake her head and mumble, "Noooo...." under her breath, but she watched Luffy cum again, his cock almost pulsing like a cannon, blasting out gobs of white goo up onto her stomach and hitting the bottom of her breasts, coating her again in white.

The sight of that reminded Robin of things beyond her own pleasure, specifically, why Luffy had pulled out even as he lined himself up again with her drenched snatch. "Thank you for thinking about the consequences, Luffy. But I asked Chopper for some pills the day after you woke up from your fight with Aokiji. I am safe."

"You asked Chopper?" Luffy exclaimed, shock getting through his still persistent desires to resume their activity. "I can't imagine that was an easy conversation."

"It actually wasn't as embarrassing as you might think. Remember, Chopper said it himself. He's not interested in human mating rituals. He and Resolve have that in common," Robin murmured, shaking her head.

"Thank goodness for that," Luffy muttered, reaching down with her two hands and pushing his cock back down so that the head was once more lined up with Robin's quim. And thank God for a girlfriend who plans ahead. I completely forgot to think about, er, contraception. I remember hearing about something called rubbers once from one of Shanks's crew..." That was an outright lie, but it had never occurred to Luffy before to look for such. *Then again, just using condoms wouldn't be enough anyway.*

"I suppose we could have found a few if we had waited to go shopping first, but I wasn't going to let us put this off further," Robin giggled, even as she lifted her lower body up against Luffy's. "Not a chance!"

Luffy obligingly shifted his hips forward, once more beginning to piston in and out of her as Robin continued to speak, her words breathy. "And, thankfully, in my infinite wisdom, I decided to take triple the normal dose."

"A, are there any side effects," Luffy grunted, even as he began to shift his hips.

"No," Robin whispered, then Luffy was leaning down, kissing her again. The two of them then stopped talking, their mouth busy first kissing one another on the lips, then moving on to necks, faces, ears. Their hips did most of the work for a few moments, as Robin began to moan again and Luffy began to emit little grunts of his own, his body slowly getting used to sensations going through it.

But both of them were so sensitive the earlier orgasms, despite the moment of levity, that neither could last for very long. Robin hit her crescendo first, and her spasming once again pushed Luffy over the edge. And this time, he didn't pull out. Instead, he came inside of her, and that sensation, the feeling of being pumped full of his cum, made Robin's orgasm reverberate with aftershocks, the sensations redoubling within her, causing Robin to wail aloud as she thrashed underneath them.

She laid back on the set table, shaking her head in bemused wonder as Luffy slowly pulled out of her, letting the conjoined juices flow out onto the table, then drip down from the

edge of the table to the floor. And yet, despite that being the third time Luffy had cum, he was still hard!

*Oh my, I think we are going to be making up for lost time in a most magnificent way,* she thought, then Luffy's chuckle dragged her eyes up to him, and he looked down at her with love in his eyes, an emotion that caused Robin, for all their earlier activities, to blush and look away like a shy maiden.

"What can I say? You bring out the best in me. Although, I think we need to stop and clean up in here before we go any further," Luffy announced, not making any comment of how damn cute Robin looked just then.

Shaking her head, Robin just crossed her arms over her chest, conjuring up several dozen hands, which began to pass around leaning items from below the sink. "Yes, I suppose you're right on that."

Later, after cooking a meal, the two went at it again in Robin's bed. This time, it was a much slower, more tender sort of lovemaking than earlier. The frantic edge was taken off for Robin, and Luffy now had a real idea of what to expect so he could go much longer before finishing. Then, after they had finished making love in her bed, Robin suggested they take a shower. They were both very smelly at that point and Luffy instantly agreed.

One of the things added to the ship was a heat dial in the showers. The shower stall themselves were still the makeshift affairs they had been since redoing the piping was a major project and hadn't been needed on top of everything else the Skypieans had been doing to the ship. However, setting a small heat dial on one of the nozzles was easy enough.

The heated air washed over the water, warming it before it came down on the two lovers. Soon Robin backed away into the wall, delighting in the water and Luffy's touches. For his part, Luffy became lost in the feel of her skin, now wet from the water, her breasts pressing into his chest, before he pulled back slightly and leaned down, kissing at her neck. *Gods, she's fucking intoxicating!*

He then moved down her body, leaving a trail of kisses straight down her chest before kissing and nuzzling into her stomach. *Heh, I can even feel some more muscles here too. Our training's already having an effect.* Eventually, Luffy continued his journey downwards, almost making out with her pussy for a time, before he added a few fingers and sent Robin over the edge again, making the woman wonder if maybe they should break for more liquids.

As he stood up, nuzzling into Robin's shoulder, Luffy muttered, "You know, it's funny. Considering how much coffee you drink, I would've thought your..."

"I recommend you not finish that sentence, Luffy," Robin said, narrowing her eyes as she tried to glare at him through the after-effects of her orgasm and the smirk showing on her

face at how much Luffy enjoyed doing that to her. *I wonder if he has an oral fetish? He went down on me in Skypiea and again in bed before this.*

Luffy laughed but then gulped, his arousal pulsing and twitching as Robin slowly pushed him away and turned so that her chest was resting against the shower stall's innermost door. She looked over her shoulder at him, spreading her legs, and then her lower lips with one hand, her eyes beckoning.

Moments later, while Robin was delighting at the feel of Luffy's hands, one in her hair, one hand around her playing with her breasts as he started a slow, languid rhythm, Robin heard something above them. Robin had excellent hearing, and further, her head was no longer in the direct line of the showerhead above them, so she had a better hearing at the moment than Luffy. She cocked her head to one side, trying to concentrate through the sensations to conjure up several more ears up on the roof above them.

When she did that, the sound of boots above them became plain, and she frowned a little, even as before she let loose a moan, throwing her head back as Luffy began to speed up a little. "L, L, Luffy, wait! Wait! We have company."

Luffy slowed down, leaning out of the water to place his head alongside hers. "What? Are the others back?"

"I, I don't know, I just know we have company above us," Robin whimpered, shaking her head. "Let me concentrate for a bit..."

Luffy obligingly hefted her away from the wall, allowing Robin to cross her arms, concentrating fully on her Devil Fruit power despite the delightful sensations still going through her body.

### **Lemon End**

Zambai had not been having a good day. As head of the thieves in the Franky family, he was in charge of scoping out new pirates or other newcomers to Water 7. If they were rich enough to interest the Franky family, he would lead the group that would attack them. And when an informant had told him about some stupid pirates traveling through the city with millions in beli, he led a group of the family after them. That group kept on growing as the pirates proved to be both wary and really strong. The sight of a Yagara ship being cut off the Yagara and then being tossed aside like nothing was going to stay with Zambai for a long while.

Still, their ship looked interesting. While not a Shipbreaker normally, Zambai, like all the Franky Family, knew how to pick out different bits and pieces of ships to see if they were worth dismantling, and there were some things on this ship that were extremely interesting.

As they hid among the crates along the wharf, two of his family members whispered amongst themselves eagerly. "Look, it's even still got cannons, marine cannons. You know their iron is always better than normal pirate stuff."

"I'm not interested in the cannons. You're thinking too small, Kop," Zambai interrupted. "Heck, I'm no longer interested in any gold that they might still and left the board. No, what's interesting me is those things that you can sort of see set between the masts."

Kop fell silent, while Schollzo also looked ahead of them, frowning. "Huh, that is weird. What are those things? They look almost like shells stuck on polls. But they are pointing up to where the sails would be.'

"I think those are something Franky mentioned to me once. And if they have a lot of them... let's just say that would be just as amazing as the beli the weather witch was playing with," Zambai whispered back, shaking his head. "Come on, gather the others, were going to dismantle that ship."

That won him a cheer from the others, and soon over twenty-five members of the Franky family had gathered. Given how the swordsman and the two women with him had dealt with smaller groups of them before, Zambai wasn't willing to assume that they would be able to overwhelm whoever had been left behind without overwhelming numbers. *I wish I could have sent back to the House and the Ship Cutters. Still, this should be enough.*

Getting aboard the ship was oddly hard. The crew hadn't left a gangplank down for some reason, and when the Franky Family members tried to put some of their own across, the darn things kept slipping off for a bit. "Fuck it, I'll just leap over," Zambai muttered. Zambai was actually light on his feet for all his bulk, and he made the leap easy. Once aboard, he turned to the others, and they passed over the plank, following him quickly, looking around them in interest.

The ship showed the signs of combat and repair, and a lot of the wood in the deck, and one of the masts, had been replaced at one point. But seeing the stands and the shells from close up, Zambai knew he was right. They were Sky Island Dials. *Oooh, wee! Franky's gonna be pleased with these, hell yeah! Even if we missed the money, these things are a find.*

His concentration was broken as one of his men stumbled, and another fell flat on his face. The others laughed at them, and Zambai rolled his eyes. "What the hell are you idiots doing?"

Another man who moved over to help his friend up seemed to trip over a bit of the nearby rope, which seemingly coiled on its own volition around his legs. "What the!?"

Again laughter abounded as the Franky Family spread out, “That’s hilarious! You tripped over your own 2 feet. Come on, how many ships of you’ve been on, and a ship in dock moving with the waves is enough to dump you on your ass?” Schollzo whopped.

“Oh, shut up! I didn’t trip over myself. The rope tripped me,” Kop barked.

“Hah, the next thing you’ll say is the rope moved to do it,” Zambai scoffed. He gestured, sending the men this way and that on the deck. A few moved to look at the trees, another to the entrance to the aft deck captain’s quarters, while others moved to the entrance directly down into the ship. “Let’s get moving. They probably left someone behind, so be on the lookout and stick together. These damn pirates are tough.”

The group heading towards the captain’s quarters at the back were the first to reach the door and opened it before backing away slightly. “Jeez, what’s that smell?”

“Heh, it smells like a brothel almost...” Another man muttered, shaking his head. “Let’s... wait, what’s that?”

The others turned to look at what had grabbed the speaker’s attention and saw an eye watching them from the mainmast. Nor was it alone.

Suddenly, hands began to appear, grabbing at legs, then wrapping around bodies, twisting them this way and that. And from where he was leading a group down into the ship by the prow, Zachary had a moment to realize his day was about to get a lot worse. Then his world erupted in pain.

**OOOOOO**

Robin was angry. While their lovemaking hadn’t been completely interrupted, their latest round had been, and that was more than enough. She was fully prepared to clutch all of these people into oblivion, but Luffy had already pulled out, and the screams from above had apparently deadened his ardor enough that his manhood finally began to flag. Staring at it, Robin scowled, her feminine pride not liking the fact that Luffy was concentrating more on the noises above them than her naked willing and above all still aroused body.

Luffy saw the scowl and leaned over, kissing her lightly on the lips, resting his hands on either side of her face. “Sorry, love, it’s not you. I just don’t want all those deaths on our conscience, you know? Not for interrupting our fourth time going. If they’d interrupted us off the bat, all bets be off.”

He winked at Robin, then deliberately traced around her nipple with one finger, pushing his hand up between her arms to do it, then down her stomach, and below, making a little circle in the tiny thatch of brown hair above her pussy. “Besides, once we can add

soundproofing to our room during the renovations and then we won't have to sneak around any longer."

"Now that is a plan I can get behind," Robin murmured. *Oh my, I might have created a monster. That touch and his gaze are just... wow.* "I will hold them until you're up on the main deck, all right?"

Luffy nodded and turned off the water before moving out of the bathing area to grab a few towels. Despite his earlier words, though, he did not turn immediately to exit the area. Instead, he paused to wipe Robin down, as he had the after their first time in the kitchen, only this time with a large fluffy towel rather than paper towels.

"Thank you, Luffy," she murmured and then was delighted as Luffy kissed her again.

Pulling back, he whispered against her lips, "I was serious, you know. The first time we have a room that is soundproofed, I'll take up that rain check..." With that, he held the towel, did something to it Robin couldn't see above her head and then wrapped the now warm towel around her shoulders before exiting the shower area.

Coming out on the deck, Luffy watched as the men who had boarded the ship tried to fight back against Robin's long-ranged crowd clutch. One of them was even able to keep hold of his sword, and when he saw Luffy, he shouted out, "You don't know who you're messing with! were the Franky..."

Yet Luffy had stopped listening and brought a chop down on the back of the man's neck, knocking the man out and tossing them onto the pile.

Several of the pirates were now contorted so that Luffy knew that Robin was still but a thought away from snapping their spines or worse, but Luffy still didn't want to just kill these idiots. They hadn't actually hurt his crew yet, and if thievery alone was punishable by death, Ranma would never have grown up. "Don't, Robin," he shouted, trusting Robin would hear it thanks to her powers. "We don't need to kill these people or even maim them much. They're not big enough a threat for that."

With that in mind, Robin went around, knocking them out methodically. By the time he was done,

Robin joined him on deck, fully clothed in a yellow patterned shirt and tight jeans, not even a hair out of place any longer. Smiling tenderly at her, Luffy gestured to one of the attackers. "This one looks a little better armored than the others. I'm gonna go out on a limb and assume that makes him the leader."

"He's certainly somewhat better fed than a few of the others," Robin quipped distastefully, shaking her head. "Although what Makino would have to say to the number of



fashions don'ts these people have committed, your idea of staying a month might have some merit. "What should we do with them?"

"Tie them up, and dump them over the side onto the dock. I'm going to see if anyone around here wants to tell me what this Franky family is that this guy mentioned. Keep the leader guy separate until the rest of them are tied up. He might be able to answer some questions for us."

"We'll need to add more rope to Sanji's supply list, captain," Resolve said, appearing nearby now that the interlopers were all unconscious. The spirit had done what she could, but staying hidden was so ingrained into her as a Klabautermann that it had been very hard to do anything around so many strangers.

Now she glared at them, then very deliberately walked up to one of them, and began methodically kicking him in the face, having heard this one mutter about what they would do to the ship itself and both halves of the Klabautermann's personality were in full agreement as to how to respond. "Cut me up, will you! Sell my bits?! You're no better than normal pirate scum you

Luffy smirked, but Robin moved over, gently tugging Resolve away from her victim. "Now, now Resolve, that isn't the way. If need be, just turn one of your cannons on them the next time. Imagine what would have happened if you had one of the cannons up on the aft deck loaded with canister."

As his lover once more showed her morbid side and Resolve cackled like a mad thing, Luffy just shook his head. "None of that. I'll tell you the same thing I told Robin, Ressay. These people were no threat to us. Any of the crew could deal with the majority of this Franky Family of them on his or her own. And you'll get to the point eventually where you can too, never fear. Now, why don't you help Robin tie up these idiots while I go ask questions? I'll just take one of 'em with me as a visual aid."

"Don't call me Ressay!" Resolve shot back but moved to help Robin without further protest as Luffy leaped to the docks.

Unfortunately, Luffy's questioning of the nearby dockworkers yielded nothing. When he held up the example of the morons, he was talking about in front of them, they all quailed and quickly moved about their business rushing off while making excuses. Indeed, after only a few minutes, there was no one visible anywhere in the pirate area of the docks.

That was annoying, but Luffy realized that if these guys were a part of some kind of organized crime family like the mafia or something, the locals might not be willing to deal with them, knowing it could bite them on the ass later. Heading back to the ship, he landed on the main deck and was to speak to Robin and Resolve, but he noticed that Robin was staring upwards, and the Klabautermann had disappeared again.

Luffy turned in that direction and saw someone falling through the air from higher up the mountain-like city, almost like Luffy could, heading their way. "Huh, now, what's this about?"

"Makino called a few moments ago, telling me that a shipwright from the Galley-La company was coming down here to look over the ship. I would guess that is the man in question," Robin replied.

The flying man soon came close enough to make out details. And to Robin, he was simply a spindly, well-toned long-nosed fellow in a blue carpenter's uniform. But Luffy frowned as he felt man's strength. He was almost as strong as Sanji, not quite, but close. "Interesting," he murmured, moving to the side of the ship, with Robin following.

Landing nearby on the docks, the man looked up at them, nodding politely. "Hello, would you be the captain of the Straw Hats?"

"I am. Who are you?" Luffy asked, friendly but also wary.

"I am Kaku of the Galley-La Company. Your bursar and first mate are discussing terms with mayor Iceberg on employing our services. I came ahead to look over the ship and see if there is any damage or ongoing issue that you haven't recognized yet that would make refurbishing the ship less than ideal."

Luffy frowned at that, scratching at his cheek and looking over at Robin. She shrugged as if to say that it was his call, and he grumbled a bit at that before turning back to the man, nodding his head. "You can come aboard, but I will be watching you and if I say a room is off-limits, that's what it is."

Chuckling, Kaku nodded. "Of course. I just want to look over the ship, make certain that it doesn't have any dangerous leaks or breaks, that's all. If you want to show me these special materials you want us to use, that is up to you. As we have yet to sign the NDA, it isn't necessary."

"Come aboard then," Luffy answered, gesturing the man to jump over. They did need a shipwright's opinion anyway, but he knew at least the secrets of the Dials might be outed here.

The man nodded, and as he did so, he glanced at Nico Robin. Kaku didn't let his plans linger, however, politely nodding his head, not even twitching as he looked around the deck, moving to the mainmast and pressing his foot down on a few floorboards, humming to himself. "Hmmm... green wood. Not good, but not bad either. The work was rough but well done. "

Even as he spoke, though, Kaku was trying his best not to freak out. Like Zoro and Luffy, Kaku had some ability to sense how strong someone was. It was why he always followed Rob Lucci, knowing the man was more than twice his own strength at the very least. But this man in

front of Kaku was more dangerous even than Lucci in his leopard form. And that was making Kaku very, very nervous, even with one of their longstanding targets, Nico Robin standing right there.

Setting aside the problem of the straw-hat-wearing man who was making his danger sense shriek 'abort, abort' in his mind, Kaku moved to the front of the prow, pressing down with both hands on the prow, humming thoughtfully as he felt a slight very slight give. "Did you take some repairable damage to your keel?"

"A bit," Luffy replied, becoming impressed. The guy sure knew his stuff. "Were you trained by Iceberg by any chance?"

"Indeed I was. All of us Dock 1 foremen were. I can't say even now that we're as good as Iceberg is, but Iceberg-san can't work on ships these days, not for any money, I'm afraid. He's got too much on his plate as Mayor, so I am afraid you will have to give up on that demand," Kaku answered.

"Heh, we'll see about that. I take it that Zoro and the girls told you we wanted him to do the work?"

"Indeed, and why. But having big aspirations doesn't mean that Iceberg-san will set down all his existing work to work with you." When Luffy just shrugged, Kaku moved over to examine the two strange shell-like structures set into the middle of the deck between the masts but didn't linger on looking at them. Instead, he knelt down beside them and thumping his hand down on the deck there. "I think I know why you all wanted an NDA. Sky Island dials are worth a Yagara's weight in gold, as we say around here."

He then stood up, looking over at Luffy. "Permission to go below?"

Luffy grunted, jerked his head in a 'follow me' gesture, and led the way down into the ship. "Robin, would you mind continuing to tie up that group? And then maybe make them into a large pile and tie it up like that. Easier to carry them that way, you know?"

"What are you going to do with them?" Kaku inquired, also glancing over to the growing pile of tied-up weaklings. He had dismissed them before but now addressed the issue they represented as far as he could without breaking his persona. "I have to warn you, their leader Franky is an extremely dangerous fellow. In fact, it's rumored that he is far stronger than even the four foremen of the Galley-La Company like me."

Luffy shrugged his shoulders as he led the way down into the frigate's interior. "That's nice. Maybe he'll give me a good fight." *I'd doubt it, though.* "But tell me more about this Franky character."

"I am afraid I have never had any dealings with them, but I can tell you a bit," Kaku shrugged his shoulders, leaning down occasionally to tap one or two floorboards, then asked politely, "May I remove one of these?"

Luffy nodded, and Kaku slowly pulled one of the floorboards up, frowning a little. "This is a typical marine ship," he said aloud, shaking his head. "The wood isn't the best quality for a long-term build. It was a little green when it was laid down, and you're going to get some spillage and slippage from it, just as you are going to get from the new repairs you added.

Luffy's eyebrows rose. "Wait, what? I would have thought a marine ship would be built as good as it can get."

"The marines don't build for the long haul. Their ships are simply weapons to them," Kaku sighed. "It's long been their policy that as long as a ship is built to last a few years, that's good enough. The only ones that get special treatment or the personal ships of admirals and above. This ship looks to be close to that half-life. Its keel may still be solid along with the beams, but the rest might need to be replaced. You also seem to be putting some strange kind of pressure on the exterior hull. I'll look around outside after this to find out why."

Luffy nodded but then reminded the man of his question.

"To me and the rest of Dock 1, the Franky family are a bit of a nuisance. They don't make a lot of waves among the locals, but strangers are fair game, and anyone around here who helps them ends up being a target as well. They don't target Galley-La Company people," the man said proudly. "They know that if push came to shove, we are more than willing to take them on, but..." Kaku shrugged. "I have heard the mayor say once that believes that having organized crime is better than having disorganized crime, and Franky does seem to keep other undesirables from taking root in Water 7 but that's about all I can tell you."

Luffy frowned at that, a thought occurring to him. *Mafia types are always good sources of information. They might know where Cutty Flam is if Iceberg won't work on our ship.* With that in mind, he asked slowly, "Do you think they're persistent enough to keep coming after my crew even if I dump that lot we've got with the local police?"

"The local police won't hold them long for fear of Franky and they are," Kaku answered instantly. "But worse, if you try to do anything permanent to the rest of them, Franky himself will avenge them."

"And they have a specific hiding place or something?"

"They do, but I'll warn you again that Franky himself is not to be underestimated," Kaku warned before pulling out a map of the island and making an X mark on it to show where the Franky House was. The hiding place was actually just a huge house built out beyond the city limits on a rocky promontory, where a lot of junk and wreckage showed up.

Taking the map, Luffy watched as the man finish the work he was doing on the floorboard, setting it aside and pointing to a long strip of green between the painted brown segments. "Do you see what I mean? Green wood, not extremely green, but not as well dried as it should have been."

From there, Kaku moved on, removing another plank for a second to peer down into the tiny area between the bottom of the last deck and the outer hull. He then looked in particular at the wide beams set to one side and then, when Luffy allowed him to, examined the gun deck closely, but Luffy put his foot down when it came to the crew quarters.

Outside, the man dove into the water, coming up after enough time to make Luffy nod in appreciation. Soon he was back on the main deck, frowning and picking up a small booklet he made. "Well, I was right. These Dials are pulling and warping the planks around them when they fire. Still, all in all, the ship is in alright shape. But the main problem is that the keel has been cracked. Those cracks are small, but even so, it's a major weakness in the ship. Are you certain you want to repair the ship? With that crack, the ship's never going to be as seaworthy as a new ship would be."

"Positive," Luffy stated firmly as if there was never any doubt. "This ship is just another crewman to me and I won't leave it behind."

Kaku shrugged his shoulders. "Well, regardless, I'm done here. So, unless you have any specific requests you want me to ask about?"

"Not any more than the other's we've already passed on. But do you really think that Iceberg won't be willing to work on the ship?"

"I think the Mayor won't agree to that without a lot more incentive than access to Dials and the money your bursar mentioned, I'm afraid. But who knows, he could?" Kaku shrugged. "Mayor Iceberg is certainly passionate about shipbuilding and designs. You might be able to convince him, but the more you try to cajole him, the less likely it gets."

Kaku laughed at his own joke, then left the ship, nodding cheerfully at both the captain and the young woman while making very certain to keep an eye on the captain. He leaped away, then allowed himself a brief sigh of relief. *That was unsettling...+*

"What are you thinking, Luffy?" Robin asked, moving to put an arm around his waist. Even if the mood had been lost, without the others around, Robin could allow herself to be a bit more affectionate than otherwise.

"Well, this group is going to keep bothering us apparently, even more so if we do something permanent to them," Luffy answered. "Unless we go see the big guy personally. And mafia types like that, well, money and power talk, and we've got those in spades. So I am wondering if dealing with Franky himself might let us kill a second bird with one stone."

When Robin looked at him, confused as to what he meant and why he had mangled that saying, Luffy went on. "If we meet with Franky, we can certainly cow or convince him and his family to let us alone. But you heard that guy. Iceberg might not be willing to help us build our ship. But I want the real deal, you know, not his knockoffs. And even if he was, from what I remember Shanks saying, Cutty was always the one to go to for weapons. If we work with Franky, slap him with enough money, we might find out where Cutty Flam is instead."

"Far be it from me, a woman who was made her life by living off of pirates and the flotsam of the Grand Line to point this out but are you certain you wish to involve yourself with such?" Robin questioned.

Luffy chuckled and then shrugged. "Meh, we'll see. I think that meeting with them though is a good idea. Besides, like I said, we can at least get this Franky Family to leave us alone, one way or another. Call the others, tell Sanji what we're doing and that Makino shouldn't sign an agreement just yet. I'll pull up the anchor and untie the moorings, and then we'll get moving."

**End Chapter**