

Chapter 4: Deep Discussions and Piratical Annoyances

Thankfully for the new sailors aboard the newly christened and haphazardly named Wayward Journey, the area around Clockwork Island, like most of the islands within the Grand Line, was impacted by the island's weather system. Similar to how they had reached Clockwork Island from the island they had first reached upon arriving in this world (and had made it into a prison colony), the crew would not run into any strange weather patterns until they left that area, which would be well beyond that unnamed offshoot of an island. The locals agreed with Borodo on that, and even shared some theories about how the prisoner island was connected to their own deep beneath the ocean's waves.

In fact, according to the locals, the size of that safe zone around Clockwork Island was actually quite unusual in how large an area it covered. Mei and Melissa theorized that an island's weather bubble was proportional to the weight of the island. While Clockwork Island wasn't all that wide, it was incredibly dense with stone and a decent amount of iron.

Regardless of the reasons, though, this allowed the group to get more used to their vessel and being out on the ocean, something only a single night's travel would not do, a point that Kirishima made less than an hour after they had left the cavern behind them and he had just seen Kyoka fall flat on her face while Tenya barely seemed able to take a few steps without wobbling. "It'll take a normal person at least four or five days to get their sea legs under them, and I think when we hit the Grand Line proper, all of us are going to need all the help we can get."

Everyone else agreed with that readily enough, all too easily remembering everything they had run into upon arriving in this world on the small dinghy that Momo had created for them. Although they could've done without Tsuyu's edition of, "It will also tell us if anyone is going to get sick. Which is probably an almost certainty if we're going to be dealing with currents and storms like we did when we first arrived, kero."

She glanced over the aft of the ship towards the cage where Bear King was housed. This was a simple boat-shaped cage with a metal frame and a set of chains looped around under the arms of Bear King to make certain the head of the prisoner stayed above water, with floatation devices set around it. "We'll also need to see how that thing reacts to calm winds and waves before we venture out."

Tsuyu paused then. "And how easy it is to get out to Bear King to feed him. We can't let him die from starvation either, kero."

"And then there's me. I'm really sorry about this, e, everyone. If only I was better at fighting or using my quirk, I wouldn't be in this state," Izuku said, as they all stood around the main deck bar Shoto and Mei, who were down in the engine room. Izuku had to go through the

ignominy of being lifted aboard by Kirishima and Tenya, and then had banged into practically everything as he began to practice going around the ship in his wheelchair.

“Stop that!” Kyoka said, pointing one of her earjacks at him angrily. “I’ll be the first one to tell you that you should be careful, but don’t you dare say it as if it's your~~if your~~ own fault you’re so injured or as if you’re some kind of burden now, Zuk! You’re our friend, dude, and real friends don’t think like that.”

“Kyoka-chan is quite correct, Izuku-san. While I think all of us would like to sign a petition to tell you to stop hurting yourself, that is out of care, not pity,” Momo interjected, going so far as to grab Izuku’s chin and pull his eyes up to look into her own. “Your current straits are simply the natural occurrence of your fight with Bear King, and as such, we, as your friends, will cheerfully handle it. If I could ask one thing of you, I would ask that you think more highly of yourself, Izuku-san.”

Izuku looked down at that, uncertain how to take what Momo had just said. Even now, even with the work everyone had been doing on I-Island and after they had arrived in this strange dimension to help build him up, Izuku still had moments where he flashed back to the same mentality he’d had as a Quirkless youth needing to deal with Bakugo, Aldera High and everything that went on there.

Mei joined them on the main deck at that point, grinning cheerily at Melissa and giving the blonde girl a thumbs up, which interrupted whatever she or Kirishima were going to add to what the other two girls had already said. -“The steam engine’s working a treat! The boiler is full up, and Shoto is down there right now. He says it’s good training for his fireside, but we’ve got enough coal to spot him twelve hours a day for at least two weeks. After that, Boobs will--”

“If you call me that heinous nickname one more time, Hatsume, I will never make you anything for your little projects ever again!” Momo hissed, a flush suffusing her features of equal parts mortification and anger.

Her eyes widening in horror Mei hastily agreed. “Er, sure...Yaomo?”

“You don’t even remember my name do you?” Momo sighed.

“Eh, consider it a work in progress, like getting Zuk to use our first names,” Kyoka joked causing Izuku to pout.

After a few moments of chuckling, everyone looked over at Kirishima, who began to show them how to walk along the ship. He also went over a few safety rules and other things of that nature, shouting them through the doorway into the kitchen cum wheelhouse to where Tenya was manning the wheel currently. As he finished, though, he turned his attention to the smokestack that rose beyond the wheelhouse, shaking his head slightly. “You know, I think I

just realized a problem. We don't have a crow's nest. On the ocean, you need to be able to see as far away from your ship as possible, and that means getting up high. Down here, the horizon is way closer than it would be from a crow's nest."

"Ugh, that sounds so primitive! I don't suppose we could make drones or something, fly out six of them all equidistant around the ship, and connect them to a video recorder or something here? Or better yet, build an actual radar!" Mei grumbled, scowling a little. "I could build it if I had the parts, but how to actually create the circuits and computer chips..."

She looked over at Momo, but Momo shook her head firmly, with Melissa, a shout from Tenya, and Izuku and Kyoka backing her up. "No. I don't foresee a time when we will be making drones of any sort, and even radar is far too advanced for what we have seen at the local technological level. Especially not on a ship we all expect to move on from eventually. Furthermore, something that complex would take it out of me quite a bit."

"But you could do it, right?" Mei persisted.

With a shrug, Momo agreed that she probably could. She had created other things with programming on them before. *Which, come to think of it, should probably have been the first indication that something was going on with my quirk that the so-called experts that my parents had brought in hadn't seen.*

"Personally, I'm still not happy about Bear King and that cage, kero," Tsuyu said, shaking her head as she peered around the side of the ship and back along its course to where the cage was bobbing along in their wake. Thanks to the smoke stack and the wheelhouse both being at the back of the ship, there wasn't any way to peer directly aft from the main deck. "It just feels a little too inhumane."

Melissa winced a little. "In our world, yes, that would indeed be the case. Here, who knows? Besides, I would look at that cage and that entire tug setup as a needs-must kind of thing."

"So long as he is in a cage and not on the ship, I'm happy," Kyoka muttered, shaking her head. "I know we're supposed to be the good guys and care for prisoners and everything, but we've got to admit there's a limit to what we can do about someone with a Devil Fruit power. And I didn't hear you complain about keeping Honey Queen in a jar."

"True. I'm not so sanguine about the general survivability of that cage, but I have to admit it is better than having Bear King aboard our ship. Even as battered as he was in his fight with Shoto and Izuku, he could still put up a tremendous fight if he got free. We would need to rig up some kind of cage incorporating sea water in some fashion," Momo stated.

Despite being quite battered by the battle, Bear King hadn't actually taken any serious wounds in the fight against the I-Island crew. His Devil Fruit form had made it very hard to permanently injure him, but he had taken quite a bit of bruising, and Kyoka's 'Sonic Stabber' (name in discussion) had done quite a bit of damage to his innards, particularly his heart. But that was nothing in comparison to the battering he had given Shoto and Izuku. -While the others had mostly healed by this point (although Shoto's fire-side arm was still extremely ~~weak~~week and sore and Momo's ribs were still bound up in gauze) Izuku's injuries had been so severe that he was still wheelchair-bound for now.

Every bone in his limbs had been broken through his use of One For All, and the gash to his forearm had reopened in the fight to the point it needed surgery after to close it. Now, months on, Izuku's hands had mainly healed although one arm was still in the full cast from wrist to shoulder, paired with his other arm having a cast on his forearm. The gash in his forearm had also been healing very well. One leg was well on the way to recovery, with the other lagging behind somewhat, there having been some complications in how a bone in his lower left leg had set.

Shrugging her shoulders and letting the subject drop, Tsuyu went inside the wheelhouse, gesturing Tenya out to move around the ship. "You'll need to practice how to turn and what kind of speed you can use without losing control in a really small area, kero."

"True that. Repeat after me, Tenya: wet floorboards are not our friend," Kirishima laughed, although there was a certain amount of seriousness to it. Of all of them, Tenya was the least likely to be able to survive if he fell overboard. His engines weighed him down like nobody's business, and unless Tsuyu was on deck with him, none of the others were strong enough swimmers to rescue him before he drowned.

Reminded of that, Kirishima moved over to the gunwale, where a cord of rope lay. "And this is a safety rope. Everyone wears them while walking around out here on the main deck," the son of fishermen said, holding it up. "We should honestly have more than the two we have. At least two more, and tied down to metal clamps on the deck itself rather than tied around the gunwale."

Momo shrugged and held out her arm, around which a coil of rope appeared in a slight flash of light. Izuku pulled out a notebook, noting that out, then watched as the others helped clamp down the safety ropes, one to either side near the entrance to the wheelhouse, then two more towards the prow, giving enough play on the ropes to be able to move around the deck easily.

With Tsuyu and Kirishima showing them how to move and quizzing them on the various nomenclature needed for a sailor, the group spent about a day and a half in the calm area. They

sailed in a circle for a bit while Shoto continued his work in the engine room, acting like a steam engine on the water reservoir that he had himself created in ice before melting it inside the reservoir into water.

Soon, though, they were turning their ship towards where the log pose was pointing and quickly came within sight of the island they'd first washed up on. After a debate, the crew decided to drop anchor there for the final night and then started forward again after a hearty breakfast in the morning.

Thanking Tsuyu as the girl handed her a plate from having delivered some food to Bear King, Melissa frowned for a moment, wondering aloud, "Come to think of it, how did I get saddled with the chief cook position on this ship?"

"W, well, I can only cook a few meals, admittedly, I think I can do those few meals pretty well, but none of them include breakfast meals," Izuku apologized. "And Katsudon kind of uses too much meat anyway when you have limited stores to be an everyday meal, drat it."

"I can cook soba," Shoto said, the words more a sign of his volunteering to do so than any kind of explanation.

"Shoto no," Momo said, wagging a finger at him. "You can't eat soba for every meal."

Shoto's face firmed, and for the first time in a while, he seemed to make a joke, although, as per usual, he didn't seem to think it was one, simply a statement of fact. "So says the woman that can't cook at all."

That shot hit home like an arrow to the heart, and Momo slumped, looking away as Kyoka wrapped an arm around hers and commiseration. Neither of them could cook.

"If you want to volunteer to swim over to Bear King and toss his meal into them, I can take over cooking a few simple meals," Tsuyu said, smiling as she touched her lips with one finger curiously. "I make good fried rice, rice balls, tamagoyaki and fried crickets, kero."

"No, I suppose that all makes sense. I also shouldn't wonder that you two don't know how to cook either," Melissa said, looking over at the last two ~~last~~ boys. Neither of them had spoken up, only looking away in embarrassment. "And Mei? What's your excuse?"

"Hmm? An excuse for me not cooking? I suppose there was a class in high school that tried to teach me how to do that, but they didn't let me back in after I disassembled the stove and tried to up the heat on it a bit too much," Mei laughed, seemingly completely unconcerned with the casual destruction of school property.

As Tenya remonstrated with Mei about her attitude, Melissa sighed and then changed the subject a bit, knowing that she was going to be stuck with the chief cook position for a while. "Come to think of it, I wonder what our ranks should be on this ship?"

"I'm the bosun!" Kirishima shouted, thrusting ahead and did the air. "That's the most manly position aboard the ship! The one that enforces the rules and watches and makes sure that everyone else is doing their job right."

"Then I'd say Tsuyu is our first mate. We need someone with actual seafaring knowledge close by if all of you are so certain that I need to be the captain," Izuku said, just a little bit annoyed at the fact that he had tried several times since they first set out to hand that job over to someone else, only to have it be firmly rebuffed every time. - Not just by one person either, but by literally the entire group taking turns to explain that he was their leader. A position he still did not feel himself qualified for, still only comparing himself up to the impossible standard that was All Might.

It did not occur to him then or for several months that All Might actually wasn't all that good a leader. In fact, he had never been one. Or a teacher, but in that, at least he had the help of an overly intelligent chimera to help him along.

"I suppose I'd be the navigator and Tenya, the assistant steersman?" Jiro said, shrugging her shoulders, her earjacks mimicking the movement with an up-and-down motion to either side of her head. "And Momo and Mei can be chief carpenters together. That leaves Shoto as the engine boy."

"If I can't be chief engineer, carpenter sounds about right, I guess," Mei huffed, shaking her head. "Wood, ugh. I suppose given supply and demand, it makes more sense than using metal. That doesn't mean I have to like it."

"I'm not certain that I like the implications that I'd simply be, what, her portable tool shop?" Momo poked Kyoka in the shoulder as she pulled out of the sideways hug, shaking her head.

The light conversation continued for a while as everyone did their best to buoy up one another's spirits until Melissa was finished putting away all the dishes and locked all the cupboards. At that point, Tsuyu took charge, directing the crew to batten down the ship as if they were heading into a storm. On the Grand Line that was more an eventuality than a mere possibility.

An eventuality that happened almost instantly when the Wayward Journey passed the nearly visible edge of Clockwork Island's weather system. On one side of that line, everything was bright and warm as evening broke over the horizon. The moment the ship crossed that line,

they were hit by a squall. Storm clouds appeared above them with a suddenness that still took everyone aback despite all they'd learned about the Grand Line, and rain began to fall in sheets.

The ship weathered that easily enough. The steam engine that Shoto was controlling could push them through the minor waves accompanying the squall. The whirlpool, though, was a different story and nearly sucked them down into the depths. Bear King was also nearly lost at that point, and the next clear moment they had, it was quickly decided that they couldn't just continue to toe him through the Grand Line. There was no way his cage would survive.

"I have to wonder why the locals didn't point that out," Tenya mused.

Melissa rolled her eyes. "What do you think? He had been lording it over the whole island for years. Is it any wonder the villagers wouldn't care about what happened to him? Heck, I think they kind of wanted him to drown. I remember a few of their shipbuilders steering us away from any question about the cage they'd built for him."

That sobered the crew a bit, although none could argue the locals had a reason to be so bloodthirsty. Regardless, the teens were unwilling to just let Bear King die.

Shoto took a break from the engine room to help, creating a small iceberg around the ship and the cage. Once Bear King was brought aboard, he was quickly thawed out. The moment he was, Momo shot him several times in the chest with tranquilizers.

"Wow, Yaomomo, that was kind of badass," Kyoka said as nearby, Izuku had pulled out his notebook again, making a note there. "How much sleepy juice did you hit him with?"

"Enough to knock out a bull elephant for an hour. I figured that would be fair enough given his size," Momo answered with a sweet smile.

While the others had been working on pulling Bear King onto the ship, Melissa and Mei had worked on transforming one of the crew quarters into a jail. When Bear King was locked inside it, Kirishima and Tenya laboriously transferred buckets of seawater down to Izuku, who at least could carry the buckets down the hall on his lap before Tsuyu took over, dumping them into the prison and watching out for leaks. There were a few, but Melissa and Mei did good work, having used several barrels to create a new floor and board up the window. Opening the door to get Bear King out would be a hassle, but it would do for now.

After the third bucket, though, the semi-peaceful ocean shifted again to trying to kill them. The whole ship shuddered, and Kirishima shouted, "Whirlpool! Shoto-bro, get back to the engine room! And, is that a killer whale with a giant horn on its head?!"

Shoto nodded and raced back to the engine room as Momo and Kyoka raced into the wheelhouse, grabbing at the wheel which had been locked into position a moment before. So

strong was the change in currents that it took both girls to keep them on course. Luckily, the moment the steam engine began to work again, the noise of it seemed to put off the monster, who dodged after scraping against the bottom of the ship once. This let the two now-waterlogged boys continue their work, dragging ocean water up over the side by the bucket full, handing them then down to Izuku. They were soon joined by Melissa as Mei hurried in to add her strength to the two girls on the wheel.

Several hours passed, but before Bear King could recover from Momo's tranquilizers, he found himself in a locked room. His upper body was held out of the water covering the bottom of his jail by ropes and a water tube around his armpits. It would be extremely unpleasant for him, forcing him into the torpor that Devil Fruit users felt when in contact with saltwater. But at least he would live through their trip through the Grand Line, whereas before, he probably wouldn't have lasted the rest of the night.

"Although I have to wonder if we're going to need to decant him occasionally. Even living people can't survive being soaked in water for so long, kero," Tsuyu mused.

"Er, I think we might have to make more use of Momo-san's knockout juice," Izuku answered, looking ahead of them as they came to the steps leading upwards.

The wheels of his wheelchairs slid into grooves on either side of the stairs designed by Melissa, and Kirishima tossed down a rope, grinning and heaving Izuku up the stairs despite looking quite tired and bedraggled. "Manly job, Tsu, Izuku-bro."

It was unanimously decided that Tenya and Kirishima should be allowed to head to bed first. They objected, but Tsuyu was quick to point out that they would all need to get used to sleeping whenever they could. "And we should always have two people on watch even if the ocean's being cooperative."

Shoto was also told to head to bed after adding a bit more melted ice water to the reservoir. Using his quirk so often, even at a low level, was tiring, especially on his fire-side.

That this left Izuku as the only boy not to be so exhausted was not lost on him. Indeed, he felt so guilty that he didn't even realize he was now surrounded by the girls of the group as the ocean calmed down for the next few hours. - Melissa, Momo and Mei retired to the workshop to work on a plan to add a crow's nest along the exterior of the coal stack, which would be somewhat tough given the need to protect whoever was up there from the fumes. Although, it might be nice and toasty being so near the stack while in use. - Meanwhile, Izuku manned the wheel while Tsuyu and Kyoka roamed the deck, looking for trouble.

However, before they could go from the planning stage to the emplacing stage, the temperature dropped like a rock. One moment, it was a semi-nice summer night, a little on the

muggy side. The next, the next, it was so cold that the people out on deck could see their breath, and frost had begun to cover the ship.

“Damn! I know we were warned about all of this, but there has to be some limit to the kind of craziness we can see out here, right?!” Kyoka shouted, shivering in place. Then her eyes widened as she turned, staring toward Tsuyu through the open door into the wheelhouse. There, she could see the frog girl crouched down on the ground behind the wheel, curling up into a ball. -“Tsuyu!”

From where he was manning the wheel, Izuku growled angrily at himself, his hands clenching and unclenching on the wheel. He was tied into place there, the wheels of his wheelchair tied down to the deck beneath, and although he could probably release himself easily enough, he knew that he had to stay on the wheel lest they lose the course. Being stuck here and seeing one of his friends suffering was infuriating.

Hearing Kyoka’s shout, Momo bounded out of the hatch leading down into the ship, creating and tossing a coat to Jiro as she passed her by before picking Tsuyu up into a hug. From her back, there was a tearing noise as her shirt began to burst under pressure from beneath as a larger, more voluminous coat exploded out of her arms, back and neck to cover both herself and Tsuyu. Unlike the simple fur coat that she had tossed to Kyoka, this one looked more like a ski jacket, lined with fur on the inside but with an insulating layer on the outside.- It was, in fact, just a larger version of the ski jacket that Momo had used for years and was even in her ~~usual~~~~habitual~~ red and black colors.

Instantly, Tsuyu nuzzled closer into the warmth Momo was providing, breathing a sigh of relief as the cold began to fade away. “T, Thanks, Momo, kero.- I hate the cold, kero...”

“Not a problem Tsu-chan! Although now I have to wonder if we should have given Bear King something. The entire ship is ice cold.”

“Central heating, something we don’t have. The only place that’s going to be warm is the engine room and in the kitchen- wheelhouse,” Mei said, coming up the stairs behind her before quickly moving into the kitchen and lighting up the stove there. “And I wouldn’t worry about Bear King. He’s a bear, right? Don’t they hibernate? I think I saw that on a TV show once.”

“It’s snowing!” Kyoka shouted from out on the main deck before anyone could think up a proper reply to that. “And the ice is starting to build up on the prow. Momo, I hate to ask, but...”

Momo wordlessly began to make gloves for them all while Melissa joined them, having taken a moment to retrieve some snow shovels and a bag of salt. They’d been given those by

the locals, although, to be fair, none of the crew had thought that they would ever actually need to use them.

As Mei and Momo – who had left her extra-large coat wrapped around Tsuyu like a tent before making her own that finished destroying her shirt joined Kyoka out on the deck, Izuku watched this from the wheel. Once more, he felt completely useless and cursed his weakness.

But he wasn't alone this time. Tsuyu curled up in front of the stove underneath the insulated coat that Momo had given her. And within moments, Mei was back inside, emptying her stomach into the sink. The first person to come down with seasickness had arrived.

Thankfully, Mei was the only one who truly became seasick. But that was scant comfort as, over the next few days, the Grand Line tried its best to kill them all.

It was a nearly endless shift from one type of weather pattern to another, running the crew ragged. Whirlpools appeared every few hours, forcing Shoto to burn the steam at an even larger amount to push them forward as hard as possible. Then came more snow, on the heels of which a rain of sardines of all things slammed into the ship. - This was followed by a heat wave for two hours that was so debilitating that even Tsuyu, who was nearly unconscious most of the time when it was cold out, complained. And then there were two near-attacks from sea monsters. - One, a serpent-like monster, was scared off by a few musket balls taking out one eye. - The other sea monster, a group of seals with huge teeth, was seen off by Kirishima and Tsuyu for the most part before the rest of the crew could join them in the fight.

The third night out from the edge of Clockwork Islands area of control, the ship had suddenly hit a calm area. No more storms, no more weird weather patterns, nothing.

"What is with this ocean? Seriously!" Kirishima groaned as he lay out on the main deck before looking up as the sun was eclipsed for a moment. Above him, Izuku leaned down, giving him a large steaming mug, which, when he grabbed it, was filled with, "Katsudon? In a mug?"

"I figured it would be easier for us all to eat and not make a mess of things. Besides, when that one current hit us from the side this morning, two of our pantries were still open. We lost most of our plates and more than half of our bowls," Izuku said with a shrug.

Kirishima shook his head at that, then dug in, watching Izuku wheel himself around the main deck to the others, who had all slumped where they were. "Hey, wait a minute, how were you able to cook anything? If you try to stand up from that wheelchair, Melissa's going to break something else on you, bro, no matter how manly it might be."

"That would be me!" Mei said, coming out with several more steaming mugs of diced pork cutlet, a bright smile on her face and, for the first time in a while, no hint that she was

about to throw up either, despite the smell of the food under her nose. “I was able to add a winch baby to his wheelchair to raise him into the air enough so he could use the counter.”

“And your arms?” Melissa asked, having pushed herself upright to glare at Izuku a little.

“One of them is good enough to be used in cooking, if nothing else,” Izuku answered, trying hard to keep the bitterness out of his voice. He must not have succeeded because Kyoka mock glared at him, poking him several times with her jacks even as she took the mug he held out to her gratefully. Even Tsuyu was a little ragged despite having been forced to sit inside most of the time when the temperature dropped too far.

“I don’t suppose anyone’s figured out a way to predict the weather?” Shoto asked, onto his side and reaching up as Izuku reached down, handing him the mug. It wasn’t soba, but it would do.

“I haven’t,” Izuku admitted, shaking his head. “I thought at first there might be some kind of pattern, some reason why everything was going on, but the books we read about it were right. There’s no such thing as a pattern here. -Or if there is, I can’t figure it out.”

Momo took her cup gratefully, thinking internally that she was also grateful for all the training she had been getting lately with her current quirk use. And the fact that protective clothing, no matter how heavy the clothing, couldn’t really compare to some of the other things she had created in the past. -“I think we are just going to have to survive it, just like all the other sailors out there. Although, perhaps Kyo-chan might be able to detect minute changes in the water with her quirk?”

“The main deck is too high up above the waterline. My ear ~~j~~ack’s can’t reach,” Kyoka answered, flushing a bit at the mode of address from her crush. -“I might be able to start to detect some movement in the wind if I really try hard enough, but even that’s chancy at best.”

“Damn...” Shoto said in his usual monotone.

“Come on, everybody, let’s all get undercover at least. Hopefully, we won’t be hit by snow or anything else that we’ll need to shovel off the deck for a bit,” Izuku said, fighting the urge to lean down and help Melissa to her feet.

Astonishingly, it seemed as if this area of the Grand Line was done trying to kill them for a bit. The next day, the duo on watch only had to deal with two squalls. They were short, sharp affairs, but once they were done, there was quite a bit of sun and even some heat. After the last few days, this seemed a blessed relief, one that the girls, even those who should have been sleeping, decided to take advantage of.

Staring out one of the portholes onto the main deck, Kirishima shook his head, looking over at Izuku, who was back at the wheel, a blush on his face. He had just taken over from Melissa, who had whooped something about swimsuits and tanning as she raced off. - “You know, if you’d asked me a day or so ago if we would ever see the girls out there in just regular bikinis, I would’ve thought you were crazy. Yet there they are.”

“I, I guess that people deal with stress in their own ways?” Izuku blushed. He had been out there a few moments ago, having delivered some juice to Momo and the others, and now was having a devil of a time getting the image of Jiro, Mei, Tsuyu and Momo dressed in bikinis out of his head to say nothing of Melissa who had just raced off.

“I mean, I’m not a pervert like Mini-ta, but even I have to admit this is quite a sight,” Kirishima muttered, staring out the porthole again before shaking his head resolutely and moving to grab a drink from the tray that Izuku had come back with. “Ugh, unmanly thoughts begone!”

“Kirishima!” Tenya rejoined. “As a student of UA, you should be above such thoughts!”

“Where was that kind of thinking when Mineta tried to ~~peep on~~peep on the girls?” Shoto asked in a monotone, causing Tenya to freeze while he looked out the porthole for a moment before shaking his head and following Kirishima. - “If anything, I think the girls might be a little annoyed that we don’t appreciate the view. Just don’t be a pervert about~~pervert out about~~ it.”

Melissa came out on deck a moment later, also dressed up in a bikini now courtesy of Momo. It was a simple two-piece, red, white and blue in a nod to Melissa’s former home country, and hugged her hips tightly as well as her bust, which bounced as she entered the room, grabbing Kirishima and Shoto by the arms. “What are you two doing in here?! Come on, it’s not just the girls who could use some sun, you know. Shoto, you have such pasty cheeks, it’s like you haven’t been outside your entire life!”

“I like my pasty cheeks,” Shoto said, but he didn’t try to fight the blonde girl, who tugged both of them outside.

“Aren’t you going to go out and join them?” Izuku asked, looking over at Tenya.

“Aren’t you?” The uptight blue-haired young man said, shaking his head with a faint flush on his face. “I would not feel comfortable out there right now. Besides, it’s my turn to man the wheel for a bit.”

“No way! I’ve been so useless in everything, I need to--”

“Izuku,” Tenya interrupted firmly, both of his arms doing his habitual axe chop. “You are my closest friend, and I believe that you and I were friends even before we came to this world.”

Please, stop talking about yourself like that. Over the past two days, you have done your best to clean up in here, to cook for us, to man the wheel, and to keep our spirits up. Even without your help in keeping the deck clean of snow or anything else and performing emergency patches where we needed to, your work has not been easy by any means. Just because you haven't been out there in the weather we've been forced to face is no reason to think that you were not contributing.

Tenya then smirked, pushing his glasses up his nose as he gestured Izuku away from the wheel. "Now, get out there, or do I need to tell Melissa to come back and drag you out like she did the other two?"

Izuku didn't get a chance to reply to that as Kyoka barged in, just in time to hear the last few moments. She wore a one piece, sort of, although it wasn't a style Izuku had ever seen. Not that he had much experience with girls in swimsuits, admittedly, but the way the semi-shiny black one piece had bits cut out of it and other bits connected to one another by steel loops, with the words, Punk For Life on the front certainly gave it a unique feel.

She slapped Tenya lightly on the shoulder, grinning as she stepped past him, blushing a bit as she saw Izuku stare at her, a blush on his own face at her appearance. That, ~~well, that~~ ~~that~~ felt just as good as the appreciative look she got from Momo earlier on her sense of style. "That's the spirit! Now come on, Zuk, let's get you some sun, too."

Izuku tried to protest, but Kyoka was already pushing him away from the wheel, letting Tenya take his place. Seconds later, Izuku didn't really know where to look as he and the other boys were forced to lay out or in Izuku's case, simply sit out in the sun with the girls. The girls had spread out so that no matter where he looked, there was a girl who he really should not let himself think about in that way.

Momo was easily the hardest to tear his eyes away from, not because she was, in Izuku's eyes, any more beautiful than the others, but because of how different it was to see her wearing something like this since they had left her first 'hero costume' behind. Her swimsuit was dark red, which was Momo's favorite color, and was a one piece, with a series of straps coming up from the bikini bottom to meet the top in the back. The top was cut in such a way as to show a goodly amount of cleavage yet the whole thing looked sophisticated somehow. It was weird.

At first, Tsuyu was perhaps the easiest to look at when Izuku was pushed outside. She wore a simple sports swimsuit, but with bits cut out from the sides. However when the froggy girl had laid out on her chest, this showed the fact the back was bare, the suit showing off her powerfully toned back and rear.

Mei's suit was easily the most childish looking, sort of. It was a simple bikini, with frilly bits top and bottom, and with a pattern of stripes on it in pink, white and black. Yet instead of simply laying out like the others were with a variety of books, the crazed inventor had brought out some of the muskets they had been given from the pirate stores, taking them apart one after another. -The Clockwork Islanders had been very generous in terms of muskets and harpoons, which Kirishima had asked for. The arm movements this called for set her chest to jiggling in a way that was almost as hypnotizing as seeing Momo lick her finger before turning a page in her book or how Melissa swayed in place to an unseen beat as she laid out on her back.

Truly it was a bit of heaven and Hell for Izuku, and the uncomfortable glances he shared with Shoto and Kirishima showed he was not alone in thinking so. And when Kyoka left him with a bottle of ~~sunscreen~~~~sun-screen~~ and moved over to a chair, laying out on her chest like Tsuyu had, showing off Kyoka's small, pert rear, Izuku's brain decided enough was enough and checked out. - He slumped in his wheelchair, his eyes closing as he fell into dreamland.

Getting used to the Grand Line proved to be a bit of a mixed blessing for the boys and girls alike over the next few days. Now, almost used to the near-constant danger, they had enough mental energy to notice that they were living in close proximity with many different members of the other sex. This naturally caused some issues, making the whole sunbathing thing seem mild in comparison.

Izuku was the first to be on the receiving end of such a thing. The head, the bathroom on board the boat, had a special stall especially for him, complete with handholds that he could now use with his one semi-good hand to get in and out of his wheelchair, a great relief to both Izuku and the other boys.

His forearm was still in a cast, but the fingers at least had healed up. And he could grip things without too much pain.

One morning however, his time on the toilet was interrupted.

Kyoka had proven time and time again that she was one of the worst when it came to waking up in the morning. This was doubly truthful when she had been on watch the evening before. This had caused her some issues already, and today was going to be one doozy of an issue.

The punk rocker's eyes had slid almost closed again as she stumbled into the bathroom, grumbling about needing to use the bathroom. -There, she first moved to the small sink, splashing her face with cold water, only to hear a gasp from behind her.

A very male gasp. Blinking, Jioru stared into the small mirror that the locals had given them for the bathroom, staring through it at Izuku, who was just now trying to pull his hands up with one hand, still sitting on the toilet, having opened the door to have more room to move.

Izuku stared back, trying hard and failing to keep his eyes from wandering down Kyoka's body. She was dressed in some kind of silk ninety that she must've gotten from Momo, which barely came to her waist, allowing a pair of panties to be seen below. It showed off far more of her rear than he had ever seen before, and the sight was nearly mesmerizing.

The two of them stared at one another, and then Kyoka's eyes tracked down words a little. His pants were still about halfway up his thighs, and she could see a tuft of green hair and...

"EEEEK!" Jiro shrieked, crouching down and covering herself up as her ear Jax flew forward. "Don't look!"

Izuku shrieked, covering himself up with one hand. "I'm sorry!"

Needless to say, after that, Kyoka had been bluntly told that she was no longer allowed outside of her room until she was fully awake.

A somewhat similar thing happened in the engine room.

Shoto was in the center of the engine, his hand stuck into the boiler, allowing his hand to boil the water that powered the steam engine away. He was also shirtless, holding up a book in his other hand that he was slowly reading, despite the sweat slowly dripping down his body. Nearby, a cup of ice water he had prepared for himself rested.

He turned as he heard a hum from behind him. "Mei?" He asked, seeing the pink-haired inventor standing just inside the hatch to the engine room, feeling a little vulnerable strangely. It wasn't the first time he had been around Mei or any of the girls without a shirt on, but for some reason, Shoto could not fathom the fact it was both of them in the engine room alone was making him more conscious of it.

"Nice muscles. A bit thin in comparison to Tenya or Izuku, but pretty good. Really toned!" Mei said, moving forward and running her fingers up his chest for a second. "I would've really liked a chance to replace that really stupid costume you had at the beginning of the year. I remember seeing that thing and thinking it was an affront to humanity."

"I, I wasn't aware that first-year students were allowed to create hero costumes," Shoto said, feeling a little breathless and thrown off by the seeming non-sequitur. When she moved away, though, Shoto then became a little sad for some reason.

“Eh, we can only do it for first-year hero students like you lot. And even then, the whole class competes against one another to redesign only a few of the worst ones. Momo’s was one, that invisible gal, and you were two others. There was also some big kerfuffle about some weapon that shouldn’t have been allowed to students, but we weren’t part of that.- I did learn several new curses from Power Loader that day, though,” Mei shrugged, looking at some of the readings on the engine. “Lower the heat a little, and shush for a second, I need to listen. Down here, my eyes aren’t as useful as my hearing is for figuring out if there’s anything wrong with any of the pipes.”

Taking this at face value, Shoto nodded, then watched as she scurried to one side of the engine, then to the other, cocking her head and listening before staring up at one of the pipes leading upwards towards the kitchen. Without pause, she pulled her overshirt off, tossing it to the side. This left her in just a muscle T-shirt, and it was very obvious, as she leaped upwards, that Mei wasn’t wearing anything underneath it.

His eyes widening, Shoto stared after her. *I know Tenya and Izuku both say it is impolite to stare, but I don’t think Mei cares either way, so this is alright, right?*

“There it is! I knew there was something off with the sound. Two of the lug nuts got loose somehow. I don’t think we were accurate about how much wear and tear steam would put on our fittings. This is the fifth time I’ve needed to fix something like this.”

Crawling between a few of the pipes, Mei went to work and was quickly back on the floor, listening intently, not noticing Shoto staring. It was hot in the engine room, and Mei had already been sweating before she had divested herself of her outer tunic. This meant that the white muscle TE was practically see-through currently.

This wasn’t the first time that Shoto had seen Mei sweat-streaked, and it wouldn’t have been the first time he’d seen her naked since that one day on the island. But that didn’t take anything from the sheer enjoyment of the view of her slightly drooping breasts as they bounced underneath her shirt to the rhythm of her bounces as she cocked her head this way and that, making sure that she had found the only current problem. She moved over to a few of the readouts again, then nodded. “That did it.”

She glanced over at Shoto, giving him a thumbs up, then gestured over her shoulder to the doorway leading out of the engine room. “Come on, put in an hour’s worth of coal, and let’s get some lunch. I’m starving, and I’d wager you are, too.”

Shoto nodded almost robotically, following after her, and soon the two of them were joining the others, at which point several shrieks of “Mei! What are you wearing!/Where’s your outer shirt!?” greeted them as the rest of the crew learned that when it came to shame, body consciousness, or modesty, Mei answered with question marks.

These little incidents came up as the crew settled into something of a routine. Momo helped Melissa and Mei stock the ship with a few small items that they hadn't realized they would need until hitting the Grand Line weather they needed, while Tsuyu helped them put a crow's nest up. An example of this was the handheld brazier Tsuyu could carry underneath the insulating coat that Momo had made that first cold night out. Spy glasses for everyone and a bullhorn for those who were on duty at any given time. More security ropes, a winch system to let Izuku get himself onto the main deck and down into the ship, and small carabiners so that you could hook and unhook yourself from one rope to the next quickly and safely. Various nets to help with fishing for Kirishima and Tsuyu and things like that also abounded.

Momo was more than happy to help. Food had yet to become an issue, although it felt as if it would eventually in terms of flour, vegetables and fruit. Thankfully, the Clockwork Islanders had supplied them with a fridge that, with Shoto's help, would keep their food fresher than most ships could aspire to keep their food.

There were always two of them on duty. One by the wheel and one outside, either up in the crow's nest or walking the deck. -This helped them several times to see trouble in the way of aquatic creatures coming their way, although obviously it wasn't all that helpful when it came to weather.

Izuku, to the surprise of no one, insisted on taking at least two watches a day at the wheel to make up for the fact that he couldn't help much otherwise. He was roundly down-voted on that, and Melissa instead continued his education in cooking, dragging Tsuyu into it as well so that she could learn to make things other than various types of rice or fried crickets.

Perhaps the most startling thing that began to happen six days out from the edge of Clockwork Island's area of control was that Kyoka slowly started to discern faint changes in the wind with her ear jacks. This allowed her to sense a shift in the weather patterns coming, so long as it included wind of any kind, anyway. This helped immensely several times, although it did not help when the change that hit them was simply ocean-related, a shift in the tide, a sudden undertow, or a whirlpool. But any help was good, and Kyoka received a lot of praise for her newfound skill, even as Mei bemoaned the lack of proper technology.

Of course, getting used to the Grand Line was one thing. Saying it was easy to deal with was quite another. After the incident with Mei and her lack of modesty, the ship went through another few days of craziness from one hour to the next. The only difference was that it was almost entirely ocean-related, with tides pulling them off course and attacks from strange shark-like creatures that tried to skewer the ship near the waterline. So bad was it that by the time the craziness began to ebb away again, everyone was almost as exhausted as they had been after those first few days.

Momo and Tenya, the two with the most endurance of the rest of the crew bar Izuku now that Momo's ribs had finished healing, helped everyone down onto the ship. Tenya turned in for the night once Kirishima, Melissa, Mei and Shoto were put ~~to bed in bed~~, knowing that Momo was able to take care of Tsuyu and Kyoka.

Kyoka was the last of the girls to be helped into her bunk by Momo, and Momo flushed faintly as Kyoka's earjacks wound around her upper arm, then trailed down her arm to her wrist. "Thanks, Yaomomo," she mumbled. "Who's on watch?"

"Izuku at the moment. I'll join him, and don't worry, I'll get him to sleep when our five hours are over," Momo supplied.

"You better, or else I'll be angry," Kyoka said, even as she began to pull her covers over herself, the earjack wound around Momo's wrist slowly going slack. Momo allowed her fingers to press into it, having always wondered if they truly felt as metallic as they looked, and found that they did not. They almost felt like a finger, a really thin, fleshy kind of finger. Judging by the faint flush on Kyoka's face, she could also feel sensations through them as if they truly were a part of her body.

Quirks are amazing like that, although I have to wonder how it feels to stab them into solid objects, Momo reflected, leaning down to give her friend a hug before pulling away and heading out the door, somewhat weary but not nearly as much as the others. She had just come off watch when the craziness began, and the others had ordered her to rest through most of it, with Izuku only reluctantly calling her up a few hours before to spell Tsuyu as the ship once more found itself in a cold front.

The Wayward Journey was still in that cold front when Momo reached the main deck, but there didn't seem to be any snow on the deck just yet, nor any kind of storm. She quickly moved forward towards the wheelhouse, ducking inside as a blistering wind picked up, shaking her head as she looked over at Izuku, who was once more roped in his place by the wheel. - "Did Shoto refill the engine with coal for the entire night?"

"And banked it down to half speed," Izuku answered in the affirmative. "We won't be making as much speed as we would normally, but it'll make the coal last longer." He smiled then, an almost tender, worried expression on his face. "Come on over. It's warmer away from the doorway."

Flushing for a moment as she realized the two of them were alone, Momo moved deeper into the room, heading towards the kitchen area. There, she quickly made the two of them some tea when Izuku answered her question about whether he wanted some. "On a night like this, warm tea is a treasure."

Momo settled into her chair next to Izuku and the pair of them were silent for a few moments, simply enjoying the tea she had made, Izuku's hum of approval making Momo smile. It wasn't an awkward silence, simply the two of them taking stock of an incredibly busy day and trying to figure out what they wanted to talk about first. The two of them were always kind of spoiled for choice when it came to topics to talk about, something the pair had noticed early on in their stay on the island before they met the pirates and the two Thief Brothers. Momo always greatly enjoyed listening to Izuku ramble on about things, mostly hero-related admittedly, enjoying the insight into what was perhaps one of the most analytical minds she had ever had the pleasure to speak to.

And for Izuku, like Melissa, Momo's attractiveness was only equaled by her intelligence. Learning about all the esoteric things she had researched, read about, or even seen alongside her parents as they traveled the world was fascinating.

For all the comfort of the moment, the warmth of the tea in her hands, and the aura of quiet dependability Izuku seemed to radiate as he held the wheel steady, there was something serious Momo wanted to bring up. After taking a few sips, she slowly set her cup down on the small table that Melissa had put in place for Izuku or anyone else standing at the wheel so they didn't have to leave their post to eat, took a deep breath, and began. "I... I have to wonder if all of us have truly understood that there are a few fundamental differences between this world and our own."

"I don't know if any of the others have spoken about it, but Melissa and I have debated about how best to hide our abilities. I, I realize that the nature of this world means that there really can't be a consensus, but I have to think that most people would react badly if they heard people talking about being from another dimension. They lock you up for that kind of thing, you know." He made the last come out almost conspiratorially, pulling his hand away from the wheel for a moment to hold a finger to his lips as if it was a great secret before hastily grabbing the wheel again as it made to turn to starboard almost instantly.

He had a devil of a time pulling it back into place with just one hand, but Momo quickly stood up and helped him do so before sitting back down, shaking her head. "That isn't what I'm talking about."

"Well, before I was interrupted by my own silliness there," Izuku snorted, shaking his head. "I was going to say that powers don't seem all that normal here either. The powers of these Devil Fruits set people apart way more than any kind of quirk would back home, even heteromorphs like Mezo or Koda-san."

As if they had a harder time than you when you were younger and your quirk had yet to come in, Izuku, Momo reflected before verbally agreeing. - "That is one aspect. Devil fruits are

an object of extreme interest, and those who own them become significant, either negatively or positively. Some of the books that mentioned the Marines spoke of how they love to recruit Devil Fruit users, and we saw evidence that Devil Fruits among pirates is distinctly a thing as well, a means to high office among that rabble. We will need to be very careful to keep together and to keep our stories straight as to our various abilities.”

For some reason, when Momo used the word rabble, as well as all the other more esoteric word choices, Izuku had to fight back a blush. Hearing her speak so intelligently gave him a strange thrill. As that thought occurred to him, a comment one of his classmates at Aldera had made about his girlfriend at one point came back to his mind at that moment. *“I like a brainy girl. What can I say?”*

“That is not what I was speaking of, however,” Momo continued, and her next words acted like a splash of water to the face of Izuku’s momentarily distracted mind. “I think there is a fundamental difference in how morality works in this world than in our own. One we must face before too much longer.”

Izuku stared straight ahead for a moment before slowly nodding. “Life...life doesn’t seem as sacred here. The quirk enthusiast in me wants to say that that is simply because of the preponderance of guns, of how easy it is to kill with muskets and so forth. The historian in me knows that’s bunk. - Another part of me wants to point to the whole pirate issue: if they’re such a big deal that there are actually four so-called emperors out there, each of them with their own entire fleet, then it stands to reason that this world is far more bloodthirsty than our own. But that doesn’t mean that we need to act in that manner,” he added hastily.

“I think it might eventually.” Those words caused Izuku to freeze again, and he turned to look at Momo incredulously. She met his gaze squarely, taking a slow, small sip from her tea before setting it down again, gesturing to Izuku’s cup. She watched as he took a sip, then set it down and went back to looking down at the log post to make sure that that moment hadn’t cost them as the earlier one had before going on.

“I was prepared to kill back on the island to defend Kirishima and the others with me. It wasn’t a question I was at all prepared to answer, not so soon into our hero careers. But I was prepared to do so. And I know I killed people among the pirate crew we fought, both among the crew on the ship we took and then Skunk One at least when we invaded Clockwork Island.”

Izuku flinched at that but resolutely turned from looking at the log post to stare into her eyes, trying to wordlessly get across the emotion that he did not blame her anyway, even reaching across with his still basically useless hand to touch her palm gently as it cupped her teacup. Izuku would not look down on her for that.

That caused Momo to smile, and she nodded his way in thanks for the support. “I lost sleep about it for the first few ~~nights when~~~~nights-of-when~~ we stayed on Clockwork Island, and I am not the only one. -Kyo-chan also lost sleep about it, although her nightmares were far worse given how much more graphic her... kill... was. Thankfully, we were there for one another, and the locals were extremely helpful. But I think that is an issue that all of us will have to face eventually.”

Izuku hesitated, then took the plunge, glancing down at the log post for a second in a move so automatic after the past few days he didn't even notice it before looking over at Momo. “I think I killed a few, too. I can't be certain about during the fight in the cavern, but I know I flung a few to their deaths in the ocean while we took the ship. Kirishima, he hasn't talked about what went on in the ship, but we, we did have to remove a few bodies.- Tenya, too, and Shoto. Tsuyu and Melissa, I don't know about... I think Mei might have, but I've not seen any sign of it in her mannerisms since. Do you think... well, Melissa spoke about mental health a time or two. -Do you think we might all want to have a group therapy session or something?”

The green-haired youth was extremely reluctant to mention that idea. While Melissa had mentioned it as being a normal thing in America for heroes to see therapists normally, in Japan, that was very much not the case. Indeed, UA was the only hero school to have a therapist, and Izuku only knew that because of his general hero knowledge. Aizawa had never mentioned Hound Dog before the USJ incident, and neither had Recovery Girl after that.

A part of him thought that Momo would object to the idea out of hand, but to his surprise, she nodded firmly. “I think that would help immensely. Kyo-chan and I were able to help one another through it, but I think Kirishima, at the very least, needs to stop bottling it up inside. I've seen him a time or two simply stare out over the gunwales or just go off and be alone when we were on Clockwork Island.”

She then sighed. “But again, that is not the main thrust of my thinking at the moment.” Momo took a sip from her cup, pulling away from Izuku's still be-casted hand, somehow missing the warmth of that touch despite still holding her cup. -She shook that observation off as she finally got to the meat of the matter, in her opinion. “My observation about the world in general was meant to convey something that we have only touched the surface of. I believe that all of us need to realize that the battles here are not simply between hero and villain, between law-abiding citizen and not. Not only will we, in perhaps a lot of cases, be thrown back on our own ideas of morality rather than what we perceive as the law, but we will also need to realize that the fighting here is going to mostly be kill-or-be-killed. And someone willing to go to those lengths is always going to be able to fight harder than someone who is simply trying to knock someone out.”

Momo sighed again. “I, I’m not saying that we will need to go into every fight with the intent to kill, but I think we need to enter every fight with the knowledge that we might have to. That is a very thin line to walk, I realize, and believe me, **I do**. My quirk gives me a **lot** of ways to hurt or even kill people. But I think it is still a mental shift that all of us need to take the time to acknowledge **now** before we run into further trouble.”

Izuku frowned a lot during Momo’s little monologue, staring straight ahead for a few moments as he processed it. The worst part, though, was that he didn’t exactly disagree. “I, I can’t say that I’m exactly happy about that observation, Yaoyorozu-san, but I understand where you’re coming from. I could even say I agree with you. But that, that doesn’t mean I won’t be looking for any other possible solution first and foremost.”

“I don’t think any of us will ever look for the ‘kill solution’ first, or else we wouldn’t want to be heroes,” Momo answered with a wan chuckle. Then her eyes narrowed, and she leaned forward, poking Izuku in the side, causing him to jolt sideways a little. *Ara, is he ticklish? New information, hehehe!* “And using my last name and so formal, too? Are we back to being mere acquaintances then, rather than friends?”

“N, no, of course not!” Izuku twisted his wheelchair entirely around to face her, his arms flapping around him as he desperately tried to fix his social faux pas. “No, it’s nothing like that, it’s just, I still have issues with using people’s first names sometimes, and well, we’re here alone together, and it was just, I mean...”

Momo giggled, suddenly feeling far better despite the serious topic of a moment before, shaking her head. - “I was just teasing you, Izuku. And I think you need to grab onto that wheel quickly, or else we might find ourselves entirely turned around.”

Hastily, Izuku turned back to his work at the wheel, and again having a bit of trouble getting them back on course. He was pouting all the while, which did nothing to settle Momo’s bout of giggles. “Just for that, I think that unless you have another heavy topic to drop on me tonight, we should turn our attention to your quirk.”

Stifling a last little giggle, Momo sifted her tea, settling it down and leaning back in her chair. “As Kyo-chan would say, lay it on me, Mr. Big Brain.”

“That last bit is quite rich coming from Miss ‘I memorized the entire periodic table and everything I built prior to being told I didn’t have to in order to use my quirk’,” Izuku jibed back before asking, “But speaking of that, did you ever look at Midnight’s quirk? The gas she emits I mean, not the actual process with which she does so? I realize we’ve already covered the topic of weapons to a certain degree, although even there, I think we might have room for improvement. But an idea I had back on Clockwork Island was whether or not you could somehow mimic other quirks, especially those like Midnight’s, which simply create something.

It might seem a little dishonest, but considering that we're in an entirely different dimension, I don't think anyone's going to care."

This conversation led to a series of experiments and back-and-forth questions about Momo's quirk, during which she created not only a vial full of Midnight's gas but also learned how to emit some of it from her forearm directly rather than into a container. She could also create oil and even petroleum. That was certainly interesting, and could have major implications if they ever decided to allow Mei to go full combustion engine on them. She could even create water, both regular water and water similar in composition to seawater, although they would need to experiment a bit with that to see if it would actually work in the same manner on Devil Fruit users as regular ocean water would. How long they were talking about that, Momo didn't know, but it was possibly the most delightful time she'd had since Kyo-chan had taken her to see a local band at a park in Mustafu.

They were slowly running out of ideas for Momo's quirk that were safe enough to test in the enclosed area of the wheelhouse when the Grand Line decided to intervene again. Through one of the portholes, Izuku could see snow beginning to fall, and not regular snow either. Large football-sized bits of snow were falling out of the air, splattering down onto the deck with punishing force.

Wincing, he looked over at Momo. "Yaomomo, I hate to say it..."

The fact that he really did hate to say it need not be said, but Momo still chuckled, leaned over and patted him on the shoulder before moving over and pulling on her warm coat and gloves and grabbing up a shovel. "Don't worry, this won't take me long. And don't you dare wake up any of the others. They need their sleep."

Nodding, Izuku watched her go, trying hard not to let his eyes flick down to her swaying hips for a second, wondering, as many a man had throughout the generations, how women could move like that. He then shook his head and looked over to the kitchen before looking down at the wheel. It would take some doing, but.

True to her words, Momo was able to clean off the deck in record time and was back inside within twenty-five minutes or so. During that time, Izuku had wheeled himself to and from the kitchen area, laying out ingredients for a small snack that Melissa had been teaching him to make. When Momo entered, he thanked her for her work and then asked her to take over at the wheel for a moment.

Seeing what he was doing, Momo did not object at all, having learned several times since coming to this world that she and cooking did not get along at all, much to her chagrin. Unlocking the wheel, she quickly put them back on course as they had begun to drift off somehow. With that seen to, Momo looked over to Izuku as he bustled about the kitchen, a

faint blush coming to her face as she bit her lip. The accouterments certainly did not match, but listening to Izuku praise her work out on the deck and watching him cook like this was doing something to her insides. *Odd, I would've never thought that a domestic scene like this would be so... pleasant. After all, I have seen my family's servants cook and clean for me constantly. Perhaps it is the more homely atmosphere?*

Shaking that thought off, Momo smiled, a glint appearing in her eye. "However, it occurs to me that our conversation thus far has been entirely on my quirk, not your own. Would you be willing to answer some questions about it and perhaps submit to a quirk analysis if you have not already done so?"

Izuku paused, wrestling with several differing imperatives in his head. One of them was shouting about how it was All Might's quirk, and he couldn't share its secrets any more than he'd already had with Melissa back on Clockwork Island. But another part reminded that aspect of his mind very firmly that according to Mei and Melissa, the best mathematicians he knew at the moment, there was absolutely no way they could return home. They simply did not have enough of the numbers, let alone the total equation, to figure that out. So why did the secret matter?

Even more than that, Momo was offering him help, something that Izuku realized he kind of needed. He hadn't really sat down and worked out what All Might's quirk was doing, and he had learned, intellectually anyway thanks to his discussion with Melissa, that comparing himself to All Might was, to put it bluntly, going to either worry him into a grave, or simply outright kill him. And Momo also had proven to be an amazing analyst. *Yet there are a lot of reasons for me to not open up about One For All just yet without at least talking to Melissa first.*

With that idea in mind, Izuku said slowly, "I, there are some aspects of my quirk that I need to talk to Melissa about. Some things that my quirk has in common with All Might's. Since she's already done an analysis of his, it will give us a good base to work from. But I think eventually, yes, I would like to have a conversation on that score. Just not right now, please?"

Momo hummed thoughtfully, then nodded despite a needle of some strange emotion going through her at the idea that Izuku wanted to speak to Melissa about something before her. "Certainly, if you wish to speak to Melissa about something first, I'm not going to argue. However, I do have another question. How exactly do you keep your hair so fluffy? And where do your notebooks come from? I have seen them literally appear out of midair."

To her surprise, Izuku cocked his head, reaching up into his hair and ruffling it. -"I don't know what you're talking about. I really don't understand why people never see me have my notebooks until I open them. It's kind of strange to me. As for my hair, I get that from my mom. Well, not the whole curly untamable thing, the softness. The curly aspect, I take from my

father, along with my freckles.” He laughed then, shaking his head. “My mom used to call my hair a bird’s nest waiting for a bird to move in.”

Momo laughed. “That would be quite cute, I think. A pity that Koda-san is not here so we could test that theory.”

“Anivoice is an amazing quirk really, ideal for search and rescue. Although I have to wonder, why didn’t he use any kind of bugs or anything like that during the USJ? I can only imagine what it would feel like for the villains to suddenly have to deal with hundreds of little ants crawling up their legs. Or rats. There must’ve been a lot--.”

“Never mentioned that idea again!” Momo interrupted, shivering a little. “The very idea of that is horrifying. But tell me, how did you come to delight in quirks so much? What was the first quirk you ever analyzed? And what was the one that you had the most fun with?”

“The first ever?” Izuku laughed a little, taking a break from where he was cooking something that smelled absolutely divine to Momo’s rumbling stomach to scratch at his cheek in embarrassment.

Yet such was the good job Momo and the others had been doing to build up his confidence that he continued on despite a small voice in the back of his head shrieking out about how Momo would find it freakish or weird. “I think I started analyzing quirks before I could use a pencil. My first few were in crayon.” Momo’s giggle sounded divine to his ears, and he grinned over his shoulder at her. “The first one I truly analyzed though was...”

He lost his smile for a moment, and Momo scowled. Seeing Izuku’s confidence and happiness start to drain away, she decided to take a page from Kyoka’s book again, using one of the terms that her rocker friend had thought up for that... individual. “Baku-bitch, right?”

Although the term felt wrong in her mouth, the curse had the intended effect, and Izuku stumbled, turning to stare at the heiress. “Don’t bother, Izuku. Let’s just not think about that individual, shall we? What was the quirk you had the most fun analyzing?”

Seeing the supportive smile on Momo’s face, Izuku’s self-confidence came back, and he shot back, “What, besides yours, you mean?” He was rewarded with a blush, and he grinned cheerily before going on to explain a quirk he had seen once in action in 1-B. The quirk was called Size, and it belonged to a young lady in that class, who he had surprisingly met a few times on the train to and from school. “She was kind of quiet, but her quirk was positively amazing! The implications it could have on so many aspects of life are phenomenal, up there with your own or Uraraka-san’s for breaking the common rules of Quirk Energy Dispensation Effect.”

“My own we’ve already gone over, but why Ochako-san?”

“Her quirk isn’t doing what she was told it does. Honestly, if I ever meet the quirk analyst who gave her that analysis, I might have to beat him over the head with a 2 x 4,” Izuku answered seriously.

That caused Momo to laugh, and the conversation continued until moments later, Izuku set down some food for the pair of them. When he made to take over the wheel, Momo peremptorily waved him off. “I have two working hands. You don’t. Eat first, then trade places.”

Izuku nodded, then blushed rosily at the low moan Momo let out as she bit into the sweet dessert dumplings that Izuku had made. The sound was almost visceral in its delight and went straight from his ears to somewhere much further south. He looked away wildly, then hit on something to say before things got a little too embarrassingly silent. “Er, I’ve been thinking, I think we need more portholes in here. The one forward onto the main deck is fine, but we need to look sideways and back over our shoulders, too. Maybe it was a bad idea to put the wheel inside. Surprised too often by outright attacks from the sea monsters.”

Licking her fingers indecorously, Momo nodded and hastily took part in the conversation to take attention away from her momentary lack of manners. “I agree. The crow’s nest needs to be made permanent, along with some means of communication down to the wheelhouse that doesn’t involve shouting into the wind. If Kyoka or Kirishima aren’t on duty, the rest of us lack both the hearing and volume necessary to be heard over some of the storms we’ve hit so far.”

From there, they discussed their journey so far and then segued into a conversation about science and the local level of technology. Then, they began to talk about weapons, gear, styles, science, politics back home, and politics in this world. The night wound on as they talked about everything under the sun, losing themselves entirely to the conversation even as Izuku kept them on course, and Momo occasionally had to go out and see off this sea beast or dump large piles of snow off of the main deck.

Nothing major interrupted them at all, and the night wound on into the morning.

OOOOOOO

Kyoka woke up and instantly knew that she had slept far too long. Her eyelids were doing that glued-together thing that they often did after she finally got some sleep after a long night, and some sun was actually streaming in from the porthole. Considering that she should have been woken up around four-thirty or five in the morning for her time on watch, that was very much a no-no.

It still took a few moments to register even as she began to crawl out of bed, but by the time Kyoka was fully awake, she was also quite annoyed.- *If Izuku has done that whole selfless*

thing again and stayed up the entire night and hurt himself trying to do everything he had to, I'm going to get pissed!

She gazed into a few of the other rooms, noticing that everyone else but Momo was still asleep, which gave her some hope, even as she roused Melissa and Tsuyu. Tsuyu should've joined her on her watch, and Melissa should be going on watch right now. They let the boys sleep for a little while longer, with Melissa breaking off to check in on the engine room. There, the blonde quickly and efficiently refilled the engine with enough coal for a few more hours, noting that someone else must've done so during the night.

With Tsuyu off to the bathroom, this left Kyoka on her own as she marched up onto the main deck and then into the wheelhouse, where she found what she expected to find, Izuku and Momo sitting there side-by-side at the wheel, sharing what was possibly their twentieth or thirtieth cup of tea together, arguing playfully about something.

"— The numbers do not lie," Momo was saying as she entered, smirking at Izuku's pout. "And those numbers are telling me that you could be at least twice as strong as All Might. Cogito ergo sum, you could be better than All Might with enough training."

"But he's, he's All Might! How can you say that I can reach that pinnacle even with more training?" Izuku argued back, waving his free hand wildly, a flush on his features that made his freckles stick out even more, to Kyoka's amusement. "He's..."

"Forty-plus years old, most of which he spent training his quirk or using it as a hero. You're not even nineteen yet and have barely... what, a full year under your belt training with it after it finally came in?" Momo arched an eyebrow, then broke off and waved merrily at Kyoka. "Kyo-chan! What are you doing up? Are you all right?"

Izuku twisted away from whatever reply he was going to give to Momo's patently impossible statement, staring at Kyoka, then out past her shoulder. "Wait, really? It's morning? When did that happen?"

"Precisely at the point where you two should have woken someone else up to take over the watch," Kyoka drawled, losing a lot of her anger at the simple confusion on the two's faces. The rest of it disappeared as Momo reached beside her and pulled out a strange-looking staff. It was all metal, with what looked like two tuning forks sticking out of the top and a bulge bit at the other end, maybe just a blunt weapon, Kyoka couldn't tell.

"I'm glad to see you anyway," Momo practically babbled, her eyes twitching a little from tiredness and perhaps bladder overload from all the tea. "Look at this. Izuku came up with an idea, and I had to try it instantly. The tines here at the top of the staff, it will allow you to

release your heartbeat blasts over distances! They'll be dangerous and punishing, but blunt impact instead of cutting."

Jiro took the staff, then experimentally plugged her jacket into the small hole halfway along its length. Instantly, the thing began to hum into life, the hum carrying from the center of the staff up into the tines on the top.

"I wouldn't recommend you try it inside unless you want us to make a nice sunroof, but it should work!" Momo enthused.

"Er, thanks, Yaomomo, I'll try it later." Jiro set the staff to one side, trying to fight a blush off of her face at the idea that Momo and Izuku had spent so much time thinking of ways to help her. Right now, she had to take care of these two.

Behind her, Tsuyu and Melissa entered the wheelhouse and Kyoka gently reached down, pulling Momo up out of her chair. "Come on, Momo, it's time to put you to bed."

"Okay!" Momo said, and then surprised all of them by pulling Kyoka into a hug. She then looked over at Izuku and the others, smiling widely as Kyoka hugged her back, quickly trying to keep Momo upright. While her brain seemed still wired and good to go, her legs most certainly were not, and the taller girl practically collapsed into Kyoka's arms even as she spoke to Izuku and the others. "You should try this, you know. Kyo-chan gives magnificent hugs!"

That broke through Kyoka's control, and she just knew there was a blush on her face that was just not going to go away for a bit, but she resolutely ignored it, turning her head slightly to look over at Melissa and Tsuyu. "Could one of you help me here? She's about a step above dead weight in my arms at the moment, and we need to get the girl into her bunk."

Melissa instantly volunteered, moving over and taking a majority of Momo's weight off to Kyoka. The taller girl could more easily handle Momo's own height, as Tsuyu, still clad in the coat that Momo had made for her days ago, slowly shook her head, staring from the still babbling Momo to the faraway look in Izuku's eyes. "Right, new rule. From now on, no letting both Izuku and Momo on the same night watch."

At that point, Kirishima and Mei came in and with Kirishima taking his place at the wheel, Izuku allowed himself to be pushed away by Tsuyu. Getting him into bed was a chore as always, made harder by the fact that his hand-eye coordination was not the best at the moment, given how much tea he and Momo had shared. But she was able to do so and even ~~tucked~~ tucked Izuku in. - The frog girl then watched as, within a few seconds, his eyes had closed, and he was dead to the world.

Kyoka rejoined the others after doing the same to Momo with Melissa's help, blushing still brighter than before at the fact that Momo had basically been trying to pull off her own

clothing even as she was pushed back onto the bed. The moment Momo's back hit the mattress, the girl was out like a light, leaving her half undressed, her bare abs and underboob visible for Kyoka's perusal.

Luckily, this had been missed by the blonde girl, who had raced up back onto the deck at a warning shout from above. One of the various snake-like sea monsters had come upon them again, rearing up out of the ocean and lunging down to take a bite out of their ship.

Kirishima met this with a punch to the side of the jaw that sent its head sideways and over the gunwale again, and then Kyoka arrived, having raced into the wheelhouse first and then back out with her new weapon. She and Melissa both raised their weapons, Melissa's being a simple pirate musket, firing at the beast. The bullet did little damage, bouncing off of the creature's scales just as they had seen several times before.

From Kyoka's staff, a burst of visible soundwaves crashed out, accompanied by a *BRRROOOZZZ* sound.

The sonic assault crashed into the creature's head, sending it back and to the side with teeth blasted out of its mouth while the sonic screech sent several of the defenders reeling. The creature, though, had taken by far the worst of it and dove away with a whale, trailing blood down into the depths.

"Damn!" Kyoka exclaimed, staring down at the staff. "That, that was a bit more than I expected."

Kyoka hesitantly pulled her jack out, then looked at some of the seams visible along the staff. As she unscrewed the top, she heard a series of small clicks and pops, then even more when she took apart the middle from the bottom bit. "Well, I think I just got a new weapon. Momo and Izuku might have annoyed me with their little stunt of letting us all sleep through the night, but I gotta say they do good work."

"I'm just grateful we brought along all of the former pirate muskets the locals were willing to let us have. At least it gives those of us with no long-range punch some kind of hitting power at range. Although obviously against monsters that size, it mattered less than a pinprick," Melissa muttered, shaking her head as she stared down at the musket in her hand. "Rifling, rifling and actual bullets instead of musket balls. I think I'm going to go get busy in the carpenter's workroom for a bit. Mei?"

Mei stuck her head out from where she had been hastily grabbing up some of the leftovers from Momo and Izuku's meals last night. "I got you. I'll meet you there after breakfast."

The stare she gave Melissa implied where that breakfast should be coming from, and the blonde sighed, muttering, “Dammit Jim, I’m a scientist, not a cook,” under her breath, even as she moved towards the wheelhouse.

With most of the crew well-rested, the rest of the day passed uneventfully. The weather did change dramatically, going from quite chilly and reeking of snow to almost scorching hot within minutes. So hot that even Tsuyu, who was extremely grateful to leave the cold behind again, couldn’t really handle it very well.

Then there was an attack of these strange water monkey things, another type of giant monster that tried to use wave attacks to toss the ship onto its side. Luckily, Kirishima was able to steer them into the waves one after another, and with Shoto out of the engine room for the moment, he was able to help lay down long-range fire on the creatures that drove them away along with Kyoka.

After that came an attack from venomous flying fish. The rest of them retreated into the wheelhouse as Kirishima smacked them out of the air or kicked them off the deck as they landed, grimacing at the patches of green they left behind, the venom from their spikes almost acting like a very low-powered acid.

When he rejoined the rest of them inside, Melissa had once more cooked lunch for them all and was sitting down next to Mei as they went over designs for a series of new guns for those of them who couldn’t already attack from range.

“A few of those flying fish hit the crow’s nest with enough power to punch straight through,” the rock-hard wannabe hero said, shaking his head and gesturing upwards with the thumb. “We’re going to need to repair that. And I think we need to seriously think about shifting our watch organization a bit. I think there ~~needs~~need to ~~be at least three~~be three people on watch~~-at least~~. One up in the crow’s nest, one ~~in~~of the wheel, and then one walking the deck. It’ll cut in on our sleep, but there’s some damage to the gunwales and a few of the planks that Momo must’ve missed last night. Those fish were a little too manly for the main deck, too.”

“I’m just grateful we weren’t hit with the worst the Grand Line had to offer us last night because I don’t think either Izuku or Yaomomo were in any mind to notice,” Melissa drawled, sounding a little jealous for some reason.

“Look at the bright side. At least because of luck and the two of them, we all got some good sleep, kero,” Tsuyu shrugged.

Kyoka nodded, finished off her plate and stood up, heading out onto the main deck. "That just means we've got a lot of energy and a lot of things to use it on. Let's get a move on, crew."

OOOOOOO

Once more, as he had nearly every night he wasn't totally exhausted since coming to this world, Izuku found himself in an ocean of gray mist. His own body was made of golden mist for some reason and didn't respond to his demands below the belt. He could move his arms now – that had come first - and the rest of his upper body had come a little bit at a time every few days. But he still couldn't speak, and his legs were still almost grafted to wherever he was currently standing. -A horrible thought, considering it looked like more mist.

And in the distance, he could hear voices again. Only this time, they sounded much closer. - He could make out more of the words and tone. -Thus it became clear very quickly that at least two of the users were not very happy with events at the moment. "--Don't get what's happened! And you know that **he's** still out there! We need to find a way to return to our own world. Only One For All can deal with All For One. And he is surely back unless you think there's some other mad scientist able to graft several quirks into one body like that Nomu creature."

"I refuse to think that we've been Isekai'd!" A second querulous voice interjected, almost shouting the words as he backed up the first voice.

"Whether or not you believe it or not doesn't matter! It's re--!" Another voice said, torn between amazement and delight, although the words he spoke seemed to ebb away after a moment.

Another voice interjected this time, a female voice, her words barely audible in comparison to the others because she wasn't shouting, simply speaking calmly, trying to keep the peace. Her tone reminded Izuku of his mom for a moment. "-- Deal with the now. Help---"

Another voice spoke up then, energetic and gleeful. "-- Give Black Whip! Needs it! Legs, arm not going to---."

"No!" That word came from several throats, followed by a cacophony. One of them shouted something about Bulk something. The woman said something called, "Float comes first, dammit," her earlier calm manner gone. -Another one espoused something about lightning.

It was so jumbled that Izuku could feel his head start to hurt as he tried to listen to each individual at once. Finally, it got too much, and he shouted, "What are you all!? What is going on!"

And to his astonishment, his 'ears' actually heard what he had just shouted. His mouth had actually responded to his mental command, just like his upper body was able to do.

Even more astonishing was that the voices out in the fog seemed to hear that. Soon, several beings began to take shape through the fog, the first of whom was a woman. She was statuesque, powerfully built, almost Amazonian, with visible muscles covering her arms, waist, and legs, which were shown off in her outfit. This was a hero costume of some kind, simplistic but certainly eye-catching, with a yellow cape. Her hair was dark brown, and came to below her shoulders, and she wore a wide grin that looked almost like All Might's. "Yo, sprout. My name's Nana, and this, this is the connection you have with One For All--"

That was all the spirit could say, though, before Izuku began to feel his body rousing from sleep. He tried to hold onto the dream, but it faded into the background too quickly, even as some final curses from another one of those figures reached Izuku's mental ears.

Sitting up groggily in bed, Izuku slowly blinked, staring at the far bulkhead, then out the nearby porthole. All the rooms had one each, and he could see outside the light of evening coming down from on high. He had slept practically the entire day away. And for once, he had kept some of the dream in his mind. He quickly wrote it down in his notebook before setting it aside and beginning the laborious process of getting from his bunk into his wheelchair. Thanks to Mei's changes to the wheelchair, this was a lot easier than it had been previously, and he was soon away, rolling himself out of the room and into the hallway beyond.

Getting up onto the main deck involved hooking himself up to a winch system and then moving his wheelchair's wheels backward, but eventually, he was up on the main deck and wheeled forward, waving at Kyoka and Tenya as they were on duty out on the deck at the moment. - "You didn't need to leave me to sleep that long, you know," he said after greeting them.

"That's right, we didn't. It was a purely conscious decision on our part. All of us should endeavor to get eight hours a night of sleep. The fact that you saw fit to sacrifice your own sleep in order to get us those eight hours is laudable, but also something that must be paid back in like coin," Tenya said pompously, shaking his head and gesturing Izuku towards the door leading into the wheelhouse. "You're just in time to partake in lunch, at least. And if you think that you will be spending another night on watch despite getting so much sleep, you had best think again."

Chuckling at that, Izuku nodded and made his way over into the wheelhouse, where he found Momo taking part in a strange, small-scale fashion show. Her top was the normal small jacket over a muscle-t, but her pants were new and not something she had made herself, a bright red color that reminded Izuku of the color of Momo's very...**sparse** hero costume. It took

a moment for Izuku to realize that Momo's sailor jacket had also been changed, with several pockets added. Why that wasn't a thing on a normal sailor's outfit or any of their outfits, bar Mei's, was a question that Izuku was going to ponder. More importantly, he watched as Momo pulled out a large wrench that should in no way have been able to house the thing, especially with no visible bulge.

"It worked!" Momo chuckled, holding up the wrench and tossing it to Mei after a moment's inspection. Mei caught it gleefully, stuffing it into a loop on her work belt. "Thank you for this, Kyo-chan, Melissa."

"You're welcome," the other two girls said, smiling at how bouncy Momo was at receiving such a simple gift. If it could even be called that. "Although I don't think that using those pockets for such large tools is exactly a viable option if we're trying to keep the fact that you're doing something inside them a secret."

Izuku remembered Kyoka's suggestion of making seemingly bottomless pockets for Momo and wondered idly how the ones on her outer jacket would work, then resolutely decided he didn't want to know what modifications had been made to the muscle T-shirt she would wearing underneath it. Thinking of Momo, Kyoka, Melissa or any of the girls in that way lay madness.

"They look as if you could keep a holdout pistol in them," he said in lieu of announcing his presence. He held up a hand, mining how far the pistol's muzzle would go. "Something like what women sometimes carried in their handbags in the bad old days before quirks."

"I gotta say, a bottomless handbag would be a heck of an amusing way to mess with guys. Most of them have some weird ideas about women's purses anyway," Kyoka said, looking over at Izuku from head to toe. "You look about as rested as Momo does, so I suppose I won't have to send you straight back to your bunk."

"Please don't. I'd probably go stir crazy really quickly if you did," Izuku answered meekly.

"I don't know. I understand that in terms of size, that would work, but from what I can remember of pictures of such weapons, they were quite a bit more sophisticated than the technology we have seen so far in this world. Not so much the gunpowder, although that too, but the general appearance, the magazine capacity, the metals and so forth," Momo murmured.

"Girl, you created a sonic staff for me. I don't think a pistol is going to matter much," Kyoka said, shaking her head.

"I still say we could get away with quite a lot more of that kind of thing," Mei said, while Momo mumbled about tiredness having impaired her sensibilities. "Maybe not rockets or heat-seeking missiles, but something!"

"We could probably get away with more in the way of advanced materials than anything else," Momo said, gesturing over to Izuku, who had moved to try to take over the wheel again, only to be glared at and shooed towards the kitchen table by Melissa. "Izuku and I talked about it last night, and it is awfully hard for the common person to tell one kind of metal from another. We can't do things like radar, missiles, or machine guns, but we could make better pistols perhaps, ~~staves~~ and knives or even swords out of advanced materials like titanium or other things."

"Actually, a titanium knife or sword would be kind of bad. Titanium doesn't really retain an edge very well; it wouldn't break or bend, but its edge would dull quite quickly," Melissa said, stroking one hand through her long hair for a moment in thought. "I think... Momo, are you up for a bit of experimentation? I think it might be time for us to tool up a bit more in terms of weapons than in actual tools."

Momo agreed, and with Kirishima and Tenya outside and Tsuyu and Mei working on repairing the crow's nest, the others settled down into a planning session.

This planning session ended that night with the entire crew getting small but exceedingly sharp holdout daggers, easily able to be hidden under their belts, something that all of their outfits had in common. By this point, all of them were wearing pants and simple shirts, the same kind of thing they had seen back on Clockwork Island, the better to blend in.

Melissa and Mei received pistols along with belts of ammunition. Momo received a similar pistol, but her belt of ammunition was special, leading into her pantaloons pockets on both sides. That way, she could make more bullets for herself in the pocket without anyone realizing what she was doing. - Even better, the look seemed almost like a fashion statement.

These pistols, moreover, were far more advanced than the simple muzzleloading pistols they had seen the pirates use. Instead, the pistols Momo supplied were copied from the American Wild West: six-shooters, along with more advanced bullets. All of this meant that Momo ate about twice again what everyone else did at dinner, but she was well pleased with the way the day went.

Tsuyu and Tenya, on the other hand, were not. Tsuyu objected to the idea of going armed all, while Tenya was quick to point out that "When we fought the pirates, their preponderance of muskets and pistols was the main cause of death among them, not our own actions."

Kirishima winced a bit at that, looking away from the two objectors. When he had charged into the ship's lower decks, it was true that the Pirates had started to fire their pistols at him, the ricochets doing a lot of damage to their own people. But looking back on it, he wasn't certain that ricochets were the main cause of death among the pirates in that fight rather than his fists.

"Guns like that make it far too easy to kill your opponent, and we are heroes. Killing our opponents should be a last resort, the difference between the life or death of someone we are trying to save," Tenya continued.

Momo and Izuku looked at one another and sighed before Izuku began to speak. -"That, that's the way it was in our old world, Tenya. Not in this one. Momo and I talked about this last night, and..."

The following discussion was not pleasant in any way for any of them, although Mei seemingly didn't care one way or the other. When a depressed Tsuyu, who had lost the argument about lethal force, demanded to know why in a waspish tone of voice, Mei simply shrugged her shoulders.

"I get why you all, with your powerful quirks and everything, think that you know there's always got to be a solution that lets you take someone alive. Me, I don't. And frankly, I don't have any kind of empathy for anyone else if they are coming at me with a lethal weapon. If they're coming at me with a tonfa or something like that, maybe I won't shoot them. But if they're trying to fire at me with a cannon, a gun, or anything else? I'll do onto them first."

Tsuyu winced at that, but she had already lost the argument, with even Tenya reluctantly agreeing that in this world, they would have to be prepared to kill if they had to. It was depressing to think about and made Tsuyu miss home all the more, but she understood it. "I just hope that we don't get so used to taking our opponent's lives that we forget that there're supposed to be other solutions, kero."

"I think with all of us here, that isn't going to happen," Shoto said, who had joined them for the evening meal, a few shovels of coal once more taking his place in the engine room.

Two weeks passed, throughout which everyone aboard got used to the weirdness that was the Grand Line and the various methods with which it could attempt to murder them. The boys and girls also got used to living in group close proximity with one another.

In the header, a whiteboard showed up on the outer wall, where anyone using it would have to sign their name. Similarly, the bathing area had timeslots for the boys and girls. Momo and the others had taken Mei to task about modesty, and rooms were sacrosanct. You could only enter them if you were helping the owner of the room inside or had been invited.

Both Kirishima and Kyoka had been strongly admonished to not leave the room until they could see straight, and to make certain that they had all of their clothing on when they did. Kirishima had nearly walked in on Melissa in the bathroom just like Kyoka had Izuku, although he was a bit better about mornings than Kyoka was so long as he got five hours or more of sleep the night before.

That didn't mean that the ship didn't face problems, however, and one day, the engine broke down entirely. One thing that none of the engineer types had realized was that steam engines were not exactly clean. The soot from the coal that replaced Shoto every night created a very nasty residue in the system, and it caused issues in many ways. Similarly, occasionally, the weight of the ice that filled the water reservoir also caused issues for the reservoir itself, and even in action, the steam put pressure on joints in strange and unusual ways occasionally when Shoto shifted or when there was a preponderance of coal to one side of the burner or the other.

To make things worse, a huge storm hit the ship as they floundered. It was so cold even in the coat Momo had created for her. Tsuyu was nearly sent into a torpor. -The storm carried actual ice with it too rather than snow. The ice battered the deck, the steam stack, and everything else, including the teens, threatening to ice over everything.

And down in the hold, the cold had one other effect. -The seawater in Bear King's cell froze. And frozen sea water had no impact on Devil Fruit powers.

Instantly, the semi-comatose state the seawater had forced on him faded, and coupled with the cold Bear King woke up, grimacing. "Wh, whesss... graah!"

With a flex, Bear King began to crack the ice around him, grimacing and he almost activated his Devil Fruit, but pulled back at the last minute. His body felt lethargic and weak, but he knew that if he used his Devil fruit before he got out of the ice, it would just melt back into sea water. *Gonna have to do this with pure muscle.*

Grunts and cracking noises abounded as he began to shatter the ice. He had a bit of play, but not a lot, and the chains under his arms were not helping. Eventually between some shoulder movements and headbutts to the ice, he had cracked it enough to give himself more leverage. Sawing in either direction, more of the ice started to shatter, and he soon had an arm free.

Raising it out of the ice he grabbed the chain that had been holding that shoulder shoulders out of the water, heating his hand only. This weakened the metal to the point where he could pull it out more, giving him still more room to move. Eventually he was able to do so to the point where he could begin to punch the ice, cracking it further.

At this point in his escape, Momo and Tenya raced down into the ship carrying Tsuyu. The frog girl had finally been overcome by the cold, and had to be taken down into the engine room, the warmest place on the ship, as the glass on the portholes leading into the wheelhouse had been broken. They could replace them, but it would take time, time Tsuyu didn't have.

"Shoto!" Momo shouted, bursting into the engine room. "Dump some coal into the engine, and get up top. We need help up there keeping the ice from doing more damage to the ship. -I'll make you a coat as soon as we are done with Tsu."

Shoto didn't wait for her, racing up top, followed by Tenya. - Momo remained behind for a moment, making certain that Tsuyu was recovering in the heat. She was, the frog girl croaking weakly as she smiled up at the much taller girl. - "Go on, kero. I'll be good here in a bit. If it gets warmer out I'll come up to help you all, kero."

"Fine, but only after you're fully recovered, Tsu. Please don't push yourself, the last thing we need is you hurting yourself permanently somehow. We get enough scares in that direction from Izuku," Momo admonished. "And remember to take these heat pads with you," she finished, pointing at a few of the shake-and-use pouches she had just created.

Tsuyu keroed in amusement at that, then waved Momo off, watching her go before pulling her special coat off, setting it aside and rubbing her arms, reveling in the heat of the engine room after the insane cold outside.

Outside, Momo paused to pull on her gloves, having removed them a moment ago to make the few heat pads for Tsuyu. As she finished pulling her first glove, she paused at the sound of grunting. Not the groaning of timber under duress or the howling of the storm, but a man grunting. *Oh, no.*

Before she could do anything, a fist impacted the door to Bear King's impromptu cell, and the man himself barreled out into the hallway. Spotting her, he growled, activating his Devil Fruit, his whole body turning into heated metal as he charged, his words slurred by his missing teeth and the fact his jaw had healed poorly. "Yo lirrle bitrh! I'ss goin' to—"

If Momo had not gone through the events at the USJ and I Island. She might have panicked. If she had not had so many talks with Melissa, Kyoka, and above all, Izuku she might not have had as large a bag of tricks to call on. But she did. Before Bear King could cover half the distance between them, she had reached into her pocket and, using Creation she created a simple glass vial filled with Somnambulist, Midnight's Quirk-created gas.

Bear King roared as he charged forward, and Momo tossed the glass vial into his face, ducking under his lunge and between his legs. Which, given how much he smelled right now

would not have been the soft option even if he hadn't been fast enough to at least knee her in the side as she rolled through. -Above her, though the glass vial shattered on Bear King's face.

Even as Bear King turned to try and stomp her, his eyes were already closing, the gas having its normal immediate effect. "W, yous, you bitrs..." he slurred before collapsing.

Momo eeped and quickly scrambled backwards on all fours to get out from under the massive man as he collapsed, the impact nearly cracking the floorboards under them. "Oh that would have been most unpleasant!" she muttered, pushing herself to her feet.

"Kero? Yaomomo, what was all the noise abo—ah," Tsuyu stuck her head out from the engine room, staring at the crumpled form of Bear King and seeing Momo's head over his rear as it stuck up into the air. "What happened?"

"I don't know, but I will send Melissa or Mei down to help you put him back in his cell. I think we'll need to rely more on my new trick to keep him out of it from now on, though," Momo said, shaking her head and creating another two vials of Somnambulist. "Hit him with one of these if he starts stirring again. Look at the bright side, though. At least this work will keep you out of the worst of the wind and ice."

"Everything all right down there?" Kyoka shouted. "I thought I heard something."

Momo smiled and with a nod towards Tsuyu headed up to the deck, shouting out what had happened before she went to work helping the others keeping the ice from forming all over the deck. -"Oh, nothing. Just a little bit of trouble with our prisoner. Melissa, you've got some work downstairs!"

The storm slowly ebbed over time, although the cold did not abate with it. Ice and snow came and went, sometimes joined by harsh winds and harsher currents. Thankfully no sea monsters came around to add to the misery, but by the time the weather calmed once more, all of the crew were battered and ~~exhausted~~ exhausted bar Izuku, who had stayed at the wheel the entire time. By this point, his legs were on the mend, and he could get around on crutches. But that didn't mean that he was able to stay on his feet for long periods or had in any way gotten his sea legs under him. Kirishima had been extremely forceful on that score when Izuku wanted to join them outside when the storm first hit, leaving Melissa behind to man the wheel.

Instead, Melissa had joined the others in the engine room, and now Momo and Mei joined Kyoka and Tsuyu in the bath~~ing~~ area. Winces and groans abounded as the girls cleaned one another, with Mei muttering imprecations under her breath. "Seriously! I didn't realize that steam was so temperamental! And screw this main deck nonsense. -Next time, we're building a fully covered ship!"

"I didn't either. And unfortunately, on this ocean, I think we might well need sail power as a backup, Mei. I know it annoys you, and frankly, it kind of does me, but unless we wish to rely even more heavily on my quirk than we already are, it is the only real solution if our main source of propulsion goes down," Momo said before ordering Mei to lean forward as she dumped a bucket of water over the girl's head, rinsing out the soap she'd used on her hair.

Kyoka was doing the same thing to Melissa and trying hard not to stare at any of the girls around her. Living in such close proximity to Momo had quixotically woken her up to the attractiveness of the other girls, although she still found herself drawn to Momo more than any of the others. Even Melissa was, while still gorgeous, less interesting in her eyes than Momo.

Momo moved to sit down as Mei moved over to hop into the bath, doing a quick rinse and then hopping back out, muttering about needing to get some sleep more than anything else. Since she was supposed to be on second watch that night, that made sense to the others. Tsuyu left with her, grunting about having forgotten a change of clothing and her own bar of soap.

Tsuyu had seemed out of sorts all day, and everyone had noticed it, although no one seemed to think of a way to bring it up to the girl herself. But now that she was gone, Melissa asked, "Do either of you know what's wrong with Tsuyu?"

Even as she spoke, Melissa urged Kyoka to sit in front of her. She paused momentarily, watching as Kyoka sat down, shaking her head as she looked at Kyoka's butt. Like the rest of Kyoka's body, it was trim and taut but very pert, the two glutes looking like they would fill a person's hands very nicely. *Gah, some girls have all the luck! I have such a boy butt, and she complains about the rest of us being too top-heavy with a booty like that?*

This was not exactly the truth. If she asked any of the boys, and any of them could in turn bring themselves to actually give an answer, they would respond that she had quite a nice rear, although perhaps not as perfectly bouncy and toned as Kyoka's. But like most women, Melissa had a few blind spots when it came to her body image.

The blonde shook those thoughts out of her head, looking away as she went on. "I don't want to sound insulting or anything, but is it something to do with her being part frog and us hitting so many cold fronts?"

"No, I think it's something personal. Tsuyu's bad mood only began today. But until Tsuyu brings it up, I'm not certain what we can do to help," Momo answered with a sigh.

Momo cleaned her hair for a few moments, then looked over as she heard Kyoka getting up, only to blink and stare in shock. "Oh my, you shave everything down there? Doesn't that hurt?"

Kyoka squawked, covering her privates with her hands for a second and rapidly backing away to the tub, sinking into it as Momo babbled apologies for her just saying that aloud. "I'm so sorry Kyo-chan, it just startled me, and I'm tired, and well, I'm sorry."

Watching Momo stand up and bow to her while completely naked caused Kyoka to shiver a bit, a spike of arousal going through her, making her very glad she was already in the water which hid her chest from view. "I, it's okay, Yaomomo, you don't have to apologize like that. We all get startled into blurting out things sometimes. Um, as for your question, I've never liked, er, having a lot of hair down there. My mom got me into it when I first started growing here down there, and I just kept it up."

"I used to get wax down there," Melissa opined, looking over at Momo. "I would've thought you would, too."

Momo shook her head with a blush. "No, I mean I do a little bit of shaving and control work, I suppose you could say, but... That kind of thing, um, my parents would never allow me to do something so daring." Something in her tone told the other two girls that this wasn't the only way her parents controlled her, but didn't interrupt as Momo went on. "I um... but I would be interested in doing, um, more down there, er I don't suppose you would be willing to teach me Kyo-chan? Only, it's kind of coming due for a shave down there, and it looks far more ..."

"I, I suppose I can show you," Kyoka said, shaking her head and biting back a whimper at the idea of being in such close proximity to her crush's body, her nipples hardening still further in the water.

Luckily for her self-control, though, Tsuyu took that moment to return, still looking in a bad mood as she plunked down into the chair that Kyoka had vacated, grumbling under her breath. This was a bit too much to ignore, and deciding to bite the bullet, Momo hesitantly reached over, touching Tsuyu's shoulder. "Tsuyu, is there, is there something wrong? Is there anything we can do to help?"

Tsuyu went still for a moment, then slowly shook her head, finished washing her hair, and then headed over to the bath, dunking herself inside. Exchanging a glance, Melissa and Momo followed, and soon, the four girls were taking up the four points around the tub, with three of them just soaking in the water for a few moments while Tsuyu ducked herself down entirely into the water. When she came up though, she found Momo still looking at her in concern.

Realizing her friend would not let this lie, she sighed. "I worked out how many days we've been in this alternate dimension, kero. If time here and back home flows at the same speed, we missed my little sister's birthday today. It, it will be the first birthday I've missed of either of my siblings. Satsuki and I, we had plans, plans we'd made weeks before school even

started to go to the beach and a water park just the two of us. I just... It just brought everything home again, kero. How much we're missing, and who we left behind, kero."

Instantly, Melissa and Momo were both pulling Tsuyu into a hug, which Kyoka reluctantly joined, the sadness of the moment driving out her horny thoughts. "I'm so sorry, Tsu! I should never have let us have that party in my room, not with so many dangerous experiments around!" Melissa exclaimed.

"It's not your fault. If I'm going to blame everyone, it would be Mei, and even that would be silly. Not only is it in the past, but since getting to know her, I've realized that blaming Mei for building something when she has an idea in her head would be like blaming the grass for growing, kero," Tsuyu answered, shaking her head. Then she poked Kyoka lightly in the ribs. "Although I could blame you for being so out of it that morning that you sat on a control lever instead of a chair, too, kero."

"If it makes you feel better, blame me all you like," Kyoka stated bluntly as she tightened her hug around the green-haired girl. "Whatever you need to feel better, Tsu."

"That isn't going to happen. It was just a cavalcade of errors. I think I just need some time alone, kero," Tsuyu gently pushed each of the other girls away, then ducked back down into the water as the other girls reluctantly moved away from her through the bath water. She stayed underneath for a few moments, then erupted up and outward in a leap over their heads to land lightly on the floor beyond. Quickly drying herself off, she changed and said good night to the girls.

Behind her, all three of the girls stayed in the bath for a few more moments, lost in their own thoughts. Melissa was missing her father something fierce, and Kyoka was reluctantly thinking about how her own parents would react to her missing for so long. Her father would no doubt rant, rave, and cry intermittently, while her mother would try to put it all into her music until she finally broke down and sobbed into his shoulder for hours. It was not a pleasant image to contemplate.

In contrast, Momo wasn't nearly as close with her parents as she got the impression the others were. They spent a lot of time with her, but more as if she was a trophy they showed off in various social functions. Yes, they took her with them around the world, but outside of soirees and very carefully prepared public outings, she had been left to explore the various cities with a pair of bodyguards rather than her parents. And then there were the various ways they had tried to control her and undercut her dream to be a hero, something that Momo had not shared with anyone, not even Kyoka yet. Even so, Momo knew she missed her parents a little bit and some of the older servants who'd acted more like older siblings or parents at times even more so.

Moments later, Melissa was the next to leave the bath, heading up to relieve Tenya on the main deck. The idea of three people being on watch hadn't really worked since there were so few of them, but two was still enough for now.

Eventually, as they were both getting a little prune, Momo and Kyoka exited the bath as well. Kyoka looked away as they both dressed before she felt a hand on her elbow. Looking around, she saw Momo's sad gaze on her. "Kyo-chan, I hate to impose, but do you think, do you think we could share a bunk tonight? I don't think I want to be alone right now."

Feeling much the same, Kyoka wordlessly nodded, and the two of them exited, heading towards Momo's room. There, as they had already changed into their nightwear, they both got into Momo's bunk quickly, with Kyoka swiftly snuffing out the candle in the small ship's lantern, one of many that they had been given by the Clockwork Islanders. The two girls wordlessly snuggled together, taking comfort in one another and the special bond they had begun to build from the moment they met at UA, which had only grown stronger here in this new world.

Melissa yawned wearily as she made her way back up the stairs to the main deck and from there into the wheelhouse, mentally going over some changes that they might need to think about for their next ship design, using that as a shield against her bad mood at the moment. It didn't really work, though, and her bad mood instantly got worse when she saw Izuku standing behind the wheel rather than using his wheelchair.

"Oh, will you sit down, Izuku?!" She barked, and Izuku stared at her wide-eyed for a moment before he slumped back into his wheelchair, which he had at least tied into place behind him.

"Er, M, Melissa, are you all right?" He asked hesitantly, only stammering a little bit, a sign of the amount of work that Melissa and everyone else had done in bolstering his self-esteem. Before he had arrived on I-Island, the very idea of a pretty girl being angry at him for something would've had Izuku freeze, stammer, blush and apologize profusely before even wondering what it was about.

Seeing the wide-eyed, almost twitchy look on Izuku's face made Melissa breathe in deeply, shaking her head as she moved over to make something to drink in the kitchen area. "Sorry, I shouldn't've shouted at you. But Izuku, you really do need to keep on resting your legs, you know. That one bone in your lower leg is still on the mend."

She paused as Izuku ran a hand through his hair sheepishly, reveling in being able to move both his arms more freely now, even though the forearm upper arm of one arm was still in separate casts, but at least the elbow was mobile now. The image brought to mind how happy Izuku had been a few days ago to be able to switch out from the full arm cast and actually be able to scratch his elbow for the first time in more than two months. The face he'd

had while doing so had been hilarious at the time, causing many of the crew to laugh, and now the memory helped banish a tiny portion of Melissa's currently sad mood.

"I know, but I just don't like being so immobile all the time, you know? And I don't think that your barking at me was altogether to do with my standing up, was it?" He asked, looking at her a little shrewdly.

Melissa snorted. "Getting better, you are at sensing other people's moods. A good thing this is," she answered, making her voice sound like a particularly famous little gremlin creature from science fiction fame, causing Izuku to laugh, although he still looked at her seriously. She sighed and explained how Tsuyu was missing her family and how that had made all the girls remember what they had left behind.

"I miss my mom too, sometimes," Izuku confided, smiling wanly in understanding. "Especially during the mornings. I miss seeing her before heading out for the day. Or when I find myself comparing my cooking to hers. I still haven't gotten my katsudon to taste as good as Mom's."

"It's the afternoon lunch for me. That was always the time that my dad would take off work to come and see me when I was in the labs. Or even at school occasionally," Melissa answered, shrugging her shoulders. "Mornings were always spent on projects or work, and both of us were workaholics, so night time was spent pretty much the same way."

The two of them fell silent for a few moments as Melissa created some American-style iced tea before holding out the jar to Izuku, who grimaced and shook his head quickly. He and most of the crew were all of the opinion that American iced tea was an abomination because of how much sugar went into it, although Mei quite enjoyed it after Melissa had introduced her to it. When Melissa came over to sit next to him, Izuku proposed that they do something for Tsuyu tomorrow to try and bolster her mood if she was still feeling down.

"That's a good idea. Provided that the Grand Line doesn't come up with another way to try and kill us," Melissa drawled. "Although I suppose Tsu would be just fine provided the way didn't include cold weather. Despite all of the preparations Yaomomo helped her with, this last bout really took it out of Tsu. To say nothing of Bear King and his breakout."

"We got lucky there. Yaomomo handled that about as perfectly as possible," Izuku enthused, shaking his head. "Although I think she's right, in the future, we might want to use Yaomomo's sleeping gas on prisoners rather than the elaborate mess we had to create for Bear King."

Melissa twitched a little at that, for some reason feeling a little jealous of Momo for a moment at Izuku's praise of the other girl, although the feeling faded as Izuku went on. "But I

have to admit, I don't think any of us were really prepared for how much craziness the Grand Line can provide."

"It makes me wonder how some of the heroes back home would deal with things here. I had an idea earlier today that Gang Orca would do amazing here, but I don't know, actually. He might find himself really low on the food chain," Melissa joked. "Although maybe his looks would be against him being able to fit in with the locals unless they thought it was a Devil Fruit of some kind."

"Actually, I don't think Gang Orca's looks would have to be explained away with the Devil Fruit. I think I heard some of the people back on Clockwork Island call Tsu a fishman."

Melissa's brows furrowed. The term wasn't one she had read about, but given how little information they'd found about the world in general so far, that really didn't mean much. "Well, however you would explain his looks away, Gang Orca would certainly do a better job than All Might. Uncle Might would be utterly pants at anything around the ship. When I was younger, he tried to help me around the labs occasionally, but instead, he would cause so much trouble! Those big hands of his were not exactly dexterous. I mean, we laughed about it, but there's a reason why I didn't try to show him around my lab when you two arrived on I-Island."

She laughed as Izuku gave her an utterly affronted look as if the very idea of All Might not being good at something was blasphemy. But then Melissa's eyes narrowed, and she reached over and poked him in the shoulder. "You're not still comparing yourself to All Might are you? That's not the reason you're still trying to push yourself despite your wounds, riii~ight?"

Izuku flinched a little, but not because he had indeed been comparing himself to All Might. He hadn't, rather, he had simply been comparing the effort he was able to put forward for the crew compared to what everyone else was doing. No, his flinch at the moment had to do with the topic of All Might itself. The two of them had not talked about All Might or the revelations about One For All since the discussion they'd had after Izuku had woken up in the hospital back on Clockwork Island. "UM... Speaking of All Might and well, everything there, are you, that is... We haven't talked about it. Are you still hurt about..."

Melissa thankfully understood what Izuku was trying to say, and she sighed, leaning back in her chair and crossing her legs. "I understand why you're asking, and I will admit that a part of me **is** still hurt that All Might never even brought up the subject of One For All with me. There are a few ways I can think up on the fly about how he could've brought up the subject with a ten or eleven-year-old Melissa in a way to ask if I wanted to be the kind of hero he was without really hinting about One For All. But remember that for a long time, I haven't seen All

Might as a role model, the kind of hero I dreamed of being for years before I stopped dreaming of being a hero at all.”

She snorted, shaking her head with a laugh and tapping her chest. “Frankly, that sort of started once I knew it was going to have curves. The idea of being a heavily muscled Amazon kind of went out the window at that point.”

A happy blush came to her features for just a second as Izuku’s eyes, as if completely separated from his mind, twitched over to her, going up and down his her body for a second. However, Melissa suppressed the feeling, looking at him thoughtfully. “Why are you bringing it up now?”

“Er, well, Momo asked me about my Quirk recently. I was wondering if I should share it with her and the rest of the crew at some point. And, well, I’ve been having dreams since we came to this world. Most of the time, I couldn’t remember much about them, but I’ve been getting better at it, and I, I think I need some one else’s opinion on what might be going on.”

That brought Melissa up straight, her eyes widening. “Dreams? What about? And yes, I think you should share the background of One For All with the others. You can do it on your own time, but I think it would be good for you.”

Izuku nodded at that and then explained how his dreams had evolved over time, first being about mists and voices and then slowly changing over time until finally, he had been able to actually act out in his dreams. He still couldn’t remember much, but he had been able last night to actually jot down the name of the woman he was apparently dreaming of, as well as her appearance over the past few days.

At the name Nana Shimura, Melissa’s eyes widened, tapping her chin. “You know, I think Uncle Might actually brought her up to me once! I can’t remember her hero name, but yeah, Nana Shimura rings a bell. She was never really popular but had a really high rescue rate, and I think that All Might saw her as something of a mentor... which, if it was literal, perhaps she was a previous wielder of One For All?”

At that, Izuku slowly nodded. He had been thinking of something in that direction, too, but the idea was so outlandish that he hadn’t really been able to put it into words. Hearing Melissa speak about the idea aloud made him understand what might be going on better. “I think that One For All is a lot more complex than All Might made it seem when he passed it on to me. I think it doesn’t just stockpile energy but impressions of the previous users. I think, I think that I might eventually be able to even use the quirks of the previous users!”

“That would be amazing,” Melissa said honestly. “And maybe a little terrifying if you ever get a handle on all of its power.”

Izuku nodded, grateful that Melissa didn't seem to be jealous even now, knowing that he could wield more than one quirk at a time. "Well, that might be a big if."

Melissa snorted that, shaking her head, then grinned at him. "You know, if you are seeing vestiges of the past users, you might eventually see one from Uncle Might. If you do, smack him for me, would you? Just because I don't think One For All would be for me doesn't mean I'm exactly happy with the fact that he never even thought of offering it to me. Or gave me any kind of positive reinforcements toward being a hero."

Izuku twitched at that before nodding. "I might. I know what it is like to never have anyone in your corner, to never have someone telling you that your dreams are possible. I, my mother didn't think I could do it either. Um, I take it your father didn't exactly..."

"No. Dad never told me I couldn't follow my dream, but looking back on it, I can't think of a single instance where Dad told me I could be a hero if I wanted to or in any way actually supported my dream of being a hero when I was younger. Instead, Dad pushed me towards the sciences until he no longer needed to." Melissa shrugged. "That doesn't mean that I am over it entirely, though."

She smiled, reaching out and tenderly touching his forearm, the forearm of the arm that was no longer in a cast. "When you told me that I could be a hero back on I-Island even without a quirk, that meant a lot to me. Even now, in a world where there aren't heroes like back home, that still means something to me."

"Of course!" Izuku turned away from the wheel for a moment, staring at Melissa, gently taking her hand in one of his and squeezing. "Melissa, your mind is **amazing**! If we were back in our old dimension, I'd do everything I could to help your drink dream along, but I don't think I would need to do much. Your ability with technology, your ability to your feet and your raw courage, I think you would've made a tremendous hero!"

Blushing, Melissa smiled at him, shaking her head with a laugh. "Maybe, but maybe not as good a hero as you would've been even without impressing Uncle Might as you did. After all, it was your courage, your running in without thinking about the danger, that showed All Might that he was wrong about you. To say nothing of how you stepped up to the plate since we've come to this weird world or even back on I-Island. In a way, I think you're kind of an inspiration to me, you know? That's how amazing **you** are."

Now was Izuku's turn to blush, and the two of them stared at one another, blushes on both of their faces until something slammed into the side of the ship. That caused Melissa to jump out of her chair and race for the door. Grabbing up her rifle, the blonde girl rushed outside, where she found a monster about to take a bite out of the side of the ship. Lining up a shot, she quickly shot it in the mouth, causing it to yelp and back away but doing little damage.

It was another serpent kind of monster, looking like a cross between a snake and a Plesiosaur, missing two of the fins as well as having a thinner body and much larger head, dominated by massive jaws. Those massive jaws reopened now as the monster glared down at Melissa. Before she could get a second shot off, those darted down towards her.

Melissa yelped and desperately rolled to the side, barely ahead of the jaws. The monster reared back as quick as a whip and then drove down again towards the prone girl.

But before it could bite down, Izuku had rolled himself out from the wheelhouse, grabbing up one of Kirishima's harpoons, which, like the muskets, they had been liberally supplied with by the Clockwork Islanders. Taking a page from Melissa's book, he hurled it forward, using only 2% of One For All, hitting the beast in the side of the mouth. It roared again, backing away as the harpoon stuck in the side of his mouth, biting down on the harpoon and shattering it, but this just left the harpoon's tip stuck in its mouth, and it couldn't get it out no matter how hard thrashed from side to side.

Scrambling to her feet, Melissa raced back inside, grabbing up another harpoon, which she tossed out to Izuku. He caught it in his good hand, rearing back and hurling it forward, this time aiming at the monster's chest. The harpoon's tip struck, penetrating the creature's outer scales although not very far, and it warbled another pain-filled cry, falling back and away from the ship.

For a moment, Melissa and Izuku stared at one another, both of them gasping from the suddenness of the little fight. Eventually, Melissa shrugged her shoulders. -"Another night in the life of a seaman on the Grand Line, I suppose."

Izuku chuckled and then allowed Melissa to push him back inside the wheelhouse, taking up position at the wheel once more. They did not return to the earlier topic of conversation, rather talking about what they had seen so far in the Grand Line for a while and then continuing on into Melissa's ideas for better ship designs and the kind of weapons she would eventually like to build with Mae to defend against beasts like that. -Neither noticed the passage of time, and the night wound on.

Scene break

"Okay, an addendum to the rule about Momo and Izuku being on watch together. Melissa can't be on watch with Izuku either," Kyoka grumbled the next morning to the sounds of agreement from Tenya, Kirishima, and Tsuyu.

OOOOOOO

Later that day, something entirely new grabbed the crew's attention, driving any lingering thoughts about cheering up Tsuyu out of their heads.

“Land Ho!” Melissa shouted from the crow’s nest that afternoon, bringing everyone, even those sleeping, up on the deck.

Upon hearing Melissa’s shouts, everyone bar Tenya, who is at the tiller that day, lined the gunwale at the prow of the ship, staring out over the horizon, only reluctantly remembering that because of the higher position of the crow’s nest, it would be a few moments before they could see anything. When it did, the island didn’t look like much. It was simply a green and brown mound in the distance. Even so, it was enough to buoy their spirits after so long at sea for people who, except Kirishima, had not been used to being at sea for so long. The crew watched avidly as it grew closer, but when they could finally make out details of the island, contemplative frowns began to make their way over their faces.

Most of the island didn’t look inhabited. But there looked to be a sprawling town separated into four small coves, built up between them and directly behind them, pushing deeper into the island. There were nearly a dozen ships there, some distant ones pulled up alongside docks, others more distant, barely inside the coves or scattered around its waters. While most looked normal, galleys of the kind they had all expected to see, a few scattered around the four coves looked like they were flying pirate flags, hence the frowns.

The ships of the pirates varied in size far more than the regular ships. One was a small lateen sail caravel style ship, according to Kirishima. “The kind of thing Vietnamese or Taiwanese families sometimes own and sail around in.

Another was a longship, the style of which Melissa felt, “Parallels that of the viking longships from ancient history in Europe. -Good grief, I am really starting to think this is some strange parallel Earth. -Even with the weird geography, there is just too much else pointing to that rather than the alternate world theory.”

The largest ship they could see as they sailed closer to the island was a massive four-masted galleon, the size of which would dwarf their own vessel once they came close. It flew a flag, but it wasn’t a pirate flag. Rather, it looked almost like some kind of royal ensign. The same ensign flew from a series of four gun towers set at the farthest points of the small capes separating the coves from one another.

“Beyond the flag of who I have to presume is the local port authority, I can see at least five different pirate flags,” Melissa reported from on high with one of the spy glasses. Even with their own spy glasses, being on deck still took away from the distance the rest of the group could see. -“I think that one of them is in charge of two ships, both longships. -There’s another one settled in at the docks I just spotted in one of the other coves.”

The ship was currently making for the rightmost of the protected ports since it was the closest to the direction they were following towards the island.

"Is there any chance this entire place is controlled by pirates, kero?" Tsuyu asked the question a lot of them were thinking, her normally impassive expression twisted into an expression of distaste, which, coming from her, was probably the equivalent of cursing and spitting from anyone else. "I can't imagine why any law-abiding port would allow pirate ships to use their docks unless they were forced to at cannonpoint."

"I don't think so. The local flag doesn't have any hint of black or skulls and crossbones, and those towers are bristling with cannons.- If they were properly manned, no ship would be able to get close to landing. I mean, they might land somewhere else and come over land, but I'd wager there's some kind of land-side defenses too we just can't see from here," Melissa answered back.

Melissa's voice trailed off, then she shook her head. "And I don't think the pirates are exactly friendly to one another, either."

A few moments later, the group at the prow could see what she was talking about. A fight had broken out around the massive four-masted galleon, involving about fourteen, maybe more people. It was hard to tell from this distance. What wasn't so hard to spot was how that ship let loose a cannon blast straight into the middle of the group.

What that would do to a group of unarmored people hardly bore thinking about. Even with so much distance separating them, it was a grisly sight to the dimensionally displaced teens. Few among them had ever seen what large-scale explosions could do at close range against normal people, and the sight of limbs being blown off or people just exploding into offal was horrifying.

Izuku and Shoto were the only two to not look away, one because of a sense of grimness, the other one because of his normal impassive nature.- "I don't see any of the other ships retaliating. If anything, I see a few dozen people coming out to clean up the mess and loot the bodies," Shoto commented.

"W, well, I would say the pirates here are here only under sufferance, from that," Izuku mused, turning away from the grisly sight.- "Have any of them seemingly noticed us?"

Melissa had kept her eyes trained on the nearest of the towers, and slowly she answered in the affirmative.- "The towers have. There's a new flag there, white with a yellow slash mark through it.- I have to think white means peaceable, but what the yellow slash mark means, I don't know."

"I would say it means 'new ship, non-pirate', or maybe just 'unknown ship' which would be fair enough," Kirishima shrugged. "I'd wager if the locals don't have radar or radio, they

need some way to tell friends from foes.- So do we try to dock here or look around the island for someplace else?"

"We need supplies, and I rather doubt that anyone smart enough to hold onto power in a place frequented by pirates wouldn't have some way of making certain that people only used their facilities," Momo instantly shot down that idea.- "I would wager that we are better served just continuing on. -If they hadn't spotted us already, we might have had more options, but not now."

Izuku agreed with that and pointed out that not only did they need supplies, but they also needed to find someone who would be willing to pay at least some money for the two pirate prisoners they had. While there might be pirates here, the locals also seemed to have their own government, which hopefully would mean they had access to the Marines or at least would be willing to take the two prisoners off their hands.

Even setting aside the money they would hopefully get for the pair, Getting rid of two mouths to feed, and the security risk of the two pirates were just too good to pass up. While mostly harmless, Honey Queen had attempted to get out of her mug several times, and it'd taken using melted wax to close her prison to stop her, which had to be redone at least once a day to let her eat. And then there had been Bear King's attempt to break out of his own prison when the saltwater he was in froze.

Momo hesitantly raised her hand. -"If the locals do not have anyone willing to pay us for our prisoner's bounty, we might not have enough money to buy everything we need.- If that is the case, I could counterfeit some of the money we were given by the residents of Clockwork Island. Or just make bars of gold. It is entirely against everything I have ever been taught, but--"

"Please don't say that kind of thing aloud," Kyoka and Izuku interrupted as one, looking around wildly just in case. Thankfully, the ship had slowed as they neared the island. There were no ships within hailing distance just yet, although two of the civilian galleys moored in the port they were making for were coming up quickly.

"That kind of thing would paint a target on your back faster than you could blink, Yaomomo!" Izuku went on while Kyoka wordlessly gripped Momo's hand in worry.

"Yeah, that kind of thing is a last-resort idea. Maybe gold if we could come up with any story of where we got it. But right now, getting rid of those two will hopefully give us some cash anyway," Mei said, her callous disregard for the lives of the two pirates or their general well-being coming to the fore again.- "Besides, it's not just fruits and vegetables we need. Local maps, local Intel on everything to do with the ocean around here, how long we need to be here to let the Log Pose lock onto the next island, and how much food they think is necessary to get there. That kind of stuff."

“Agreed,” Izuku said with a nod. “And no offense to anyone else, but I kind of want to get off the ship for a bit. Just for a few hours or so.”

Everyone agreed with that wholeheartedly. While none of the teens were claustrophobic or had felt living in such close proximity was itself a hardship, the ship felt just a bit too small and cramped for any of the crew these days.

For a bit, the crew dispersed, going about their duties around the ship or getting ready to go ashore. Under the watchful guns of the cannon towers, they moved through the port, passing by the larger vessels until they settled into a dock between the large galleon and the Viking-like pirate ship. A comparison that proved ever more accurate as the *Wayward Journey* closed, and the crew could see the shields decorating its side, the large ram at the front, and the banks of oars.

“Damn, that thing makes me feel tired just looking at it,” Kyoka commented, to the amusement of everyone there. “How the heck do they move through the Grand Line under simple oar power?”

None of the crew had an answer to that, and soon, with Tenya and Kirishima jumping off onto the docks, the *Wayward Journey* was tied up at the docks. With that done, the crew all gathered on the deck once more, where everyone looked at Izuku for instruction, something Melissa put into words somewhat teasingly. “Well, captain, how should we split up to get everything done? Because I really don’t think we should be here for long. This place is not giving me very welcoming vibes.”

Taking a deep breath, Izuku nodded. Several times over the past few weeks, it had been his ideas and shouted instructions that had everyone working together to deal with this group of sea monsters or that natural disaster and the fact he was their leader had finally sunk in. He still wasn’t happy about it and still felt more useless than useful most days, but it was still a lot of progress. “I, I agree with that. We should split up into large enough groups to defend ourselves, but get everything done quickly. Then we can, if we need to, drop anchor everywhere. Y, Yaomomo, no offense, but um, your general attitude and mode of speech would probably stick out like a sore thumb in a place like this. Unless we find some kind of local noble or someone for you to deal with directly, anyway. I’d, um I’d vote for you and for Tsuyu to stay on board and guard the ship. Blunt speaking might be just as bad.”

Tsuyu actually ribbited in amusement at that, nodding her head. “I tell it like it is, and I will tell a pirate he’s scum to his face, kero.”

“I will stay, too,” Shoto said, holding up a hand. - “I’ve no interest in exploring here, and if it comes down to intimidating any pirate interested in our ship or anything else, I’m probably our best bet.”

Everyone agreed with that quickly. A quick show of hands as to who had any experience at haggling proved, however, that Izuku and Mei were the only ones who did. Mei had quite a bit of experience haggling with junkyard owners for parts for her babies, whereas Izuku had a lot of practice haggling online for ~~A~~all ~~Might~~might merchandise. Although it would be the first time he had to do so in person in a few years. His story about haggling with someone whose online handle was SirToTheFuture to convince him to drop his bid on a collectible All Might action figure had the rest of them in stitches for a few seconds.

He had barely finished the story when a shout from the dock interrupted the discussion. "Ahoy, the small steamship! Prepare to pay the toll."

Frowning, Izuku hobbled over to the side of the ship, where he and the others could look slightly down at the docks. - The side of the ship was only about two feet taller than the docks.

There, a small, officious-looking man stood. He wore a redcoat with long lapels a white tricorn hat, and had around his neck an abacus on a string. A small, well-maintained goatee curled forward from his chest into a tiny swirl. In his hands, he held up a clipboard and pen, and he looked up at the newcomers like they were something someone had scraped~~scrapped~~ off their shoe.

"In the name of Lord Victor, to use these docks, you need to pay. The toll is ten thousand belli or a thousand belli per head of your crew, whichever is more. You can also buy a year pass for a hundred thousand. -To use our facilities beyond the docks, another two thousand belli is required from the ship as a whole," the man shot off, his tone and the look in his eyes saying this was something he had done millions of times before. "Failure to comply will have your ship impounded or just pounded into flotsam by the cannons."

Izuku did not need to look over his shoulder to Melissa or the others to know that was more than they had been given by the locals on Clockwork Island. -He even could sense Momo stirring, but before she or anyone else could say anything, he asked, -"Can we turn in a few bounties before paying?"

"Ah, so you're bounty hunters?" some of the officious, almost aggressive air seemed to fade from the man "And young, too. - Get yourselves a flag, youngsters. -All ships need to have a flag of some kind."

He then shrugged. "The toll will be an additional two thousand for every hour you dock here until you pay. And I wouldn't try to run away without paying." The man's smile turned a little vicious once more as his sneeringly aggressive air came back as he gestured up to the towers, then out to where the topmast of a ship could barely be seen sticking out of the water line. "We don't like anyone who tries to cut and run like that."

“Got it. We’ll get it done right away. Where can we find you?” Izuku asked, disliking the man but understanding that any kind of order was probably better than none. *And maybe there’s a reason why the locals need to coexist with pirates. - Stranger things have happened, right?*

The officious little man pointed to a small building among the regular buildings dotting the wharf, painted in a rather vibrant red color, a marked contrast to the warehouses and taverns around it, none of which had any paint on their walls or even much color bar their signs. “That’s my office. And as for where you can drop your bounties, that’s handled by Grinning George. He’s down at the other side of the docks. Bright Blue building. You can’t miss it.”

Izuku nodded and, trying to be polite, thanked the man, who simply scoffed and turned away, heading back the way he’d come.

“I suppose he would be missed if I punched his head in, huh? Talk about a seriously unmanly guy!” Kirishima muttered, shaking his head.

“Yeah. -Okay, here’s the plan. Kirishima, Tenya, Mei, Tsuyu, Kyoka, Melissa and I will head down to hand over our bounties. We’ll return to the ship afterward and split off at that point.”

While the others gathered the two prisoners – an easy task for one, a not-so-easy task for the other, Izuku made his way slowly down the gangplank. -By this point, he was able to hobble along with only one crutch, but getting down the gangplank was still tough.

Kyoka saw his annoyed expression and laughed quietly, poking him in the side with her jacks. “Hey, don’t frown so much, Zuk. Heck, your crutch makes you look almost piratical. Pretend your boots a peg leg, and you’ve got it.”

“Ugh, as if anyone would want to act like a pirate,” Izuku shook his head. “That’s like the exact opposite of being a hero.”

Kyoka had no answer at the moment to that, and the two of them turned to watch Melissa join them a second later, followed by Mei and Tsuyu, who held in her hands the bottle containing Honey Queen. - They were followed by Tenya and Kirishima pushing Bear King, whose mobile prison was simply a barrel large enough to contain him up to the head in seawater on a cart. Getting him from the main deck down to the wharf wasn’t easy, especially without their strongest member, but using a ramp of ice and calling on everyone to help, they eventually got him down to the wharf.

The group that then set out along the boardwalk was dressed very differently than what they had been wearing when they arrived on this world. Of course, a part of that was a given,

considering most of them had been dressed in their pajamas when they first arrived here. First, all of them were in sailor's pantaloons, the cut and style of which varied a little bit from one person to another. -Over that, the boys had regular-looking shirts, although, underneath them, they all wore Kevlar body armor hidden by their shirts. The same could be said for the girls, although their over-shirts were all long-sleeved jackets over thinner t-shirts.

The crew was also armed.

Kyoka, Melissa, Tsuyu and Izuku were all armed with pistols, although Izuku had actually never fired his yet and felt it was more of an accessory than anything else. The girls had been put through a crash course of gun safety and usage by Melissa, who was the only one bar, Momo, who had ever fired guns before. And unlike Momo, Melissa had actually been trained to teach others. Momo's gun safety had actually left much to be desired at first. Now, though, all of them could aim and fire both one-handed and two-handed, although Kyoka also had her disassembled staff on her person, too. -Melissa had a pair of tonfas hanging on the back of her belt and a rifle she had created herself from the parts of the muskets that Mei had taken apart over the past week. -Mei had a similar rifle, a pistol and a cutlass hanging off her utility belt, although Izuku felt she was more likely to reach for the wrench Momo had made for her weeks back than the cutlass.

Among the other boys, Tenya was the only one not armed. Instead, he wore heavily bulked-up shin guards and gauntlets. Kirishima wore two cutlasses strapped in an x-shape on his back, looking down on guns as being 'unmanly'. Shoto, who, like Momo, was staying behind, had opted for a simple musket for now and a few equally simple grenades that Mei had made back on Clockwork Island from the mass of gunpowder the pirates had. All in all, the group felt they looked tough and intimidatingly well-armed.

But to the shock of the group moving away from the Wayward Journey, they simply blended in with the locals and the sailors around them. -There were few women about the docks, and every man they passed or saw lounging around the area was armed. Pistols, muskets, swords and axes, everyone here went armed. Even a few tavern owners they spotted talking at a corner between their establishments were armed.

Moving down the boardwalk, the group went unnoticed after a bit, only the girls getting interested looks. Which had nothing to do with their weapons and everything to do with their figures. Some of the remarks she could hear had Kyoka flushing and vowing vengeance. -But even her moving earjacks only garnered a few looks.- It was evident that the people in this world, not just the Clockwork Islanders, were used to the unusual.

Just like the port tollman had told them, the blue-painted building was easy to find. Although Grinning George would also have stood out among a crowd on his own, even one on

this island. -He was a massive man, but the majority of his height and weight seemed to come from a huge head, which itself was barely wide enough to encompass the wide grin he always wore. Even while speaking. He also wore a red coat with long coattails, which might be some kind of uniform among the locals. He was nearly bald save for a single cowlick of hair.

“Welcome!” he bellowed, his grin not shifting a bit even as the words were nearly shouted. Although at least the tone was a jovial one. “I’m Grinnin’ George. -If you want to move something illegal, ya come to me.- If you want to broker a deal, I’ll see to the security for a fee. And if you’ve got bounties ta pay off, I’m your man. Lord Victor’s chief treasurer, that’s me!”

Trying hard not to stare at the unusual-looking man, Izuku hobbled forward. “Er, we have two bounties to turn in. -From the Trump Pirates, Bear King, eleven million, six-hundred thousand belli, and Honey Queen, another seven million, eight hundred thousand.”

“Ho!?” The man leaned forward over his table, and for a moment, Izuku worried the weight of his head would overbalance Grinning George out of his chair, but that didn’t happen. “Two known Devil Fruit users, is it? How did that happen, and where is Honey--” he broke off as Tsuyu held up the bottle containing Honey Queen. Seeing the moving, watery face within was enough to tell him there was a Devil Fruit user of some kind trapped within.- “You realize that I will need to see her actual face, yes?”

“Do you have some means of containing her?” Izuku asked before gesturing to Tenya. Tenya pulled off the burlap sack they had placed over Bear King as a precaution against any of the pirates they passed on the boardwalk.

At the sight of the semi-comatose ~~Bear~~Beark King, Grinning George nodded. “That will do. -Alright, the total, minus the thirty percent cut of Lord Victor, comes to—”

“Thirteen million, five hundred and eighty thousand,” Izuku, Mei, and Melissa interrupted in a chorus, causing Grinning George to lose some of his smile for just a second.- It was evident to most of the crew that he had hoped to shave off more of the bounty for himself.

“Er, yes, well. -That. -And don’t try to haggle, my young bounty hunters.- Lord Victor’s price is absolute. -You can haggle with the food merchants, the bursars of the various warehouses or among the sailors here. Not with me or Dapper Laddy.”

“Dapper Laddy’s the name of the port authority?”

“Hah, yes, he often doesn’t bother introducing himself.” -He looked at Bear King avariciously, then over at Honey Queen, his expression shifting a bit as he looked at the bottle. “So, do we have a deal?”

“Deal, but give us the name of a few merchants willing to sell us some wooden boards and other materials. We’ll make our big purchases right away.” Izuku answered instantly.

Grinning George nodded agreeably, and soon the crew was leaving with two large suitcases full of money. After a round of haggling with the local shipbuilders for material, one of those suitcases was a good deal lighter, but the large group returned to their ship with all the building supplies they needed to fill up their stores in that area.

The only thing the locals didn’t have was coal. -There was no source of coal on the island or nearby. -That was going to be a problem going forward. Momo would have to supply the coal, which, when told about this, had her joking, “Who am I now? Mrs. Claus, dispensing coal to all the bad children?”

While the others stowed away their supplies, Izuku took the time to pay off their docking fee to Dapper Laddy, returning to the crew a moment later. Divvying up the money into two uneven piles, Izuku decided that he, Melissa and Kyoka would be in charge of gathering information. “Maps, books, rumors, that kind of thing. Mei, that leaves you to take Tenya and Kirishima and buy our food supplies. Um, Yaomomo, that leaves you in charge here.”

As the cook, Melissa had worked out the supplies they needed the most and how much they ate every day. -Momo and Tenya had helped her in writing down the prices of the various ingredients on ClockWork Island, so Mei would have a good idea of what they were worth. As the others all nodded, she handed over the list to Mei and within moments, the two groups had split off. -Mei led the two boys directly away from the docks while Izuku and the two girls with him hobbled in the opposite direction of Grinning George’s office, looking to go around the exterior of the town. -This would let Kyoka listen in on any conversations on the docks while leading them towards where there had seemed to be a more affluent area from what they had seen coming into port.

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Mei, Tenya and Kirishima moved directly away from the docks deeper into town along the main road. -Since they were looking for places to buy vegetables and produce, they all figured that the main market would be somewhere along this road.

In some ways, the feel of the town slowly changed as they moved away from the docks. They started to see people dressed more like locals than sailors, and there was less rubbish and refuse. -But there were also more people than on the docks, most just lounging around outside a few taverns, in alleyways, and even at makeshift tables made out of barrels.

Alas for the trio, at least in this part of the town, the locals were just as rough and tumble as the sailors and had far more energy to spare on noticing the newcomers and the fact

one of them was a pretty girl. Something that seemed to be in limited supply around here. Both boys began to feel their blood boil at some of the comments that Mei was getting from a few of the people they passed by.

“Hey, big tits, how much for a feel?”

“Only a feel, you damn cheapskate! How much for a night!?”

“Why don’t you leave those two and get with some real men?!”

The boys were almost to the point of turning around and attacking a group of men whistling at Mei, when Mei simply paused. She turned, taking out one of the coins they had been given by Grinning George, and flipped it up through the air. Without even looking, she grabbed one of the pistols at her side and pulled the trigger, shooting the coin out of the air, then pulled her pistol back down, blowing at the faint hint of smoke coming from the barrel. “Sorry, boys, I’m what you might call high maintenance. And I ain’t for sale.”

The rowdy sailors all hooted and hollered at that, but the comments about Mei’s body stopped, shifting to comments about her shooting and feisty attitude. With a smile, Mei walked on, shaking her head at the two boys. “Come on, you must’ve known the moment we saw the port that this kind of thing was coming.”

“What, does that mean you did, Mei?” Tenya asked, his eyes narrowing a little even as he used Mei’s first name. Something that, like Izuku, he still occasionally had issues with when it came to the girls. And Mei in particular.

Mei looked away, pulling at one of her dreadlocks sheepishly. “Well, Melissa and Kyoka did, anyway.”

That made more sense than the extremely socially unaware Mei doing the same thing, and Kirishima congratulated her on finding a manly solution to the problem, which caused Mei to snicker a little. Unlike the other girls, she had no issue with his mode of speech, and the trio continued down towards a small market area.

There, Mei began to haggle while Tenya and Kirishima asked a few questions from a few of the other stall owners there. Soon, they learned that it would only take two hours for their Log Pose to set, although the next three islands they would hit would not have much life on them. One was a winter zone that was constantly frozen, with little to no habitation. The next two were autumn islands, but one lacked in any kind of natural port, and the other, while also lacking in such a natural port, did have a decent civilian presence but, in the words of a grocer, “It’s full of marines coming and going since that’s where this line meets one of the Grand Line trunks. There’ve been a few clashes with some of the pirate vessels that come here, but they tend to keep to themselves unless some bigwig officer is around.”

Tenya took this to mean that the island in question was perhaps part of the World Government and might be an actual law-abiding island, quite unlike this place. While the majority of the denizens here didn't seem to be pirates, they did seem to get along with pirates remarkably well, and there wasn't nearly as much order as Tenya would like to see. Even here in the market area, things were going on that made him scowl.

Kirishima was also having trouble stopping his fists from itching as he noticed at least a few examples of bullying or extortion going on. He wasn't certain which, though, as one of the people seemingly shaking down a grocer for money was dressed in a red coat, sans the long tail things at the back that the two officials the crew had seen so far had. -He was also armed with both a pistol and a saber rather than the normal cutlass.

There were also several arguments going on that had daggers being drawn by both parties and at least three drunks lazing about in small alleyways while two barmaids were being bothered by a few men nearby. Everything he was seeing was crying out to the hero in him to do something, but he remembered Izuku's earlier injunction to not cause trouble and the conversation they'd all had several times about this world not being like their own. That was enough to keep him silent for now.

Mei had just finished purchasing enough fruit to last the crew for a few weeks, turning away and placing it in the cart the boys were pushing when Tenya saw something he simply could not ignore. At one of the stalls selling fresh food, one of the workers shouted at a man, telling him that he didn't have any money then he wasn't going to get any food either.

The man in question pulled out a gun, threatening the stall owner, shouting, "I've lead, I don't need gold! Get me some food, or you'll be eating it!"

While the grammar of that sentence was in deep question to Tenya, it was very obvious the man intended to shoot the individual in front of him. Tenya could not allow that. His jets activating for a brief moment, Tenya zoomed over and grabbed the man's arm. Twisting it up behind his back, Tenya forced the attacker to drop the pistol before tossing him aside. "Even in a place like this, there is something that I will simply not allow!"

The man had not been alone. Several others now turned away from where they had been kicking at a few of the drunks, pulling out swords. "Look at what you did to our aniki! Get him, boys!"

Kirishima instantly hardened and charged into the fray, causing some startled exclamations from people around them, many of whom hadn't noticed Tenya's use of his engines. Mei stared after them, shaking her head and watching but not stepping in, seeing no point to it. Instead, she kept a wary eye over her shoulder as she continued on her way to purchase more food, dumping it into the cart. They needed more flour, more rice, more well

practically everything really, going from Melissa's list. *Thank goodness that Izuku gave me most of the money we got from turning in the hairy guy and what's-her-face. And Blondy's notes on what food is worth also help big time.*

The beatdown the two boys did on the three armed men did not go unnoticed by others.

In one of the alleyways, two men stood, looking at what was going on thoughtfully. "Interesting. That almost looks like some kind of Dell fruit. And that guy, he's got weird-looking things sticking out of his legs. Could be another Devil Fruit"

"Square kid used those things just now to go away faster than he should've moved." The two men looked at one another then back out at the trio, with the second speaker noting now the guns that Mei was carrying, having missed them earlier. "They look interesting."

"Yeah, they do. And I think that their ship is that small steam-powered ship we got a report about. Do you know how much a steam engine can go for on the market around here? The whole crew would probably make good slaves, too. -There's supposedly a lot of girls among them." That caused the second man to chuckle evilly before the first speaker went on. "As for the boys, we might keep them in line by threatening their crewmates, or we could kill them and try to harvest the devil fruit that kid's using. Some kind of rock transformation thing? It could be valuable. Harvesting it might be chancy, but if not, we won't really have lost anything."

His companion nodded eagerly. "Let's get back to the others. Will need to give Lord Victor a cut, of course, but once he's on board, they're toast!"

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While Kirishima and Tenya were having a manly time, Izuku, Melissa, and Kyoka had simply been walking around town as they looked for more information. They'd first found a map shop, although, in Melissa's opinion, the maps here weren't worth much. "Although I don't know if that's this world in general or just Clockwork Island in this place."

Despite that, the group bought several maps, both of this island and the next two, along with one other thing. It was an oceanic map, marked at either end with the markers for an island, and it purported to measure the distance between them, although the mapmaker was quick to point out that was only the most likely distance between the two land masses. Better, though, it listed in the upper margins what kind of monsters and calamities had been reported by sailors in the past few weeks.

Melissa and Izuku learned quite a bit about the next two islands, though. -Flora and fauna, of which there was a surprising abundance on the winter island. -Apparently, several species had evolved to live in year-long winter climates, just as polar bears and other animals

did back on Earth.- Buying a book about what kind of plants could be found there and used as supplies was also an excellent find.

“Although I will warn you now. According to the last crew of sailors that had to spend any time on Fewfroxe, they warned about the dangers of the island’s interior. -The survivors said they ran into a herd of lapahn and lost twelve men to them before retreating. -Lapahn might look vaguely cute, but they are deadly monsters,” the map maker warned.

Izuku and Melissa thanked him for the advice, and then the trio moved off to try and find a bookstore. Thankfully, they had been right in that the outer edge of the town, like most cities back home, was the equivalent of suburbs. -Well-to-do locals, fewer sailors, only a few pirates and actual guards, although there were also a few homeless and drunks around. The guards wore red jackets without the tailcoats the trio had seen before and seemed armed with halberds for the most part. -Some looked scruffy and unkempt, but most didn’t in this area of the town.

Searching for a bookstore, though, still ended in annoyance. The bookstore was small and out of the way, and the books were expensive. But with the money they had from turning in the two bounties, that wasn’t a problem. A few books about the nearby islands gave more details about the flora and fauna found there and two more detailed weak points on some of the sea monsters the I Island crew had seen. A survival guide that covered some basic ideas about how to catch rainwater and make the most out of limited supplies also found its way into the trio’s bookbags.

Despite that, most of the books were fantasy or children’s books. None of the books were about Devil Fruits, the World Government, science, engineering or anything like it. There were a few books about shipbuilding, but it was more like a how-to primer rather than a book that went into detail about **why** ships were designed the way they were. There also wasn’t any kind of history section and asking got them some very strange, almost baffled looks from the bookshop owner.

While Melissa and Izuku had concentrated on books, Kyoka listened in on any of the conversations going around them for anything interesting. As they walked away from the bookstore, she filled the others in, her voice low, almost a whisper. “Okay, so those redcoats, they’re the local police force, like we thought.- They act more like bullies though, according to some of the locals. -They are employed by the lord of the Island, a Lord Victor. He’s apparently the son of the previous ruler, a line that goes back as far as the locals remember.”

The other two nodded, with Melissa asking if Kyoka had heard anything about him.

“Some. Lord Victor’s seemingly kind of respected, but it’s more like...” Kyoka paused, twirling one of her earjacks around a finger. “Like the locals just don’t care much? I’m getting

the sense of a lot of apathy, a lot of 'well it could be worse' from a lot of them. Others have businesses that deal with taverns or the docks, and they're mostly happy to follow Lord Victor's family's desire to have an open port." She shivered then. "Though, a few of the women are thankful he's a bit of a prude."

Here, Kyoka's other jack pointed towards a few elderly women, who seemed to be engaging in the elderly's favorite pastime of embarrassing those younger than them. In this case, that came in the form of a young couple. "Apparently, in his grandfather's time, there were a lot more brothels, and if families couldn't pay their 'taxes', well..."

Melissa and Izuku were somewhat naïve, but not even Izuku could miss the implications of that, and his hand clenched so hard on the handlebar of his crutch that the wood began to creak. "That... I don't care what I said about us keeping a low profile. If we get even a hint at, at that kind of practice going on, I am going to come down on them like All Might's United States of Smash!"

"Me too. I think I'd be more than willing to toss out that 'seek nonlethal solutions first' concept over that kind of thing." Melissa growled, although not without a hint of guilt. In some third-world nations, where quirkism was entrenched even beyond what it was like in Japan, girls unlucky enough to be born Quirkless often found themselves in the position of doing that kind of work just because no other job would have them, willingly or unwillingly. That wasn't something she'd ever had to deal with, thanks to living on I-Island and who her father was.

The group fell silent for a few moments before Kyoka spoke up, changing the subject. "There's also something else going on. The island of Rorca, the one with the marine presence, is calling in more marine ships recently. There are some rumors of a former Marine officer who apparently went rogue being spotted in the area recently. What that could be about, I don't know, but it might be something for us to be on the lookout for."

Izuku filed that information away, humming thoughtfully. "Rorca definitely sounds like a great place for us to stop. Not only does it have a marine base on it, but I heard some rumors that it's the only place where steam engines can be found. Maybe you and Mei will be able to gather enough materials to upgrade our ship," he said to Melissa. "Or maybe we can just take passage on a marine steamship."

"Sounds good, although I am still a little—" Melissa cut off as they rounded a corner. "Ooh, look, a café. I don't know about you two, but I am dying to have a meal I don't have to cook myself."

Kyoka chuckled sheepishly at that while Izuku, the only other one on the crew who could cook much, simply smiled and nodded. "Milk and some kind of cake sounds nice." The locals didn't have much chocolate, but all of them had seen this or that passerby munching on

snacks that looked like lemon cakes, and milk was also quite common on the island. The café also looked quite nice, at the end of and dominating a small cul-de-sac with outdoor seating under a dozen or so umbrellas.

As they sat down after ordering their food, Izuku looked over at Melissa, asking politely what she had been about to say. -She smiled at him and began to speak about what she saw as some strange incongruities. She tried to keep her voice down, but it rose a bit as Melissa became more enthusiastic. “I don’t know much about architecture. It’s never been a field that interested me, like robotics or metallurgy. However, I could swear that we’re seeing at least Chinese houses mixed up with European here. This café would be called Parisian in some places back home. Look around. Can’t you tell how strange some of the houses here are in comparison to their fellows?”

“Huh... come to think of it, yeah. This café’s nice, like, really nice. Could be plopped into any town back home ~~easily~~easy,” Kyoka mused.

“Exactly. I’d be very interested to look into this place’s kitchen. -I have to wonder what kind of appliances they have. But that’s not all. -While all the books and maps we’ve found are in Japanese, have you looked at some of the older-looking road signs?”

At Melissa’s question, the others looked at one another and shook their ~~heads~~head. None of the three noticed an older woman who had been reading a book nearby was now instead listening to them closely. She was in her mid-twenties, sitting alone at her own table set ~~in such~~such a way she could look around at the entire café and street leading into it. On the table, an elaborate coffee set sat along with four books similar to the adventure-style fantasy books Izuku and Melissa had found earlier. Her eyes were hidden behind a pair of sunglasses as they tracked away from her book to their table while Melissa explained.

“~~If you~~if you look at the road signs, you’ll see that there’s one new road sign and an older one underneath it. Before we left the docks and the more rundown areas directly around them, I saw a few where the new signs had been cut off or shot, revealing the older sign. The writing on the older sign looks like a Latin derivative rather than the normal hiragana.”

“Yeah, so?” Kyoka asked, cocking her head quizzically.

“Order up, number twelve!” a shout came from inside the café, and before either girl could move, Izuku was pushing himself to his feet.

“What the heck, my dude?” Kyoka muttered, staring after him.

Melissa slowly shook her head as she watched him hobble off, admiration and something else in her eyes. “You have to admire his dedication.”

"I guess..." Jioru looked over at Melissa, her quirk letting her hear the way Melissa's heart went pitter-patter. *Oh ho, Mel's really into Zuk, isn't she? Neat. -I wonder if they've done anything about that yet.*

She was about to ask but didn't get a chance as Izuku returned to their table with their drinks, somehow balancing the tray in one hand while hobbling along with his crutch, a sight that had Kyoka shaking her head. "Damn, Zuk, I told you I would go get the drinks if you wanted to sit down. Are you sure you're okay?"

Her ear jacks twitched, one of them rising to point at him angrily, causing the woman who had just been about to go back to her book to blink behind her glasses. -"And don't lie, I can hear your heart thumping a little too much to be normal after such a short~~so short~~ a walk."

Izuku gulped, staring at the jack hovering in front of his chest like a snake ready to bite. "Er, I don't suppose you would buy the excuse that i, it's because I'm out with two good-looking girls, and that's a first for me?"

Both Melissa and Kyoka flushed a bit at that while the woman with the open book in front of her chortled. Despite her blush, Kyoka snorted, keeping her voice level and amused rather than flustered with difficulty. *Where the heck did that line come from!?* "Smooth Zuk, real smooth."

Izuku smiled back, feeling a little more confident now that jack-stabbing didn't seem to be on the table just yet. "Er, well, it's the truth, um, both the fact that the two of you are pretty and the fact that I've never sat down at a café with even one girl before we came to I-Island. I'm kind of getting used to, er, being close to you and the others aboard the ship or when we are alone. Out in public, it's a different feeling."

"Heh, dealing with all the eyes on us here has been a bit strange, admittedly. -Especially down by the docks. -In this area of the city, at least there are other women around," Melissa mused before shaking her head, her blush fading as her mind returned to Kyoka's earlier question. "I suppose it matters because, in conjunction with there being so few history books and no history books on this island or world history books on Clockwork Island, it just kind of bothers me."

Here the woman who had been listening in began to do so even more intently, her eyes narrowing behind her glasses.

"Taken on its own~~its on~~, on this island, it, it feels as if this Lord Victor's family have gone out of their way to bury the history of the island, and I've got to wonder why. It's just, weird. Like so many of the questions we've been piling up," Melissa muttered. "Why is everyone speaking Japanese when with all of these different islands, different languages should've

popped up all over the place? Why isn't there more writing in different languages? And what the hell is up with world history here? Two islands in a row not having anything about it is not out of the realm of possibility, but it is certainly unusual."

As Melissa wound down from her list of questions, the woman behind them spoke up, grabbing the attention of the trio at the other table. "Ara, that is a most interesting set of questions."

The trio turned, and Izuku promptly began to flush, his eyes widening as he started to blush while Kyoka blinked, staring and wondering internally if she could get Momo to wearaddress an outfit like that.

The woman who spoke up was beautiful. She was tall, maybe as tall as Mezo Shoji, the tallest student in 1-A, who was taller than most of the teachers. She was heavily tanned, something that they hadn't yet seen on the island even among the pirates and sailors, her smooth skin a color that looked almost Indian or Middle Eastern. The woman's face was smooth, full lips twitching up into a smile, her body fit, with long legs and a bust that made all three youngsters wonder if even Momo, with a few more years of growth, would be able to match her, both shown off along with her smooth stomach and belly button by the Midwest-seeming outfit she wore, complete with hat.

Melissa couldn't stop herself. "Oh wow, I love your style! That look is way more unique than anything else we've seen here, and you rock the cowgirl look! Is there any clothing store around here that sells something like that?"

"While cowgirl is not the term for this look where I am from, I suppose I can get the reference, and no, this style of clothing is not common around here or for many islands in the area," the older woman answered, a light giggle escaping her for a moment. "Although I would say that you both could pull off this look very well, too."

She became serious quickly, cocking her head thoughtfully as she looked at the trio of teens, examining them in a way that made Izuku a bit uncomfortable. -"But I'm interested in that comment you made about how there should be multiple languages due to how different each island is from one another? Wherever did you get that idea?"

Kyoka frowned a little, wondering why the woman hadn't introduced herself or asked for their names and why she was curious about such a thing but decided to put that down to local attitudes. Melissa simply took her questions at face value, grinning as she spoke in English for the first time since she had last spoken to her father in their old dimension. "Well, I reckon it's because I know multiple languages."

The woman looked blank but extremely interested, and Melissa switched back to Japanese. "This isn't actually my first language. It's my second one. I can speak English, which I just did, and two other languages, although, admittedly, my Spanish is only good for curses."

That joke had both her companions and the as-yet unIntroduced woman chuckling while Melissa continued. "I know that languages change from one culture to another, and I'm just wondering why it seems as if most of the books I've seen are written in Japanese and why, on an island like this, with both civilian and pirate crews coming and going, no one seems to speak anything else. It just doesn't seem natural."

At those words, the woman's interest seemed to fade a bit. Or rather, her wariness rose to match it. "I'm honestly quite fascinated with the fact that you are able to speak so many languages. I can read several ancient languages, but they are no longer used in the modern day, nor have I run into any different spoken languages. -There might be such out there; I certainly have not traveled the entirety of the world, but they are very rare."

Melissa's eyes narrowed. "And why is that? And why did the locals here go out of their way to cover up the original language on those signs?"

"Your second question has a far easier answer than you might think. No one currently living here is an actual local of the island. By which I mean that whatever original population this island might've had, they were wiped out," the woman stated simply, causing all three of her listeners to flinch. She made a note of that, as well as how the green-haired youth began to mutter under his breath. The woman was tempted to listen in a bit but decided against it just yet. -"It is a tale as old as time. Local, weak natives are superseded by stronger, expanding empires."

"That's just wrong! Surely someone made an effort to, I don't know, preserve some memory of them?" Melissa exclaimed.

"Perhaps. For a time. But where is the profit in that for most?" The woman asked, shrugging her shoulders. "History doesn't pay. It only educates, and few are interested in such without the local lords enforcing it. If they do not or are actively suppressing the knowledge?" Another, even more fatalistic shrug, and Kyoka twitched as her hearing told her how the woman's heartbeat twitched as she spoke. -She didn't know what to make of that, but she didn't like it.

"And Melissa's point about the one language thing?" Izuku asked.

"The language we all speak is the language of the World Government, of Marijoa. That should tell you all you need to know," the woman answered glibly, taking a sip from her coffee.

At that, Melissa began to mutter under her breath, and this time, the woman wasn't able to stop herself. Setting her coffee down, she crossed her hands over her chest for a moment. The next instant, a small ear appeared out of nowhere underneath the table near Melissa, hidden just below the lip of the table from her eyes.

“--. So, the World Government went with the Roman language. Every Roman citizen was taught how to speak Latin on top of whatever local language, with writing following up. That's different from ancient China, which had a lot of different spoken languages, and the various emperors decided to push a single writing system so that everyone across the nation could communicate. The second would have worked better, though on a planet like this one, with all the problems facing travel, the written word would be the best way to communicate or control a far-flung polity, so why? And how has it worked so well?”

The two names the blonde girl used were unusual to the young woman, and she found herself even more interested in these three. Interested, yet also wary. A part of her was wondering if they were part of some kind of elaborate trap.

*Yet they might not be. They could simply be from an island that has been cut off from the rest of the world in some fashion. I don't know where they would come from if that is the case, or why this young girl would know several languages. But this **is** the Grand Line. Stranger things than ships suddenly showing up where they have no business being happens practically every day. I can also tell that while they are all around eighteen, these three are quite innocent if the way they looked over at the drunkard in the corner with such sadness is any indication when they first sat down.*

With that in mind, the wanted criminal with a seventy-nine million belli bounty on her head, the Devil Child, Nico Robin, decided to do her good deed for the day. Speaking up, Robin interrupted the blonde's mutter, discreetly pointing behind them towards the cannon tower that was visible on top of the small peninsula in the distance. L “I applaud the fact that you are asking questions. However, I have to warn you. Asking questions at the wrong time, of the wrong people, or even if it simply gets back to the wrong ears, can all lead to disastrous consequences. I would warn you most strongly to keep such questions to yourself. Lord Victor is one such, as his family has made it a policy to expunge the original inhabitants of this island from the world since they took control here a generation ago.”

~~She was~~Sh was interrupted by a phone call sound coming from one of her pockets. Quickly, she reached in, pulling out a Den Den Mushi. - It wasn't like the ones that the teens had seen on Clockwork Island. It was smaller and had both a microphone and an earpiece that looked much the same on either side of the primary shell rather than a more phone-like growth on top of the shell.

"That is so weird, I mean I know you guys all told me they use those to communicate~~those communicate~~, but seriously!" Muttered Kyoka.

What kind of island has no communication devices? Robin mused as she placed the ear-shell over one ear and brought the other to her mouth. - "Yes?"

"Miss all Sunday, if you have concluded your business, you are wanted on the island of Gavidon. There is a man there who might be amenable to being recruited. Do not push him too far, however. The name of the fellow is Gasparde. - I don't doubt you have heard of him."

"Of course I have, Mr. Zero. I will be going through that island back to our base anyway. Although define how far you wish me to push here, please?"

The trio of youngsters watched as the woman spoke into the device for a few seconds, but at that moment, the trio of dimensionally displaced youngsters didn't have any further time to exchange questions with the older woman. There was a furious wooshing sound from the direction of the docks, and Kyoka twisted around, staring in that direction. "Fire! A lot of fire."

Melissa and Izuku turned in that direction too, just in time to see an iceberg many times the size of the intervening buildings suddenly appear, to the shouts and cries of fear from the passersby and from others further away. "Someone must be attacking the ship! Shoto wouldn't be using his powers willy-nilly. Let's get back there," Izuku said, hobbling away on his crutch. The woman they had been speaking to was forgotten for the moment, the girls grabbed up their backpacks with all the books and maps they had bought and raced after him.

"And we didn't even get to finish our cakes, either!" Melissa grumbled to Kyoka as they ran off.

"Welcome to the glamorous life of the displaced," Kyoka shot back before falling silent as the two raced along beside Izuku toward the docks.

OOOOOOO

Behind them, Nico Robin froze, staring at the ice mountain that had just appeared to dominate the skyline until her employer's voice woke her up again. "Mr. Zero, I believe I might be late. I may have to evade the marines. I will get back in touch with you with more details when I have them."

With that, the woman stood up, staring as the trio had also raced off, not away, but towards the iceberg. *So, am I right? They are new marines, somehow working with Aokiji... no. He is a loner. Aokiji would never work with other marines, not brand-new recruits anyway. Further, he isn't the type to think of the kind of psychological trap I thought those teens might be. Besides, fire and ice in one place? That is highly unusual. -I cannot allow myself to panic.*

Leaving some money for her coffee, Robin moved in the opposite direction. -Moving through a series of alleyways, Robin quickly found a three-story building. -There, a rope made of hands appeared from above, reaching down and grabbing her forearm. One after another the hands disappeared, the shrinking 'rope' pulling Robin upward quickly.

Moving around the rooftop until she was hidden from the gun towers in the distance, Robin pulled out a spyglass, setting it to her eye, staring towards the dockyard area.

There, she saw the trio arrive, as well as the person who created the ice and who was also the source of the fire. -*My word! Now **that** is interesting. I wonder, now, very much, where these young people come from. And whether or not Mr. Zero might be interested in them... Or indeed myself for my end game against him.*

With that thought, Robin fell silent, observing the actions below.

OOOOOOO

"Izuku-bro!" Izuku nearly stumbled to a halt as he turned, staring toward the shout, watching Kirishima, Tenya, and Mei racing toward him and the two girls. -"Do you have any idea what's going on? We've been attacked a few times and stepped in when the locals showed way too unmanly behavior, but..."

"No idea, but it really doesn't matter," Izuku gasped back, pushing through the aches of his body as he pushed himself forward with the ease of more than a decade's worth of practice ignoring pain. "Let's go!"

By the time they got to the ship, the situation had worsened. The two nearby towers on either side of this area of the docks had begun to fire down at their ship, accompanied by scores of pirates charging forward. Many of them were from different crews, but in the few seconds it took Izuku to take in the scene, it didn't look like they were really working together. They pushed and tossed one another aside as they charged toward the ship like hyenas trying to get in on a kill.

In defense of the Wayward Journey, Shoto had created two ice walls to either side of it, This froze both ships nearest to them in their births, causing quite a lot of consternation among the pirates. Seeing this, several sailors who had not joined in but were rather just watching events began to mutter and shout at one another. "Fucking hell, did Aokiji have a kid or something?!"

"You're a damn retard, DF powers don't work like that. -No, this is an entirely different power of some kind. Never heard of a DF that could give you control over two different elements, though."

The voices nearby were drowned out by musket fire from the docks toward the Wayward Journey, followed by a whoosh of flame from Shoto. -But the locals had already begun to plan around his attacks, spreading out and firing back from hidden places among the docks. Nearer to the ship, two dozen pirates dressed like Vikings scrambled up from the water near the starboard side of the ship, having evidently leaped off their ship before it was turned into an icicle. Having swum around the Wayward Journey, they climbed up onto the wharf at the side of the ship, where they began to try and climb up onto its deck. “Hah! The brat can only do so much with his ice and fire. -We take this ship, and it’s ours! -A steam engine’s good money, and the girls too!”

“I don’t like either of those statements, and here is my rebuttal,” Momo growled, still feeling out the whole trash-talking tactic as she moved to the side of the ship and fired down into the mass of pirates below, lining up a shot with one of her pistols on a man’s forearm. She hit, and the man fell screaming, tumbling several others behind him to the wharf. She did so again with her second pistol before switching back to her first, mindful of not using her quirk visible, simply pulling bullets off of her belt as needed for now, while Tsuyu punched and kicked others off the deck.

As Izuku and the others came closer to the action, there was a loud cracking noise from one side as the galleon, the largest ship in the port, opened fire over the ship, separating it from the Wayward Journey. Its broadside was so heavy that it shattered the ice wall on that side, and before Shoto could renew it, a dozen pirates swung over from the four-masted vessel fearlessly.

Tsuyu met them in midair, kicking several of them away, uncaring at the moment where they landed, even as two snipers fired at her from the dockyard area. One of them hit, causing her to croak in pain as the bullet found her shoulder. Thankfully, she and all of the crew were wearing Kevlar body armor under her outer clothing courtesy of Momo. It wasn’t as thick as a policeman’s, so as to not be obvious, but even so, it was enough to stop the musket ball from penetrating her skin, but it broke her shoulder, causing Tsuyu to cry out in pain. The momentum also hurled her sideways through the air to land roughly against the wheelhouse, letting the others land aboard the ship.

Izuku took this all in at a glance, as well as the larger group of guards and pirates pushing toward the ship slower, now ducking and covering from fire from Shoto. -Momo had finished injuring the Viking-like pirates and now turned to fire at the other group of pirates that had gotten aboard the ship while Tsuyu recovered. -Renewing the ice walls and keeping them in place to defend from fire from the towers and the galleon

Seeing everything going on, Izuku instantly sprang into action.

“Kirishima, arm!” Kirishima barely had a second to turn and hold out his arm toward Izuku before he found his forearm grabbed by the greenette’s one good hand. Greenish lightning played across Izuku, and he grimaced but called on only eight percent of One For All as he twisted in place, actually balancing on his crutch for a moment. Whirling in place, he added a bit of centrifugal force to his throw and hurled Kirishima toward the embattled Wayward Journey.

Even as Kirishima flew through the air to impact some of the pirates on their ship, Izuku was barking orders at the others with him. “Kyoka, get on Tenya’s back. Tenya, race forward, disrupt the attackers coming along the docks! Mei, Melissa, cover fire, I’ll protect you in close.”

He was then twisting around, lashing out with his crutch like it was a spear at the first pirate to notice the arrival of the newcomers. Balancing on his one good leg he thrust forward, using the bottom of the crutch like a spear, smashing it into a pirate coming up behind them. The pirate was thrown backward through ~~the air~~~~the air through the air~~, crashing into a building but not before also smacking into two others, sending them reeling to either side.

Kyoka leaped up onto Tenya’s back just as he shouted, “Recipro burst!” And launched himself forward, far faster than Izuku had ever seen him move, but well within what Izuku felt was his true upper limit. With Kyoka having pulled out her staff and using it in every direction, the two of them crashed into the large group that had been about to charge toward the ship again.

Seeing this, Shoto turned his attention to the galleon firing at his ice wall on the port side. The ice wall shattered under the combined fire of the tower on that side and the galleon, but even as chunks of ice fell, Shoto launched a fireball through the still-breaking ice into the side of the ship.

“FUCK! FIRE, lads, he’s set us on fire! All hands on fire detail!”

Swiftly, dozens of pirates turned their attention from the fight to dousing the fires with buckets of sand, water, anything they could get their hands on. Fire was the bane of any wooden ship, and that meant Shoto’s attack was like their worst nightmare come to life.

Something, Izuku thought as he dodged under a cut from a cutlass, the pirates perhaps should’ve thought of before keeping up the attack after seeing Shoto toss around fireballs at the pirates and guards attacking from the wharf. *Shoto’s control of his fire isn’t all that good, but it is more than enough when facing wooden ships, of all things! And I, I really don’t want to think about what might happen if that fire gets to the ship’s powder supply.*

The next second, the padded portion of Izuku’s crutch came up into an attacker’s chin, sending him flying through the air upward. -As that pirate flew upward, Izuku twisted around,

grabbing the blade of an attacker who was about to stab Melissa, shattering it between his fingers. A punch sent that man flying into the prow of one of the ships nearby, which he hit with a splat, then collapsed into the waters. The next second, the man Izuku had thrown into the air came down on two of the local guards.

There were several more charging forward, though, with large Mei twisted away from where she and Melissa had fallen down onto their chests, providing a smaller profile as they fired at the pirates charging toward the ship further down the docks. -Leaving Melissa to that, Mei grabbed at her work belt, where two glue grenades hung. -Pulling them both, she tosses them behind and to the right.

The grenades landed, bursting and creating large puddles of glue the guards tried to charge through, only to get stuck within seconds. -Then, with Izuku only needing to protect the pair from pirates coming at them from the ships on their right, Mei rolled back to her rifle, firing down range once more, the constant crack of Melissa's gun a backdrop to her own, slower shots.

This was next to nothing to the fight going on closer to the Wayward Journey, where Kirishima had landed, smashing several of the attackers off their feet. Tsuyu was back on her own and now began to leap around the ship like a wild frog, hammering out kicks that floored the pirates or tossed them overboard. As she did, her arm hung uselessly from her side. Between them, though, the pair had taken the pressure off Momo and Shoto.

Momo turned to hurl Midnight-based knockout grenades at the docks. The gas erupting from them billowed everywhere, ripped apart by the sonic attacks of Kyoka, which kept her and Tenya safe from the effects, decimating the pirates there. The entire mass of pirates had now stalled out thanks to Momo's gas grenades and the earlier impact of Tenya and Kyoka.

A second later, she cried out in pain as a musket ball found her chest, smacking into it with punishing force despite the Kevlar bodysuit she wore under her clothing. -*"Thank goodness Izuku told us all to switch into our body armor before coming to port!"* She had seen that same fact save Shoto from losing his forearm and stomach earlier in the fight.

Yet still more guards were arriving. It was evident that for whatever reason, 'Lord Victor' had decided to put more of his own weight behind the attempt to capture the crew.

Over the sound of the battle and her own weapon, Kyoka could hear shouts of, "Take them!"

"That engine of theirs is going to be worth a lot of money!"

"Lord Victor demands that they be taken!"

This also forced Shoto to hold his fire back for a time against the pirates coming at them from the wharf until the charging duo reached the ship. From there, Kyoka leaped upwards, using her jacks to grab onto the gunwales and flip herself up and over in a manner she had begun to learn on the island after their arrival. Her staff blocked a blow ~~meant~~^{met} for Tsuyu, and then ~~her~~^{your} earphone jacks were out in stabbing, knocking down two more pirates in quick succession.

With Kirishima bodily grabbing up another pirate and hurling him like a sandbag into another, the last of the pirates were knocked out on the ship. The rock-hard hero then proceeded to toss the unconscious pirates over the side onto the wharf. Tenya, who had just scrambled aboard, began to help in this while Kyoka ran to the prow, adding her staff's sonic blasts to keep the pirates and guards from reforming. "Any idea what started this, Yaomomo?"

"I don't, no! One minute, there were no problems. The next, that little fellow was back demanding that Shoto, Tsuyu and I come with him. We refused, and he ordered a group of pirates to board us. -Then, when we routed them, more came at us, and then those towers fired on us. -I think that was meant as a warning shot, but..." Momo shrugged as she reached into her pocket, using her creation to form a glue grenade similar to the ones that Mei had made.

"Seriously!?" Kyoka shook her head. "I don't know what is worse, pirates or corrupt lords."

"Corrupt Lords," Shoto deadpanned as the towers fired at them again, hammering into Shoto's ice walls. -They were too far away for his attacks to reach, and he grimaced as he had to renew them again and again.

Back with Izuku and the two inventors, Melissa and Mei continued to lay down a decent cover fire, but the two of them and Izuku were still stuck there, even as their friends ended the fight aboard the Wayward Journey. -Grimacing, Izuku finished off another pirate, shouting, "Girls, it's time to go!"

"Okay, how?" Melissa shouted back, firing and grimacing as her shot missed her target, only to hit another pirate in the head. *Oh, well, that's one more for the nightmares.* -"There's still a crowd between us and the ship."

Even so, she and Mei stood up, grabbing at the bags that Kyoka, Izuku and Melissa had dropped.

A momentary lull began around them as the pirates still aboard the nearby ships who had joined the attack seemed to pause to assess things. This let Izuku turn, crouching down. "Melissa, Mei, grab on!"

With no other option, the girls obliged, their rifles stored on their backs in their holsters under the backpacks.

“Ten percent, ten percent,” Izuku muttered under his breath. With a grunt of effort and pain, Izuku pushed off the ground with his one good leg and his crutch, which shattered even as he leaped up into the air and away toward the Wayward Journey.

“Three coming down!” Melissa shouted.

Hearing this, and with the pirates on the docks having been successfully driven into hiding, Tenya and Shoto twisted around. Shoto created a slide, and as the trio landed, Tenya zoomed forward, grabbing at the girls just as they were about to come to the end of the slide, pulling all three to the side and then to a halt, their momentum dying out quickly.

Even as his friend helped the girls stand up and he just lay on the main deck, his whole body throbbing and his arm worst of all, Izuku began to shout orders. “Shoto, extend your ice walls out toward the open ocean. Mei and Melissa, get down into the hold, dump our purchases, and get the engine started.- Momo, Kyoka, keep up the pressure on the guards on the docks. Kirishima, you and Tenya will have to pull us out away from the docks. Tsuyu, wheel!”

Not questioning his friend’s orders, Shoto did as he was bid, and soon, the walls of ice protecting the ship had spread backward of the aft out into the ocean. Almost instantly, the ice began to crack under the repeated strikes from the cannons.

“What’s our plan, bro!?” Kirishima shouted, even as he dumped the last of the attackers over the edge.

“We are getting out of here! We can’t fight the entire island, not with how many guns and cannons they have!”

Kirishima objected to that, saying retreating was unmanly, but the others all nodded firmly.- “Even heroes need to know when they need to retreat and get back up, Kirishima. If the marines don’t know how lawless this place is, we might be able to convince them to come here in force later. For now, Izuku’s plan seems the best, kero,” Tsuyu stated.

“Aye-aye, captain! Melissa mock saluted, then raced inside with Mei, while Momo moved to Izuku, quickly examining him for more injuries even as her own throbbed. Luckily, he had only a single shallow cut on the cast on his forearm, and while he might have pulled some muscles, he hadn’t broken any new bones. But it was very obvious he couldn’t stand any longer, even on his one good leg, and she left him there, returning to help Kyoka near the prow of the ship.

With Kirishima and Tenya pulling them out, the ship was slowly moving backward away from the docks, a maneuver the crew had never had to do before. -With only two oarsmen, they didn't have much control, and the ship rubbed hard against the wharves, shattering some of the planks of the wharf. Seeing that, Izuku made a note to make certain they hadn't sprung any leaks themselves.

Within ten minutes, they were away from the docks.

This was the most dangerous moment as Shoto had to collapse one of the ice walls he had been maintaining against the cannon fire from the locals. This gave the ship enough room to turn around in place but also allowed the cannon tower on that flank to fire at them once more.

Worse, two of the pirate ships had pulled away from the docks themselves, trying to encircle the ship from behind.

Luckily, Izuku had also thought ahead, having Tenya switch out with Tsuyu and even as they came under fire, Izuku, one more on his feet, barked orders once more. "Shoto, take out those ships! Tsuyu, use your tongue and hurl Kirishima around to intercept those cannonballs.

"Manly!" / "Call me Tsu, kero!" was the dual response to that statement, and a moment later, the first of the cannonballs coming their way was smashed out of the air as Tsuyu used Kirishima like a flail. At the same time, Izuku, armed with musket balls, hurled them forward using One For All. -His good arm was starting to hurt again, but thankfully, five percent was still enough to propel a musket ball hard enough to explode the cannonballs on impact or at least redirect them.

The pirate ships only had one gun forward each that could range on the smaller Wayward Journey, out of position to bring their broadside to bear just yet, a problem they were already rectifying, turning on their anchors to present broadsides. The towers similarly only had a few guns that faced every direction around them, letting only five range on the Wayward Journey here, just like when they were stuck on the docks.

"Launching an attack so far is hard..." Shoto grimaced, concentrating on his fire-side, making the fire come out like a stream of fire rather than a ball for the first time in the fight. The attack lashed out across the open waters, hitting the target ship's prow and lighting it on fire.

Once more, screams and shouts abounded as all thought of firing on the escaping heroes faded, the pirates all rushing to try and put out the conflagration with scant effort.

This scared the other pirate ship off after only a single broadside. It turned away, its sails furling out as the pirates pulled up their anchors quickly, trying to put distance between them and the Wayward Journey almost frantically.

Still taking fire, the Wayward Journey finished turning entirely around. -Its prow now facing out toward the open ocean, the two girls in the engine room answered the call to speed up. -They took fire for another twenty minutes from the towers, but Kirishima, Tsuyu, Izuku, and now Shoto were able to defend the ship well enough that none hit. Soon, the ship was well away, pushing out and into the ocean, with Tenya following the Log pose once more.

The moment the towers stopped firing at them, Izuku slumped down, grimacing in pain from his legs. Even the one that had mostly healed now felt as if he had strained something in it big time. The others all slumped where they were, too, with Momo slumping against Kyoka and both of them slowly turning so they could slump onto their rears, leaning back against the gunwale behind them. "So, what have we learned?" Momo groaned.

"Are you talking about in general or specifics that we learned in town? Because I really don't think any of us are in the mood for that conversation right now," Kyoka grumbled.

"In general. Because I, for one, think we've learned not to dock at strange islands without thoroughly scouting it out first."

"Agreed!" Everyone there shouted, none of them getting up from where they had slumped across the main deck as their ship chugged along.

OOOOOOO

Far, far behind them, Nico Robin stood on the same roof she had been observing the battle from earlier. A faint smile was on her face as she put away her spyglass, tipping up her cowgirl hat with her other hand. Once her spyglass was away, she pulled out the whistle that would summon her swimming turtle, Bancho. *Interesting. Very interesting indeed. Yes, I think I definitely need to observe them a little more. Luckily for me, I believe we are going in the same direction...*

End Chapter