

I know how to bring a story to a proper conclusion, thus am not one creator, nor am I Oda, who is one of very few people alive who I would say has far more imagination than I.

Howdy, all. Sorry this took me so long to post. I lost the 14th to the 18th due to babysitting a literal baby (so CUTE, but so much work) on top of losing the previous weekend to further family times.

This has been edited gently by **Primordial Vortex**, who helped me rewrite a specific scene especially to the point I think it is far better than my original one.

Chapter 5: Environmental Destruction and Good First Impressions

For a time, while the ship's coal engine chugged along under Mei and Melissa's direction, the rest of the dimensionally displaced teens just stayed where they had collapsed around the deck. At first, all of them had been too exhausted to do anything, but eventually, Izuku recovered enough to pull himself so he leaned up against the outside of the commissary. From there, he looked around at his friends, a term that Izuku still had trouble believing truly could be used to describe so many people.

But that was what all of them were: friends. Far, **far** better friends than Bakugo had been even before he'd begun to change. A part of Izuku, the same little boy who'd had big dreams but saw no way to achieve them, who knew thanks to the glares, sneers and assaults he sustained every day that the world was against him, still had trouble believing that. But having faced so many life and death situations alongside Tenya and the rest had made it so clear to the rest of Izuku that he had friends, that his old scars no longer had power over him.

Right now, however, it was clear that all of his friends were feeling in a bit of an introspective, almost dour mood after their most recent brush with the amount of casual, murderous violence that seemed all-too normal in this new world of theirs. To that end, Izuku decided to lighten the mood a bit to start with. *We can come back to the serious stuff later.* "H, Hey, um, have, have any of you ever thought about what kind of one-liners you'd use when you became a hero?" he stammered out.

Blinking, Jirou turned from where she had been pressed into some extremely nice Yayo-side boob to look over at Izuku. "What the heck?"

"Er, well, I had to fight with myself a lot of times in that fight to, um, to not shout some of my own. Like, 'you've just been smashed' or 'fear the green machine,' you know?" Things like that or All Might's Never fear, for I am here!"

Laughing, Kirishima threw a hand into the air. “Heck yea, bro. One-liners and superattacks are the hallmarks of any hero. I always had trouble with them, though. For some reason, when I tried my ‘don’t hate me ‘cause I’m harder than you’ line on Mina, or ‘I’m the rock-hard hero, you can’t break me’, she—”

Only Shoto and Tenya did not erupt into laughter at that point with Shoto just looking blank and Tenya turning red in imagined outrage. Even Momo, who could not spot a sex-based double entendre to save her life, could see the problem with those lines. Yet Kirishima just looked at them, shaking his head. “Yeah, that. Still don’t get why, though.”

“I’ll explain it to you when you’re older, Kiri, kero,” Tsuyu croaked, shaking her head and deciding to cut in before Jirou could explain, lest Tenya burst a blood vessel. “My earlier one-liners were all like ‘these frog legs bite back, or ‘I might not be poisonous, but I still pack a punch,’ kero.”

“Ehehehe... well, I have to say I didn’t think of any such lines myself,” Momo confessed, getting control of her giggles. “I have to say I’m not the best at such off-handed jokes. Um... thinking about it now, I suppose I could say something like, ‘you just ran into the hero with literally the tool for every problem at her fingertips?’ Is that the kind of thing you mean?”

“Hell no, girl! With your Quirk, you could make so many one-liners work for you,” Melissa giggled as she came out onto the deck in time to hear Momo’s words. “How about ‘would you like to see if I can make a cannon bigger than your head? Oh look, I did’, or ‘this is a bomb. This is your body after encountering a bomb. Any questions?’”

Momo looked bewildered while Mei and Izuku laughed. “That’s a spin on the old anti-drug campaign, isn’t it? Nice.”

“Kyo-chan, what about you?” Momo asked her best friend, putting an arm around where Jirou still lay against her side. *My, having her there like that feels quite nice. Perhaps I can convince her we should have another sleepover? I can’t remember a time when I slept so well as the time we shared a bunk.*

“UGH!” Kyoka groaned, rolling her eyes. “I, I suppose I thought up a few oneliners. Stuff like ‘this is my version of heavy metal’ or ‘music ain’t supposed to hurt, but for you, I’ll make an exception’, really lame stuff when I think about it.”

This drew some cheers and laughs while Shoto and Tenya looked at one another, one feeling some amusement, the other embarrassment. “I have to confess that my brother tried to get me to memorize a series of one-liners based on our family’s engine-based Quirks, but I, to my shame, fought with him about it tooth and nail. I felt as if such things were beneath a hero

or that if they weren't, we would surely take a class about them at such a prestigious school as UA in order to learn when to use them appropriately."

"Eh, when I was younger, I couldn't really... well, I don't have a Quirk to base that kind of thing on. I remember before I stopped dreaming about being a hero though, the last few all had to do with being a scientist. Things like, 'you think doctors are scary? They only know how to take you apart. I know how to do so with SCIENCE!'" Melissa's bellow of that last word had everyone flinching, and she laughed. "Or the simple, 'hello guinea pig, we're going to have a lot of fun today'. I thought that was simple and scary, too."

"It would if you weren't a complete sweetheart who looks like the girl next door," Mei answered bluntly. She had followed Melissa out of the engine room once she saw there was enough coal burning to keep the ship going at this speed for at least four hours. Normally, leaving the engine like that was a bad idea, but Melissa and Mei had designed the engine so it could run on its own for certain amounts of time. "You couldn't pull off the mad scientist look if you tried. Me, on the other hand?"

Mei's irises widened as she looked over at Shoto, who suddenly had the impression she was counting his eyelashes for some reason. "Heh, I bet I could pull it off easy."

This went on for some time, with Shoto being the only one not to take part, instead simply shaking his head, a faint smile on his face as some of the others began to think of some one-liners for him. In time, the jokes shared shifted into the realm of puns and simple wordplay based on their Quirks. At that point, Jirou decided she'd heard enough bad jokes and reluctantly pushed herself away from Momo and onto her feet. "I'm going to get us some food. I think some of the fruit we just bought and maybe some jerky will do us all as a snack. And then... well, we are still in the island's weather system, but I've no idea what our course is."

"Actually, I should take some time to look you all over," Melissa decided. "Hold off on food for now, Kyoka. I'll whip us up an early dinner instead after I'm done." She sighed then, looking over at Shoto apologetically. "Unfortunately, Mei and I just about used up the last of the coal we had from Clockwork Island. With us not having picked up any coal, you're going to be on engine duty for longer periods, Shoto. Sorry."

"It's alright. It's either that or we make Momo make us enough coal to get by, and I'll wager that would be just as boring for her as being part of the engine is for me," Shoto answered with a shrug.

"Ugh. You would be correct on that, Shoto. Still, I will go do that now if you are going to make a large meal for us, Melissa," Momo said, groaning a bit as she stood up, reaching down to her thigh, which had just twanged a bit in pain.

Melissa went over to the boys to make sure none of them had broken any bones, taking particular care to poke and prod Izuku a lot to make sure Jirou and Mei got the ship back on course following the Log Pose to the next island. Thankfully, pulled and strained muscles were it. For her part, Tsuyu went over the ship to look for serious damage, even jumping into the ocean with a line and diving under the ship to check for damages to the outer hull. Luckily, there wasn't much, although the main deck, the makeshift crow's nest at the top of the smoke stack, and the ship's boat had taken several hits.

Unfortunately, while this was going on, the ship passed out from the island's weather zone and soon ran into a storm. That storm lasted the rest of that day and most of the evening, but the crew, getting more and more used to such things, dealt with it easily. As night fell, the storm passed away to the west, and the ship chugged on.

Mei and Kirishima volunteered to be on duty out on the main deck while the others convened in the main cabin, where Melissa had already begun dinner, grumbling all the while. "Seriously, you lot need to start learning to cook. I'm the ship's doctor at this point, and unless we get really lucky, that position isn't going to be nearly as easy to fill as getting you all to do your part in the galley."

Tenya held up a hand. "Ahem, well, I will volunteer for that, I think. Unfortunately, my Quirk makes me too much of a liability to be a very good deck hand or rope monkey in any kind of weather. It is either helping in the kitchen or the engine room for me."

Beyond Izuku patting him commiseratingly on the shoulder, something Izuku would never have felt comfortable with prior to coming to UA, none of the others argued the point. Tenya had become a lot better at making short turns and using his engines in equally short bursts. Yet given how saltwater bothered his engines and how quickly he sank because of their weight, he had still run into trouble occasionally, particularly in bad weather.

Indeed, Momo and Jirou both looked happy to not need to try and learn how to cook, given the disasters they had caused when trying in the past. Momo could brew tea with the best of them, but anything more than heating water was beyond her.

"Regardless, I think now is the time for us to all share what we learned back on..." Tenya paused, frowning. "Did, did any of us learn the name of that island?"

"Er, a few different ones were being used when we were on the island. Savar was apparently the name of the island for a long while, but there was a push going on to change that to... to Victoria," Jirou stated, shaking her head. "Talk about egos."

Victor had been the name of the corrupt lord of the island.

“Savar then,” Tenya stated firmly, getting nods all around. “Regardless, I will start. Between us, Mei, Kirishima and I discovered that the next two islands we will hit will not have much life on them.”

This prompted an outburst of cheering from Momo and Tsuyu as they said as one, “Good! I’ve/I have had enough of people for now!”

The pair looked at one another, then broke into laughs as the others all chuckled in agreement. The local government having turned on them and then set pirates on the crew had soured the crew a great deal.

However, that woman, Nico Robin, she was something... different. I got the impression of someone like Aizawa-sensei mixed with a spy for some reason, Izuku mused. She wasn’t a local, that’s for sure. And she seemed too... wary to be a normal person just passing through. Still, she wasn’t there for us, so I suppose I can set that aside.

“The next one is a winter zone island,” Tenya continued. “That means the island is locked in a constant winter.”

Tsuyu groaned. “UGH. That kind of island is my natural nemesis. Still...” she looked over at Momo, who smiled and created a hand warmer before tossing it the frog-girl’s way. “I think with Yaomomo here, I can get by at least, kero kero.”

“We’ll want to come up with a more permanent solution to the cold for you, Tsu,” Mei muttered. “Heat pads are so simplistic. Let me and Mel design you a proper baby!”

“That’s true, we should. More importantly, we also learned about the next island. It’s called Fewfroxe, and while it doesn’t have any people there, it has some kind of animal on it called a lapahn,” Melissa stated as she kept on working on dinner. “We were warned about them as if they’re a known major danger. That might not mean much to us, but we shouldn’t take that for granted.”

“Apparently, several species have evolved to live in year-long winter climates, just as polar bears and other animals did back on Earth,” Izuku added, with only a hint of a stutter. It occasionally came out when more than a few people were looking at him, but even that was becoming rarer as time went on. “We bought a book about what kind of plants could be found there and used as supplies. We also bought an oceanic map. The salesman said it was ‘accurate’ for the area between Savar and Fewfroxe, but really, the best thing about it is probably the list of monsters and weather patterns you might see in the area.

“Yeah, meteorology is probably cutting-edge science here, like physics or something back home, although mapmaking definitely isn’t,” Melissa stated. “It’s like distance and what

kind of trouble they run into on the way is the only thing they can reliably figure out, so that's all that matters. Even the map of Savar wasn't anything to write home about."

She then brightened, gesturing with her cooking knife over to the large box which she, Jirou and Izuku had dumped all their purchases into, reaching into it. "But way better than that is the fact we bought a few books on monsters, flora and fauna and even a few books about shipbuilding. It's not very detailed, but it'll help me and Mei when we have to do repairs and stuff. We bought a few other books, but they are mostly adventure-style books. Oh, and I grabbed an encyclopedia as the last thing. It's the thinnest example of one I've ever seen and isn't even one of a series, but it might be helpful."

"EEE, thank you!!" Although most people found them ridiculously dry and annoying, Momo had always enjoyed reading encyclopedias and research books. A whole new encyclopedia, which might explain a lot of things the locals of this strange world took for granted, that was a lovely find and, astonishingly, had not been something they had been able to find on Clockwork Island. The library's set of encyclopedias had apparently been the subject of a drunken shooting game the Trump Pirates had thought up one evening while they'd controlled the island. Something that, when she heard of it, had Momo in a near-murderous mood.

So happy was she that Momo leaped across the intervening distance, catching the surprised Melissa in a hug where she had been cooking. "EEEE, I call dibs, I believe it is, on reading that book first, please."

"You don't add please to a dibs, Yaomomo, but sure." Laughing, Melissa turned from the counter and hugged her back, their chests pressing together noticeably, a sight that caused Izuku, Shoto and even Tenya to blush and look away. Jirou blushed too but didn't look away, despite feeling Tsuyu's eyes on her from one side, the sneaky, all too observant frog, as Kyoka felt a spike of jealousy at the sight before shaking it off. *Damn it, I know I've got a crush on Yaomomo, but that doesn't mean I can get jealous of her hugging someone else. Yaomomo wouldn't be Yaomomo if she wasn't bubbly like that. And as for any idea of getting lost between them, well, that will make for a nice dream tonight, but that's it.*

With that in mind, Kyoka made certain her face was under control before speaking about something she felt was way more important in the long term than the kind of books she, Melissa and Izuku had found. "The other two islands, the next one after Fewfroxe and the one beyond that are both autumn islands. The first autumn island lacks any kind of natural port and doesn't have humans on it because of that and nothing to really attract people. The other, though, is the next island with actual humans on it. And this particular island has a Marine base on it."

That drew Momo out of her impromptu hug from the nicely squishy Melissa while Tsuyu croaked in delight. "Considering our plans going forward, that's really good news, kero."

Those plans, of course, were for them to join this world's Marines. They seemed the next best thing to heroes if far too militaristic sounding for most of their liking. Still, that kind of thinking had taken a hit, given the events on Savar and how lawless this world's oceans seemed to be. Obviously, the World Government would need to be more regimented and organized than the heroes of their old world could get away with, given the logistics of the police, civil services, and so forth. Izuku and Melissa were still wondering why they went with a military title like Marines rather than a law enforcement style like the police but felt they would discover the why of that in the long term.

"Maybe, maybe not. The base might not be looking to recruit. More importantly, though, the Marines on Rorca are having some trouble themselves. According to rumors, a former Marine apparently went pirate and is in the area," Jirou warned. "We might need to be on the watch for that. If we see any other ship out there, one of them could be this ex-Marine guy. Or just regular pirates, given the number of pirate ships we saw in Savar's port."

While the others mused on that point, with Shoto wondering aloud how bad a single Marine officer going rogue could be, Melissa put the finishing touches on the meat skewers and sandwiches she'd been preparing. She and Momo began to bring out the food onto the deck, where the two on watch could also participate in the discussion. The group spread out, including Tsuyu heading up into the crow's nest despite it being battered and Izuku near the prow, looking out around the ship with practiced ease even if they ate.

Mei came out after everyone else, having paused to grab up some of the books and bring them out. She and Melissa sat underneath the lamp nailed to the smokestack, cracking open the books quickly. In this case, it was the books about surviving on the Grand Line, with both of them opening up a book and laying them out to read while they ate.

Hearing the rustle of pages, Tenya looked up from where he had been about to eat and pointed at them, one hand doing Tenya's all-too-familiar chopping motion. "Stop that at once! This crew collectively purchased those books, and you are in danger of getting grease and crumbs on them! It is incredibly rude to both the books, us who bought them and the authors who took such pain to write those books."

"They aren't schoolbooks, Tenya," Jirou murmured, shaking her head, before leaning sideways to whisper into Momo's ear. "I thought he'd have mellowed since coming here, but he really hasn't, has he?"

"On the contrary, I think he has," Momo countered, a sly smile on her face. "He doesn't shout out about how it is unbecoming of students from UA after all or how it is against the

rules. I also don't think he's mentioned being the class president even once since we left clockwork island."

"Progress!" Jirou mock-exclaimed, and both girls fell to giggling.

Not noticing how his tirade was being taken by his friends, Tenya continued to berate the uncaring Mei and Melissa, although he had changed tack. Instead of arguing about the books being communal property he warned them that reading by lamplight was bad for their eyes.

At this point, Tenya turned to Izuku waving his formerly chopping hand back towards me and Melissa. "Izuku, you agree with me, don't you? Surely ruining those books by eating greasy food like this and reading at the same time is something that you, as Captain, should put your foot down on!"

"I, er, I'm still getting used to the whole Captain thing, and I think, well, I think I'd rather leave my authority for fights that well really matter. Sorry, Tenya," Tenya said with a shrug and only a hint of stutter.

Nearby, Momo had also decided to go and get some reading, although in her case, she didn't get the encyclopedia. Her fingers were itching to open that book up, but Momo knew she could wait until she was in her bunk. For now, since they spent the majority of the evening trying to get back on course, Momo felt that looking at the navigational maps the others had purchased while in town was a better use of her time.

Jirou joined her. She'd gone on several camping trips with her family and knew how to read maps better than the rich heiress, who had only learned how to read a map since they had come to this new world. Now, she began to point out the features of the map and what the different symbols meant.

After a few moments of this, Momo shook her head quizzically. "I understand the side panel here with all the small images matches a few of the color-coded areas and that they, in turn, are areas of the ocean where certain types of monsters can cause trouble. But why mention sharks? Surely, sharks are just, well, sharks. Of all the dangers we have seen so far in this world, I do not think sharks would rank in the top twenty." Her lips Quirked. "Or maybe right at number twenty, right behind becoming sunburned and random things falling out of the sky due to Grand Line nonsense."

"Actually, that last can be pretty dangerous," Jirou muttered, but she also frowned, staring at the image. "Still, you're right. It doesn't seem to make sense when it's listed with the rest of the monsters. I can't imagine that sharks are only found on the Grand Line after all. Or even in just those areas marked on the map."

Melissa looked up from where she and Mei had been looking at some of the books, a blank piece of parchment waiting for note-taking in between them. "They could be sharks of unusual size. Given some of the things we've seen already, a shark the size of this boat wouldn't be that unusual."

The others all nodded as that made some sense, with Kirishima shivering at the very idea, although Momo still looked a little quizzical, staring at the shark image for a moment, wondering what bothered her about it. *Is it the fin up top, or the fact it doesn't quite look like a hammerhead? The hammerhead segment looks like it flows backward. Odd.* Then Momo shrugged it off, admitting to herself. She had never really studied sharks, so who knew what they were supposed to usually look like? *Especially in an entirely new world. Dolphins, fish and octopi we might have in common, but who is to say what this world calls a shark will cover all the different forms of predator we think of when we use the term?*

"Um, anyway," Tenya said, gathering everyone's attention to him. "I think we should continue our discussion on what we learned on the island. And in point of fact, Jirou, Melissa and I actually met someone who very definitely wasn't a local..."

From there, he explained the meeting with the older woman who had seemingly warned them about asking questions of the locals and why. That saddened many of the crew but did not alarm them much once Shoto pointed out that this world seemed equal to the Colonization Era back on Earth. Cultural imperialism was something that Japan had dealt with in the past with the Black Ships well before Quirks came around, and the tale of the Native Americans in America was well known as well. Thus, it wasn't unusual enough to concern them overmuch, although Izuku's comment that local warlords like Victor might be the norm did, as did the idea that history was somehow being suppressed because of that imperialism.

The group talked about that, examples of the same thing in their own world, and what it could be hiding for a while until Kirishima spoke up for the first time that evening. Kirishima knew that he wasn't a big-brain kind of guy, so he let most of the others do the talking while he got on with the work of making certain they all got used to life afloat. But sometimes, he felt that the others got off track or forgot what was really important. Currently, that meant surviving until they could link up with the Marines and decide whether or not they wanted to join them, not this history stuff.

"OH! Um, well, first, I think we need to make it a point not to immediately land on any island we see. We need to scout out the island first, which means making the best spyglass we can make and using it to survey any island we come across from a distance first," Izuku said, nodding in thanks to Kirishima before looking over at Mei and Melissa. "Is it possible that the

two of you could come up with a spyglass or something that would give us a longer... is it range or line of sight? Well, one of the two, then something like those guard towers we saw?"

"Heck, yes!" Mei shouted, thrusting her hand upwards while Melissa hummed thoughtfully. "With my eyesight, optics was an obvious area to go into. I preferred robotics, but optics are pretty cool, too. I bet I can make a spyglass that can even work like a laser with a little bit of work and changing out a few parts."

"Now, hold on a minute! A laser is not what we are looking for here, right?" Tenya said, frowning. "Would that not fall under technology we do not want to show around?"

"I think we've been a little too stringent on that," Jirou argued back. "Judging from some of the fantasy novels we picked up, I bet we could at least get away with revolvers and belt-fed guns, magazine-style rifles and stuff like that."

Tenya looked appalled at that while the listening Tsuyu, up in the crow's nest, croaked worriedly in tandem with his words. "But, but guns, I... they are so..."

"That is some cultural baggage we all need to get rid of, Tenya," Momo stated firmly. "I've used guns in nearly every battle we've been in, as have Melissa and Mei. Yes... that, that means we, I have probably killed in each and every fight we've been in. Yet that is the world we are living in now. We have talked about this before, but going forward, we all need to remember that this world is not our own."

Momo shivered, then steeled herself. This wasn't the first time they'd had this conversation, and she reckoned it wouldn't be the last, but Savar had been a major wake-up call, and Momo had already had several such. "It is not easy to think about, but here, there are no jails. There are no police to come and round up a single villain or a group of them after we capture them. We just fought a fight where the local authorities were on the other side, and that is not going to be unusual from what we've discovered. We need to understand this and fight accordingly."

Tenya paused, his mouth opening and closing as the others all twitched a bit, even Izuku. Knowing they had killed other human beings was one thing. Coming to terms with it was another, something that only Momo and Izuku could really say at this point. The only one who didn't seem to care was Mei, although Izuku couldn't tell from here what Tsuyu was thinking up in the crow's nest.

"A, actually, on the topic of lasers, I think it would be fine," Izuku said aloud, trying to move the subject back to Mei's statement. "Creating a laser isn't like, no offense Yaomomo, you're showing off that you can create multiple things with your Quirk. A laser is just reflected

light. It's understandable technology, whereas your abilities are simply world-changing. I agree we can get away with things like that...wait...refraction..."

He fell into a mumble, his eyes widening suddenly and a notebook appearing in his hand as he quickly began to jot down some things, completely forgetting his desire to lighten the mood as a thought struck him.

The others stared for a second, then, sighing, Tenya shook his head. "Very well, I won't argue against the idea of creating a spyglass laser system, so long as it doesn't have any ability to harm the user or the ship."

"I make no promises about the ship," Mei interjected with a lazy wave of her hand, a series of blueprints already out in front of her.

With a roll of her eyes, Melissa reached over, smacking Mei lightly upside the head before gathering the books they'd been reading to her, putting one to the side as she kept the other open on her lap. "Don't worry, I'll keep our resident mad genius in line. I'm a perfectly sane genius, thank you. I can assure you that whatever we create will be safe for us and for the ship. And we'll stay away from powered beam-type weapons. It'll simply be pure refraction."

"Prismatic!" Izuku suddenly shouted, slamming the notepad up into his head. "Hagakure-san isn't an emitter type because if she was, Aizawa-sensei's Quirk would've erased it. We've understood that, but what if she isn't simply a chameleon-skinned-mutant type either? Those have been seen in the past before, and even the best isn't as fast to change from one color to another to be useful. But what if her Quirk is a passive **refraction** type? A prism that bends or somehow controls the light that passes through her body so that she remains invisible from one movement to the next. But Hagakure-san certainly wasn't blind, so it had to be some kind of controlled action, or else the light would have gone right through her eyes. If that's the case, then--"

Reaching over, Shoto gently took the notepad from Izuku's hands, setting it on his other side, wondering idly what would happen if Izuku decided he needed the notepad again. *Will it just disappear from there to reappear in his hands like they so often do, or will he actually have to get up and retrieve it now that someone else has touched it?* "While that might have been fascinating in the past, at the moment, our former classmate's Quirk has literally nothing to do with our current lives. Let's concentrate on the here and now, Izuku."

"Ahahah... um, sorry. It's just, even with everything in this world we've run into, Quirks still fascinate me," Izuku answered, scratching his head sheepishly.

The others laughed, with even a cute 'kero-kero' coming from the crow's nest while Shoto nodded his best friend's way before looking at the others. "One thing that has bothered

me since we were attacked is what brought the locals down on our heads like that? While some of the attackers were organized and came from the local lord, others clearly did not.”

“I overheard several of the attackers shouting about how the steam engine would be good money and... other things of that nature,” Momo supplied, shaking her head. “It seems that devices like our engine apparently are not common, and... well, slavery is a thing as well. One of the attackers mentioned that Lord Victor wanted us. That was what started everything. You all can connect the dots as well as I could.”

“Actually, I think it went beyond wanting you and the rest of the girls for your bodies,” Jirou confessed, causing Momo to scowl a little.

Momo had caught the self-deprecating tone Kyoka spoke with when she mentioned the other girls and not herself and did not like it. *I will admit she doesn't have much up top in comparison to the rest of us, but who cares? Her style, her hips and her rear are far better!*

“I heard several of them saying something about Devil Fruits, by which I assume they meant our Quirks. I’m still having trouble getting an idea of how Devil Fruits and Quirks differ, really, other than rarity and how you acquire Devil Fruit powers, I mean. But it sounded as if harvesting Devil Fruits was a thing. It’s why the locals were willing to pay out the bounties for Bear King and Honey-whatever-her-name-was because if they execute the pair, Victor and his people will have a chance of harvesting the fruit somehow.”

That caused shivers down everyone’s spine. “Are you telling me that if we land on a lawless island, we might run into people willing to try and kill us because they think they might have a chance to get our Quirks to transfer to the nearest fruits, kero?” Tsuyu asked from the crow’s nest, wanting to be clear she understood the implications here, her voice calm, but far louder than most had ever heard it outside of a fight.

“I think... I hate to say it, but maybe?” Izuku frowned, scratching his chin and suddenly holding another notepad, which caused Shoto to twitch a bit. This twitching increased to the point Kirishima looked at him in concern when Shoto saw that the notebook had already been filled with several notes and was titled ‘Grand Line analysis book 2’.

While Shoto was mentally screaming about where the first such book was and where this second notebook had come from, Izuku continued speaking, not noticing how he had just caused Shoto’s mind to go offline for a second. “I think super strength is nothing new or unusual here. Several of the pirates we fought didn’t have Devil Fruit powers. That strange pig-themed pirate didn’t have one, nor did the swordsman or the gas user we dealt with alongside Bear King. Yet all of them were far more durable than they had any right to be, and the pig man certainly hit far harder than he should have with those weird rolling attacks he used. Further, I’ve been thinking about it, and Bear King himself was much stronger for his size than he should

have been. His Devil Fruit didn't have any strength-assisting properties. So I think my superstrength is safe to use to a certain point."

"Yaomomo, the bottomless pocket concept will pass muster as well." He grinned over at Kyoka, giving her a thumb's up while Momo hugged the girl from the side, causing her to blush and her jacks to *tink-tink* together in a show of embarrassment before directing his words up to the crow's nest. "Tsuyu, you were called a half-merman back on Clockwork Island. I realize it's meant as a slur, but--"

"No problem, kero," Tsuyu interjected before trying to joke a little, sticking her head over the side of the crow's nest to look down at everyone with a smile, her face barely visible from the lantern light. The crow's nest was above all the lanterns so that the person on watch wouldn't ruin their night vision as he or she stared out past the ship. "I'm a mutant type, and I've been dealing with actual insults because of my Quirk for most of my life. Ones that barely make any sense. They're water off this frog's back, kero, kero."

"It is utterly reprehensible that someone as heroic and kind as you are had to deal with slurs simply based on your appearance, Tsuyu-san! Dreadful!" Tenya stated, his hand once more doing his patented chopping motion in censure.

Everyone there agreed with that, with Melissa going so far as to praise Tsuyu's looks, saying that many a supermodel would kill to have thighs or hair like her. "Kids are just assholes," was Jirou's comment, and it was one everyone there could agree with as she continued. "So that is you two, Mei and Melissa, with your guns. But Shoto, me, Kirishima and Tenya probably shouldn't use our Quirks then. Is that what you're saying? But how would that work with Tenya, since his Quirk's a physical type that's very visible? I mean, I can hide mine to a certain degree, but he can't."

"True, but I don't think that his legs will stand out overmuch. Not unless our actions do." Melissa stood up, looking around at the others, even those like Kirishima, who was more of a moving shadow in the darkness beyond the lanterns around her. "Look, I, I know that none of us want to say it, but we really need to think about... well... how to keep a low profile until we know the lay of the land, and especially after. Trouble found us on Savar because Kirishima got in the way of some crimes going on and our ship's engine, and we got away by the skin of our teeth. I think going forward, we all need to, to kind of harden our hearts again against stepping in when we see something that we think is against the law or wrong."

Tsuyu, Tenya, Kirishima and Izuku all began to raise their voices in protest, but before the conversation could go any further, Jirou twitched, staring off to one side, her jacks having let her pick up a change in the wind. In this case, both the direction it was coming from and the fact it was a cold front. "Snowstorm!"

A sudden shout like that back in their own world would've simply had people blinking, then looking over towards where she was pointing in confusion before actually doing something. However, by this point, the teens had gotten used to life on the Grand Line as much as it was possible, and all of them instantly sprang into action. Mei, Melissa, and Momo quickly gathered up the books and raced inside just as the first head-sized snowballs began to smack down into the ship, with the temperature plummeting dramatically at the same time.

From her position up in the crow's nest, Tsuyu was caught in precisely the worst position for her when faced with a sudden cold front. "KERRRO! Frog incoming!" she shouted, leaping down. From there, she didn't have a good angle on any of the entrances down into the ship, but Tenya heard her and whirled, grabbing her out of the air and racing the few feet needed to let her out and down into the ship. By that point, though, the chilly weather had washed over and even through the ship, equivalent to the Antarctic's kind of weather. After a few steps of this, Tsuyu could barely push herself forward.

"Shoto, go with Tsuyu and get her into the engine room for now, then get her some clothing and make certain the engine keeps on pumping," Izuku ordered, while nearby Kirishima shifted into his stone form. He had discovered early on that temperature changes didn't bother him nearly as much once he was in his stone form. "Kirishima, take over the lookout for now but switch off with Mei when she gets back up here. Tenya, race inside and get us some clothes and those shovels. We can't let the ship get weighed down, or the wood iced over, right?"

"Too right, bro!" Kirishima shouted as he moved to climb the rigging, finding it far harder than normal, thanks to his stone form weighing him down. "And we need to be on the lookout for the ocean freezing around us. That didn't happen the last time, but who knows."

Needless to say, the snowstorm interrupted the conversation for a while. By the time the crew finished dealing with that issue, most of the crew was yawning and tired. The cold front still gripped the ship, but the snow had stopped at least, and contrary to Kirishima's worries, the ocean showed no sign of freezing around the ship.

Lots were drawn, and Tenya and Izuku found themselves on late-night watch duty, with Mei having drawn the lot to be on helmswoman duty.

Melissa glared at Izuku with a surprising amount of heat. He had been moving around all day despite the cast still on his leg, but she had looked him over earlier and hadn't found anything beyond sore muscles. "All right, I think that you can do a full day out on deck duty. But you had better not strain those muscles of yours any further until we take that cast off in a few days. Let Kirishima do any kind of heavy lifting if it's necessary, and only pitch in when you have to from now on."

Izuku made to protest this, as he thought he'd been doing pretty well helping to shovel the snow off the deck, but the glares from all of his friends caused him to subside. "You got lucky in the fight back on the island, Zuk," Jirou teased, shaking her head. "You didn't re-break anything. That's a trend we want to continue, and one night spent shoveling snow isn't enough."

"It's really manly of you to always want to do as much as you can, but it isn't as manly if you hurt yourself so much doing it that we can't rely on you going forward," Kirishima added, thumping Izuku enthusiastically on the back.

Those words acted like arrows to Izuku's heart, and he sadly subsided. As he did, Izuku's mind went back to the conversation the snowstorm had interrupted. The idea that they would have to look the other way occasionally, to ignore crimes, even villainy, simply because it wasn't safe to help someone or because the locals wouldn't help them in turn stuck. That thought stuck in his mind like poison. He really wanted to make it clear to Melissa that there were just some things he could not do, and avoiding sticking his nose in to help someone was one of them.

Yet, looking around at his friends, he decided against it.

The crew had already had several depressing talks about the difference between the morality of this world and their old one and were all exhausted. Thus, Izuku simply smiled wanly, wished them all a good night, and then looked over to Mei and Kirishima. "So, I'm up for some tea. How about the two of you?"

OOOOOOO

Two days passed as uneventfully as any day on the Grand Line could. In other words, the crew was forced to deal with ice forming on the ship and a glacier ahead of them as the cold front that had moved in on them that night remained.

Tsuyu was essentially confined to the engine room for two days. The heating system on the ship was nonexistent, with only the main cabin that housed the kitchen and the wheel being warm enough for Tsuyu, even with the coat and leggings that Momo had previously created for her froggy friend.

This, and the fact that the cold front went on for so long, forced Momo, Mei and Melissa to spend quite a bit of time creating a heating system for Tsuyu's room, as well as clothing that was warm enough. Coats that Momo had created before this were enough to keep Tsuyu from going catatonic but not enough to allow her to be at all mobile in weather this frigid. Coming up with and having Momo create clothing that would allow Tsuyu to move as she normally would

be able to was an entirely different factor of difficulty, as, for the most part, winter clothing was bulky.

Yet eventually, Melissa came up with a semi-electronic skinsuit that had numerous heating pads throughout it's frame. This, with the addition of a few batteries and controls in the wrists, gave Tsuyu the equivalent of a truly high-tech wetsuit. With that and a regular winter coat to cut the wind, Tsuyu rejoined the rest of the crew three days into the cold front. The others noticed she seemed a little pensive and quiet but put that down to simply another aspect of her body's reaction to the continued cold.

However, some good came during those days.

Melissa watched, trying hard not to stare at the sliver of abs visible as Izuku's shirt rode up his stomach, instead concentrating on how he was moving his legs as he did a series of squats, kicks, lunges and twists. "Mmm... okay. It, it looks good. You're not flinching, no twitching, no seeming weakness in the leg. I would say you're healed." She turned away, looking over to where the others, bar Tenya and Shoto, were watching, a smirk on her face. "I'd really like to use an x-ray machine on you, but I figure those would be way too bulky for me to force Momo to try and make."

As Yaomomo had taken it upon herself to spend every spare moment making coal and was looking decidedly on the thin side, it came as no surprise to anyone that Jirou's jacks rose in automatic response, a low, snakelike hiss coming from her. But Momo simply giggled around a handful of nuts, chewing and swallowing before responding, as speaking with a full mouth was quite unbecoming of a lady. "I rather think I would not like to make something like that for only one usage. Perhaps I would be amenable to creating large-scale things of that nature in the future, but not right now. Although if either of you know how to construct one, I might be willing to make some of the smaller parts."

"Sorry, nope. I never went into medical-type babies except for things like hover gurneys, and that was more a side project of making my own hoverboard," Mei answered, not looking up from where she was hastily correcting her latest plan for the laser spyglass. Which was, indeed, going forward, despite Tenya and Tsuyu still thinking it was a bit much. The pair of them were the ones having the most problems in making the shift to the deadly nature of combat in this world, and the idea of striking first just because someone looked threatening or was flying a pirate flag (which was much the same thing) did not sit well with either of them.

"Well, regardless. I think you're free for deck duty. Do small-scale leg exercises and stretches, sit your butt down if your leg starts to throb or feel weak, and don't use it to kick anything with," Melissa finished. She reached forward, taking Izuku's chin in her hand to glare into his eyes, not noticing the blush on his face or the wide eyes of Momo, Jirou and Tsuyu at

this move. Touching someone's face like that was something even the best of friends wouldn't do in Japan. "If you hurt yourself by going all Plus Ultra when you don't have to, I'm going to start charging you in fingers for my services as a nurse, okay, Izuku?"

Ara, and it's Izuku, is it? Yaomomo thought, feeling both amusement and a strange spike of jealousy for some reason. That emotion faded quickly, though, and all that remained was good humor. *I wonder if the pair of them will become the first couple aboard the ship?*

"H, Hai!" Izuku stammered. *Too close, too close*, his mind whimpered. He'd somewhat reconciled with the fact the majority of his friends at present were beautiful girls and even living in close proximity to them so that his eyes didn't wander too much. But being touched like this, without any kind of super-serious talk or revelation to concentrate on, that was something else. *It also doesn't help that her blouse is so open at the neck, and if I just look down, I'll... no, no Izuku, bad!*

"Good." Flushing herself at how closely she had just pulled Izuku's face to her own, Melissa pulled away, her hand moving from Izuku's chin up to his hair, caressing his cheek for a second before patting his head. "Good boy... and damn, Izuku! I know you don't use the shampoo Momo created for us. How the heck is your hair so fluffy!?"

That had ended the serious talk for the moment, and the rest of that day passed uneventfully. With a clear sky and a brisk breeze, it was one of the easier days they'd had on the Grand Line, and Tsuyu made the most of being able to be outside, staying in the crow's nest or out on the deck the entire day.

That night, however, was something different. It remained clear well after the sun went down as the two boys patrolled the deck, staring out into the darkness and up into the clouds occasionally, doing both a necessity on the Grand Line as they had learned several times already. At night, it was just the two of them and a helmsman, or woman in this case, as Tsuyu had taken over from Momo when the sun went down. Normally, one of the boys would be up in the crow's nest, but Mei had finished creating a weird pivot system up there but hadn't yet installed the chair to put on it, which left very little in the way of a place to sit. So the boys felt that tonight they could do without one of them being up there.

It was Kirishima who first spotted the trouble coming, although he didn't realize that it was trouble at the time. "Wow, flying fish."

Izuku turned from where he was near the aft of the ship, looking towards where Kirishima was near the prow on the port side, needing to raise his voice a bit to be heard over the sound of the waves. "What?"

“There are flying fish out there. I just saw a few scales flipping through the air and then down into the water. We’re kind of heading in that direction, so maybe we’ll see them up close soon. Flying fish can be really manly,” Kirishima stated.

At the word ‘manly’ Izuku had to roll his eyes. “We’re going to need to sit down and talk about your definition of that word, Kirishima. Its meaning seems to change far too often.”

Kirishima acted as if he didn’t hear the verdetto, and the two boys continued their patrols while inside, Tsuyu stood at the wheel. She was eager to do whatever she could to make up for the lack of help she’d been, thanks to how cold it had been over the past few days. That, and it let her have some time to herself without the others thinking she was brooding.

That’s one of the bad things about living so close with everyone like we have to aboard ship, Tsuyu mused. There aren’t many secrets we can keep from one another, even if we try. I know the other girls are worried about me, but I think I’ve fooled them into thinking it’s just the cold weather affecting my mood... and not the same thing that has been bothering me since we arrived in this world. The fact we’re stuck here like this.

That was bothering Tsuyu more and more as the days spent in this weird world went by. While Tenya was bothered by the lack of overarching rules, the lack of law and order and the very idea that there could be such things as corrupt officials, Tsuyu could get her head around that. What Tsuyu was still having trouble with was the fact she would never see her family again. Which, surprisingly, wasn’t something the others were dealing with, bar maybe Izuku. *I sometimes see him looking glum and staring out into the distance, anyway. What he’s thinking when he gets like that, I don’t know, but I think he’s still missing his mother.*

Shoto doesn’t miss anyone but his sister. Jirou... well, I think her overall attitude is helping her deal with things like Izuku’s is his. They are concentrating on the here and now to avoid wondering about those we left behind, and it seems to work for Jirou way better than Izuku. Melissa only has her papa to miss, Mei doesn’t care, and Momo’s relationship with her parents isn’t close. As for Kirishima, I honestly admire how he tackled it. He went off and cried a bit back on that first island, saying that was how ‘real men of the sea’ dealt with loss, and then, then just moved on, not thinking about it since. I wish I was that strong.

But Tsuyu wasn’t that strong. Instead, she was plagued every night by dreams of her family. Unless she went to bed utterly exhausted (which she had most of the nights out at sea at first, admittedly) Tsuyu saw them: her mother, crying in that quiet, big tears manner that only those with frog mutation Quirks could. Satsuki bawling her eyes out at Tsuyu not being there for her birthday. Samidare trying to act all big and tough, only to break down when he thought no one was looking. Her father would undoubtedly stay stoic and calm for everyone

even as his heart shut down for a time, just like what had happened when his sister died when Tsuyu was younger. Tsuyu's family did not do well with personal tragedy or sadness.

Tsuyu missed her family, but more than that, she was weighed down by what her going missing would do to them. It was getting to her more and more. Worse, it seemed as if everyone else had simply accepted the fact they weren't ever going to go home. That somehow made it worse in Tsuyu's mind. *I, I really need to pin Mei down in place and get her to explain that to me again. I know they said something way back when we first arrived. But, but I, I need more than that. I need to... if there's really no way home, I, I... need to know as much as I can about why, to, to banish my guilt and hopes all in one,* Tsuyu thought, tears springing to her eyes as she glared down at the Log Pose as she thought once more of her family.

It began as the ship shuttered a bit underneath them, causing Kirishima to scowl and lean over the side to stare down into the water. "Are we being attacked from below again?"

Izuku, however, didn't look down into the water. Instead, he stared at the rather large silver really flashes barely visible out in the darkness beyond the lanterns. "How large are flying ship fish normally?"

Kirishima pulled himself back upright, turning to look towards Izuku stood, a brief grin appearing on his face, teeth flashing in the light of the lanterns. "Normal back on earth, or normal here in the grand line? Because as far as I know, the girls haven't gotten that far into the encyclopedia or the books of monsters and stuff to tell us."

"... I walked into that one. Still, if these flying fish are big enough to rock the ship when they go by, it might be troublesome," Izuku answered before suddenly buckling as a monstrous migraine hit him. It was as if a multi-directional vise had clamped down on his head, so bad it felt as if his mind was burning from the agony. It was only from a lifetime of hiding his pain that let Izuku clamp his mouth down on a scream of pain.

The pain was all he could think about for what felt like an eternity, but it was only a few heartbeats before a voice, one he had only heard a few times in his dreams, spoke up into the scream of pain that had replaced Izuku's brain functions. *"Well fuck, that didn't work..."*

A second later, the pain receded, with Nana's voice shouting something about a filter, and the same voice from a moment before the first voice responded with a despondent sounding, *"Filter? No. It's either fully on or off. What's the point of..."*

The voices all faded, and Izuku had a few seconds to collect himself, wondering what the heck that was about. He didn't have long to wonder, though, as a shark seemingly appeared from out of nowhere beyond the lantern light, its jaws working up and down as it made for him. The creature was about as long as one of Izuku's legs but thin, with a wide hammerhead-style

head and several fins placed along its body. More importantly, the jaw was large enough to take a significant chunk out of any of the crew.

“Gah!” Izuku ducked to one side, and it smashed into the deck, cracking several of the planks, bouncing up and over the other side to land back into the water with a splash. “What the?!”

That first shark was followed by two more, and Izuku leaped up over one, then was forced to bounce off of the mast to avoid a third midair. Still more came up and over the ship, dozens of them, their mouths open and jaws working hungrily.

Kirishima was smashed off of his feet and almost over the side by one of them, which caught him in the back, smashing him over the gunwale. Thankfully, his safety rope held him in place for a moment, and he was able to climb back over the gunwale, getting to his feet just as another shark slammed down, biting at his safety rope.

That safety rope was basically a bungee cord made by Momo, far stronger and tougher than it should be for its width. Yet the shark, although small in comparison to the sharks back home Kirishima had seen once or twice, bit straight through it regardless. At the same time, another flying shark flew through the air, its jaws wide as it tried to bite at Kirishima.

“Not manly!” Kirishima shouted, reaching forward, his body turning into stone as he grabbed the shark, grabbing at the hammerhead portion of the shark’s head to either side. Whirling, he tossed it out into the darkness only to be smack back into the gunwale by another.

Hearing a sound like several hammers smacking into the wood, Kirishima looked over the side. Below, barely visible in the dark of the ocean, he could make out the form of several other sharks smashing into the ship’s outer hull. Without the impetus of their leaps and against the thicker planks of the outer hall, they couldn’t do more than cause the ship to shudder from the multitude of hits.

All of this had been heard from inside the steering room, and leaving the wheel for a moment, Tsuyu poked her head outside just in time to duck back inside quickly as a shark slammed down where her head had been, smashing the hatch off of its hinges. The door was sent flying, and then another shark smashed into it, causing it to careen out over the side of the ship into the darkness. “**Flying** sharks?! Is **that** what that little image on the map meant, kero?!”

“AH, I hate how much sense that makes!” Izuku shouted as he ducked, dodged and flipped over sharks, trying to bite at him. His sleeve was torn away, then a portion of his legging, but ten of the sharks paid for it as he smashed and kicked them flying.

Another shark slammed down into the deck directly in front of the now wide-open hatch, forcing Tsuyu to jump to one side, then bounced off the roof of the cabin, coming back with a kick. The kick smashed into the flying shark with enough force to blow most of its teeth out and knock it unconscious even as its head was embedded in the deck. Another kick sent it flying backward and into Izuku, luckily carrying him out of the path of another flying shark he didn't see coming. "Should I get everyone up?"

"Yes!" Izuku answered instantly as he pushed the unconscious body off of him, then grabbed it by its tail, using it as a weapon to smash several other flying sharks out of the air. Kirishima and Tsuyu raced forward to help, yet the whole ship was being attacked from port, starboard and aft. There were just too many sharks coming in, and the damage to the deck began to get worse. They weren't big but there were so many of them that their being small actually worked in their favor.

Tenya and the rest zoomed up onto the deck, although Melissa ran into bad luck almost immediately. Coming up behind Tenya, she was forced to jump to one side just as a shark bounced off the deck alongside where Tenya had been standing a second ago. Whirling around it, she felt rather than saw her shirt being torn, the jaws of the shark coming that close to biting into her instead. She lashed out with the butt of her rifle, smacking the shark aside, before lining up a shot on another shark just as it exited the water.

The shot struck home right behind its gills, causing the flying shark to convulse, its leap ruined as it smashed into the gunwale, shattering a yard of the rail's length, then fell back into the ocean. The blood of the wounded shark attracted other sharks, but many still kept on attacking as the rest of the crew joined in. "Work to make the sharks bleed when they return to the water! If we do a good enough job, the rest of these sharks will go for the easier target."

Shoto lashed out with a lance of fire along one side of the ship, striking several sharks and turning them into flying bits of charcoal, although the added light of his flames didn't do so much to make the experience of being attacked by so many sharks out of the darkness any less terrifying. Mei and Momo, in particular, screamed the moment they came on deck and saw all the flashing teeth reflected in the fire and lantern light.

Yet they rose to the occasion, lashing out with a series of billhooks that some of the attackers from the day before had left on the deck. The added reach of the long-shafted weapons proved incredibly helpful in dealing with the sharks in midair, although not so helpful when they had to deal with sharks that had landed on the deck and were bouncing around.

Tenya was also having difficulties as the battle had destroyed large segments of the deck, meaning that he could barely take a few steps without being in danger of tripping.

“Yaoyorozu-san, would you mind making me a weapon of some kind?! I am afraid I can’t get up enough speed to add anything to my kicks.”

His kicks were still more powerful than even Kirishima’s punches since he could accelerate his leg in midair for a second, but Tenya had been trained as a skirmisher, rushing in, lashing out with kicks or propelled punches and away. Moving around the place and using high kicks was something that he had not been trained for, much like Izuku’s prior training had not focused on his legs. Still, once he had a pair of sabers in hand courtesy of Yaomomo, he got along well enough.

As the fight continued, the crew got into a rhythm. Jirou, Mei and Melissa targeted the sharks further away from the ship, peering out into the darkness and using guns to shoot any they could before they leaped for the ship. This was perhaps the most important part of the defense, as each dead or bleeding shark drew a dozen more to them.

Momo, Izuku, and Tsuyu provided the next layer of defense, all of them now wielding bill hooks, slicing and, more, pushing away any of the flying sharks as they were in the air or catching them as they landed on the deck. The three of them kept moving around, with Momo showing a surprising amount of dexterity on the rapidly battered deck. Meanwhile, Tenya and Kirishima kept the deck clean of sharks in close, kicking or hurling them off the sides of the ship, roars of “MANLY!” puncturing the night.

Several minutes into this, Izuku nearly missed a blow from his pike when the voice in his head came back. Instead of commenting on anything in particular, this time, it sounded as if the vestiges stored in One For All were just taking in the sights of the battle like spectators at a sports game. *“OOH! Engine’s boy nearly ate the deck there, but look, he’s recovered nicely!”*

“Yeah, but that’s because the ears girl stabbed that other shark right before it hit him. Their teamwork sucks. I’ll wager that at least one of them gets injured badly before the fight’s done.” That voice wasn’t one that Izuku had heard before, and the surly, bitter tone caused Izuku to flinch.

That faded as another voice, another one he’d not heard all that often, mused, *“This reminds me of that old Sharknado movie. But in the darkness like this, it is way more terrifying.”*

“How the hell do you even know that movie? That was old even when I was alive!” Another voice said.

The accumulated impact of this interruption to his thoughts mid-combat was not, to put it mildly, welcome. It caused Izuku to miss a slash from his billhook, and an instant later, the shark in question smashed into him, just missing taking out a chunk from his side by biting at his shirt.

This forced Izuku to drop his billhook and grab at the shark. He turned this into a positive, using the shark again as a flail to smash dozens of sharks out of the air before his chosen weapon had become too mangled and bloody to be of use.

There were numerous other close calls, and by the time the shark attack ended, everyone was breathing raggedly. Yet, thankfully, the surly voice's hope was foiled, as none of them had worse than bruises and scapes. When the last of the sharks finally stopped coming, several slumped onto their knees as Tsuyu hurried back inside, turning the ship so that they were back on course with some difficulty.

"I, I don't know about you, but I think that was worse than most of the other monster attacks we've had to deal with. Numbers and persistence count for a lot," Melissa groaned, dropping her rifle and raising her arms up above her head in a stretch, muttering about how her back hurt from a blow from a shark tail that she hadn't seen coming in time to dodge. "And thank you for forcing us all to wear safety ropes, Kiri. Those things definitely came in handy. I can't count the number of times I was nearly knocked over the side only for the safety rope to save me."

"They're truly a manly invention, although I can't take all the credit. I've seen those in use ev...er...y..." Kirishima's voice trailed off as he stared at Melissa.

Izuku, who had just been about to ask Shoto to step down into the engine room and give them some more power so they could get further away from the flying shark-infested area of the ocean, also stopped, staring, a blush suffusing his features.

Shoto stared, his eyes wider in his face now than they had been when he saw Wolfram's giant robot form.

Tenya, who had slumped to his knees and his face thereafter, the use of his engines in brief spurts while lifting his legs into kicks having taken a lot out of him, stared.

All of their clothing had taken a hit, but nothing so big as that first near miss at the start, which had shredded Melissa's shirt. What remained barely covered her shoulders and the upper portions of her chest, starting right below where her nipples were, and as she had been sleeping, she hadn't been wearing a bra, allowing her breasts to bounce freely. Melissa didn't quite match the size of Momo, but her chest was actually a little bit perkier than either Momo's or Mei's, and they were perfectly formed.

Since the blonde girl was currently standing right below one of the lanterns, this gave all of the boys a delightful amount of underboob to stare at. And after the harrowing experience they'd just gone through, not even Tenya had the willpower to look away.

Melissa blinked, wondering why Kirishima had stopped talking. She peered out towards him, then cocked her head in confusion as she saw he was looking in her direction. It took her a second to realize that all the boys were. She then looked down at herself, squealed, and quickly covered her chest just as Jirou's earjacks slammed into Kirishima and then Shoto as she stalked along the ruined deck towards the more distant Izuku and Tenya. "Eyes closed, boys!"

A moment later, Izuku tossed his own shirt over to Melissa. Beyond his sleeve, his shirt had remained in one piece. Melissa took it gratefully and then sighed, looking around the ship. "Well, tomorrow's going to be a busy day. So I suggest we all get some sleep. Um, those of us who aren't on duty, anyway."

The next day was mainly spent repairing the ship from the damage it had sustained. Luckily they'd had enough money to buy a good portion of spare planks back on Savar, but even so, the ship was looking much worse for wear as work was called on account of fog.

This was no ordinary fog, though. It came in at around midday, roiling up off of the ocean and within minutes, it had covered the ship in a layer of fog that only Mei was able to see through for more than a yard in any direction. This made the work nearly impossible, but with the Log Pose still directing them forward, it didn't stop the ship's progress going forward.

As Melissa, who was basically in charge of safety during large-scale projects like this, called the day's work over, Shoto nodded. He held out a hand in front of himself experimentally, then nodded absently. "I can't even see my own hand when I push my arm out. Seeing my arm disappear into the fog is highly unusual. Visibility like this would shut down cities at home, let alone ships at sea. Still, I suppose we should look on the bright side. At least in the Grand Line, we're not liable to..."

That was as far as he got before Momo shouted, "Shoto, no!"

At the same time, Jirou and Izuku, using the location of his voice, practically tackled him to the deck, momentarily fighting between themselves to put a hand over his mouth. They were joined a moment later by Mei, whose face flashed by Shoto's so close he could have leaned in and kissed her just at the moment that he found his back on the deck.

"Do not tempt fate like that," Jirou hissed, while Shoto tried hard not to blush at the feeling of Mei on his chest as she presently was, while Izuku pinned one arm to the deck and Jirou the other, her jacks waving like striking snakes waiting for an opportunity. "In a place like this, simply saying that is tantamount to suicidal stupidity!"

"Seriously, Shoto! Even I know not to tempt the gremlins when I make babies," Mei said before humming as she pushed herself upward. This made her head and upper body disappear in the fog, which for some reason caused Shoto to gulp, the strange, surreal nature of not being

able to see her face but feel her hands on his chest and see her lower body pressing down into his own causing his pulse to start racing. “Huh, you know, you feel a lot warmer than I would have thought with how your Quirk works. Kind of neat.”

At that, Izuku and Jirou both scrambled away, with Jirou hauling Mei off the ice and fire user. This left Shoto there for a moment, wondering why his heart was hammering so hard in his chest.

The fog remained in place throughout the day and into the evening despite the fact that the sun should’ve boiled it away if it was a normal fog like what a ship could run into back on Earth. Instead, it simply stayed there, with the ship moving through it. The fog was still there that night and then into the next day, during which they’d also had to deal with several rain squalls, although none were serious. The amount of rain they had to deal with below decks, thanks to the number of shattered planks on the main deck, was far more troublesome but not life-threatening.

However, As the fog started to slowly lift, the ship came under another attack from flying sharks. This time, they looked more like great white sharks, far larger than the variety they’d dealt with previously and of a different shape to boot. This actually made them less of a threat since there weren’t as many of them, but the fog made up for that lack.

Jirou quickly proved a godsend. She stayed in the center of the deck, with Izuku, Momo and Tsuyu moving in her direction. “Yaomomo, one shark’s about to come over the railings to the starboard, two feet left of your position. Kiri, there’s another one that just landed on the prow and is wallowing around there. Zuk, another one’s flying through the air right above your head!”

In this manner, she directed the defense of the ship despite the fog, but that didn’t stop the bruises to the crew of the damage to the deck from building up again. Then Jirou twitched and she turned to look to the port, her eyes narrowing. “Something’s coming uPPP!!”

The ship heaved as a large wave hit the ship’s portside, nearly pushing it over before the Wayward Journey could rebalance itself. Something had come up from above, but thankfully, there was no direct impact, just the water suddenly swelling to one side of the ship.

None of the crew, not even Mei, could see what it was through the fog, but that just made it more terrifying.

“Whatever you do, don’t shoot in that direction! From the size of whatever that has to be, our guns won’t matter to it more than pinpricks unless you get lucky, and if it’s not attacking us yet, I want to keep it that way!” Izuku barked, to which all of the shooters agreed quickly.

A moment later, although no one was there to see, Jirou's face took on a greenish cast. "Yeah, we definitely... Tsuyu, two sharks, one to your left, one to your right, midair just above the gunwale coming in. Um, yeah, we really don't want to fight whatever that thing is. I can hear the sounds of something large chewing on something nearby."

Moments later, the flying shark attack faded out, with Jirou reporting still more chewing sounds out in the distance as the ship chugged on. Moments later, the fog finally lifted on a sunny, bright day.

"So sharks of that size have predators, which is not exactly unusual. But it is a message to us. These monsters are not attacking us out of malice. They are simply attacking us because we are food," Momo mused, watching as Kirishima and Tsuyu set up a large grill in the center of the deck next to a pile of shark bodies. "And, rather amusingly, so are they to us."

The first time, they'd been too exhausted and too busy keeping the deck clear to think about how the sharks could help their supplies and had simply pushed them overboard through the numerous holes in the gunwales. This time, well, waste not want not. *That, and oddly, I think eating them when they did their best to eat us is more than fair.*

Melissa stared as Izuku and Tenya began to work on one of the sharks, taking its scales off and cutting it into smaller slices ready to be put on the grill. "I'm watching one of my best friends carve into a shark that's about as wide as his arms can reach and about as long as Uncle Might is tall, and all I'm feeling is hungry. Who else thinks it's a little telling how we've all gotten so used to the crazy?"

To this, none of the others had any response beyond wan little chuckles.

OOOOOOO

For the next few days, the ship now found itself in sunny, warm weather, causing everyone aboard bar Shoto to become quite pleased. He very much preferred the cold weather and said so before pausing, staring at Mei as she came out on deck again. *There's that feeling again.*

While the other girls had gone inside for their Yaomomo-made bathing suits, she had come out with a tank top that was barely big enough to cover her abundant chest like an extremely thin second skin. The fact it was white and quickly began to get wet from her sweat simply added to the effect. Shoto began to get a bloody nose, and he twisted away as Izuku and the other boys did the same, with Tenya shouting, "Mei! Whatever are you wearing?"

"Ehh, this? It shrunk in the wash for some reason. I wasn't about to toss it over the side or whatever. I'd just have to ask Boobs for another one, and that'd be annoying," Mei said, looking down her top and shrugging, causing her breasts to jiggle, which in turn caused the

other boys to get bloody noses. The girls already out on deck were wearing the same swimsuits as before, yet for some reason, Mei's too-tiny tank top was just that little bit more stimulation than they could handle.

Shuddering, Izuku resolutely turned to look over the prow of the ship, trying not to notice the number of holes in the gunwale. They were now moving slower, at around a quarter of their normal speed, simply because this day was too enjoyable after so many harder days. "I, I'm going to go swimming, yes, swimming." *That will keep me cold and, um, certain things from growing into a problem, so to speak.* "I need the practice. I rarely ever swam when I was younger except when we were forced to do so in gym, and getting used to swimming in the ocean like this is a must."

It took Izuku a second to switch to one of the longer safety lines, but when he did, Izuku wasted no time at all to jump up and over the side of the gun well beside him, dropping down into the water beside the ship. Watching this, Kirishima nodded, keeping his eyes well away from Mei or the other girls and sitting a little awkwardly on the deck. "Swimming is really good exercise. Hmm... yeah, that sounds good."

The next second, he threw himself off the deck while Mei just watched in confusion for a moment before shrugging and heading toward one of the folding chairs. Shoto followed Mei, laying out to one side and grabbing up a book about weather patterns on the Grand Line, one of the navigational books Izuku, Jirou and Melissa had grabbed.

Tenya's brain seemed to have stalled out for a few seconds before Tsuyu's tongue smacked into the side of his face, waking him up.

He opened his mouth to begin a tirade about impropriety or something, but Momo hurled a towel into Tenya's face before he could get more than a few words in. "Tenya, let Mei wear whatever she wants. It is far too hot to deal with one of your lectures."

"Lectures? I merely think that we as UA students should uphold a certain---"

"And where is UA exactly?" Jirou asked archly. "I thought you'd left all that kind of thing behind, dude."

Tenya stumbled, then sighed and looked back over at Mei. Inside, through the still unrepaired hatch, Tsuyu had also heard that and flinched, trying to not let her reaction to that statement go beyond a faint kero of dismay.

"Nonetheless, I feel as if we should...er... w, well... if we are not upholding the standards of UA, then we should follow the basic standards of decency!" Tenya rallied. "There is nothing whatsoever decent about tha, that tank top that you're wearing, Mei! I request that you replace it with a serviceable swimsuit at the very least!"

“What are you, the fun police? And here I was just about to lay out and pull it off entirely,” Mei grumbled, shaking her head, causing Shoto to blink and lose all his composure entirely. “Still, if it makes you feel any better, I’ll go change into a swimsuit top before taking it off so I can work on my tan.”

This caused practically everyone on the deck to freeze and blush. Deciding that he’d had enough stimulation for one day, Shoto stood up from his lounge chair and headed inside to take over for Tsuyu at the wheel. Tenya watched as Mei, with a huff, pushed herself to her feet, heading down into the ship again, his hand chopping, building up momentum.

Seeing that and realizing that another diatribe was going to start the moment Mei returned and tried to go through with her words, Jirou pushed herself off of the lounge chair where she’d been lying beside Mei and Melissa, handing over the book of monsters and sea animals she’d been reading through to Melissa. “I’m going to go swimming too. Getting cooled off like that is a nice idea right now.”

Melissa nodded, taking the book and placing it beside her as she looked at the nautical map, trying to figure out where they were in relation to the next island, with scant success. As a steamship they should have been making better time than any sailing ship, the type of vessel which had been originally used to mark out the distance between the island they’d just been on and Fewfroxe. Yet they’d started off on a completely different heading and had lost their way several times when everyone had been forced to fight the flying sharks, leaving no one to man the wheel.

Worse, they were in the ocean. That meant there were no landmarks. Thus, to figure out exactly where they were, Melissa could only use the marks on the map showing the territories of the various monsters in the area. “Have fun, Kyo-chan. Now, are we over here or over here? If we assume this one is the first flying shark territory we passed through, then...”

In contrast, Momo didn’t even bother to look up from what she was doing. One of Izuku’s notebooks was open beside her as she took some notes on the Den Den Mushi, the strange snail communication devices and other strange creatures they might run into in the future from the encyclopedia. That, and a lot of notes about money and various precious ores. While the others had made it clear to Momo that they didn’t want her to use her powers to just make money, they might need to in the future, and she wanted to be prepared, considering how much coal they went through and how seemingly rare it might be.

If we can’t join the Marines right away on Rorca, we might need to figure out a way to make money there to buy either more coal or the rest of what we want. The money we received from the bounties for Bear King and that water woman might not be enough to cover everything.

Wondering idly how Momo had gotten one of Izuku's notebooks away from the boy, Jirou finished tying one of the extra-long safety ties to her waist. Momo had made these at Kirishima's behest, and while not as tough as the safety lines they used while on deck in any kind of weather, they were about twice as long as the ship was. With the rope in place, Jirou then moved over to the gunwale nearest where Izuku and Kirishima were, hopping out down into the ocean with a whoop, landing in the water feet first.

Soon, Jirou bobbed back up onto the surface, swimming along lazily beside the ship for a few seconds, the tug of the safety chain light and actually a source of comfort, a sign she would not be left behind. Her idyllic moment of relaxation was interrupted by a splash to the face as Izuku and Kirishima raced by, with Kirishima shouting out, "Come on bro, try to come at me from behind; don't just race after me. You're never going to catch a seaman like that."

Grumbling, Jirou lay there for a second, then flipped herself back onto her chest and followed the boys, deciding to make this game of tag a three-way.

However, swimming alongside the ship, even when they were attached to the ship by long safety ropes, was incredibly draining for both Izuku and Jirou. Izuku had never been all that into swimming before, and Jirou just didn't have much endurance, something that she had neglected prior to coming to UA. She'd tried to make that up since, given all the facilities the students had access to, but hadn't really made any headway prior to their arrival in this world given everything else that had been going on.

On the heels of that admission, Jirou's eyes widened as another revelation occurred to her, one she had somehow missed all this time. *Holy fuck, we've been here way longer than we were at UA! We were there for three weeks before the USJ. With all the time we spent healing and building the Wayward Journey on Clockwork Island, we've been here almost four months by this point.*

That thought had her stopping in place for a moment, kind of stunned. So much had happened since arriving at UA that the school had made a deep impression on Kyoka, above and beyond the effort it had taken to be accepted there in the first place, that thinking it had all happened in just three weeks was amazing. *And so much more has happened in this world, and we've been here longer to boot. HA! That'll give me something to stop Tenya in his tracks when he starts up another diatribe about our needing to 'uphold the fine traditions' of UA.*

Shaking those thoughts aside, Kyoka dove towards Izuku, resuming the game of tag.

Eventually, however, Kyoka's arms began to feel sore, and she called a halt, leaning up against the ship as it shifted slowly forward behind her, lightly dragging her along by the rope. "Who would've known that the stone-hard hero was so good a swimmer," she teased, looking over at where Kirishima floated nearby.

“Ugh... I should never have told you I came up with that line,” Kirishima grumbled, shaking his head. Eventually Jirou had told him what the line sounded like, and his embarrassment had never gone down since. “Are you ever going to let it go?”

“Nope. I’m going to tease you about that forever,” Jirou answered with a smirk before turning around and gesturing with her head upwards. “I’m done for the day, guys. Ahoy, the deck. Throw me a line, would you?”

To her surprise, a full rope ladder was quickly rolled down towards him, the clack clack clack of the wooden steps against the hull causing Jennifer to twitch a little, but she grabbed it and began to pull herself upwards. “Nice. Er, would one of you guys mind holding it still?”

Below, Izuku moved forward, holding the bottom to keep it steady, resolutely trying not to look upwards. “H, here you go, Kyoka.”

A moment later, Jirou’s wet food slid on one of the steps, her leg flailing just as she had raised her other leg to take the next step up. Jirou tried to hold on, but her grip strength wasn’t the best, which had been why she was so happy to see the rope ladder. But now that lack of strength cost her and she fell off, dropping straight down. “Woop, fuck, coming down!”

Izuku looked up at her sudden cry of alarm, but before he could try and help, Kyoka’s rear impacted his face, causing both of them to fumble off into the water.

“AKKK! I, I’m sorry!” Izuku sputtered, partly from embarrassment, partly from the water getting up his nose, quickly pulling away from Jirou in the water. *Soft, squeezable... no, no, bad Izuku!*

Treading water for a second, Jirou groaned, blushing hotly at what had just happened, embarrassed twofold. “Stop saying you’re sorry, Zuk. This was completely my bad.”

It took her a few seconds and a few tries to get Izuku to understand that she wasn’t holding him at fault for what had just happened. Then, with Kirishima and Izuku both holding the rope still, she began her climb once more, using her jacks to add another point of contact. Around halfway up, Momo and Tenya began to tug at her safety rope, helping her up the last two yards.

“Word to the wise,” Jirou grumbled as she laid out on the deck, letting the still-warm weather start to dry her off, wringing her arms out to either side. “Always be aware of how tired your arms are when you’re swimming, especially if you then have to climb back up onto the ship.”

Shaking her head, Momo chuckled and, releasing the safety line, sat down beside Kyoka. Once she was sitting down, her legs out in front of her, she pulled Jirou’s head off of the deck

and then set it down on her lap. "Well, at least you chose a nice day to push yourself so hard, Kyo-chan." *My word, this does feel nice. No wonder Meli-chan did this to Izuku so often. "You just lay there and recover."*

This caused Jirou to blush hotly, yet the girl did not try to move away. She simply laid out there, staring up at the sky (or the underside of Yamomo's boobs, Kyoka would never tell which) for a few moments before she closed her eyes, deciding to just enjoy it.

Her eyes opened a second later at a low thumping noise and both young women looked over as Izuku pulled himself up over the side of the ship, their eyes widening and flushes appearing on their faces. Izuku had divested himself of his shirt before jumping into the water, although for the life of him, he couldn't remember where he put it down at the moment. That did not matter at all to either young woman, however, who simply stared at Izuku.

His arms had a few too many scars for their liking from their time in this world, and there were indeed a few other, older-looking scars, scars that Momo realized looked like they had been created by small fireworks. She made a note of those, and her analytical mind instantly connected them to the fact that Bakugo had been Izuku's primary bully until they arrived at UA, which had obviously taken a toll on both Izuku's body and psyche. However, the impact on his body of those injuries was not nearly enough to take away from how incredibly **interesting** he looked at the moment with how wet his skin was and the water slowly dripping out of his hair down his chest.

Now, if I were not a well-bred young lady, I might well be whistling at the moment because this is a show. It's just like in some of my romance novels. Hehehe, though, I doubt anyone would ever call Izuku rugged with how cute his face is.

Izuku's definition was incredible, yet that could be said for the other boys aboard. But Izuku had very visible muscles bulging on his arms and more in his legs, even more than Tenya. He looked like he was a mid-weight boxer mixed with a bodybuilder despite his overall small height and frame. Momo estimated that his shoulders were actually a little wider now than Tenya, who was the next tallest and broadest of the boys, while his waist was thinner than Shoto, whose build was the thinnest of the quartet, and his six-pack was better than Kirishima's, who had more musculature there than either of the other two boys. The dichotomy between that kind of body on Izuku's boy-next-door freckled, cute but not handsome face was quite shocking.

She blushed further, as did Jirou, as he slumped down next to Momo, leaning against the gunwale, a bright smile on his face. "How goes the encyclopedia? I noticed you stole one of my notebooks, have you noted down anything interesting?"

Pushing aside her hormonal thoughts, Momo turned her attention to what she had been reading, a smile appearing on her own face. "Quite a lot, really. The sciences here aren't nearly as advanced as back at home, which we expected, given they are in the pike and shot era. Yet they do know quite a few things and have access to several real oddities, some of which are fascinating. One of the entries I looked for specifically was on those snail devices. They are called..."

Below the pair, Jirou simply rolled her eyes but did not make any movement, simply laying there on Momo's lap, listening to Momo and Izuku nerd out about the Den Den Mushi, the various types there were out there, and several other points about the Grand Line and the world overall that they hadn't learned before this. Most of that stuff wasn't interesting, but they sounded happy. That was enough for Kyoka, and she simply basked in their presence for a time, enjoying this moment of peace on the Grand Line.

OOOOOOO

For some reason, the weather remained decent for the next few days. Yes, there were still monster attacks to deal with. However, the weather had proven just as deadly to them in the past, and now it had seemingly faded away. The current of the Grand Line still occasionally caught the ship at the wrong moment and pushed them off course, but that and a sudden squall was all.

After the squall it became noticeably colder than those first extremely nice days after the fog and the flying shark attacks, which Tsuyu didn't like at all. Yet thanks to Momo, Melissa and Mei, or, as Mei had started calling them, "3M Design Corp!" she was able to handle it easily. The skintight wetsuit-like outfit the group had created for her was fantastic, over which she wore a typical coat, the same type that all of them wore, along with leggings. Even better, the cold didn't seem to bring anything more than a light snowfall down on the ship.

On the second day of this new cold front hitting them, Momo and Jirou were on duty at the wheel. Jirou should have been outside, but it was a full moon, and Mei was up in the crow's nest. Whenever she was on duty, Mei routinely took the position of lookout up in the crow's nest, fiddling with her sniper rifle or the new spyglass that she and Melissa had invented. And with the amount of moonlight, she didn't really need the help. Kyoka was simply awake to help in case of a monster attack or some other danger.

The two girls sat close together, Kyoka having turned her chair so the two could look at one another, their legs gently touching occasionally when one or the other shifted the small tea table to one side. At first, the conversation had been about the monsters they had seen so far, with Momo explaining some from the encyclopedia. It shifted to their plans going forward and more serious matters after a time, however, specifically what they could expect from the

Marines. "The encyclopedia doesn't really mention much about how the Marines work, but it sounds far more militaristic than anything I've ever read about."

Kyoka shrugged. "So long as they don't try to split us up or anything, I honestly don't care. Izuku's right. If we're going to act like heroes, and I think we all still want to, then we need to join the Marines." She frowned then. "So long as they aren't sexist or anything. I know in the past, combat was mostly a guy's only thing, but I hope that's not the case here."

"Since I found an entry for someone called 'the Pirate Empress' in the encyclopedia, I think the locals know that women can be tough, although I doubt that we represent much of the Marine's fighting strength," Momo answered dryly, knowing more about history than her friend and why war had indeed always been a man's game in the main. *Spying, planning and small-scale things, no, but real war, yes.* "Regardless, the whole splitting us up thing will... hopefully, it won't happen if we make that demand a contingent on our joining up in the first place. Still, we will see, as you are quite correct. If we want to help people, becoming Marines is the best way to do it in this world. On a large scale, anyway."

"Hmmm...speaking of the future though, have you noticed Tsu's been down in the dumps again recently? Do you think she's still dealing with us being unable to go back to our old world?" Kyoka asked, frowning a little as she looked over to the hatch leading down into the ship.

"Almost certainly, but unless she opens up to us, I think trying to get Tsu to do so will just make her button up more." Momo sighed. "I agree Tsu's putting on a front trying not to worry us, and that it's not just because she's feeling guilty about not pulling her weight. Yet, getting Tsu to admit she is still feeling down is not going to be easy. You also have to admit, well," Momo shrugged. "The rest of us have moved on quite quickly from the idea of never seeing our family again."

Jirou nodded, feeling a faint pang for a moment as the thought occurred to her she hadn't thought of her parents for weeks now. *Hell, the last time I did was back on Clockwork Island right after we kicked Bear King's ass in.* "Yeah, I getcha. It still hurts, though, seeing those moments when Tsu's mask drops."

"I know. Still, all we can do is be there when Tsu breaks down. It isn't like the rest of us didn't do so before. Or that we do not have our own problems sometimes. I, I know that I sometimes still have nightmares about our fights in this weird world. The sound of Skunk One's back snapping... the, the faces of some of the people I've shot, who I know I killed..." Momo shivered.

Kyoka instantly leaned forward, pulling the taller girl into a hug. The difference in their height didn't matter much when they were sitting down, something that Kyoka was very

grateful for right now. “Shh... I know all about that. I still have nightmares about the vibration sword and what it could do, and I know that Zuk and the others sometimes wake up from their own nightmares, I’ve seen and heard that. You’re not alone, Yaomomo. But, but you were right. The fights here, with the muskets, swords and how willing to kill everyone is, we need to match that energy. I, I’ve been thinking about using that sword as a backup weapon, at least. We, we just need to get through it together, okay?”

“*SNIFF*, okay,” Momo said, hugging her back. “Thank you, Kyo-chan.” She smiled then banishing her sadness as she pulled back to look into Kyoka’s eyes. “You give good hugs, you know?”

“Er, well, I’ve never been told that before, but I’ll take your word for it,” Kyoka answered, flushing a bit.

For a while, the topic shifted again to less serious things, such as their plans for what they wanted a permanent ship to look like, what they would decorate their rooms with, and more typically girly topics. Men came up at one point, and Kyoka was horrified to know that Momo’s parents had been looking for boys for her to date since she was sixteen, while Momo was astonished that Kyoka had a crush at one point on Best Jeanist.

She actually didn’t, but Kyoka wasn’t about to tell Momo the truth: that one of her hero crushes, beyond Edgeshot, who she’d been attracted to during her dark goth years, had been Mirko for much of the same reason many a young man had a crush on her. *Hot bunny with thighs that can crush my head, yes, please. I’ll still take suffocation by Yayoboob over that, though.*

The night wound on, and eventually, Kyoka had to go to the bathroom. She returned to find Momo nearly nodding off at the wheel and after teasing Momo gently, offered to make them some tea.

“Oh, but I can do that,” Momo said, perking up at the mention of tea.

“Nah, you just stay right there. You’ll just make tea, Yaomomo. I can at least make little sandwich thingies for us,” Kyoka teased, causing Momo to pout. Over the past few days, Melissa had tried to teach some of the crew how to cook stew, but none bar Kyoka had gotten past the cutting the ingredients phase.

Momo watched Jirou putter around the kitchen, cocking her head as the shorter girl began to hum, bopping her head to some remembered piece of music. Soon, she was quietly singing, causing Momo to blink, smiling at the sweet sound. “That sounds nice. Is it a song you made up or something you remember, Kyo-chan?”

“H, huh!?” Kyoka stumbled. She’d honestly forgotten for a moment she had an audience. “Oh, um, yeah. Er, it’s one of my favorite songs. Er, I don’t know if you’d like it much. You mentioned you prefer jazz and classic, right?”

“Yes, but I’d be willing to listen to anything at this point. Something to dance to would be nice. I think dancing and music are the things I miss most about not being at home,” Momo sighed faintly.

“Er, well, I can’t help you there, I’m afraid. Unless you count grinding or twerking as dancing, I don’t dance or know any songs that would lend itself to that kind of thing,” Kyoka admitted, finishing making up some sandwiches with re-cooked fish slices.

“I am afraid I’ve never heard of those dances. But... ooh, I could teach you some dance moves!” Momo excitedly stood up, reaching over and grabbing Kyoka’s hand and pulled her close, ignoring the tea and food for a moment in her enthusiasm to share one of the most loved pastimes with her best friend. “We’ll start with the waltz. Let’s see, you put your hands here, and then I put mine here and...”

A blush invading her face with furious force and her earjacks twitching spasmodically, Jirou could only go along with things as Momo danced the two of them around the wheel, cajoling Kyoka into singing for them. Finally, she did, although not the song she had been singing a moment ago. Instead, this was a softer song, one her mother had sung for her when she was younger. “OH, Heaven is a place on earth...”

For a time, the two just danced, with Momo taking it seriously and Kyoka just going along with things for a bit until her song ended. Then Momo sighed, raising her arms from around Kyoka to reach to the wheel, noticing absently it hadn’t moved nearly as much as it normally would if left alone, as she had neglected to tie the wheel in place as she should have.

“Well, that was fun, thank you, Kyo-chan. Certainly much more fun than most of the times I had to dance with boys at this or that soiree.” It was only now that Momo saw how flushed Kyoka was and instantly misconstrued it. “Oh, I’m sorry, did that make you uncomfortable? Or was it difficult to keep up with me and sing? I’m sorry I should—”

“NO!” Kyoka yelped, taking her courage in both metaphorical hands and keeping her physical arms around Momo. “No, I, um, I wasn’t uncomfortable. Um... kind of the opposite, actually.”

“Oh, that’s nice,” Momo happily let her arms remain where they were on Kyoka’s back, peering down at her. “Do you want to learn another dance, then?”

“I, I...er, I’d rather, um...” Kyoka, her thoughts and courage fraying, let one hand move up Momo’s back, causing the taller girl to blink. She didn’t do anything though, simply looking

down at her best friend in confusion, which somehow gave Kyoka the courage she needed to move on. Her hand rose further, reaching Momo's neck as she leaned up.

"Land ho!"

What would've happened between the two girls would go forever unknown as the shout from out on the deck caused Kyoka to jolt away from Momo. Panicking, she backed away entirely, cursing herself for a fool. She rushed out onto the deck, shouting up to the crow's nest, leaving a perplexed Momo. "Are you sure?"

Unaware of the moment that she had interrupted, Mei continued to peer through her newest baby. The spyglass/laser was a thing of bronze, multiple pieces of glass, and, strangely, a series of lenses set up in a row, like an iron sight on an old rifle. Creating those lenses to Mei's exacting demands had taken Momo quite a lot of time and effort for something so small, but with them and a few bits that could be added on to the spyglass, which was now in small holsters attached to the inside of the crow's nest, the scope-eyed girl could indeed have her laser. At least on sunny days. "Yep, land ho. It looks really snowy and... Triangular, I think?"

"What is that supposed to mean?" Jirou murmured.

Retying the wheel down to keep them on course, Momo followed her best friend out onto the deck, wondering why Jirou had pulled away so suddenly and why she felt a bit disappointed about it. *I don't know, but did it not look like Kyo-chan was going to try and kiss me? But that's impossible, isn't it? Two girls kissing is something that only happens in dares.*

The Yaoyorozu parents were very controlling when it came to their daughter. They controlled quite a bit of what she learned and had sent her to a series of schools to prep her for taking over the Yaoyorozu group as well as marry well, which meant that Momo, a very down-to-earth girl beyond her bourgeois upbringing who wanted to make friends who liked her for her own sake rather than last name, had been almost as lonely as Izuku.

Thus, Momo actually didn't know that girls could love each other or even understand much about romance in general. Certainly she had gotten access to a few bodice rippers over the years and had been subjected to Mina at UA, but that wasn't enough to say she was at all knowledgeable on the subject. *And my bodice rippers were severely lacking in specifics.*

Shaking her head to free it from such thoughts, Momo exited the deckhouse and was outside just in time to hear Mei shout, "Remind me how long we have to stay at Fewfroxe?"

"Two weeks before the Log Pose resets the next island," Momo said instantly, her voice causing Jirou to twitch.

Glancing sideways, Kyoka could only see Momo's normal, warm smile. There was no awkwardness there.

Gazing back, Momo squeezed Jirou's shoulder as she elaborated, her voice pitched to carry up to Mei in the crow's nest. "That is mentioned on the map we bought. There's also an entry encyclopedia under the entry for this island. That entry isn't very large, admittedly, but it did mention that."

"Do we have to land on the island, or can we just stay in its weather pattern to let the Log Pose reset?" Tenya inquired, the first of the rest of the crew to join the two girls on the deck. When he had been reading books, they had been the ones about shipbuilding or what few books that mentioned the World Government and such.

"I think we have to land. Regardless, let's put it off until we circle the whole island, get a feel for the place like we said we should," Izuku stated from behind Tenya. "Drop anchor here, and then we can keep heading forward in the morning and survey the island in daylight."

"Aye, Aye, Captain," Melissa teased gently, poking him in the sides, with the others piling in for a moment, causing Izuku to roll his eyes.

But even that was progress, Melissa noted. No longer was Izuku arguing that he shouldn't be Captain or wasn't the Captain, rather, he was willing to take charge and give out orders when need be. *Still, I have to wonder about that migraine he mentioned a few days ago, she thought as she turned back, heading back to her room. It was still nighttime, after all. I know we promised to talk more about One For All, but we really haven't made any headway on its powers or getting Izuku in touch with the spirits in his head. And whatever that specific power was supposed to be obviously didn't work. If we're going to be here for two weeks, maybe we'll have time to do some experiments. On top of all the repairs and stuff, anyway.*

The ship was completely out of repair-type supplies at this point. Momo could easily create nails, but they needed far too much wood to want to lean on her for that, especially when there was going to be a ready source of wood on Fewfroxe.

Melissa had the right idea, and after dropping the ship's anchor, Izuku had everyone but Mei head to their bunks. From experience, he knew Mei was able to go even longer than he could without sleep, and she was perfectly happy tinkering with her tools up in the crow's nest. On the other side of things, this near the new island the ship wouldn't need to deal with any of the Grand Line's real weather.

This let Momo and Jirou head to bed as well. Neither girl was able to fall asleep quickly, however. Relieving the almost-kiss she had been going for had Kyoka tossing and turning for quite a while. As for Momo, she was plagued with a bit of confusion and strange thoughts

about Kyoka and Izuku reliving some of the scenes from her romance novels and whether or not her knowledge of romance, even as an existential concept, might just be as lacking as her personal experience with it.

OOOOOOO

The next morning, after a hearty breakfast, the crew sailed the ship until everyone on the main deck could see it, and as it did, everyone stared. Because Mei had been right the night before. Fewfroxe was indeed extremely triangular.

This trend started with the fact that there were two triangular mountains, one smaller than the other, set side-by-side, at least from the perspective of the crew as they approached the island. The feet of those mountains went straight down into the ocean. There didn't seem to be any place to beach a ship, regardless of the size of the vessel. Those mountains looked like they were dotted with areas of forestry, many of those areas being in the shape of triangles. As they got closer, these segments of the mountainsides proved to be semi-small plateaus, each of them almost completely disconnected from one another, or at least they looked like it from the ocean as the ship moved around the two mountains.

As they closed, the triangle theme continued, with the trees that they could see growing thickly on the lowest of those plateaus. The trees looked like pine trees, their trunks jutting up from the ground several meters before their branches began, and most of them looked triangle-shaped or perhaps more like an arrow. Despite having two mountains on it, Izuku estimated that this island was only about half the size of Savar, although it was probably far denser thanks to the amount of stone those mountains warned of.

The ships sailed slowly around the island, and just as they were almost back to the direction they had closed with the island first, Mei reported a small area that was a little flatter than the rest, although it still wasn't what anyone would call a beach. Rather, it was simply a shallower slope rather than a sheer mountain cliff jutting out of the ocean. Two rivers steamed down from a central, large confluence between the mountains, the smaller rivers heading down in a series of waterfalls to either side of this area. Above the point where the river split, the rest of the river was seemingly frozen to a certain extent.

Since this seemed to be the only place that looked even remotely accessible, the ship made for it. Kirishima and Tenya were placed on the prow, taking soundings every few yards as they moved closer, while Mei kept a lookout up on the highlands for any movement just in case. This island wasn't supposed to have a human presence, but one could never be too careful, something all of them were mindful of after Savar.

"As someone who knows at least a little bit about geography, this island makes no sense," Melissa grumbled, shaking her head. "Those triangle plateaus, filled with triangle trees,

on two triangle mountains? It seems made up, almost. I realize that a large portion of that is the distance with which we're looking at those highlands, but still."

"I agree, but then again, the geography of this entire planet doesn't really make sense. Each island being its own magnetic pole, and each has a single weather system year-round? Even islands on the equator have autumn, spring and winter periods back on Earth," Momo agreed. "They are much milder than elsewhere, but they still have them. Here, that doesn't seem to be the case."

"Enough worrying about things like how weird this world is in comparison to our own. It's not like we can do anything about it," Jirou interjected, shaking her head. "This place looks incredibly difficult to get around on. But we're nearly out of meat, and I don't know about you all, but maybe some more fruits and vegetables would be good, too, since we go through them so fast."

"We are still okay for fruit, but more vegetables would certainly be a good idea. I also think the next time we stop in at a civilized island, we all might want to buy some cookbooks. No offense, Meli-chan, Zuk, but the meals you two prepare go through certain ingredients more than others," Momo said apologetically. "We need to balance our diets not just for health reasons but also supply ones."

Melissa and Izuku simply shrugged their shoulders at that, as it was very true. Izuku could only cook a few meals. He cooked them very well, judging by the responses he'd gotten on his katsudon, but that was it. Melissa's repertoire was similarly slim, leaning heavily into bachelorette-type food like stew, sandwiches and some sweets like pancakes and waffles.

"That's fair enough. The books about flora and fauna, the ones that tell us what kind of vegetables grow where and what substitutes grow elsewhere, what animals we can eat and so forth, were good. Yet we should've thought about the cooking part just as much as the preparation stage," Jirou said, her jacks going up and down in a shrug.

Moments later, Tenya reported that they were finally beginning to hit a bottom with the sounding line. This put the ship around two hundred feet away from the shore, further than Izuku could jump, but the water was still too deep to wade through. Luckily, the ship had an away boat, a small one that had taken a good deal of damage in the fight back on Savar, but it was still in one piece thanks to repairs done to it for just this sort of purpose.

With Shoto looking on in bemused confusion, the away boat was lowered over the side, and then the crew began to disembark. Only when it was in the water did he speak up. "You do all remember I could just make an ice bridge for us, right?"

Everyone in the boat at the moment, all the girls and Kirishima, stared back up at him, then as one slapped their foreheads and groaned, causing Shoto to smile ever so faintly. To one side, Izuku whispered, "Is it just me, or has Shoto started to develop a sense of humor? Leaning heavily into pranks?"

"Erm, well, I suppose after months of playing a straight man for Hatsume-san, anyone would start to develop at least some sense of what is funny and not," Tenya answered, pushing his glasses back up his nose. That pair was one of several Momo had made for him for emergencies, a necessity since he had destroyed several sets of glasses since arriving in this world. Even during the flying shark attack he had lost two pairs. Luckily, Tenya always kept two pairs in reserve to the one he was wearing.

"If Izuku was any other member of the crew, he would have had a smart answer to that line, something along the lines of 'oh, so where's your sense of humor then?' since Tenya had also been acting as a straight man for Mei. Although, in his case, it was more that he was Mei's minder. Even now, months into their life in this new world and weeks into their lives aboard a small ship with very little privacy, Mei still couldn't care less about such silly concepts as modesty or shame.

As it was, though, Izuku simply smiled and patted Tenya on the shoulder. "Are you ever going to get to the point where you call Mei-san by her name? Even I'm using all of their first names or nicknames these days."

"Hmph. I, I suppose I will get there eventually. I have already gotten there with you, Shoto, Kiri and Yaomomo. But it is just taking me longer for Hatsume-san and the rest," Tenya mumbled.

Despite Shoto's dry declaration, they did decide to take the boat to shore, simply because they'd already gone to the trouble of lowering it. Shoto, Izuku and Tenya climbed down into the boat, joining the others, and as he settled into his place beside Jirou at one of the oars, Izuku looked over at Tsuyu. "Um, a, are you sure you're up to this Tsu-san? I know the clothing that Yaomomo and the others made for you is working well, but that's a far cry from enjoying exploring a winter island like this.

"Tsu!" Tsuyu growled, poking Izuku in the nose before settling back, giving Momo and the other two Ms big smiles. "And yes, I'm good. I stowed a few spare batteries in my pockets, but I'm actually nice and warm, kero," the frog girl stated. "With this, I think I will be able to start pulling my weight in weather like this. I know I haven't been able to before, kero."

"Another satisfied customer," Mei guffawed while Momo simply smiled, and Melissa gave Tsuyu a thumbs up.

For his part, Izuku looked at Tsu closely, hiding a faint frown. He wasn't the best at reading other people, but it felt to him like Tsu was, well, putting on a front of being in a good mood. She was forcing herself to act like nothing was bothering her, a type of mask that Izuku was very familiar with. *But, but should I bring it up or get one of the girls to do it? I know I'm not the best at cheering people up.*

Actually, most of the crew would have disagreed with that statement. Particularly Melissa. But since he kept that idea inside, no one commented on it.

Once they reached the steep shore, it was very clear that to get anywhere else, they would have to go climbing. Deeper inland, the hill-like area abutted what amounted to a cliff face going straight up for at least 80 feet before you reached the iced-up rivers. There were signs that people had been here previously, in the way of small fire pits scattered around, but no one had thought to put in a ladder or something similar. "It's as if they simply made shore here and stayed in this small area, afraid of going anywhere else," Izuku mused.

"That's gotta be because of the rabbit bear things, right?" Mei pointed out. The group had discovered an entry into the encyclopedia about lapahns, and that was pretty much what they looked like: rabbit ears and hind feet on a body like a polar bear, complete with short claws and a nasty disposition.

"Probably. From what we read, the lapahn are quite fearsome..." Momo began.

"Almost like Mirko, heh, multiple Mirko's," Kirishima interrupted with a laugh. "Yeah, that'd be real manly, although these things aren't supposed to be."

"Still, if we are to resupply ourselves as much as we can on an island like this, we need access to the actual island rather than the little entry-level beach," Melissa mused before looking around at the others holding up her hand.

"Who here has experience mountain climbing? I've gone a few times with my family's chief butler and even once with my father when I was young," Yaomomo said, holding up a hand, which then shifted into a finger pointing at Shoto. "And yes, Shoto, I know that you can create slides and even stairs. But such constructs are not going to be available everywhere, and there are several safety measures we should take going forward."

Shoto shut his mouth, frowning a bit, while Kiri chuckled. "I haven't been mountain climbing, but I've gone rock climbing. I'm not very good at it, though."

"I've rock climbed in a gym, and it's really good exercise for your grip strength," Izuku stated enthusiastically. "I'd love to learn how to mountain climb."

Tsuyu moved to the bottom of the cliff, staring upwards, then pulled off her glove, hissing a bit as the cold hit her hand. Yet she was able to grip the rock easily and scaled upwards a few dozen feet before nodding and jumping back down to the others. "I think I can climb it well enough, so long as I can keep my hands warm. If I can get halfway up, I can jump the rest, kero."

Her expression turned a little mulish, reminding the rest of them, bar Izuku, of Izuku when he was his most helpfully demanding self. "And I am not being left behind. I'm going to do my part, kero."

"I am making a captain's decision," Izuku said, holding up her hand and pointing back towards the ship. "Mei, you should stay in the Crows Nest with an eye out to the sea. Remember, we were warned that there were pirates in the area, as well as the ex-Marine. Kirishima, you should stay behind on the ship with Melissa and Jirou. That will give the ship a good core of fighters, and meanwhile, you all can work on the repairs that need to be done."

Jirou grumbled at that, but she was the only one. While a lot of the repairs to the main deck were pending due to the need to replace shattered planks, other repairs could be seen to now even without wood. Yet she was the only one of the crew staying behind that wasn't 'handywoman' inclined. Still, she knew a large portion of the repairs were in the engine room, and her hearing might be helpful there.

Izuku looked over at Tenya. "Tenya, you can probably do something similar to Tsuyu. And with all the work you've been doing on twisting and turning while aboard the ship, I think being in a forest isn't going to hamper you much. What about the snow, though?"

"The snow will not be an issue. Once I build up even a modicum of speed, I can plow through it easily enough. It will slow down my top speed, but that is all," Tenya answered firmly, also looking a little mulish. He still didn't think he was doing enough aboard the ship, thanks to how dangerous it was for him to fall into the ocean. He welcomed the opportunity to show his worth again.

"Then me, Tsuyu, if you're sure you're up for it, Shoto, Tenya and Yaomomo will head up," Izuku decided. "Yaomomo, you said something about safety?"

"Yes, I did. If we ever split up, we need to have some safety tools, climbing gear, and so forth..." Momo trailed off for a second as she held out her arms concentrating. Seconds later, grapnels, pickaxes, and other things began to appear, falling to create small piles around her. "Um, everyone, what is your boot size?"

A second later, metallic-looking clamps that could fit on their shoes appeared, along with snow goggles. "Just in case we run into a snowstorm while we're exploring and can't get

back to the beach. Oh, and..." Again, Momo trailed off, and a moment later, five backpacks appeared from her forearms one after another. When Izuku moved to pick one up, he found that they were decently substantial, with numerous smaller pockets woven into them. "For when we're foraging."

"Hey, making all that stuff didn't cost you too much, right?" Jirou asked, moving over to place a hand on Momo's shoulder. "I know making finicky stuff is almost as hard on you as making big stuff."

"Eh, not so much physically as mentally," Momo tried to play it down before surprising Kyoka by pulling her into a hug, giving the startled, blushing girl a wry smile. "Thank you for always worrying, but I wanted to be a hero too, you know? I am quite capable of pushing myself. I won't do so now because there's no point, but please, don't think that I am just some kind of wallflower because I overdid it with the coal or when we first arrived in this world."

Blushing, Jirou stared back into Yaomomo's obsidian eyes, resolutely trying not to catch any of the other's eyes, especially Tsuyu, that overly observational frog. "I, er, um, okay, I, I'm not trying to, er, mother you are anything Momo, it's just well how thin you were when I went to check on you in the engine room, it reminded me of when we arrived on the island at first. I know you want to be a hero, and I know it was needed at the time, but I don't want you to get into the habit of pushing yourself to starvation. If I think you are, I'm gonna worry, okay?"

The others looked on as the two girls had this little private moment before Shoto pointed upwards, saying dryly, "Well, with all of you now weighed down by all that safety stuff, I think I'm going to go on ahead."

Was Shoto taking it personally that Yaomomo wanted everyone to be prepared just in case they ran into something Shoto's ice or fire couldn't deal with? Yes. Yes, he was. *I understand her point that we might split up, but I think she's overthinking things.*

With that, he created an ice slide, which pushed himself upwards and up onto the plateau above them. Nodding to the others, Izuku zoomed up onto the same slide after Shoto. Luckily, it was simply a straight-up slice, as on ice, he would've had a great deal of trouble with traction if he had to turn in any fashion.

"Well, that makes me feel quite silly," Momo pouted, pulling away from Jirou to stare up after the two boys. "I'm just trying to make certain we're all prepared for anything we run into."

"Er, well, I understand why you did, and I think the bags and the emergency flares are really important!" Izuku said earnestly, causing Momo's pout to disappear, which made what he said next easier to take. "Er, it's just Shoto's got a point too. I doubt we're going to spread

out beyond one forest area at a time, so, um, the ropes and stuff won't be necessary just yet. But um, maybe Mei and Mel-chan can make something from them?"

Mel-chan is it, Tsuyu thought, shaking her head, although she seemed to be the only one who noticed that. From another girl, that wouldn't mean much, but from a guy like Izuku? Well, at least some people are enjoying being in this weird world.

Aloud, Tsu said, "I think we all need to get into the habit of relying on one another's Quirks just as much as we rely on our own going forward, kero. You did good, Yaomomo, but next time, just like we did with the ship's boat, we need to remember to ask what the rest of the crew can do, kero."

With that, Tsuyu pulled on one of the backpacks, grabbing up another as Shoto had left his behind in his annoyance with Momo's overplanning. Tsuyu then leaped upwards, grabbing onto a small hand hold on the rock face with her free hand, before kicking off the rock, bouncing further upwards with a single push off from her legs.

Chuckling, Momo sighed. "Message received, I suppose. With that in mind, Kiri-san, if you could write out a list of how much wood we need and Melissa, do the same thing as you all are repairing the ship? Today will be for food and simple exploration, I think. But in the future..."

"Now that's some good planning there," Kiri said, giving Momo a thumbs up. "Manly."

"I very much am not," Momo drawled, watching as the ice slide finally broke under its own weight. Shoto hadn't put in the effort to make it permanent. "Drat."

"Um, well, like Tsuyu said, we should rely on one another so..." With a faint flush, Izuku crouched down in front of her even as the ice ramp began to collapse under its own weight. "Er, can I give you a lift, miss?"

It was a sign of how close he had grown with the crew that he was willing and able to joke like that with Momo, especially considering how close she would have to press her body into his in a second. But none of them commented, and with a "Why, thank you, kind sir," Momo climbed onto Izuku's back as Kyoka looked on, feeling a little conflicted for a second before turning to the others.

"Right!" she clapped her hands, pointing with her jacks back out into the ocean to the ship. "I think we need to get going. Yaomomo and the rest might be busy foraging, but we also have some work to do. Let's get back to the ship and get to it. I might not be good at building or with my hands, but I can at least take notes and hold stuff, so let's get back there and get to it."

Mei whooped and raced back to the ship. “Woohoo, more baby-making time!”

Kiri rushed after her, and Jirou turned a deadpan gaze to Melissa, who was looking back at her with much the same expression. “We’re going to need to sit Mei down and talk to her at some point about phrasing, aren’t we?”

“Her and the Stone hard hero,” Jirou quipped, getting a giggle from Melissa.

Which only grew louder as Kiri, who had just reached the ship, turned and shouted, “I heard that!”

OOOOOOO

Oh my, he really is quite muscular, Yaomomo mused while the pair were in midair. From behind Izuku like this, she could feel his shoulders and back muscles moving under her own, the numerous layers of clothing not doing nearly enough to stop her from realizing that, or how wide his shoulders were and other observations of that level.

Luckily for her, the trip wasn’t all that long, and the pair touched down on the first of the escarpments that made up the flat zones on this bizarre island.

There, they found Tenya with a book already open, giving directions to Shoto while Tsuyu moved around the area, peering deeper into the forest. Here, the forest in question was made of the odd-looking pine trees with only a small clear area by the bank of the frozen river. The red-and-white-haired youth knelt underneath one of the trees, using his fire to steam off a portion of the snow.

Looking over to Izuku and Momo, Tenya held up the book, saying, “According to this, there should be several varieties of mushrooms that grow at the base of these trees. I thought that would be a good starting point.”

“There should also be fish in the river underneath the ice, kero. I know Kirishima is going to want to try to fish out in the ocean by the ship, but we might have better luck here in the river,” Tsuyu pointed out.

Gently setting Momo back onto her feet and desperately trying to fight the faint feelings of arousal he felt from having her chest press into his back as she had during the jump, Izuku pulled out a notebook. Which, for some strange reason, caused the others to twitch, although Izuku didn’t notice this right away.

“I took some notes on the kinds of vegetables we could find on this island, and Tenya’s right. Most of them are mushrooms. You’ll need to be on the lookout for poisonous ones, though. There are some vegetables we might be able to find here, including one called carrot vine which grows up in the foliage of the trees. Apparently, it’s a kind of carrot that grows from

a vine in a hard shell. It's an invasive species, and I think it sounds more like daikon radishes than anything else judging by how it can be used, but it's apparently a good source of fiber."

He looked up from his notebook to find all of the others there staring at him, or rather, his notebook. In particular Shoto was nearly glaring at Izuku's notebook, giving Izuku some flashbacks to Bakugo for a moment. But Izuku knew that Shoto would never bully him like that (yes, Izuku could now acknowledge the fact he had been bullied by his childhood friend by this point, even if it still came hard to him) although he could not stop himself from flinching a little. "W, what is it?"

"Where did that come from?" Several voices asked as one, but Izuku simply frowned in confusion.

"Where did what come from? My notebook? I've always had it." The others continued to look at him as if he was some strange puzzle they were trying to figure out, but Izuku, well used to people never noticing his notebook for some odd reason, put that down to them simply not seeing him carry it, and gestured deeper into the forest. "They're also supposed to be squirrels, snow rabbits, and deer, which would all be good sources of meat. I drew up some of the designs I found for noose traps and other things so we can also stop up on meat, which I know we're almost out of again."

It turned out that the cured meat that Mei and the others had found had not been of the best quality. Several dozen pounds of it had gone bad, and one cut in particular, well, luckily, Mei had been the one helping Izuku cook that night, and she had seen the signs of the little worms inside the meat with her 'scope' Quirk.

Of his listeners, only Shoto took this stoically. The others looked distressed to various degrees at the idea of killing animals like that. Fish was one thing. Most of them were ugly and hard to humanize to any great degree. Deer and other animals though, that was a different story. In particular, Momo looked a little distressed, and she quickly volunteered to start climbing trees to look for the strange carrot vine.

Similarly, Tenya volunteered to go fishing. He'd taken up the hobby with Kirishima over the past few weeks and was a dab hand at both fishing with the line and with the net out on the ocean. Momo supplied him with both quickly, then, under the looks of the others, also pulled out from her bag a few pieces of jerky, eating them and a handful of peanuts quickly, just as she had told Jirou she would.

The sight of the nuts reminded everyone that those would also be around here, and Izuku ruefully admitted to himself that the group wasn't exactly all that good at foraging if they only thought of that now with a visual reminder. *After all, we come from a world where food simply appeared at the grocery store.* Here, they'd learned to make do with fishing out on the

ocean, but that was a far cry from doing the same on land. *It is something we'll have to get used to going forward, though, unless we're able to join up with the Marines on Rorca as we hope. And maybe even then, depending.*

With three of the five people occupied, this left Izuku and Tsuyu to make their way deeper into the forest, which they did. Izuku was able to lay out small traps as they went. Doing so, he ironically used most of the safety rope and so forth that Momo had made in her burst of over-planning. At the same time, the pair found dozens of acorn-like nuts pretty quickly.

However, as they pushed deeper, they found fewer and fewer nuts, and the areas around the bottom of the trees, where the snow was thinnest, also looked despoiled to a certain degree. There were also strange, small patches in the snow.

"I wonder if that's a sign of large animals or small ones like deer?" Izuku murmured.

Tsuyu giggled. "Kero kero, spoken like someone who has never seen a deer in person. They can actually be pretty big, and on an island like this, we might also see moose. Moose are huge. They stand taller at the shoulders than bears do, and they can weigh more than bears, too, kero."

"Sorry, I never really went into well, researching animals like that unless they were hero-related," Izuku found Tsuyu mocking his last few words and mock pouted at her, only to smile as the frog girl laughed again. For the first time that day, it seemed as if her good humor wasn't forced, and inwardly, Izuku breathed a sigh of relief.

Tsuyu's laughter abruptly cut off, however, as she looked to the side, having seen something move there for a second. "What was that?"

A second later, something around the size of Tsuyu's fist zoomed past where her head had been a moment ago. Whatever it was landed in the snow, practically disappearing thanks to natural camouflage, but before Izuku could try to move over and see where it had gone, something slammed into his side, then the backpack he was wearing, sending him stumbling forward. "OW! W, what the heck?"

"Those aren't the lapahns, are they?" Tsuyu asked, jumping over two other strange things that sped through underneath her. They all looked pretty the same, small, with what looked like snow covering their bodies, but she couldn't make out any details before the creatures had burrowed into the snow again.

"No, those are polar bear-sized, whatever this isSSS!" Izuku broke off as he twirled to one side, his hand flashing out, grabbing whatever was in the air.

He found himself holding what amounted to a small toad creature, only one that had apparently evolved to live in winter. It had thick, rubbery sides, which seemingly made up a large portion of its body, narrowed, beady eyes under ridge-like protrusions, and a big wide mouth, out of which its tongue flashed towards Izuku's eyes. "ACKK!"

That stung like blazes, causing him to release the creature. "Ow! They're tiny toads or something! They don't look as if they have poison marks on them, although I don't know if that would work here in the snow with the rest of their adaptation...OW!" another toad caught him in the rear, sending him a few inches into the air. "How the heck are they moving so fast."

"Don't underestimate the power of an amphibian's legs, kero!" Tsuyu threw herself into a role, dodging under several more of the small toad things, before whirling around with a loud kero, her tongue lashing out towards one, as her foot caught another in midair. The one that she caught with her foot was blasted through the woods to splat against a distant tree, causing Tsuyu to wince a little. Frog-on-toad violence was not something she'd ever done before, but she felt it was fully justified.

Grimacing, Tsuyu pulled in the frog that she'd caught with her tongue, plucking it out of her tongue around it to glare at the little creature, who glared right back. "Kero. You might not be tasty, but you all are squishy. That might be enough to tell you that you shouldn't mess with us?"

She glared at the toad creature some more, pulling it up until they were face to face. At that point, the toad's face seemed to shift into one of surprise, reminding Tsuyu almost painfully of her father for a second. Her grip slackened, and before she could stop it, the toad leaped away. It landed in the snow, and before it disappeared into the snow released a loud *CROAK!*

For a moment, the attacks ceased, and Izuku moved over to Tsuyu, the two of them going back-to-back as he stared out into the trees around them. Then, several further croaking noises were heard as more than a hundred of the little frog creatures waddled up out of the snow. In unison, several of them jumped, but not to attack. They stayed well out of attack range. Instead, they jumped into the air simply to get a better view of Tsuyu's face before landing.

"Wh, what..."

"I don't know. Maybe, um, maybe they recognize your froggy features?" Izuku asked, his head ringing from a blow he'd taken a second ago.

"Kero, that would be weird."

“W, well, not to um, be trite or anything, but um, Grand Line?” Izuku answered, chuckling.

The leaping and looking continued for a few minutes while the snow toads croaked to one another, and then most of them faded back into the snow, disappearing with such adroitness that Izuku had to shake his head. A few remained, watching them, particularly Tsuyu, but no longer attacking.

“Did, did they somehow understand me, kero?”

“I don’t know. The one you caught in your tongue its just a guess, but looking at the snow toads as they jumped up to get a look at you, it seemed it was bigger than the other ones. It also had a red mark on its nose. Maybe it was some kind of leader?”

“This world is really strange,” Tsu stated bluntly. “I think we should turn around, kero.”

Nodding, Izuku agreed, and the two retraced their steps through the snow underneath the eaves of the forest back the way they had come. Several snow toads followed them, croaking in the background for several minutes, then paused and turned back in the direction they came from. It was very clear that while they had seemingly been fascinated by Tsuyu, that had only caused them to stop attacking. That was a far cry from wanting the pair of intruders to remain in their territory.

Reporting this back to the others, they found that Tenya hadn’t had much luck with the fish just yet. Ice fishing was extremely different in comparison to fishing out on the ocean, and the fish in the river seemed wise to the idea of nets and holes in the ice. Shoto and Momo were having much better luck, though, and Shoto reported that he’d transported three bags worth each of the carrot vines and mushrooms. “I had to flash fry a flying squirrel that tried to invade the bags after I left them behind.”

“And I still say that was overkill, Shoto,” Momo huffed. “What could one squirrel have done?”

“Eat some of our supplies,” Shoto answered blankly. “I thought that was obvious.”

While Momo groaned, Izuku hummed thoughtfully. “Hmm... That’s a good point.” Between one millisecond and the next, he was holding his notebook again. “UM... let’s see, there was something I copied out about warning off animals...”

“Again, where does he keep those things? just where?” Shoto nearly growled, his eyes burning as he stared at Izuku, trying to figure out where the notebook had come from.

“Ahah, here it is,” Izuku said with a bright grin. “It says here that animals will notice the smell or appearance of poisonous plants. Shoto, did you see any poisonous mushrooms? String

them around the place where you're putting the bags, and then burn a few lightly, to the point they let loose a bit of smoke and smell."

Nodding, Shoto did just that, standing on the beachy hill for a bit, staring out at the ship. He'd made a thin bridge out to the ship, and Kirishima had come across to grab a few of the bags, but he couldn't see anyone out there bar Hatsume's dreadlocks in the crow's nest right now. Shrugging, he renewed the ice bridge, then turned back, heading up to the same escarpment again.

"I think in the future, we might want to think about having a garden aboard the ship. If we can make the heating system on the ship work better in the future, then a greenhouse somewhere in the middle of the ship isn't a bad idea. Or a garden on the main deck at the very least," Momo was saying as Shoto returned, tugging at her ponytail thoughtfully as she looked at two more bags to go down to the beach with Shoto. "We could try and replant some of these."

Izuku nodded, pulling out his notebook again, causing all three of his fellows to twitch for a third time, especially Tsuyu, who knew for a fact he hadn't been holding or carrying that earlier. "I'll make a note of that. Mel-chan and I have begun to make a **lot** of little notes like that, improvements to the ship, improvements to its overall design, how we store food and so forth. She's especially unhappy with the bathroom situation and the food storage. We need to come up with a fridge or something."

Considering that since they'd left Savar behind, there had been two further bathroom incidents between the boys and the girls on the crew, Momo, Tsuyu, and Tenya could easily understand where that was coming from. This included Tsuyu had been involved in one such, along with the now-blushing Shoto. "Er, I know I don't want to be stuck inside the engine room all the time, but is there any way to let the coal engine heat the rest of the ship?"

"Sure, if we had built it that way from the start," Izuku agreed with a nod. "That would be ideal. But for now, we might want to think about little heaters like the one Mei and Melissa made for your room, Tsuyu-san, and other things like that." He then shook himself and brought the topic back to the here and now. "In any event, I don't think we should push deeper into this plateau's forest."

"I might have better luck if we find a portion of the river where it isn't so straight," Tenya admitted, looking disgruntled, as Shoto shrugged.

"I can make ice stairs to the next area if you want, but I think we're having good luck with mushrooms right here. What about trapping rabbits and such?"

Once more, Momo looked a bit disgruntled at that, while Izuku and Tenya both looked more philosophical about killing small, furry creatures than they had before. “Well, I think we are also having good luck with the vine carrots. I realize that it will take a lot more work to cook with them, but it’s still a good source of fiber, like you said, Izuku. Let’s stick to the edge of the forest for now. You said you noticed a difference in the area where those snow toads were, correct? So we should be fine.”

Izuku nodded. “Agreed. I also saw a few downed trees. We can take them down to the beach and work on cutting them down too.”

The others all nodded, and the foragers got back to work. Izuku headed deeper into the forest with Tenya while Tsuyu joined Momo in the trees. Tenya helped Izuku pare away the branches of the trees he had seen, which had fallen, and then Izuku carried them down to the shoreline. After a second trip, he found Melissa waiting for him when he came down with the third trunk, along with a backpack full of tools. “Tell Shoto that the ice bridge is nice and all, but not all of us can just walk along it as easily as he can.”

“Hah, I’ll remember. Um, so what should we do with this?” Izuku asked, gesturing, trying not to notice how nice Melissa looked in her cold weather outfit, or the slight hint of cleavage that still showed, or the flare of her hips and rear. *UGH. Isn’t cold weather supposed to help shrink issues like this? Do I need to go find a cold waterfall to stand under or something?*

“Well, first, we’re going to need to get the bark off. Then we’ll need to see if the wood is green or not, then start cutting it into slats. That’s going to be heavy work, makes me very happy that you’re the one with One For All,” Melissa said with a wink. “I can then stand back and direct, which is the way it should be.”

Izuku laughed at that, and the two got to work.

That is what they did for the rest of the day. Melissa and Izuku worked on the wood he had gathered, making a long fire pit to one side from the scraps and the bark. With that done, Izuku worked on using a saw to cut the wood down to size. This saw was quite small for the purpose, but Izuku was more than strong enough to make up the difference. From the first one, which was indeed dried out and without any damage from termites or anything else, Melissa began to cut the slats down further to be used for specific repairs around the main deck. The two trunks that were still green were also cut down and placed around the fire to dry out. And as they worked, the two joked and talked together, having a strange amount of fun despite the hard work.

The fact that both Izuku and Melissa had to peel off some of their clothing? Depending on who you asked, this only made it better or worse a time for both of them.

Meanwhile, Shoto kept using his fire powers to find mushrooms and made a permanent set of snow stairs down to the beach from the first escarpment. This took some doing as he wasn't all that good at making ice creations that needed to last, but it worked, and Momo, Tenya and Tsuyu made several trips down. The group found lots of vine carrots, as there didn't seem to be any animal in this particular forest area that ate them.

Although, none of the group had much luck hunting. They saw several squirrels and a few strange goat-like creatures with huge, lightly curved but very large horns that reminded Momo of an animal she had seen in books about Africa. But it seemed the majority of this area, the forest escarpment closest to the ocean was dominated by snow toads. An animal that Momo was quick to point out was not mentioned in their books. But the small traps they set out caught nothing, and Tenya only caught two large fish from the river. That meant eventually, they would need to spread out.

For two days, however, the group of foragers did not go any higher into the snowy mountains. Instead, Shoto and Momo stayed to help with the wood prep, while the others, along with Shoto, made his constructs even more permanent. The ship was turned to present its port side to the beach-like hill, and another rope ladder was made, with both it and its predecessor being nailed down into the ice. Further safety railings were made with the rest of the wood they had cut off from the three logs. "After all," Momo said, "We're going to be here for two weeks. We might as well make everything a little safer and more stable."

The same thing happened to the stairs leading up while the fire pits were made deeper. Slats were dug into the sand to let some of the heat from the flames wash over the slats of wood to help them dry out more evenly. And all the while, the group assigned to the ship remained the same and work on the repairs continued. Jirou actually began to learn bits and bobs about carpentry and other things to be more helpful and especially took over making simple sandwich-type meals.

Throughout this, though, Melissa noticed the same thing that Izuku, Jirou and Momo had: Tsuyu seemed fine, but that was all it was a mask. Sometimes, when she thought no one was looking, Tsuyu's body language would just shut down, and she would stare off into the distance. Occasionally, it looked like she was fighting back tears, or her smile was a little brittle. Like the others, Melissa suspected that Tsuyu was simply still missing her family, but unless Tsuyu brought it up, what could they do?

Regardless of the problem brewing, on the fifth day, the work on the wood was done. At that point, Izuku joined the other foragers as Shoto created a new ice stairwell, moving around the island slightly from the first plateau while the other half of the crew went to work on repairing the deck.

Nodding to himself, Shoto was pleased with his work, yet still knelt down, putting out his left hand on the ground at the start of the new stairs. "Head on up, I'll keep it stable until you're up, then follow after."

The others all nodded and, with their ice cleats climbed upwards, reaching the next plateau within minutes rather than what Momo estimated would have been at least two hour's arduous climb along the cliff face. Given how little in the way of handholds there'd been, she would've been forced to pound in pitons every few feet to make any progress. Given the work that Shoto had put into molding his ice creations, there was even a short wall to the outer edge of the stairs, giving them some safety from sliding off away from the stone of the mountain.

Or perhaps Izuku could simply have carved out handholds with his super strength. Which reminds me... "Izuku, what percentage of your power can you use these days? Without hurting yourself or straining anything, I mean. You lifted up that whole pile of wood and just kept on holding it in the air as Kirishima and the others pulled the slats aboard a few at a time."

*And good grief, but that was... alright, I can say it in mind at least. That was **HOT**,* Momo practically squealed at the memory. Watching Izuku stand there like a modern-day Atlas, holding up a pile of wood taller than his head and far heavier than his body while balancing on Shoto's ice, not even letting it quiver, had been amazing.

"Er... I want to say around eight percent without any pain. I feel the burn at around sixteen, and at anything beyond twenty, I'll start to break bones. It um, it isn't an exact science, but that's how it feels," Izuku admitted.

The others all stared at Izuku, then shook their heads slowly. "Kero, that's kind of scary, Zuk."

To this, Izuku could only shrug. "Maybe, but it's nothing like what All Might can do. And before you jump on me, Yaomomo, it might not be anything to some of the enemies we might face in this world once we become Marines, either. Remember reading about the Yonko?"

Yaomomo Tenya and Tsuyu frowned at that but nodded. Momo had found an entry in the 'Y' segment of the encyclopedia that covered the 4 Emperors, four pirate lords strong enough to be considered heads of state almost simply because of how strong they were. That was alarming to all the teens, as back home, there were very few heroes who could be called that strong. It also told the teens more about how lawless this world was, something that none of them liked to think about.

Thankfully, the introspective moment didn't last as Shoto arrived behind them and began work once more. The group soon split up along similar lines as that first day, with Shoto and Momo moving from one tree to another. Since this plateau was away from the river, Tenya

joined the two explorers and the three of them moved into the forest, keeping within sight of one another as they went.

The three of them pushed deeper into the forest, where they began to collect a few nuts apiece, with Tenya finding a few berries that the notebook that Tenya brought along said were edible. "They apparently taste more like... I don't know this fruit they're comparing them to," he grumbled, shaking his head as he looked from the image in the book to the small, intensely white-colored fruit that was barely visible among the snow. "Kumquat, what is a kumquat?"

Neither of the others had any answer, but the group decided to gather as many of those as they could find. Their fruits were already starting to run out, as, much like the meat they'd been sold, the fruits had begun to go bad. Finding the berries was surprisingly hard as the outside was made of a hard rind. Yet the book said they were supposed to be eaten rind and all. That confused them a little, but after around fifteen minutes, they'd gathered up a good deal of them.

Tenya finished up by pulling out one of the berries and placing it in his bag, then turned to move deeper into the forest before pausing, his eyes tracking a small bit of movement to one side. "Izuku, could you please tell me again what those frog toads look liIIII!" Tenya's voice ended in a yelp as from underneath the snow came an eruption of violent movement caused by a large polar bearlike creature.

It was huge, perhaps a little shorter than Bear King, but easily taller than any of the teens and just as wide as Bear King had been. Its face looked almost rabbit-like, complete with large ears and rabbit whiskers. Yet no rabbit should have jagged, sharp-looking teeth like this creature did, nor should that face be stuck on top of a body that a polar bear would envy. Its hindquarters were also rabbit-like, just like in the image the group had seen in the book, with long rabbit legs tucked underneath its body.

Yet the book did not properly describe how fast the creatures could move when they kicked off the ground. Within one second and the next, the creature had burst out of the snow about a yard away into striking distance of Tenya, who oofed as the creature's paw crashed into his side.

The blow hurled the square-jawed youth sideways into a tree, which finished the process of knocking Tenya's breath out of his body. It was only the fact that he had worn the kevlar body armor that Momo had created for them all weeks back underneath his winter coat that saved him, and even then, Tenya could feel that most of the plates on that side had shattered under the impact.

“Tenya!” Izuku crossed the intervening distances in an instant. A blow smashed into the creature’s chin with enough force to send it hurtling through the air through the foliage above. Then he was kneeling beside Tenya, rapidly checking him for injuries while Tenya protested that he was still in one piece.

Alas, lapahn did not hunt alone.

“We’ve got company!” Tsuyu shouted as growls began all around them.

Several of the large rabbit creatures reared up out of the stone, having blended in almost as well as the much smaller snow toads. They all stared at Izuku and then to where their companion had been standing when Izuku had struck him. For a moment, Izuku had hope that the creatures would react like the snow toads had, understanding the teens were dangerous without further combat.

The lapahns' ears began standing straight upwards, but as they turned back to Izuku, one then laid flat, creating a right angle to the one sticking up. This seemed to be some kind of signal, and the pack charged forwards, snarling, leaping forwards or racing through the snow, which served as no impediment to their movement whatsoever.

Nor did trees, as several of them smashed through them or smashed them toward the trio of interlopers. Two even smashed the trees apart in such a way as to send large chunks of the trees hurtling toward the three interlopers.

Tsuyu ducked under one large chunk of wood, then hissed as a splinter slammed into her leg, causing her to upend face-first into the snow. She rolled with it, lashing out with a kick at the first lapahn to reach her, her blow smacking into its face with little to no effect, to her consternation.

The creature reached up and tried to grab her as she bounced off it in midair, but Tsuyu flipped herself backward thanks to a quick grab to a nearby tree branch, only to need to kick off another blow away as another lapahn tried to attack her. This opened her up to a slash from behind, which caught her in the back, sending her sprawling again as pain flared through her body and blood splattered the snow.

“Have at thee!” Tenya shouted, pushing Izuku away. With his engines revving, he zoomed forward, slamming a hard kick into one of the creatures, lifting it into the air slightly, and causing blood to burst from the beast’s mouth as ribs cracked, but even so, it lashed down at him, causing him to fling himself to the side, then up into another spinning kick that caught another creature on the face, knocking it out as sharp teeth flew. “I suppose we should be thankful that these creatures can’t regrow their teeth as fast as the flying sharks could!”

"I know, but these monsters seem smarter," Izuku answered as he bounded this way and that, punches and kicks lashing out. Soon, Tsuyu and Tenya heard him start his familiar mantra of, "Keep it contained, keep it contained eight percent!" the sound echoing all around them.

"We need to get out of here!" Tenya demanded, zooming from one target to another, no longer lashing out with full power kicks but rather using his speed to his best advantage, getting the lapahns tangled up in one another, shifting their attention entirely onto him to allow Tsuyu a moment to recover from what the two boys thought had been a glancing blow. Neither boy was able to see her back through the trees, or the blood that had splattered the snow.

Tenya's punches did little to these creatures, but the speed of his travel and even his low-power kicks did, and he and Izuku held the line for several seconds as Tsuyu pushed herself to her feet, then bounced away back the way they'd come through the wood forest. Luckily, the lapahns hadn't yet cut them off from an escape route, and Izuku and Tenya followed after their friend quickly.

"Keep going! Don't stop, we need to warn Shoto and Momo!" Izuku bellowed, turning back to smash one lapahn so hard in the head the beast's face simply came apart, spreading blood and viscera everywhere. The others didn't seem to care or cared too much, Izuku wasn't certain. Whatever the case, the monsters kept on coming, roaring and snarling as they shattered trees, rocks and anything else that got in their way as they tried to kill the dimensionally displaced trio.

Luckily, Tsuyu's speed via bouncing off the trees was enough to keep her mainly ahead of the beasts coming in from their flanks. Soon, she saw movement ahead of them, red hair standing out starkly against the white and brown of the forest.

Shoto and Momo had pushed deeper into the woods themselves. The first few trees they'd tried didn't have much in the way of mushrooms or carrot vines. Indeed, Momo had yet to find a single carrot vine, and had searched around thirty trees by the time roars and shrieks began to reverberate from deeper in the forest. Shoto had found numerous mushrooms, but most of them didn't match any of the descriptions in the books they had and might well be poisonous, so he had kept them aside.

Now, as he saw Tsuyu racing their way and moved towards her, his fire side flaring up as icicles appeared on his other side. "Tsuyu, what's happening?"

"Th, those lapahn things we were warned about, they really are just as dangerous as they are supposed to be, kero!" Tsuyu said, gasping.

Coming around a tree, Momo also gasped as she saw that Tsuyu's jacket and suit had been opened up at the back and were flapping freely behind her. That meant that the power supply to at least her lower body had also been cut, which probably meant she was in danger of freezing soon.

With that in mind, Momo hurried forward, creating a grenade in one hand before lobbing it at a large white-furred creature that had just burst out of a snow mound behind Tsuyu. The sticky bomb hit and stuck. As the creature looked down at it, the grenade exploded, turning half of his body into blood and viscera.

Months ago, Momo would probably have used something like a complete glue bomb, something that would stick a creature to itself or the ground, particularly on a creature that was only defending its territory. The fight on I-Island and the fights in this world had hardened Momo to an extent that probably would've horrified her old self. Now, she didn't even bat an eye at the grisly death, simply creating several more bombs and hurling them at other monsters as they raced forward through the trees.

Some hit, some didn't, and more lapahn died, while two others were forced to retreat before Momo reached Tsuyu, pulling Tsu's arm over her shoulder. It had taken that long for Shoto to race forward and put himself between Tsuyu and the pursuers, and a moment later, Shoto laid down literal cover fire. A sheet of flame flashed out from his right side to ignite several trees and impacted three more creatures, who stopped and rolled desperately to put out the flames. They succeeded but backed away rapidly at the sight of several of the trees that had been lit on fire and the flames coming from Shoto's fire half.

But to Shoto's shock, a second later, the creatures came up with a solution. They and others dug their large paws into the snow, hurling tons of snow up into the fire in such large amounts that large swaths of the fire were quickly doused, and the creatures tried to race forward, only for Shoto to produce more fires.

Several of the creatures paid for the inattention this caused them as Izuku and Tenya burst into view behind them, with both of them doing their best parkour impressions, bouncing off of trees, lapahns, and the ground, putting still more distance in between them. As they passed the previously burning trees, they turned, creating a protective line.

This let Momo turn her attention to Tsuyu, and she gasped, staring at the blood on her hand as she pulled it away from Tsuyu's back. "Oh, no!"

Ignoring the battle going on around her as more of the lapahn arrived, doused the fires or leaped over them, Momo went to her knees beside Tsu, who had collapsed to her face in the snow. Blood was dripping out from five long slashes on her back. Luckily, the blood was also

freezing as it flowed out, slowing the green-haired girl's blood loss. "I, it looks worse than it feels," Tsu stated through chattering teeth.

"That would be because of the cold numbing all feeling to your back, dear now hush!" Momo ordered as she went to work, creating as much medical wrap as she could. *Gosh darn it, medical knowledge, add something else to our list going forward!*

Momo had no idea about first aid beyond a few things like how to check for a concussion and if someone was breathing or not, so right now, all she could do was wrap Tsu in the medical bands, making sure that she wouldn't keep on bleeding. The frayed, frozen, blood-covered portions of her coat and warm suit helped, but it was clear the girl was suffering.

"Asui-san!?" Izuku shouted. He had been turned around from needing to deal with a lapahn and saw the two girls and how red Tsu's back was for the first time.

"It's Ts, Tsu, don't backslide, Zuk, kero," Tsuyu tried to joke, but the cold was really getting to her, and she soon slumped unconscious.

Back nearer the fiery frontline, Tenya had plowed through what he thought was a normal snowdrift only to smash into a rock. Before he could recover, a pair of lapahns attacked. He kicked one off and dodged the other, but did not see a third coming in from him from behind. It caught him on the opposite side as the first strike he had taken earlier, and this time with enough force to not just break the plates of Kevlar in his armor but also possibly several ribs.

The blow smashed Tenya into the air and sent him hurtling off the edge of the escarpment. He was only saved by Shoto lashing out and creating a temporary ice floo. Racing along it, he grabbed at the other young man, but this gave the lapahn a chance to put out most of the fires.

Twirling away from Tsuyu, Momo hurled out more grenades. "We need to retreat off this bluff. Hopefully, with the others, we'll be able to--" Cutting herself off, Momo stared between two of the lapahn towards Izuku while Shoto returned to the escarpment, her eyes widening. *He's not going to...* "Izuku, wait!"

Growling angrily, Izuku kicked out, smashing two lapahn away. This gave him some room, and he faced deeper into the forest where the lapahn were coming from. "Nineteen percent Smash!"

The shockwave of his attack caused a booming noise as, for an instant, Izuku's fist broke the sound barrier right before it slammed into the ground in front of him. The blow blasted out away from him in a wave, causing what amounted to a small earthquake up and away from his position.

The noise of that strike was so loud it reverberated up into the mountains around the bluff. "Oh no, oh no, oh no!" Momo whimpered, pulling Tsu into her arms and lurching to her feet.

A moment later, her fears materialized as that sound seemingly boomed back from the mountains above, and the snow began to move, shivering almost in the distance before it started to come down the mountain, gaining momentum as it came.

His eyes widening, Izuku stared upwards, as the avalanche began above them, already hitting the back upper edge of the escarpment. "Oh... no, wh, what have I done!?"

"Shoto! We need a slide straight down to the beach!" Momo ordered, turning back to Shoto as she continued to carry Tsuyu along. Tenya pushed away from Shoto, zooming towards her despite his own wounds. He reached her in a second, pulling Tsuyu from Momo's arms and racing back to Shoto, who had created another cordon of fire.

Izuku, shamefaced, arrived a second later beside Momo, picking Momo up and bouncing away despite his arms aching as if he'd just spent all day trying to shift the heaviest object he could back on Takoba Beach. Soon, all five of them were by the edge of the plateau nearest the beach, with Shoto creating a slide downwards.

"I am so sorry! I forgot about the dangers of avalanches," Izuku babbled, but Momo leaned up and put her hand over his mouth.

"No recriminations, Izuku. You did what you thought you had to give us some time to break away. Now, let's get out of here!" With that, the group sped down the slide, with Tenya and Izuku even dropping to their rears and literally sliding down it until they hit the hill-like area of the beach. There, they rapidly raced out onto the icy wharf.

Behind them, the avalanche eclipsed the bluff they had been on and then continued on down into the lower area of the mountain. Of the lapahn, there was no sign, although Izuku had seen a lot of them retreating to either side, trying to get around rather than keeping ahead of the avalanche. Not that even Izuku could bring himself to care about the murderous animals at this point.

The ice beneath their feet began to break as tons of snow slammed into the ocean behind them, while in front of them, Kirishima raced down the rope ladder with Jirou beside him. Izuku disdained the rope ladders, though, jumping straight up and letting Momo down before jumping down and grabbing both Tenya and Tsuyu in turn, handing them over to Melissa, who briskly ordered them both into the main cabin and the warmth of the small stove there. The others all went with her, eager to hear how their two companions were doing, but

the boys were chased out instantly as Melissa began to strip off Tsuyu's outer jacket and heat suit.

While Melissa was working on the two injured members of the crew, Momo, Shoto, and Izuku explained what happened to the others while they waited for news. Listening to them as she watched the ongoing avalanche, Jirou went pale at the damage it had caused. It had wiped out the beach area where they'd set up their woodworking area and everything else there, including the ship's boat, which they had left on the beach after Shoto had created his no-longer permanent ice quay. "Damn, I am so glad I didn't go with you guys today. If I'd tried to use that pole you made for me, Momo, I'd probably have caused an even worse avalanche!"

"Do you think we will be able to return?" Shoto asked, looking over at the beach. "I can make us a path up towards another one of the plateaus or melt away the ice and snow from the beach. But if we're going to run into those lapahn creatures, is it worth the effort?"

"As much as I don't like it, maybe we should steer clear of the beach and see if there were any animals caught up in that avalanche I caused," Izuku said, looking incredibly guilty as he bowed towards Momo and Shoto. "I am **so** sorry! I completely forgot about how sound carries in winter conditions like that, and I should've held back more. I should have done..."

Momo stopped him with a tug on one ear, shaking her head. "You are not perfect, Izuku. Nor are any of us. You had just seen Tenya almost killed on top of Tsuyu's injuries. You overreacted in our defense. There are no recriminations here for that."

Shoto and the others all nodded, although Momo could tell that Izuku really wasn't listening all that well. She tugged at his ear harder until Izuku was looking at her face to face from less than a few inches away, so close her breath, visible in the chill, flowed across his face.

"You are **not perfect**, Izuku. Nor do any of us depend on you trying to be. We all can look after ourselves to a certain extent, and we all can look after one another far better together. No one here blames you for overreacting, and none of us were injured in the avalanche itself. Stop trying to take on more guilt and responsibility than even your broad shoulders can bear," Momo nearly ordered. "We need you centered here and now, with us, not thinking of what ifs or replaying events that you **might** consider mistakes. Understood?"

Izuku couldn't look away from her onyx-colored eyes as Momo stared at him from barely a few inches away until he nodded convulsively, blushing at the realization of what kind of position the two of them were in currently. Momo realized it too and hastily released him while Jirou looked on, torn between a faint flicker of jealousy and amusement at how Momo had broken Izuku out of his sudden funk.

The door to the main cabin opened, and Melissa appeared there, gesturing Tenya out. He was shirtless, flushing a bit but apparently in too much pain to really care that he'd been nearly ordered to strip by an attractive young lady. "Tenya's got some broken ribs, and both of his sides are big black and blue marks that are frankly a little ugly to look at," Melissa reported quickly. "The Kevlar body armor that Momo created for us all had saved him from any worse injuries. Next heat suit we make for Tsuyu though, we're going to need to incorporate some armor. She wasn't wearing any. Now, do any of you know how to sew?"

"Wait, why?" Jirou and Izuku both yelped while Momo and Mei's eyes widened.

"The gashes to Tsu's back are pretty bad. I need to sew them shut, but I've never learned how to sew at all, let alone want to try and sew wounds shut. Even the idea's making my hands shake." *I wish I knew more about medicine and the medical field! We seriously need to read up on stuff like that along with getting some cookbooks.* "So I need some help."

Surprisingly, Kirishima and Izuku both raised their hands, although hearing the reason why Melissa had asked had both of them looking green. "Um, I um, I learned how to patch my own clothing because of, um, Bakugo and everything..." He trailed off, looking over at Kirishima, who just waved it off.

"Dude, I know by this point how things really were between the pair of you. I just didn't want to bring Bakaboom up at all to dredge up bad memories. I've learned how to knit sails back together, but if you're good enough to fool your mom, your stitches are way better than mine," Kirishima stated.

Izuku turned even greener while Melissa turned to Momo. "I don't suppose I need to worry about disinfecting string and a needle if you make it on the spot, right?"

"No, but I would still douse it in alcohol just in... oh dear, that's going to hurt, isn't it," Momo stated, wincing.

"This whole thing's going to hurt. We don't have anything to deaden the pain either than this world's equivalent of Tylenol," Melissa growled. "Unless you can come up with something stronger."

Momo had held up her hand, already preparing to make the best, thinnest string she could along with a needle, but now paused. As a suddenly wide-eyed Izuku watched, notebook in hand, Momo closed her eyes, drawing back the partially formed items and beginning to create something else. A small injection tube appeared there, and she held it out to Melissa. "That... well, it should work? Um, it's epinephrine. I know it was used on me when I had my wisdom teeth removed. I was so impressed by how painless the process was I looked up the chemical makeup, although I don't know if it would be used on external injuries."

“Memorized a specific chemical formula, kept it in her head for just such an occasion as this. And you still argue you’re not a genius, girl?” Jirou quipped.

Momo just looked embarrassed at that as she handed over the injection tube. “Um, I also don’t know the dosage. So you and Tsuyu will just have to experiment.”

“Ouch,” everyone there intoned, with Izuku going even greener than before.

“If we need to, we can. I mean, I think Tsu’s wounds aren’t life-threatening, but if we just let them to heal as they are, they’ll leave nasty scars,” Melissa stated, looking over at Izuku. “And while I’m handling that, maybe you should practice too, Zuk?”

About an hour later, Izuku stared down at Tsu’s naked back. She wore a pair of leggings as she lay out on the dining table, and there was a soft blanket, her own down comforter, underneath her, hiding some of her curves, but that was about all. However, the gashes on display on her back were more than enough to let Izuku push through whatever embarrassment he might otherwise have felt.

There were five long gashes there. Starting from just below one shoulder blade, they passed on a diagonal down Tsu’s body to just above her waist on the other side. The gashes didn’t look very deep, but they were wide, around half a pinky in width, almost from start to finish.

On the floor nearby, the ragged remnants of Tsu’s heat suit and coat lay discarded. There was a tremendous amount of blood soaked into the things, but it was obvious looking at them that those items of clothing and the cold itself had helped to keep Tsu going. *Cold to deaden her pain, her clothing and the frozen blood to act like a cheap bandage, keeping her from bleeding out*, Izuku thought sickly.

Before his mind could follow this up with guilt about not having noticed her injury, Melissa tugged at his ear. “Enough of that, Zuk. I know you want to kick yourself about this, but that’s just really stupid. You didn’t make the lapahn attack, and you couldn’t see everything that was going on around you through the trees, snow drifts and, oh yeah, fighting for your life,” she growled. “Now, come on, we need to get to work.”

“Er, r, right,” Izuku mumbled, his stutter making an appearance again. “Um, did you er, did you test to make sure the stuff Yaomomo gave you is working?”

“I did,” Melissa said, gently rubbing her hair through Tsu’s hair. Then, when the girl opened her mouth and used her tongue to point at a bowl of soup, she helped feed Tsu for a moment. “I’d still like to knock you out for this, Tsu, no offense, but with you having signs of a concussion, that’s not going to happen. Still, you didn’t feel me when I was prodding your wounds a second ago, right?”

"No. I didn't even know what you were doing until you told me, kero," Tsu said somewhat groggily. She chewed enthusiastically when Melissa fed her, yet it was clear she was having trouble keeping her eyes open.

"Don't make me get out the hot pepper, Tsu," Melissa warned. "Keep your eyes open, darn it."

"Erk! I promise, kero," Tsu said quickly.

"Good." Shaking her head, Melissa turned back to Izuku, handing over a spool of tiny thread and the accompanying needle. "Okay, here is what we're going to do. I've cleaned the wounds and disinfected the needles and thread, even though Yaomomo just made it for us. We're going to need the best, tightest stitching you can do."

"R, right," Izuku stuttered again, holding the needle. He then began, wincing at the feel of the needle going into Tsu's flesh. It was an altogether surreal experience, and he thanked Momo in his mind for the nerve-deadening agent as Tsu barely twitched.

For a few moments, the room was silent except for Melissa's whispered encouragement and the sound of her feeding Tsu. He supposed it was a meat-heavy stew or something that was intended to help her body create more blood, but he couldn't concentrate on it, instead concentrating on Tsu's wounds and what he was doing to the exclusion of all else.

So it came as a shock when he was almost done with the final wound and Tsu spoke up for the first time, although she didn't address him. Instead, she addressed Melissa, who had just used the epinephrine again on her back, renewing the lack of feeling. "Hey Melissa?"

"Hmm, yes, Tsu?" Melissa responded, placing the needle down again. "Wait a second for it to kick in, then you can start up again, Zuk."

"Is, is it really impossible for us to go home again?" Tsu asked, her voice sounding small and fragile in a way neither Izuku nor Melissa had ever heard from her before. Not back on the first island when they all started to realize they were all here for the long haul, not when the girls tried to confront her about how sad she had been feeling.

Izuku, who had realized Tsu was putting up a front for a while, sighed in some relief, knowing that Tsu was finally going to let the others know what was bothering her. That was good.

Looking at Tsu, Melissa sighed, running a hand through her hair. *I kind of suspected this was why Tsu's been so morose occasionally, but the timing could not be worse.* "Look, Tsu, I, I know where this is coming from. Believe me, I've thought about going home too. But it's just, just several layers of scientific impossibility piled on the merely technologically impossible." She

reached out a hand, touching Tsu's cheek gently. "Look, are, are you sure you want to hear about this now, with how hurt you are?"

The froggy girl nodded slowly, letting out a mournful 'kero.' "Okay, but remember, you asked for this. In broad terms, understand first, not to toot my own horn, but I'm pretty darn smart, and I've spent a lot of my life in my Dad's labs. Mei, as crazy as she is, is a genius... if a bit more crazy genius than the normal variety. Yaomomo's even smarter in a way. Even with that and Yaomomo's Quirk, we just don't have the capability to create the hyperdrive engine. My dad didn't build it in a day before passing it to me, and while I will raise a hand and admit I got it to work, I didn't memorize the plans. I'd need a dedicated CAD, several dozen computers all dedicated to helping me design it from the ground up, and even if I can describe the programs, I don't think that Yaomomo could create a computer with that kind of specific programs on them."

"A, actually, Yaomomo and I talked about that. She can create drones easily, and computers, but only computers with programs she has specifically used in the past. And, um, Yaomomo hasn't used CAD. She never went into designing things, let alone real engineering," Izuku volunteered.

Melissa nodded soberly. "And without those specialized programs, it would take decades to build the things I'd need to build to figure out how to build the hyperspace engine again. And that... that's the easy part, Tsu."

She paused as Tsuyu started to silently cry. Yet she didn't look away from Melissa, and after a moment, Melissa continued. "Let's, let's say that I had an eidetic memory and was able to remember each and every piece of the engine perfectly. That I was then able to, to transfer that knowledge to Yaomomo so she could create the individual pieces for Mei and me to actually build it. That'd probably take her a good year or so of doing nothing but gorging herself and creating things to our specifications. Which would be just wrong, even if it was working towards getting us back home."

Melissa held up a finger almost angrily. "Even then, **even then**, we would need to power the darn thing. We'd need a dedicated generator, and not a small one, either. I'm talking about a full fusion generator, and that's a whole different kettle of fish." She then shivered. "We'd also need to make an actual ship to house the transdimensional engine so that we wouldn't end up freefalling like when we landed here, or worse. We could have appeared in space, Tsu. We could all have just suffocated with no air then and there."

Neither the blonde scientist nor Izuku could find the croaks coming from Tsuyu weren't cute for the first time. The despair in them and the tears that accompanied them were enough to break their hearts.

Yet Tsu had asked for it, and all that Melissa had listed so far was the easy part. "Finally. Let's pretend, **again**, that the technical issues behind rebuilding the engine and a ship didn't exist. That Mei could whip one out like she does her plans for support gear. We, we still wouldn't be able to get home because none of us have a damn clue where or when home is from here."

Now Melissa began to cry as well, silent tears dripping down her face. This conversation had opened up wounds she had wished to let scab over. Yet she wouldn't begrudge Tsu that. *Her own hurt is just too obvious.* "I'm not going to try to explain String Theory or Alternate Dimensional Theory. I will just say we'd have better luck picking out a specific piece of hay in a haystack the size of the world than figuring out where our home is from this world, let alone whether or not the passage of time would impact those equations. Mei, Yaomomo, me, none of us could figure that out, simply because we don't know how to even build the equations to try. We'd need a starting point, and even then, it would take decades."

"I, I'm sorry, Tsu. I'd love to see Papa, to see Uncle Might again and give him a piece of my mind. But it's just, it's about as beyond us as quantum physics is the common layman! I... I know it's harsh, but this world it's our new home now. We, we can't change that."

Tsu slowly nodded, and Melissa moved to hug her head while Izuku, tears in his own eyes, made for the door, leaving Melissa to comfort the distraught Tsuyu. With the reality that there was no real hope setting in, it was time to let Tsu just cry it out, which Melissa would be better at than him. *And hopefully, after she does, she will embrace our life in this world like the rest of us have tried to do.*

OOOOOOO

It was decided that any effort to reveal the beach again under the tons of snow and debris was an exercise in futility. "If you start to burn that snow away, the snow above it in the avalanche will just come down to fill it in. I don't doubt you can do that for a while, Shoto, but there's no need for you to do that when you can simply create a longer set of ice stairs up to the nearest surviving forest area," Izuku declared.

The avalanche had spread, smashing not just the two forest areas the crew had already explored but two more to either side with aftereffects, further avalanches starting up on the heels of the first. This completely changed the topography of the island and left them with no place to land. So it was decided that the ship would stay where it was in the small cove leading

up to the former beach while the group of explorers went upwards, using what amounted to a series of icy stairways leading up to the nearest plateau that they had yet to explore,

And this time, when Izuku, Kirishima, Momo, Melissa and Shoto went ashore, the group went knowing the kind of trouble they might get into. Once on the target escarpment, Shoto created two icy towers for Melissa and Momo, who situated themselves up top of them with a pair of the rifles that Mei and Melissa had been tinkering with. They still lacked the range of modern rifles from back on Earth, but the magazines allowed each of them to fire seven times before reloading, and they had sniper scopes as well.

With that done, Izuku and Kirishima worked to essentially denude a part of the plateau of a large chunk of its trees. They searched for vine carrots and mushrooms, of course, then removed the trees entirely, tearing them out and tossing them down onto the ocean below, creating an open area. With that done, Kirishima and Izuku went exploring. The two girls provided overwatch while Shoto cleared out an area of the forest with short, controlled bursts of his fireside.

They did run into lapahns again that first day and the day after, but Izuku and Kirishima were no longer playing around. With their traps, the group finally began to find a few animals, mostly squirrels and a few raccoons, but also two goats. They were attacked nearly every day by groups of the monstrous lapahns, but thanks to the protections they pushed into place, the lapahns couldn't ambush them as they had Izuku, Tenya and Tsuyu. Without being able to ambush them, their ability to actually take the fight to the dimensionally displaced teens was greatly reduced, and soon, the teens fell into a routine.

Once ambushed, Tenya and Kirishima would hold the lapahn in place until the lapahn began to die from Momo and Melissa's (or Mei's, they switched off) fire before beginning to slowly retreat to the others. Once the lapahn were out in the open, Shoto would use his fire or ice to deal with them while the two girls continued to pick off any that were further away from their friends.

Admittedly, the shooters had to hit the head to really put a lapahn down, but none of the quartet had problems with that after what had happened that day with the avalanche. Despite that, the creatures kept on coming back day after day, and several times they changed tactics. Twice, they ambushed the group as they climbed onto the semi-flat escarpment. Once, they started an avalanche of their own, but all that did was make Izuku and the others retreat back to their ship, move on and start again at another escarpment. This obviously had them fighting another group of lapahn, but still.

In this manner, the larder was practically full by the time they left the island with meat and nuts. They even had vegetables, along with the berries that, according to Momo, who was

the only one of them who had had them before, did indeed taste like kumquats: tart and mildly acidic. Indeed, their meals began to be more varied as they stayed on the island over those two weeks as well. Steak on the grill, shish kebabs, and even a kind of winter salad made an appearance, with Kirishima's grilling skills put to good use and Melissa slowly branching out in what she could cook.

Despite that, there was much rejoicing as the Log Pose suddenly shifted. Yet before that, one more thing happened during the time on Fewfroxe. Izuku's dreams began to change.

Up to this point, he had only dreamed of the spirits held within One For All once every few days. Occasionally, he would hear voices during the day, like back when he'd had his migraine. In one dream after leaving Clockwork Island, Izuku had been able to make himself heard. But since then, he hadn't had such a vivid dream, only ever hearing their voices, which Izuku put down to the fact he was so exhausted every time he went to sleep while the crew was out on the ocean.

Yet ever since Melissa had bluntly, if broadly, explained how it was impossible for the dimensionally displaced teens to ever return home, his dreams were dominated by the shouting voices of the previous users of One For All. Every time, Izuku tried to make himself heard, but it was as if the anger/argument between the other spirits was somehow crowding him out, making him unable to make his voice heard and make out what they were all saying at the same time. There also seemed to be another spirit he could barely glimpse through the fog of the dream, but who it could be, he didn't know.

Two nights before the Log Pose reset, this changed. Izuku once more found himself in the shadowy fog, only this time, there was a startling lack of shouting going on. Indeed, all he could hear was the murmur of Nana and the spirit he had learned was called Yoichi.

Of the group, Nana seemed calmest about things and the kindest, the most welcoming to Izuku. Yoichi seemed the most intrigued by the new world, while the other two semi-friendly (or at least neutral) he knew the names of were Banjo and En.

Or at least he thought the fourth spirit was named En. He didn't talk much. But when he did, he seemed more analytical about everything, unlike two of the other spirits who always tried to make jokes or the two who always sounded bitter and wrathful.

Tonight, however, there was another spirit there, the one that Izuku had only caught brief glimpses of before. Seeing it like this, Izuku instantly knew who that was and could feel his eyes start to prickle. As a lifelong fan, how could he not know All Might, even if his entire body was made of strange gold mist? The height, the width of the shoulders, the antennae, all of it screamed All Might to Izuku.

As did the touch on his shoulder. The feel of that big hand on Izuku's shoulder reminded him of the day he'd cleared Dagobah Beach, of the time All Might came to see him in the hospital after the battle against Wolfram. Although All Might's misty body still didn't have any definition, let alone a face, the warmth of that hand and the thumbs up the spirit gave him said it all.

Izuku (or his spirit? Izuku was still uncertain where one ended and the other began here.) sniffled, tears streaming from his eyes, so strong was the approval and acceptance in that act. "A, All Might, I, I'm so sorry! I, I won't be able to, to follow in your footsteps, not back home. Here... I think I think here, this world's so weird, I don't know what..."

The young greenette's thoughts were all a jumble. The bone-deep need to apologize for something Izuku saw as his fault and the need to explain the straits Izuku and his friends found themselves in warred with one another and a far simpler need to just talk and bask in the approval he could somehow feel from the spirit of his mentor. The result was his mental voice being almost as stutter-filled as his voice had been back before UA, let alone in this world.

"Now, now, Ninth," Nana's voice came out of the mist. Turning in that direction, Izuku saw the semi-familiar form of Nana appearing out of the fog that comprised the background of this strange mental realm. This was followed by the whole area Izuku could see changing, the fog flowing back, leaving behind several comfortable-looking chairs.

"None of that, ay? None of us, well... most of us don't blame you for anything that's happened. We know it wasn't your fault we arrived here. But we do have some questions about that," Nana continued, ruffling her hair. "Geez, kiddo, the girls have got to like playing with your hair if it's like this out in the real world, too."

Izuku barely had time to blush at that before the astral plane around him changed again, a third spirit forming out of the mist and striding over to take a seat. This spirit was a middle-aged man who wore what looked like a late eighties biker of some kind made into a hero costume with the addition of shoulder pauldrons and knee guards in gold. He had a bald head, broad shoulders, and big hands, along with what looked like a five-o'clock shadow. His leather jacket was open, showing a muscle t-shirt beneath along with what looked like a bandoleer full of what looked like shotgun shells.

"Yeah, quite a lot of damn questions. I only hope you've found your voice again to answer them... which it looks like ya can if ya can stop blubbering, Ninth. All Might and Nana just want ta support ya regardless, but the rest of us? Well, we've got bigger things to care about. No offense, gaki."

The spirit of All Might turned to face the other spirits as they appeared, leaving one hand on Izuku's shoulder comfortingly as Izuku stared at them one after another. While Nana

and the biker man appeared almost fully formed, the next three spirits who appeared didn't. Izuku got the impression that they were doing so on purpose or, or maybe, because of laziness? He wasn't certain how or where that impression was coming from, but it was there.

However, they were followed by a lean man with short, beige hair and startlingly green eyes that slant slightly downward. There were two scars on his face stretching from the left side of his forehead down to his chin, but looking closely at them, they seemed to have smaller scars, almost like age lines, radiating off them. He was heavily muscled, just like the bald man, but when he moved, he moved more like someone like Itsuka Kendo back at UA: someone who had a lot of training rather than the other man who moved like a brawler.

The next spirit to appear in full was a tall but sickly-looking young man with white hair and a firm, hard face. The spirit's bangs nearly obscured his eyes which should have given him a wild sort of appearance, but he came off more as an incisive observer more than anything else. This, Izuku felt, was probably the spirit called Yoichi. *I always got the impression of someone who had seen a lot but who hadn't at the same time, for some reason.*

"I agree with Banjo. We spirits can see some of your memories and especially the memories your mind sorts through from the day when you sleep as well as occasionally through your own senses. But we often miss a lot of context, so putting things together is kind of hard, especially when you don't understand something. Worse, sound is always... weird."

"Think of it like one of those old crackly FM radio stations, kiddo," Nana said, moving to sit beside Izuku as the spirit of All Might pushed him into the center of the ring of chairs. "We sometimes get a few minutes of real sound, but then we'll get around ten minutes of interspersed sound, and finally, a lot of crackling drowning out everything else."

"But now that you can speak more freely, I hope you can tell us how we arrived here and why we can't go back. We know that's your and the other's opinions after that young frog girl's collapse, but well..." the white-haired young man with old eyes shrugged, looking a little sheepish. "None of us were naturals when it came to math. Let alone the high-end stuff those two girls—"

"Whooh yeah, that Mei girl man, and the all-American, she's Melissa, right? Don't suppose I could convince ya to spend more time with her or that girl with the ponytail? They definitely grow them bigger in America, and as for the rich girl, I knew full-grown women who'd want to know her secrets," Banjo whooped.

All Might's spirit left Izuku's side for a moment, and a *BAM* noise rang out as a blow to the back of the head slammed Banjo down into the ground. The next second, All Might was back beside Izuku while Nana nodded sagely. "That he had coming."

The two other spirits both nodded, but Nana ruined the moment by then leaning down and whispering into Izuku's ear. "But um, to stop that old perv and the rest of the boys here from concentrating on that kind of thing, you might want to not let your own eyes wander so much, you know? I doubt the girls themselves have noticed or would mind if they had, and I know you're still not used to being around girls, let alone girls as pretty as your five friends. Still, you need to practice just a bit more self-control sometimes. Okay, kiddo?"

At that Izuku felt himself turn nearly red, and his spirit started to literally come apart in embarrassment.

Nana went on, adding to his torment. "Although... well, you could call yourself lucky, you know? You've got the spirit of a young woman in your head, ready and willing to give you advice on romance stuff. Now, I have to tell you, you're getting some signals from several of those girls that they might be into you. You need to narrow it down a bit. To do that—"

"*AHEM*. Might we actually talk about what we are all here to learn, please?" Yoichi demanded. For some reason, Nana and the other spirits instantly differed from him, with Banjo pushing himself to his 'feet' such as they were in this weird dream realm, and both Nana and All Might coming to attention as did the silent, scarred man beyond sending a smirk Banjo's way. "Now, Izuku, please explain young Hatsume and Shield's reasoning as to why we can't get back to our old dimension."

"I, um, alright, but um... I, I get the impression that there's more to your desire to get home than just, er, doing that. I, um, I feel like I should apologize to All Might for not living up to his position as the Symbol of Peace, but um, I... I don't think most of you care about that, do you? So, er, so what's all this about?"

"Well, I do," Nana laughed, standing up to pat the spirit of Toshinori on the shoulder. "I was this lug's teacher, after all. For a little while, anyway. But yeah." She sobered and sat down again to be more level with Izuku. He'd gone through a bit of a growth spurt since coming to this world, but most of that had come in the form of muscles rather than height, which meant that even sitting down, the Amazonian Nana was only about a foot shorter than Izuku's spirit standing up. "There's a reason we're all invested, and not just literally, in One For All. You see, One For All has a purpose, a goal that's been passed down by Mister Sickly over there."

"Nana," Yoichi reproved as several of the other spirits seemed to flare in anger. One of them even appeared for a brief moment to almost form into a true body but faded out after a second. "Be serious about this if nothing else, please."

Why do I get the impression those spirits aren't quite all there? Like, they're starting to fade away or.. want to? Izuku thought, frowning as he looked at them and then back to Nana.

Shrugging, Nana continued, and what she told Izuku horrified him. The knowledge that the boogeyman of the criminal world, All For One, was real was one thing. Izuku had thought the Quirk Thief was just an online rumor, something spoken of like aliens or All Might having made a fortress of solitude under Mount Rushmore in his time in the US, which he had passed on to Stars n' Stripes. The fact that One For All was created almost by All For One as an attempt to get his brother, Yoichi, on his side was even stranger, as was the fact it had been passed down time and time again in an effort to build up enough power to fight AFO. This was all followed by the hope that All For One was dead at All Might's hand after he had killed Nana in an effort to reclaim One For All.

Yet the fact the spirits were deeply concerned he might be alive thanks to the Nomu thing that had appeared at the USJ having multiple Quirks nearly had him frozen in fear and crying at the same time. Because Izuku knew that there was no way home, no way he could take up the mantle and fight this evil if it still existed. There just **wasn't**. And now it fell to Izuku to try and explain why.

This took a while and not just because Izuku had been reduced to a stuttering, apologetic wreck. But eventually, he got the words out, explaining the, in Melissa's words, "Several layers of scientific impossibility piled on the merely technologically impossible" problem that was getting back home, including what he knew of string theory, something that Melissa hadn't tried to explain to Tsu, but which was the basis of the biggest problem facing any attempt to get back to Earth.

As he did, the spirits all around him began to understand and reacted in various ways.

Banjo cursed for a few moments under his breath, then shrugged, sighed, and leaned back in his chair. The bald biker-themed man seemed resigned but upbeat about the news they could not go back and try to finish off All For One.

Nana didn't seem to care at all. Instead she was watching Izuku, an expression of almost motherly concern on her face. As soon as he finished speaking, her hand found his, squeezing. "It's not your fault, Izuku. We're in this weird dimension due to Mei's actions, if anyone's, and even she didn't realize what that engine could do. No. Your being in this dimension was caused by a cavalcade of errors, nothing more. It isn't your fault," she repeated. "And I won't let you beat yourself up over it. You tend to do that too often with other things as it is."

All Might seemed to agree, ruffling Izuku's hair, yet the other spirits, the ones who hadn't bothered to form into full bodies, seemingly disagreed. Or at least, that was what Izuku thought their disappearing meant.

As they popped out of existence, though, the whole mental (spiritual?) realm shuddered, a series of quakes going through it as Yoichi cursed volubly. "Damn it!"

He disappeared a second later, and the realm subsided, but his face was a mixture of thunderous and resigned when he reappeared. "Damn those two, and En too! I never thought he'd want to disappear like that. Second and Third, I can understand, but En?"

"Wh, what was that?" Izuku asked querulously while Nana sighed, and All Might looked confused.

"One For All stockpiles energy, as Nana told you. What she didn't tell you, but which I wager you've already figured out, is that it also stockpiles the... the soul-impression of the people who used it before. Which includes their Quirks. My Quirk is the Quirk that allows us to pass One For All on to another, for instance. The Stockpile Quirk... well, that was created by my brother, and whatever soul it was connected to it is long gone. Nana's Quirk is float, which you'll eventually be able to use along with the super strength portion of the Quirk. Each of us represented our Quirks, the portions of the soul that were in One For All."

The heretofore silent man with the scars sighed, seeming to take a deep breath, although, in this place, that didn't seem necessary. "Bruce and Kudo, well, they never approved of Toshinori. They were—"

"Freaking edge lords who came from the time before Quirks were accepted, kiddo. Just like those bastards to take their toys and go home," Banjo grumbled. "They wanted to let themselves fade, let their Quirks fade out of One For All when Bulky and Blonde over there had us, and we all thought All For One was dead. Now? Hearing that even if he's alive, there's no way we could do anything about it? Well, they didn't like you either, kid. Sorry."

Banjo didn't sound all that sorry, Izuku thought somewhat numbly. He sounded more like someone who had finally gotten rid of an annoying roommate after far too long. For his part, though, Izuku was shocked and horrified that his actions had caused One for All to lose a part of itself like that. *I, I'm really not wor—*

Twin smacks landed upside Izuku's head. Each of them was light, but together, those slaps were enough to send his head rocking forward. "None of that, Izuku!" Nana admonished. "What did I just say? Our current situation has nothing to do with you." She smiled then, a bright, wide smile. "Frankly, **I'm** happy. This world is incredibly interesting, and you don't have to worry about fighting in a war like what All for One might be capable of back home. And. No offense, Izuku, but I think if Toshi was around in the flesh, you'd still be stuck trying to copy him, trying to become a new All Might instead of being the best Izuku you can be, you know? That's what you should concentrate on now, okay?"

Izuku stammered for a moment, but under the relentlessly upbeat smile on Nana's face and the enthusiastic thumbs up from Toshinori, he couldn't help but smile back. It was a

tremulous smile, but a real one as he felt the guilt he'd been about to drown in fade. *Ugh, I really do tend to think everything's my fault, don't I?*

Yoichi's words weren't as encouraging, but they were nonetheless helpful. "While Banjo's words might have sounded harsh, Izuku, you should understand that Bruce and Kudo, they didn't get along with any of us. They tolerated me, as they were the ones to break me out of the safehouse that my brother had confined me in. But bar Quirks being accepted, they hated how the world had changed after Hikage's time. What those two thought of modern heroism isn't printable."

The scar-faced man, who must be Hikage, Izuku realized, frowned. "Yeah, those two, they never quite fit in. En is a mystery. He hated the whole isekai thing, but he also didn't really like the Grand Line. I... don't know why, though. I mean, I don't like the Grand Line either, but not to the point of wanting to take my power and go on to the big pizza in the sky."

Izuku couldn't have stopped himself if he tried, and he blurted out, "B, big pizza?"

"Ha!" Banjo guffawed, slapping Hikage on the shoulder. "This guy used to live in the woods all on his own, working on strengthening One For All. So his idea of heaven—"

"My idea of heaven is all the food I saw images of on TV or read about in books that I never got to try. I'm not gonna be ashamed of that," Hikage stated before looking at Izuku apologetically. "But um, in terms of things to apologize for, I have one for you. You see, my Quirk's name is Danger Sense. This Quirk allows me to detect incoming danger as well the the distance and direction."

"How does it do that?" Izuku questioned enthusiastically. "Does it give you actual coordinates, a vague feeling? How does the Quirk convey its intentions? And how, how can..." Izuku's immaterial eyes widened. "Those migraines! Those were you?"

"Yes. I admit I jumped the gun, but we felt that it might be easier for you to deal with a nonphysical adjustment to your Quirk. But," Hikage shrugged. "We were wrong. Being on the Grand Line, there's always danger all around you. Sifting through that deluge to what is really important would be impossible. It amounted to a sudden mental overload like someone had stuck your brain into a lightning bolt."

While somewhat confused by how Hikage was speaking, He understood the man was right. On the Grand Line, danger could come from anywhere and everywhere all at once. If he couldn't somehow tone Danger Sense down, Hikage's Quirk sounded like far more trouble than it's worth on the Grand Line.

"Regardless of our comrades exiting stage right, we seem to be running out of time," Yoichi stated, staring out into the distance where the fog of this realm was starting to

disappear. “While their specific Quirks are gone, the buildup of kinetic energy is still there, so your overall physical power won’t diminish,” He then smiled, stepping forward and putting a hand on Izuku’s shoulder opposite the one Toshi had his hand on. At a look back, Banjo, grumbling, came forward with Hikage, and the two of them followed suit while Nana kept a grip on Izuku’s hand. “Regardless, we’re all here for the long haul, Izuku. Whatever you do, we’ve got your back going forward in this amazing, weird world.”

“Hell yeah!” Nana enthused. “Build up to the point you can use twenty percent of One For All, and you’ll start to be able to use Float. After that...”

The dream realm started to fade, and Izuku once more could not make out the spirit’s words. But despite that, Izuku smiled. He had the majority of the predecessors on his side, and right now, that was all that mattered.

OOOOOOO

“Hey, bro, it’s your turn on watch.” How long it had been since his One For All dream ended and Kirishima’s voice woke him up, Izuku didn’t know. But however long it had been, Izuku hopped out of his bunk, grinning widely, feeling invigorated.

Deep in his mind, there were still many bits of what Izuku had taken to calling his old attitude, or old Izuku. Old Izuku still occasionally had problems acknowledging that Bakugo was not his friend, that many of his friends were extremely attractive girls and that Izuku could notice this. That Izuku wasn’t unworthy or lesser for either doing so or that he wasn’t worthy of doing it.

Now, while those thoughts had been somewhat loud occasionally, the ones that occasionally haunted his nights were about what All Might’s vestige would think of him if or when it appeared. Would he blame Izuku for not being able to become the next symbol of peace? Would he hate the fact that Izuku had given up on the notion of going home so fast, unlike Tsuyu, who had kept a flame of hope in her chest for so long? Would All Might look down on him because he was so weak in comparison to All Might just yet? Worse... would All Might, would Toshinori think Izuku a villain for having killed people in this world? While Izuku had mentally accepted that, he knew that someone like All Might wouldn’t be able to.

Yet Toshinori’s vestige hadn’t brought up any of that. Instead, he had given Izuku unfiltered, immediate support. Toshinori kept on supporting Izuku throughout the dream, saying nothing but laying his hand on Izuku’s shoulder, a pillar that Izuku could lean on. That, Nana and the others all wanting to stay with Izuku thinking he was worthy of their Quirks, meant the world to Izuku on a conscious and subconscious level, and Izuku felt as if a massive weight he hadn’t even realized he was carrying had just been removed.

“Thanks, Kiri.” He said, exchanging a high five with Kirishima before pointing to his head. “And it looks like it’s time to redo your hair coloring again.”

“Hah, yeah, I noticed that yesterday. No worries, I’ll talk to Yaomomo about it.” Kirishima smiled back at Izuku. “Had a good night’s sleep?”

“Just... resolving some issues in my own head. It’s been surprisingly helpful,” Izuku said, completely honestly and yet also falsely. “Listen, tomorrow, if weather permitting, would you be up to doing some training? I, well, we’ve all been so busy with the ship and everything we haven’t done any actual training. But I think with Rorca coming up and all of us having gotten used to life at sea, we should look to train ourselves a lot, especially our Quirks.”

Eyebrows rising, Kirishima nodded firmly before holding back a yawn as the two boys exited Izuku’s cabin. “I’m down for some manly training anytime, Izuku. But do you think Iida and Tsu are going to be up for it? I’ve been talking to Tsu a lot since she got hurt, and I know she’s no longer in the dumps, but her back is going to take a while to fully heal.”

“Um... point. But the two of them can work with Mei then on weapons and other things. And I know Tenya’s been feeling antsy about how much his ribs have forced him to take it easy.” Izuku had indeed noticed that Tsu and Kiri had been spending a lot of time together but wasn’t about to comment as to the nature of that time spent.

“Heh, I bet you have. It takes one to know one, after all,” Kiri snickered, said goodnight to Izuku and headed into his own cabin for a moment.

Heading upward, Izuku walked out onto the main deck. Up in the crow’s nest, he spotted Mei’s pink hair and hollered up, “Mei-san, are you okay up there?”

“Huh? Oh, Green. Yeah, I got some tea, I got some of the leftover jerky, and a plan to upgrade a gun baby, I’m good.”

By this point, Izuku and the others knew Mei didn’t really need as much sleep as the others, and he had stopped objecting to how she had started to routinely take up two of the watches in the crow’s nest. So he just nodded now before shouting up, “Just remember, no experiments or else we’ll take your paper and quill away! And you’re up there to look out for trouble, not just concentrate on your designs.”

There had been a few incidents in the carpenter’s room and the engine room when Mei got a little too wild. This forced Izuku and the others to find penalties that would at least make the wild inventor think twice.

Mei waved a hand lazily over the crow's nest's side. "Yeah, yeah. We're still not seeing any more crazy weather, but Engines was complaining about a lot of different currents trying to pull the ship off course. I'll call ya if we run into trouble."

Izuku sighed and began to patrol around the ship for a bit, thinking more about the dream he'd had. Then, he turned his thoughts to the future and to training in general. His thoughts were interrupted by a light drizzle, and Izuku hastened over to the smokestack, climbing up the side to the crow's nest, where he helped Mei set up a tarp over her. It was like an umbrella that covered the crow's nest but let whoever was sitting there peer out in every direction.

With that done, Izuku headed back into the wheelhouse. There, he found Melissa literally wrestling with the wheel. As Izuku stepped in, the wheel twisted so hard to one side that Melissa was hurled sideways and down toward the deck.

The ship lurched, and Izuku rushed forward, catching Melissa and setting her on her feet with one hand while grabbing the wheel. Twisting around the wheel, he began pulling it back on course, grimacing and pulling at One for All for a second, just five percent, but even so. "What the heck?"

"I don't know. It's like we're getting hit with the current equivalent of a covalent shear!" Melissa grumbled, flushing a little as she found her head pressed against Izuku's chest. She tried to stand up, but the ship was lurching so much that she couldn't get her feet under her easily. Once she did, Melissa moved forward, grabbing at the wheel with both hands and adding her own strength to Izuku's. With scant impact, it had to be said. "It's gotten worse over the past few minutes, damn Grand Line!"

"Right, don't worry, I have this." With that, Izuku called on more of One For All, reaching forward with his other hand now that Melissa was standing upright again.

At first, he didn't realize he'd done so so quickly that he essentially pinned her between the wheel and his own body. Her chest was pressed almost against the wheel, while her rear was pressing back into his own waist. For a few seconds he didn't notice even that touch, too busy wrestling with the wheel. When a little eep came from the blonde girl, he looked down, seeing her staring up at him through her glasses, her eyes wide and face flushed.

For a moment, panic gripped Izuku, and he made to release the wheel and pull back, but Melissa shook her head, turning back around and staring down at the wheel. "D, don't!" We need to fight the ship through this. Who knows how far off-course this current will take us if we don't fight through it! Just, just get on with it."

That was easier said than done, and now that Izuku was aware of Melissa being so close to him, pressing back into him, it was all he could do to not rise to the occasion. Blushing, he tried to concentrate on the wheel, his arms straining to the point where the green lightning that presaged One For All at anything above ten percent appeared. "M, Melissa, you can squeeze out below one of my arms."

"I could, if I thought I could stay on my feet long enough to get into one of the chairs," Melissa grumbled as the ship heaved upwards, hitting a wave at a bad angle as they continued to fight the very ocean. "I don't see that happening."

The chairs in the wheelhouse were kind of ingenious in a way. All of them could be moved around, but once clamped down onto hooks that Momo had made to strips of steel on the floor, they couldn't be moved very easily. In this ocean, though, one of them had already come undone, and Izuku grimaced as he saw the chair slide sideways so quickly that the back of it snapped off as it caught the corner of the kitchen counter. "R, right."

For several moments, Izuku's mind was torn as he tried his hardest to not be too aware of Melissa's body, trying to fight the wheel without using too much power and breaking it. That would have been disastrous and was a very thin line he had to tread, with a rather delightful distraction in his arms, so to speak.

For her part, Melissa was embarrassed, annoyed at her own weakness, and, although she would never admit it, turned on. The green lightning arcs coming off of Izuku felt good for some reason, like light electrotherapy, or so she would assume. The feeling of his solid, muscly body pressing into her from behind was lighting a spark in her. *DAMN ME, I knew I liked Izuku, but this is **so** not how I want him to find out*, Melissa thought, holding back a moan as she felt her body starting to respond, her nipples hardening and her core becoming hot.

Luckily, the insane current pulling the ship to the starboard finally began to fade, and Melissa ducked under Izuku's arms as the ship settled down. With a heavy blush on her face, Melissa moved over, clearing up the damaged chair, pulling off the damaged bits quickly and stowing them into one of the lockers on either side of the kitchen area. "D, damn good timing, Zuk. I don't think anyone else would have been able to get us back on-course like that!"

"Ah, aheh, um, thanks. And um, I'm sorry about--" Izuku began, but Melissa turned to him, a smile on her face as she waved a finger at him.

"None of that! It was embarrassing, sure, but that's all it was. And frankly, I don't think that I would've been safe anywhere else in the wheelhouse than in your arms," Melissa teased lightly before gesturing to the kitchen. "Now, do you want some tea or some food?"

“Er, both, please. Um, and er, I wanted to tell you something else.” Relieved and now desperate to move on from what he saw as a super embarrassing moment, Izuku blurted out what he had dreamed of with One For All.

Melissa listened intently, finishing putting a few fish-cabobs together along with some tea. “Aw, you forgot to slap Uncle Might for me,” she mock lamented as Izuku finished.

“EH!? Oh, um, it um, it didn’t seem appropriate, but er, I,” Izuku babbled.

Laughing, Melissa set the food down on the small table by the wheel. Unlike the chairs, which were mobile and could be clamped down wherever there were clamps, the table was bolted into place. “Enough of that. I was just joking, Zuk.”

Reaching over, she ruffled his hair, biting her lip lightly at how nice it felt under her fingers. An image of running her fingers through that hair, of gripping it in... other circumstances came to her, and Melissa quickly dismissed it before the image could become a little too graphic to ignore. “Still, that’s amazing. And pretty interesting. And I completely agree. Those asshats who decided to just let themselves fade are completely idiotic.”

“W, well, I wouldn’t go that far. They, um, they put all their being into fighting All For One, and now that there’s no way we can go back and fight him if there’s a chance he’s alive, well, I can see them just deciding to give up,” Izuku said with a shrug. “I can’t say I don’t see their point, even if it isn’t a choice I’d make. Even if one goal is impossible, well, there can be another one, another way to achieve what your dream is.”

“Hmmm...” Melissa pulled over another chair, and if she wiggled her rear a little bit in Izuku’s direction a bit too much while she was clamping it in place by the wheel, that was no one’s business but hers. *I might not have gotten up enough courage to outright say I like you yet, Zuk, but flirting like this, that I can do.*

Sitting down, she looked back over at Izuku, who had a faint flush on his face, making his cute freckles stand out more. Ooh, he looked and liked it! Nice. Still, more importantly... “That line, that sounds like there’s more to that than you just commenting on Bruce and the other guy taking their toys and leaving.”

“Um, yeah, a bit. I... I realized early on at UA that everyone had their own reasons for being a hero, you know? Bakugo--”

“BAKAgo,” Melissa interrupted, holding out a fish kabob to Izuku. “Get it right, Zuk.”

Izuku laughed, staring back at Melissa, his eyes sparkling. “Yeah. Yeah. Bakago. You, you’re the best friend ever, you know that right? Helping me realize all that, and, well, just

being you from the moment we met. I, um, I don't think I ever thanked you for all the help you gave me to get my head on straight about that."

Now it was Melissa's turn to blush, but she smiled back, shaking her head. "Well, a girl does like to be appreciated, so thank you for the compliment, Zuk. But go on."

"Oh, um, right. So, er, Bakago, he wanted to be the best because it was a way to prove he was the strongest. Tenya, he wanted to be a hero because it was his family's business, a way to uphold the principles he felt they stood for. Um, Mina... I think she once said she hated bullies and wanted to help people feel safe. I wanted to help people. I wanted to protect people who couldn't protect themselves."

Izuku, who had been looking at the wheel for a moment, turned to Melissa. "I, I remember when you tried to tell us after Savar that we might need to think about how to keep a low profile, to turn the other cheek and not get involved with trouble we saw in any island we stopped in. I, I don't think I could do that. I... even here, my dream's the same. Being a hero, a symbol of peace, of safety, was my dream. While they might not be called heroes here, that dream still lives here."

"Hmm... and if and if sticking your nose in like that puts the rest of us in danger, what then?" Melissa asked, not judging, just asking.

"I, I'm going to get stronger," Izuku said, pulling a hand off the wheel and clenching his hand into a fist, green lightning arcing around his forearm. "I'm going to get strong enough to make this world safe, to stand as a symbol of peace. And all of you, all of you can get stronger too!"

The lightning disappearing, he reached over and took one of Melissa's hands, squeezing it. "I told you before I thought you could have been a hero back home. I'm certain you can be just as strong as any of the rest of us in this world!"

Biting her lip again, Melissa smiled faintly. "Well, with that kind of dream, who am I to get in your way? I just want us all to be aware, here, that doing the right thing might not be as straightforward as we like, and we might anger the locals if they aren't on the side of the angels."

"Then we get strong enough as Marines to remove them," Izuku stated firmly. "As the world's peacekeepers, they should be strong enough to do that."

Melissa chuckled at that, then asked brightly, "So, I wager you've got a lot of ideas about training the others, but what about me? Any ideas for me in terms of weapons or training?"

“Yep! I’ve got a lot, in fact.” Sitting down now that the final, far less powerful counter currents had faded away, Izuku kept one hand on the wheel and pulled out his notebook with the other, putting it on the table next to the food. He flipped it open to a page, then grabbed up a fish kabob and began to point out some things he’d written down. “Now, I’ll admit that most of my notes are about the other’s Quirks because, well, I’ve always liked analyzing Quirks. But I’ve had a lot of ideas for you and Mei, too. Guns will be the way to go, unfortunately. But there are a lot of things we can do with the kind of metallurgy and engineering we saw on Clockwork Island. How do you feel about making mechanical arms?”

The conversation that followed continued on and off with Izuku breaking off to take a turn around the deck occasionally. Luckily, the trend that they had started to see upon leaving Fewfrox behind had continued, and no monster-type danger showed up, bar a sighting of what looked like a plesiosaur in the distance. Izuku also had Melissa start a few of the exercises he felt would work best for her and some hand-to-hand moves. While he wasn’t at all trained in that area either, he still had some idea of boxing and movement.

When dawn came, the rest of the crew was greeted with a smile from Izuku as Melissa laid out breakfast. “Hey, everyone! Nothing major happened in the night, and it’s a nice day out for now.”

Momo noticed several notebooks laid out on the table and the kitchen counter around the food. “What’s all this?”

“Well, like I told Kirishima, I think that it’s time we all start to train again. We’ve gotten used to life on the Grand Line, and I think, well, once we become Marines, we’ll be back to being heroes, right? So we need to train and grow stronger so we can be the best heroes we can be,” Izuku stated, stuttering only a little bit.

“Yeah, bro mentioned that to me last night.” Since he had been on the evening watch, Kirishima was awake now, unlike Mei, who had been forced to go to bed, and Melissa and Izuku, who would be heading to bed soon. “I thought it was a manly idea then, and I agree now.”

“I hope you’re still saying that a few hours from now, Kiri. Considering most of my ideas for your Quirk have to deal with your protecting yourself from more and more powerful impacts,” Izuku stated.

“And me? What do you have for me?” Jirou asked quizzically.

“A lot of questions to point me to what bits of advice would work best,” Izuku admitted with a laugh.

“Well, you all have fun with that. I’ve already done my exercise for the day, and I need my bunk,” Melissa said tiredly. Indeed, Momo and the others could tell she was looking a little frayed around the edges. Her blond hair was sticking in every direction, and her outfit, which was a pair of exercise togs and a t-shirt rather than her normal blouse and pants, was also marked with a few sweat stains. Her hands were marked with ink, a few small nicks and her knuckles looked like they had been scrapped red. Despite that, and her glasses looking a little dirty, Melissa looked quite happy, all things considered.

“I can see that. Would you like some help with your bed, Meli-chan?” Momo asked solicitously.

“No, I think I can make it, but thanks, Yaomomo.” Melissa laid out the final plate for the crew, having already had some breakfast with Izuku more than an hour ago in what she felt had been a semi-romantic setting despite the lack of romantic conversation. *All in all... I think there’s only one way tonight could be better.*

With that in mind, she moved over to Izuku, who had just sat down next to Kirishima and Jirou, beginning to question the purple-haired girl on how far she could stretch her jacks, what kind of metals she had attempted to jack into, and other things. “OH, and Zuk?”

Blinking at the interruption, Izuku looked over at Melissa, his eyes as bright and caring as they had been all night. “Yes?”

“Thanks for believing in me, too,” Melissa stated, leaning forward and giving him a kiss. It was still on the cheek, that kiss, but it was right next to his lips rather than on the side of the cheek as normal. “And thanks for everything else and just, just being you, Izuku,” she murmured against his skin before giving him a second kiss at the same place as he sat there, frozen in shock.

With that, Melissa moved off, leaving a stunned Izuku behind, while the others, bar Tsu, who simply kero-keroed, looking on in surprise. Surprise, and in Yaomomo’s case, feeling a bit odd for some reason.

“Nice, ZUK. Just, try not to be too manly aboard the ship, yeah? The walls on this ship are kind of thin,” Kirishima teased.

“Oy!” Jirou’s jack stabbed into the mock-redhead’s shoulder as she rolled her eyes. “None of that. I don’t need that idea in my brain.” *It’s already got a lot of others, and I’m gonna be the one to suffer if anything like, like that happens,* Jirou added mentally.

“Ahem, yes, well, let’s not tease Izuku too much, shall we? After all, who knows what they were talking about late at night. All alone.” Momo had intended for her voice to be

teasing, but it came out a little too flat for that. In fact, it caused Kyoka to look at her in surprise, her eyes narrowing.

Thankfully for both Izuku's blood pressure and Momo in general, Tenya coughed. "Yes, well. Izuku, plans, yes, you were mentioning training. Were there any exercises you think I could do with my ribs the way they are?"

OOOOOOO

Much to everyone's delight, the seas turned relatively calm as the ship made its way from Fewfroxe and onto the next over the next week. Even the horrendously powerful currents Izuku and Melissa had to deal with didn't show up again. All the crew had to face was one sea monster trying to take a bite out of the boat, a few squalls coming up out of nowhere, and a day so hot that Shoto retreated into his room, remaining there until the weather changed for fear of heatstroke.

Considering that Mei did indeed overheat, that was not exactly out of the realm of possibility. But besides the sea monster, there wasn't any real life-threatening event.

This was an autumn island, and like Fewfroxe, there was no human presence on it, as they had been told back on Savar. The island was small, smaller than the mountainous winter island they'd just left let alone Savar, as the ship barely took more than an hour to go entirely around it. Mei was even able to see across the island to the other side with her spyglass.

"It's like a normal forest to me. Oh wait, there it is," Mei said from on high, her voice ending in a snicker. Below, the others waited bar Momo, who was manning the wheel at present, and Tsu, who was still on half-duty and would be for quite a while until her back healed. Tenya was up and about as he had been most days since his wounds, although he was still on half duty thanks to his broken ribs. He had been able to exercise and move around, but not as intensely as he would otherwise, showing that maybe Melissa had been wrong and he had only sprained his ribs instead of breaking them.

"Alright, I'll bite. What strangeness caused that snicker?" Jirou asked, rolling her eyes.

"The trees are huge like American redwoods are supposed to be, which you all can probably see. But what I can see among them are deer about the size of a house. Which have armor on their backs and what look like metal horns," Mei replied dryly.

She zoomed in with her eyes through the spyglass, blinking as she saw a group of three squirrels leap down on one of the deer in question. Feeling the impact on its armor, the deer twisted its neck entirely around, more like an owl rather than a deer, bringing its horns into play along its body's length. The squirrels leaped away bar one, which was smacked off, landing and racing away along the ground.

With her eyes on maximum magnification, Mei could see the squirrels open their mouths, showing teeth that more resembled those of the flying sharks they'd dealt with in the past. "Oh, and the squirrels aren't eating nuts on this island. They look like they can eat meat."

"That sounds like two terrific reasons why humans haven't tried to settle this place," Kiri muttered, shaking his head. "Still, those huge trees, I'd wager those things could be made into some really manly ships."

Melissa agreed, adding, "The idea of squirrels being meat eaters is just a little terrifying. Even if it isn't really a squirrel, but simply this universe's, or this island's rather, analog of what we would call a squirrel, trying to keep them from bothering loggers would be next to impossible unless you create a clear zone like we did back on Fewfroxe."

"We still need to stop here to let the log pose reset," Izuku reminded the others, shrugging his shoulders. "And we still need to fill up our freshwater supply. That's the only supply area we really need to be worried about right now."

Thanks to Momo and Melissa, the ship had a series of rain catchers that could be set up in any kind of storm. Yet the crew still went through the accumulated water extremely quickly, and the day a few days back that had them hit with intense heat had almost finished off the stored water supply.

Jirou nodded, then patted the vibration sword at her belt while hefting the sonic staff in her other hand. "Well, unless Mei says some of these animals look to have developed an immunity to sound-based weapons, I think one of the people going ashore should be me."

"You, me, and Mei," Izuku answered with a nod. "Shoto can make us an ice bridge out to the island, and that will leave Melissa and Kiri to finish making up our away boat, with Momo on overwatch in the Crows Nest."

Landing took a while, simply because the ocean floor rose precipitously near the island, which meant that Shoto had to create an ice bridge to the island that was nearly half a mile long. Creating an ice sculpture like that in only mildly cold ocean water that was strong enough to allow Izuku to walk across it while carrying the empty barrels was extremely difficult.

Difficult enough that it was pushing midday by the time he was able to finish, and the trio of explorers were on the shore, waving back at the ship. With a sigh, Shoto released his hand from the ice, bringing his other hand up to his shoulder, massaging gently, releasing a beat bit of heat into his exceedingly cold arm. "That was exhausting. I don't think I'll be able to do that again for a while."

"Yeah, but the way you can use your ice to help us out like that is really manly, bro. But don't worry about needing to do it again. Melissa and I should finish our work on the away boat

before we run out of daylight,” Kiri said from where he and Melissa were working on that very thing and had been since before Shoto had begun his work on the ice bridge. The away boat had not been a priority before this. “Izuku and the rest will need to do multiple trips, but he’s manly enough to do that easy.

“Good.” Shoto walked away from the prow of the ship. Behind him, the ice bridge that had been connecting it to the shore was starting to collapse already under the strain of the waves all around.

Finding a source of drinkable water (once they had boiled it anyway, everyone on the crew was kind of afraid of what kind of diseases the water in this world could carry) was simple, thanks to their scouting the island at first. Doing that allowed them to find a stream that fed out into the ocean, and following that to its source, Izuku, Mei and Jirou found a small lake, its waters hidden under the verdant growth of the autumnal forest around them from Mei’s gaze before this.

However, just because they were able to find a source of water quickly did not mean that they did not run into problems.

“Squirrels incoming, and I cannot believe I just said that,” Jirou muttered, twisting around and staring to one side as she heard the noise of several small animals moving through the branches above in that direction.

She flicked on her sonic staff, bringing it around and blasting out a belt of sound that burst through the tree branches like a physical force, even on a low setting. Even that was enough to get the squirrels to clutch at their ears as they ran away, while others simply were stunned unconscious from the sudden auditory assault.

“Yes! I knew that would work,” Jirou said, grinning and raising a hand from her staff to pump a fist in the air.

“Nice,” Mei said, giving the girl the thumbs up. “Hopefully, it’ll work on those giant deer things too. The squirrels looked nasty, but the deer looked dangerous to me. I don’t think anything but one of Green’s punches would matter much to beasts that size.”

This statement was proved correct just as the group was filling their barrels with water. At a noise neither of the others could hear, Jirou twisted around, staring hard through the forest at a distant noise coming closer. “We have incoming. Not squirrels this time, either. Something big, or lots of something medium-sized.”

A group of ten combat deer soon became visible through the trunks of the trees around them. They were originally making their way towards the water, but when the first of them spotted the humans in turn, it let loose a strange sound, half whistle, half horse whinny. In

response, the others assembled on its position like a cavalry troop coming together. In the next second, they all raced forward, lowering their horns and bellowing a challenge.

Izuku stepped forward, grabbing a tree nearby that had been downed in some storm or other, shifting it in front of him like a barricade. "You two get behind me, and Jirou, let it rip!"

Jirou did so, lashing out with a wide-angle blast from her sonic staff. This worked about as well on the deer as it had on the squirrels. Several of the creatures shied away, slamming into one another or the trees they were passing by, then twisting around and literally running away with their tails between their legs. None of them were knocked out like the squirrels, but Jirou put that down to the deer's basic size more than anything else.

The central three kept on coming, the largest and most bulky of the group of ten pushing through the pain of Jirou's attack as they let loose another strange whistle whinny as they came, their horns lowered.

However, just as they came within striking distance, Izuku lifted the log into the air. Despite it being several tons of weight, he held it there, green lightning flashing over his body, blocking their charge. Each of the deer things slammed into this barrier, and Izuku's feet skidded through the ground, but he held them there, his strength against their charge.

It took five sonic blasts from Jirou that made all three twist around, trying to get away from the sound, their stubbornness finally breaking. A sixth sent them racing away in terror.

"Well, that worked," Izuku said with a self-satisfied nod, letting the tree trunk fall gently to the ground.

As he did, Jirou simply shook her head, always amazed at how strong Izuku was. *That trunk must weigh as much as ten tons, but Izuku lifted it with what, less than twenty percent of his Quirk? Scary.* She flushed a bit, looking at his back muscles rippling under his shirt. *And also yummy. Yep, I'm not just Yayo-sexual, guys, or at least this one guy also does it for me, even if I don't have the feels for him like I do for my Hime.*

"Now, let's get to filling our barrels," Izuku continued, not noticing how Jirou was looking at him.

With Jirou on guard, Mei and Izuku filled the barrels slowly, one after another. Or rather, Izuku filled the barrels while Mei walked around the lake, peering at some of the rocks and tapping them experimentally with a small pick that she produced from her backpack. Watching this, Jirou sent forth another blast of sound at a group of investigating squirrels, sending them racing away through the trees before asking, "What are you looking for, Mei-day?"

“heh, Mei-day. Eh, I’m not really looking for anything. I’m just experimenting. We can’t always rely on Boobs to meet all our construction needs, you know, so it would be a nice idea to have a second source of iron and other metals,” Mei answered, pausing as she came to one rock. A portion of that rock jutted out from the rest, and she began to knock on it with her pick before smiling enthusiastically and beginning to work around its edges. “Nice! Copper.”

Shrugging her shoulders, Jirou turned away from Mei, peering out into the forest around them, her jacks up and moving, listening intently for any movement. A moment later, she sent a sonic blast over Mei’s shoulder into another group of carnivorous squirrels that had begun gathering in the branches near her. She frowned as these squirrels ran off to a squirrel, not one of them being knocked out like the squirrels she’d hit in the first clash with the creatures. “That’s a little weird.”

However, this trend continued. The next time Kyoka spotted a group of squirrels coming near the small lake, they only retreated half as far. “Guys, I think the squirrels here are learning or developing some kind of immunity to my sound attacks.”

Frowning, Izuku looked up from where he was busy filling the last of the barrels. Five of them already rested along the shore of the lake, their tops already in place and malleted down. *I hope I’m able to carry all of those at once now that they’re all full. Carrying them while they were empty was easy. But I bet juggling them is going to be much harder now that they are full.* “Learning? They’re building up an immunity to your sound attack?”

“I think so. Are you nearly done?” Jirou asked, ignoring the loud protest from Mei, who had just barely begun to knock off a fist-sized chunk of copper from the rock she had been working on.

“Just let me finish this barrel,” Izuku answered, quickly pulling the barrel in question out of the water and shifting it onto the shore. There, he hammered the top down in place with a bung mallet, placed the tool back on his belt, and began to lift the barrels one after another, grunting a little as he added the third and fourth to the pyramid.

Doing so, he was again unaware of the show he was putting on for Jennifer. While Mei was busy with her rocks, Jirou simply stared, shaking her head slowly from side to side. *You know, I never thought I’d go for the musclebound type, but damn if his body and the look of complete concentration on that cute face of his doesn’t do something for me.* Izuku’s shirt had previously been a white T-shirt, and in getting the barrels full of water, he had basically gotten up into the lake water almost to his chin, causing the wet shirt to cling to him, showing off his defined musculature for Jirou’s appreciative gaze.

Stop that! You already have one crush on Momo. You don’t need to develop another one, especially one that’s purely physical, Jirou reminded herself, shaking her head before sending

out a blast of noise towards the group of squirrels. This time, only a few of them peeled off, the others remained where they were, then, when no attack was forthcoming, charged forward towards Mei through the branches. Another attack hit them a second later, this one far more condensed and powerful, as Jirou raised the power of her sonic staff, sending them flying.

Yet all too many of them landed lightly in the branches elsewhere rather than went splat. Those that survived charged again, letting loose evil-sounding chittering to one another as they came. “*CHITZA*, *CHITZAHHH*!”

Cursing, Kyoka lashed out at the larger group of survivors, but this left two of the meat-eating squirrels to charge forward toward Mei. “Mei, watch out!”

Warned by the shout, Mei twisted around and saw the squirrels just as Jirou’s attack hit the larger group. Instead of panicking, Mei grinned reaching up to her pack and pulling out what Izuku and Mei had thought was some kind of pistol, the grip of it sticking out the side of the pack. However, when she pulled it out, it was revealed to have a small reservoir at the top and what looked like some kind of attachment at the front with a tiny bit of candle.

“This is a little primitive, but if the creatures aren’t going to be afraid of our sound anymore, there’s one element that all animals are afraid of. And that’s fire!” Mei cackled. With a click, a small pilot light burst into being at the front of the strange rifle, and she twisted around, pointing it at the incoming squirrels.

“Did, did you make a flamethrower?!” Jirou gasped in astonishment.

“That is honestly quite terrifying,” Izuku mumbled as he used a foot to flip the last of the barrels up on top of the pyramid he was already holding in midair. “Do you think you’ll be able to keep the squirrels off...”

That was as far as he got before Mei’s invention burst into life. A stream of fire lanced out from her weapon, several yards long and around 3 inches wide, made of broiling fire that looked strangely blue in places on top of being red and orange. The fire collided with the two attacking squirrels as she moved the nozzle from side to side, turning those squirrels and three more that had snuck up, bending the two frontrunners into tiny torches for a few seconds as they fell, screaming, rolling and dying.

“I am so glad that this world doesn’t have an animal welfare group or anything similar,” Jirou murmured. “That looked altogether too cruel. Even for carnivore squirrels.”

However, Mei’s little toy didn’t just hit the squirrels, something Jirou and Izuku realized a second later. The tongue of flame that her flamethrower had released also touched several of the trees. Two of the trees seemingly resisted it, only being scorched, but several others were set on fire, flames starting to crawl up their sides and into their branches.

“Yes, yes, burn in the flames of science!” Mei shouted, uncaring of the carnage her weapon had created, staring at the dead animals in delight. She had pulled down her set of goggles that she routinely wore in her hair, and the light coming off of the fires that she had started gave her a decidedly mad scientist look, even more than usual.

“Nope,” Jirou stated firmly, lashing out to one side at another group of squirrels that had been coming toward Izuku. The full-powered sonic blast caught the center of the squirrel formation, sending them hurtling in every direction, including, unfortunately, forward. She watched as Izuku raised a foot, kicking the squirrel in midair so high that it disappeared into the sky above, then turned back in Mei’s direction. “Mei, we are leaving! Stop trying to set the forest on fire.”

“I make no promises,” Mei said, still chortling to herself even as she flicked the switch along the side of her gun, where, a part of Jirou thought, a safety switch should have been. Something happened, there was a loud *glorp* noise from her backpack, and the stream of fire coming from her weapon stopped. She turned towards the others, racing around the lake to join them, still giggling as she reached Izuku in Jirou. “Well, I think we can call that an experiment a success.”

Izuku stared over her shoulder towards the burning trees, where the fire was showing no sign of stopping anytime soon.

This was an autumnal forest. While the trees were all young and vibrant, the leaves were yellow and in a state of continual readiness to fall to join the thousands of their brethren coating the ground underneath. All of which was incredibly flammable. “Mei! You, seriously, girl, you just started a forest fucking fire! This is not a good thing!”

“Oh well, you can’t grill a few steaks without sacrificing a few trees,” Mei laughed. “My little baby performed so well!”

Groaning, Izuku ordered them to start moving down the trail the way they’d come. He then leaned forward slowly, allowing the topmost barrel to fall off of the pile he was carrying on his shoulders. When it fell down past his line of sight, Izuku lashed out with a kick that sent to the barrel flying toward the center of the fire, its side staved in by the impact. This sent water tumbling in every direction, dousing several of the trees, but not enough to stop the fire. “Dammit!”

“Nice trick and all, Zuk, but let’s just go,” Jirou shouted, blasting away another group of inquisitive squirrels. Luckily, the deer didn’t make an appearance, and after two more blasts, the squirrels seemed to have finally decided to give it up. That, and the rapidly growing smell of smoke, had obviously spooked them.

Luckily, that same smoke served as a signal to those on the Wayward Journey. By the time they reached the shore, they found Shoto waiting for them beside the repaired away boat. He nodded to Izuku, then gestured to the smoke rising over the forest in the distance. "Should I go and try to put that out, do you think?"

Izuku nodded firmly, and the two of them left the others there with the barrels of water racing back into the forest.

The barrels of water were so heavy that only two of them could be put on the away boat in time by Kiri and Momo. Jirou stood guard as Kiri, Momo and Mei hefted the barrels one after another into the rowboat and then rode it back out to the ship, where a net had been set up to allow for a barrel each to be holed up the side of the ship, although Kiri had to climb up the rope ladder first in order to operate it along with Melissa, since neither Tenya nor Tsu were in any condition to help.

By the time night had fallen, Shoto and Izuku had been able to stop the forest fire that Mei had caused, although they were both soot-stained and annoyed. The others had worked laboriously on getting the water up onto the deck and then down into the ship. All of them were tired, sore and irritated, even Mei, who had been forced to help move the water barrels without Izuku's superstrength around.

Despite her help having been important to the whole project, none of them raised an ounce of protest when Izuku marched up to Mei, a face of extreme censure on his face, took her bag, and hurled it out over the ocean. "No! My baby, why, what did it ever do to yo--!?"

She broke off as Izuku wagged a finger in her face, with Shoto nodding along beside him. "No more flamethrowers for you!"

OOOOOOO

Thankfully, the Wayward Journey only had to stay on that autumn island for less than a day before the Log Pose reset, and they could continue their journey. That first day out was quite nice, with no trouble from animals or the weather. However, the day after, two sudden squalls hit the ship, along with a sudden attack of tuna.

These were not flying fish type tuna, thankfully, but none of the crew bar Kiri had ever seen tuna in the wild, and to see how huge they were in their natural habitat was something astonishing. So was the aggressive nature with which they began to bang and attack the sides and keel of the boat. It made for a very nervous time, even though Kiri assured them that the outer hull was thick enough to not be bothered by the creatures.

They also made good eating, even if Tenya, Melissa and Mei were all nearly pulled off the ship when they actually caught a tuna on the hook. Only Izuku had the strength to pull the huge fish aboard.

Storms remained the main problem over the next few days, coming in and leaving with a suddenness that would've been impossible to emulate back on Earth. They hit the boat with astonishing ferocity but only remained around it for an hour or two before dissipating.

On the ninth day out from the autumn island where Mei had turned pyromancer, Melissa was up in the crow's nest at around midday. Staring out into the distance, she saw what looked like a cloud at first, but soon, she could tell what it really was, and with a smile, shouted, "Land ho! That's got to be Rorca, boys and girls."

It did not take long for the island in the distance to become visible to those who gathered on deck to see. The reason for this was that the island in question was **big** and soon stretched well to either side across the horizon, with the shape of mountains becoming clearly visible soon. As the ship neared it, more details could be discerned, the first of which was a series of mountains giving way to more normal-looking lowlands. And then, as they moved closer, signs of human habitation could also be seen, including a massive lighthouse that looked like, in Momo's opinion, "Built on something like the Alexandrian lighthouse type of scale."

Flying from that lighthouse were two flags, one draped along its side and one that flew from the very top of the lighthouse. The one sticking out from the side was the Marine flag, a strange birdlike image sitting on top of a double-ended spear with crescent-shaped blades above the word 'Marine'.

The one flying from the top, which was so large it could be seen even this far away, was the flag that the encyclopedia said was used by the World Government. This was a series of interconnected black balls on a white background with the words 'World' and 'Govt.' on either side.

"Well, if that isn't a sign of actual civilization, I don't know what is," Tenya said, breathing a sigh of relief. "Being among civilized people is going to be exceedingly nice after so long."

"I'd say something about you insulting the rest of our crew, but I know what you mean, kero," Tsu joked. Getting all that off her chest, learning and allowing the others to give her what comfort they could, she seemed to have gotten through it.

"We all do," Izuku said, grinning over the others, as Momo raised the group's second spyglass to her eyes, staring through it towards the still distant island. "This is where we can start on the road to join the Marines and become this world's version of heroes!"

“While I agree with that emotion, I think we should still observe the place for a little bit, just in--” Momo said before breaking off as Jirou’s jacks twitched, pointing forward. “Kyo-chan?”

“I think I hear cannon fire,” Jirou said, holding up a hand for quiet. She moved to the prow of the boat and remained there, her ear jacks pointing forward. To the watching Kiri, she looked almost like a greyhound on the hunt, a comparison that had him having some trouble keeping in a round of chuckles.

For several moments, bar the noise of the engine, the ship moved on in silence, with everyone else looking between Momo, who was still staring ahead of them towards the island, and Jirou. Melissa, though, was the first one to report from on high some trouble. “I’m starting to see smoke coming up over the island from the ship’s starboard.”

“That matches with the noise I’m hearing. Cannon fire, for sure. From this far out, I can’t tell anything else. Hell, I don’t think I’d have been able to do that much without all the training I’ve been doing hearing lower and lower noises,” Kyoka admitted.

Izuku frowned, staring in that direction, but the smoke still wasn’t visible to the naked eye. “Shoto, head back down to the engine and pour on the coal.” At the moment, the ship was moving at normal speed. With more coal added to the fuel, it would be going much faster soon. “Let’s go around the island in the other direction. That way, if there is trouble, we will be coming at it from an angle they might not expect.”

The island was so large that the noise in the distance faded out quite quickly as the ship turned in that direction, pouring on the speed Izuku had requested. Most of the island was lined with cliffs, with a few beaches, but the majority of it didn’t show any kind of human habitation. At one of those beaches, the group spotted what looked like several large rowboats, and Izuku frowned at them. “I wonder if that’s a sign of some kind of prepared assault?”

“We’re, we’re at around precisely the other side of the island from the lighthouse,” Momo pointed out. “It would make sense, but it would take someone who could plan well ahead and who knew about this island’s geographh--- that Marine officer, Gasparde. He has to be.”

Izuku nodded, watching as a few houses appeared here and there deeper inland. Momo took a look at a few of them, saying idly, “Those look around the same size as my home,” to the headshaking of the rest of the crew. At full flank speed, it took them around two hours to make a full turn of the island to the point where the smoke could be seen, and Jirou again started to hear noises of battle.

At the same time, the crew began to see what looked to be a city on the island, a sprawling network of buildings that spread inland and along the edge of the island high up on the bluff that was the island's edge at this point. Ten minutes later, the edge of the island abruptly shifted inward, marking the beginning of a cove, which was itself marked by a cannon tower, which was firing down at something in the cove itself.

As the teens watched, whatever was down below returned fire, hitting the tower in several places with cannonballs. It didn't do much damage, but it was clear that a pitched battle was taking place here.

"Slow us down, and then take us out into the ocean a bit. We still need to see who's fighting here," Izuku said, scowling, just as the first actual screams reached Jirou's ear jacks.

To reach this far, there had to be hundreds of voices screaming, and Jirou shivered even as she reported this to the others, who all grimaced, staring at one another and then out towards the tower, which was still firing down at whatever was going on below. In particular, Izuku gripped the side of the gunwales so hard that the wood began to creak and snap under his grip until Momo gently took his hand, squeezing it lightly.

Soon, the ship rounded enough of the cap to look into the cove, and with Melissa using Mei's spyglass up top, she could report on everything going on. Not that the cove was large enough that the others couldn't see many of the details either.

From the deck, Izuku saw what looked like a truly massive merchantman, easily two or even three times the size of their own ship, sitting in the center of the dockyard area. It looked to have taken a good deal of damage. Four other ships behind it were burning to the water line, while as they watched, another, a Marine frigate, exploded.

Through the haze, Melissa frowned, her eyes narrowing. "What the heck... that looked like some kind of lime green spear hundreds of yards long. Another Devil Fruit power?"

The massive ship flew a Marine flag with a red X through it and very obviously was the source of the attackers, along with two other ships. Those ships were far smaller, more streamlined, looking more like Viking war galleys than anything else, but they had run aground deeper into the harbor, disgorging their troops directly onto the docks.

Melissa could easily see fighting going on practically throughout the city, and Momo and Izuku exchanged grim nods at that. "More troops attacking from behind. Damn it."

At least two other Marine vessels were on fire, no longer taking part in the battle, but Melissa and Momo could still crew aboard, trying desperately to put out the flames. Fires raged practically everywhere in the city, a sign to Izuku, who had made as much study as he could of

gun and cannon warfare since arriving in this world, that someone had deliberately used a heated shot or similar.

However, there was another Marine vessel, larger by far than any of the others, about half the size of the large merchantman, more streamlined. It had paddlewheels along its side from what they could see, a large smokestack, and what looked like three or four decks of cannons forward from the paddlewheels. Even as Melissa watched, the two large paddle wheels at the sides began to move and steam began to emit from the back of it.

“And those aren’t Marines on its deck either,” She reported a moment later. With the fire, smoke and debris getting in the way, Melissa was the only one who could see that kind of detail from where the ship currently was. “I think what we’re seeing is just a, a big smash and grab. Whoever the pirates were, they wanted that one ship. They’ve been very careful about not firing anywhere near it. It’s not damaged at all. They’re going to take it unless we do something. I can’t see more than a few dozen Marines still fighting, and all the locals are either fleeing or hiding.”

Looking around at the others, Izuku frowned pensively. “All right. Rules of engagement. Momo, remember you’re only to use your bottomless pockets, Kiri. I think you can get away with using your Quirk. Shoto... Would you mind only using your ice side? For now, anyway, until we get in touch with the Marines.”

Shoto, who had left the engine room to Mei, simply shrugged. Frankly, he was still much better at using his ice side than his fireside, even if he had overcome the mental hangups to using it in the first place.

“You and I will be on crowd control,” Izuku went on. “Melissa, Kiri, you’ll need to attack that ship that is firing into the port. Feel free to break out the toys you, Yaomomo, and Mei created. You’ll be in danger not only from the defenders of the ship itself but the towers still firing at it. Is that okay?”

“Friendly fire might not be, but putting up with it is manly indeed to see if we can help the locals here! Let’s get it stuck in, bro!” Izuku, a thumbs up.

“Tsu, you’ll need to...” Izuku went on, only for Tsu to interrupt.

“If you think either me or Tenya are sitting this out, you better think again, Zuk, kero,” Tsu growled.

“Agreed. As hero students or as prospective Marines, there is no way we could turn aside from something like this,” Tenya added, his hand chopping.

Izuku might have argued, despite the fact he would never had allowed injuries to get in his own way, but Melissa's shout stopped that budding argument. "Izuku! I'm starting to see steam coming out of that steamship's funnels!"

"Momo, Kyoka, it'll be your job to stop that ship, I think," Izuku concluded hastily. "For now, Tsu, full steam ahead, get us ashore!"

End Chapter

I had a Kiri/Tsu scene, but I think it will serve better later on. The same goes for a Momo/Izuku true flirting moment. I know that some of my readers might want me to move the romance along, but none of these characters are the sort to leap into a relationship. Sorry Folks. Same for the lack of a large-scale fight. Like I said, I lost the fourteenth to the eighteenth to time spent letting my brother have some romance time with his wife, then a slim break from baby duty, before dealing with a water-type issue in my house.

I also will be working on getting out a Ranma chapter by the end of the month. Thanks for reading, and as always, leave a review if you liked it, guys and gals.