

One Piece: Halfway Broken

Chapter 114

Novus Peregrine

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Chapter 114: Hell Training

Nami, looking more than a bit battered, including her clothing being closer to a barely-modest suggestion of coverage than an actual outfit, flopped bonelessly into the sand by Luffy.

"I hate you."

Luffy snorted at the flat-toned statement with no real heat behind it. His girlfriend hadn't even managed to muster up a proper glare, and *did* look grateful when he produced a drink with a heart-shaped swirly straw and held it for her. She was exhausted enough that she didn't even try to *take* the drink, letting him hold it for her as she sipped gently. Only after a couple of minutes and half the drink did she look a little better, stirring herself to actually take the glass in hand herself to drink the rest.

"A new recipe? A tiny bit chalky but it does seem to work faster."

Luffy nodded, even as he moved to start working over Nami's muscles with hands coated in spiritual energy. He wouldn't be fully *healing* them, so much as forcing them to naturally heal faster, which would help with muscle gain...just as much as the recovery drink Sanji was working on and which Nami was currently sipping.

"Yep. He's not happy with the texture, obviously. But the trick he picked up from his last competition on Little East Blue, combined with some of what Chopper learned from the Fishman Island medicines, worked to speed up his Recovery Special. Honestly, I think it's the most promising of his current attempts. Rapid recovery for training is already a hell of a boon, but if he gets it to the point it can restore stamina without side effects between fights? That could be a big deal considering how small our crew is compared to groups like the Beast and Big Mom pirates."

Nami nodded, humming in thought as she sipped down the rest of the drink, occasionally moaning a bit as Luffy's work on her legs hit a sensitive spot. Normally, she'd be a puddle of horny from the massage, but even with the Recovery Special, she just didn't have enough energy for that. The crew had been on Rusukaina for nearly a month now, being run varying degrees of ragged by Rayleigh.

Those who already had the best understanding of Haki, namely Luffy, Yamato, and Kaya, had things the easiest in a sense. Not *easy*, they were being pushed hard to both increase the duration they could use it for and to fully learn infusion. Yet a good chunk of that process was, for people who weren't dense shonen protagonists like the originally Luffy would have been, as much an intellectual pursuit as a physical one. Haki was *will* made manifest, after all. Technically, one

could brute force it by slamming your face into the wall of your limits over and over and over...and over and over and over.

That didn't mean doing so was honestly the *best* way to learn.

Some of that sort of thing was required, and Luffy and Yamato in particular sparred multiple times a week with Rayleigh to push themselves past their limits. Yet they gained just as much or more by *meditation*, on contemplating and refining exactly how it was they did what they did. *Understanding* and *force of personality* were just as critical to *Will* as stubbornness was. Indeed, for Yamato in particular, throwing herself in the passion she had for art and using it as a form of self-reflection was actually paying the fastest dividends. It was something Luffy wouldn't have had a clue was important, but which a full-blown Master like Rayleigh did. Original Luffy would have been too thick skulled to get much out of alternate methods, which is presumably why Rayleigh hadn't even tried. Thankfully, even Yamato was a bit smarter, or at least less one-dimensional, than that version of Luffy would have been.

The fact that the three of them, and to a lesser extent Kuina as well, were spared the worst of the 'Physical Hell Training' was why Nami had tried to muster a glare at him. That training took the form of being thrown up against the beasts of the island, with the result of...well, Nami's current state being fairly normal. Though, frankly, as a Zoan she was luckier than some. Hina, Perona, Pagaya, Usopp, and Vivi were being run the most ragged of all. Chopper and Sanji were being spared going *quite* as hard due to their job speeding up recovery for the others. Though both were still putting in some serious work, and Chopper was only handling it as well as he was due to being a Zoan himself.

Robin, Zoro, Brook, and Nojiko were somewhere in between, each for their own reasons. Zoro simply learned best by the bash-head-against-wall method. Nojiko both had a better handle on Haki than most of the others *and* was getting different tips on the subject from a certain Dragon Lady. Robin was the weirdest case in that it quickly proved working Haki *through her extra limbs* produced faster results than anything else. Something which still gave her a brutal workout as a certain percentage of strain was transferred back to her real body, but which meant she could still do other things while working on Haki. Her ability to multitask was *seriously* broken in a lot of ways. Brook was a bizarre case even for Rayleigh, and it had been quickly realized that working on his Devil Fruit manifestations was so will-intensive that it was almost identical to Haki training anyway. Given that physical exercise did *nothing* for Brook, having him focus on his Devil Fruit instead was simple good sense. He was still learning Haki, but the work with his Devil Fruit was doing double duty by helping him stretch his *will*.

Nami herself was with the group being pushed hardest on a physical level, it being by far the best way to refine Armament, which is where she was weaker. She also just happened to be the one with a Devil Fruit that helped her tank the physical hell training the best. Which is why she'd managed to make it to Luffy while the rest of her group had collapsed farther inland and were being seen too by Chopper, Kaya, and Sanji.

"You have to admit it's working, Nami. I know your own Haki had stalled for a bit as you focused more on your Devil Fruit. But now..."

Nami groaned, but reluctantly nodded as the last of her drink vanished. The same insane stamina that her Mythical Zoan Fruit granted meant she was also making the most progress of the 'hard work equals GAINZ' group. To the point that, after a three-week crunch, her Observation Haki was now just behind Kuina's, a jump that put her in fifth for the overall crew. Meanwhile, Armament Haki was something that had previously come to her only in fits and starts, but which she could now call upon reliably and with rapidly advancing skill.

The entire crew was making fantastic gains, to be honest, if not quite so dramatic in every case. Rayleigh had promised them three months of his time, and they all intended to make as much of that time as possible. Even if it was certainly living up to his declaration that it would be 'Hell Training'...

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The world itself seemed to *shudder* as two fists met. The smaller, furred fist, arced with black lighting that, despite its color, seemed to glow in a way that shouldn't be possible. The larger fist, enhanced by Yamato's Devil Fruit and a version of Gear 4 Luffy had guided her towards, glowed a malevolent-seeming red-black in response. For a long heartbeat, the world and physics seemed to refuse to process the consequences of the impact...and then both of them were blown backward as the *landscape* was torn apart by the combined shockwave of their blows. Luffy's arm twinged in pain as he skidded to a stop, but he could see that Yamato was losing her 'Gear 4.' He'd come out the better for the exchange, this time, but only just barely.

Still, given that she'd originally been *stronger* than him, he'd take it.

Even as Yamato's Gear 4, a term she'd happily adopted when he'd explained the idea to her, started to fade completely, Luffy scrutinized it. His suggestions, which had combined his knowledge of science and his understanding that what Yamato had *wasn't* the Gomu Gomu no Mi, but something else entirely, had resulted in different outcome than canon. Her version of Gear 3, which she'd originally just called Giantize, hadn't involved the ridiculous idea of 'blowing air' into her bones. Instead, she'd been a bit smarter than original Luffy and realized that her 'stretching' was creating more mass than she actually had. If something like Gomu Gomu no Pistol was *just* stretching, it should have thinned out other parts of the body to reach as far as Original Luffy had often done with it.

Realizing that such was the case, Yamato had experimented and discovered she could 'stretch' herself to create new temporary mass. Something she'd used to 'Giantize' an arm or leg in a way similar to Gear 3. Given he had known, since looking up Yamato's Fruit, that it *didn't* just make her body rubber, Luffy had leaned into helping her make a somewhat *different* Gear 4. He *still* wasn't sure just what the fuck a 'Nika' was, or what her Fruit did *exactly*, but piece of its description in his System hinted that it let you 'fight as you wanted to.'

Taking that and interpreting it as some sort of image or imagination-based power, Luffy had explained the concept of *vulcanization of rubber* to Yamato. With Robin backing him up that it was a real thing, and with him even managing to demonstrate it a bit on some natural rubber, he'd convinced Yamato that she *should* be able to do the same thing. Which apparently had been enough. Though the *result* was...not *really* vulcanized rubber. Yes, it was harder and tougher, but

Yamato must have gotten stuck on the concept of ‘heat,’ as her Gear 4 form had jagged cracks in it that *radiated* a searing amount of heat. Enough to duplicate some of Sanji’s developing heat-based attacks, in fact.

No, Luffy did not understand how the fuck she was doing that or what the fuck her actual Devil Fruit power *was*. Not beyond that it might have something to do with imagination or belief, anyway.

Equally no, he wasn’t going to tell *her* that it shouldn’t work that way. Instead, he’d cheerfully congratulated her for creating a ‘Vulcanized Rubber’ form. Which she now referred to as Gear 4. In appearance, it bulked her up a bit, though not to the grotesque degree Original Luffy’s would have, and turned her skin black with glowing lines of heat traced through it. Fully body, instead of the weird half-and-half of Original Luffy’s Gear 3. Farther infusing that form with Conqueror’s Haki caused a dark heat-haze like effect instead of the black-lightning that formed for him when he did the same thing. Both the base Gear 4 *and* the infused versions boosted her strength, and they most certainly stacked.

Together? Well, the only reason Luffy had just managed to equal or better he was that he’d been using his Storm Tiger form with his own infusion, and he’d been working with Chopper on how to farther boost his Zoan hybrid form’s strength. No one could say that they weren’t making progress, that was for sure, and tightening up his understanding of his Zoan form was helping him with the Awakened aspect of his Fruit, too.

Though, looking at the devastation that last shockwave had caused to the island around them, they might need to call off any more such exchanges before they *broke the island*...

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Luffy couldn’t help but let out a low whistle as he watched Nojiko and Hina spar. *Technically*, they were working on their Observation Haki, it being the naturally weaker type for both women. He had to admit, though, that he was paying less attention to how well they were doing with their Haki than he was on their *other* improvements. Not content to *only* work on Haki, both had been working on making better use of their Devil Fruits during their training as well. It sure as hell showed...as Hina used the mecha-shaped cage around her body to hip-toss a three-meter-tall crystal wolf.

Yeah, that sentence had *not* been on Luffy’s expected bingo card for the month.

To be honest, while *both* of them were impressive as hell, he was even more impressed with Hina’s construct than he was with Nojiko’s developments. Nojiko, at least, had gotten some measure of guidance from Neethrax. The dragon woman had *really* been good for Nojiko’s development, pointing her in the direction of *animated* crystal constructs. In retrospect, the idea made a lot of sense. The drones and Nojiko’s flying platforms both firmly proved that she didn’t need to be *touching* Crystal in order to influence it.

She did, notably, having to have *touched it recently*, or else have created it to start with. So long as one of those two things was true, though, she could control it at a distance. Which, once she’d gotten the hang of it, had meant she could create and control objects like the wolf construct

she was currently using against Hina. For the time being, she was still very limited in how many such constructs she could control at once, but with some help from Robin she was rapidly getting a handle on how to expand her numbers as well.

Hina hadn't been nearly so lucky as to stumble into someone who'd seen another user of her Fruit before.

Instead, she proven just *why* she'd been considered a rising talent within the Marines by solving her own lack of higher-end power with her Devil Fruit. Being able to capture-on-touch was great...at the low to mid end. At the level their crew as starting to operate, there were far too many Haki users who could shatter the 'locks' that Hina made to capture people. Frustration from sparring with several people who *could* do that had inspired Hina to look for other options...and it had been Pagaya's Crystal Armor that had caught her attention.

One of the more interesting and useful previous abilities Hina had shown had been the ability to 'extend' a flexible 'cage' of restraints away from her herself. Bending that ability until it cried and called uncle, she'd figured out how to create a 'cage' from several different points of her body that came together into a hulking, skeletal...mecha. Honestly, that was the only thing Luffy could think to call it. She was using a mid-sized version for this spar, but the larger versions honestly looked quite a bit like a skeletal Gundam to Luffy, with Hina at its center as the 'pilot.' It was *strong*, too, her powers apparently being able to output far more force than she could, and she wasn't exactly physically weak. Not to mention...

Luffy shook his head as repeated blows with 'cages' that Hina had extended like knuckle dusters managed to shatter Nojiko's wolf.

That. She'd figure out how to make weapons for her 'Mecha Form,' so long as the weapons weren't *sharp*. Honestly, he was *extremely* impressed. He was also, however, currently taking the time to help the pair with Haki training for a reason...a reason which caused him to fire two 'low-velocity' railgun shots from his fingers. Doing it with his fingers didn't have the same power as using his revolver, but both girls still yelped as the ball bearings he'd shot towards them connected. One to Hina's left but cheek and the other to Nojiko's forehead.

They both sucked, relatively speaking, with Observation Haki for a reason. They were too straight-forward and narrowed down their focus once they started fighting someone. Ah well, he'd keep leaving welts to remind them they were supposed to be keeping their Observation up rather than just smashing each other. Sooner or later it would become reflexive. Though at the current rate, he suspected they'd have a *lot* more welts before then...

... ..

As Kaya chained together moves for an assault against Kuina, Luffy frowned and took mental notes. He'd had perhaps the *least* influence on Kaya's fighting style, at least from any of the East Blue crew. Even Sanji had benefited from a lot of Luffy's training, particularly in Haki and the Six Powers. Kaya was the odd woman out as she was just flat out *far* more gifted with the manipulation of spiritual energy than Luffy was, even *with* Luffy having help from his System and its perks. He'd been able to act as a solid sounding board for her, but not much else.

The fact she was, in fact, a prodigy partially explained the issues she was now facing.

Simply put, Kaya had developed *too many* abilities, too quickly. Which, coming from Luffy, was particularly rich as a criticism. The difference, however, was that Luffy had come into his array of abilities over a much longer period of time and systematically integrated them into his fighting style. He'd naturally integrated even the more active Perks like Power Strike, as well as his Devil Fruit abilities, into his style over a period of *years*. Kaya, on the other hand, had gained a diverse set of abilities over an incredibly short period, a bit less than a year and a half on from being a near-invalid, in fact. From her ability to make seal tags to the unique hand-to-hand style that let her disrupt the flow of spiritual energy in an opponent, she'd added *too many options, too fast*.

The result was a fighting style that didn't flow properly.

Sighing as he kicked himself for not seeing the issue sooner, he started mentally categorizing her various tricks and trying to figure out which ones she could most easily integrate into a proper style. The martial art she'd learned from her family scrolls was a solid place to start, and he was certain she could work palm strikes that planted seal tags into it. But how to add the Sick-Sick Fruit and some of her other tricks? That was a bit more of a puzzle.

Still, now that he had seen the issue, he was certain a bit of brainstorming with the more experienced combatants in his crew would help sort it out...

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"The deltoid looks good, proceed to the triceps."

Brook, who was seated in a meditative pose with Chopper on a stool behind him, made no indication he'd heard as he focused. Yet, it was obvious a moment later as the 'Spiritual Muscle,' glowing muscle-stand-ins that were made from the energy of his Devil Fruit, extended down from his shoulder to his upper arm. While Brook had certainly spent time working on Haki, just like everyone else, he'd spent almost as much time with Chopper's medical books. Specifically, he'd spent that time memorizing the muscle structure of the human body in *extreme* detail. With the goal of replicating the entire structure with his Devil Fruit provided spiritual energy.

So far, it was looking like he was well on his way to success, too.

In no small part that was due to both Kaya and Chopper helping, along with Luffy occasionally filling in for one or the other if they were too exhausted to help. With either Chopper or, to lesser extent Luffy leaning on his perfect memory, to double check each muscle was formed properly, Brook was avoiding mistakes he'd made previously. In the early days, he's tried to form the muscle willy-nilly and ended up with a mess that only *sort of* worked. Which wasn't nearly good enough. Add in Kaya, who was helping him with the spiritual energy side, aided by Luffy when needed, and Brook was making solid progress.

Better yet, based on the limited testing they'd done, the net result would leave Brook *several times* stronger than regular muscle would allow. Possibly strong enough to match even Luffy or Yamato for raw power, though with a somewhat high mental cost until he could make the entire process automatic. The fact that the entire process was also a *massive* undertaking of raw

will to focus his Devil Fruit meant the entire affair just-so-happened to be boosting Brook's Haki training as he worked on it.

A win-win of which Luffy fully approved. Still, he was going to have to break in soon to remind Chopper *he* needed to work on their efforts to get him able to use his Rumble Ball transformations without the drugs. It was something Luffy *knew* he could do. A bit of knowledge he still possessed about how the people he'd once seen on a screen would have developed on their own during this period. Though Luffy was hoping to help it along faster and possibly with more options by adding his own understanding of shapeshifting to Chopper's methods....

... ..

Watching Perona actually somewhat keep up with Usopp as he ran her through his personal routine, Luffy had to admit he had mixed feelings. Logically, he had to admit that Perona had probably been right to approach Kaya about getting the sort of modifications that Usopp had. It was objectively a good solution to her being the physically weakest member of the crew.

All of the crew had some of the barebones modifications Kaya had come up with. Improvements to their immune system and some tweaks for a faster and more complete healing factor had been something Luffy had personally helped talk even Kuina and Zoro into, and those two were the most 'purist' of the crew about accepting any sort of 'cheat.' Both had admitted that, on the Grand Line, a boosted immune system was just too important. As for the healing, that had been all too easy to sell as a training tool.

At that same time, most of the crew hadn't gone very far beyond those minor tweaks.

Well, that was mostly true, at least. There *had* been some quality of life improvements. Increased nutrient extraction from food had been fully Sanji approved. Not to mention that Kaya had admittedly earned near-goddess status with the female crew and sainthood with the male crew when she'd come up with a tweak to make periods less dramatic. With her tweaks they only happened once every three months and were much lighter when they did. A 'Sickness' that only cost a single day of fever and aches to make it take effect. The Kuja, when they'd found out about it, might well have kidnapped Kaya if not for the fact they'd found out by her *offering it to them* in the first place.

Still, even those were more a 'quality of life' tweaks than anything, and until Perona had approached Kaya, no one on the crew had gone much farther than that. Well, no one but Usopp and Kaya herself, of course. Luffy genuinely didn't know how much Kaya had modified herself, as she'd kept external signs to a minimum. *Usopp* was more blatantly modified with his flacon-based eyes and some changes to his musculature that were fairly obvious if you saw him with a shirt off.

Perona now shared in modifications of that level.

Specifically, Perona had requested a 'feline' theme, since she felt that would be 'cuter.' She now had cat-like eyes, ears, a tail, and some serious muscle mods to crunch a *lot* more power into a small package. If anything, her body mods were likely *greater* than Usopp's at this point. In part, Luffy suspected, because Kaya didn't care as much if every mod was 'perfect' for the pinkette. She was still cautious, being an *ethical* mad scientist, with a strong amount of empathy

and an even stronger dislike for causing pain or suffering. Yet, without the romantic attachment she had with Usopp, she was a little less neurotically obsessive about checking every detail a thousand times before implementing them on Perona.

As for Luffy's conflicted thoughts...he genuinely wasn't sure how he felt about someone getting power 'unearned.' Objectively, it had been a good choice on Perona's part. She'd been struggling, despite legitimate effort under Hina, to catch up to the rest of the crew *physically*. She was honestly doing pretty solid with her Devil Fruit, finding new ways to use it. She'd even managed a breakthrough with Observation Haki before Luffy okayed Kaya working on her, having found similarities between Observation and how she used her ghosts. For that matter, keeping with the objective viewpoint, Devil Fruits could be considered the same sort of unearned boost. Which made any negative thought on the subject a bit hypocritical.

Yet, despite that, he found himself wrestling with whether to approve or not. Even accounting for his Devil Fruit, Luffy had worked *hard* for what he had. As had most of the crew. Even Usopp had put in thousands of hours of practice with his primary skill, his modifications only enhancing what was already there.

Perona...well, Luffy decided he'd have to see how it changed her attitude long-term. If, as she was currently still showing, she kept putting in the effort? Then he supposed it wasn't really any of his business how she'd gotten to the baseline needed to keep up. Nodding to himself, he decided to stay hands off with the situation. So long as Perona didn't get arrogant or lazy, leaning too much on the new strength and speed as a crutch, he'd leave it entirely in Hina and Kaya's hands...

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"Alright. Hell training is officially over!"

Luffy was amused at the ragged cheers that came from his crew. Not that he didn't sympathize. Even he and Yamato were seriously feeling the final month of brutal effort that Rayleigh had put them through. Still, just eleven months into their two-year training gap, he was feeling good about the progress everyone had made. Even their weakest members, arguably Perona and Chopper, now had a measure of access to Haki. Perona's was primarily Observation and Chopper's primarily Armament, but both could muster at least a little of their weaker type as well.

"Now, we need to discuss what to do going forward. We have a single island we wish to visit for access to their library, which supposedly has quite a bit of medical knowledge among other things. Otherwise, I have a number of leads we can follow on challenging places we might learn from or historical sites that may be of value. We also have agreements with Amazon Lily and Fishman Island for cross training."

Luffy paused, nothing which of the crew had predictably perked up at each mention. Letting the suggestions linger for a moment, he grinned and added a bit more.

“Of course, that assumes we wish to go straight into action again. The other option is that I think we’ve earned a bit of a break. Specifically, Shakky managed to come through with the current location of Spa Island for us...”

Far more of the crew perked up at that possibility. By this point, all of them had been traveling the Grand Line for at well over a year, with a few much longer than that. As a result, the vast majority of them had heard at least rumors of the place...though not all of them. Something proven by Pagaya as he spoke up.

“Ah. Sorry? But just what is this Spa Island, beyond the obvious?”

Not missing a beat, having expected at least a *few* of the crew not to know, Luffy fielded the question.

“Spa Island isn’t actually an island, but a ship large enough to be mistaken as a small island in its own right. It’s owner, a man named Doran, tours around Paradise with the slow-moving ship, catering to both islands and shipping alike. A theme park, restaurants, shopping, and of course the expansive spas the island-ship is named for. The mobile resort has them all and, just as importantly, serves all equally. While it isn’t always safe for pirates to visit it, if it happens to be near a Marine Base or any island with a heavy WG presence, it otherwise serves everyone the same. Pirate, Merchant or Marine, so long as you have money you are welcome to use the amenities.”

Nami was quick to jump in the moment Luffy finished.

“It’s supposed to have *the best spas in the world!* Not to mention 5-star restaurants that even Sanji might learn something from!”

The chef perked up at that, his expression saying initial indifference had abruptly and predictably shifted to sharp interest. Despite that shift, it was actually Vivi that spoke up next.

“The food there is, in fact, quite excellent. As are the spas. Though, personally, I liked the amusement park the most myself, as Alabasta doesn’t have anything like it.”

The whole crew shifted to stare at her, even Luffy, and she grinned a bit sheepishly.

“I’m *from* the Grand Line, remember? Alabasta is both located on two major trade routes *and* has the highest single-island population in all of Paradise. Of course the ship, which is literally named Spa Island, has stopped by Alabasta a few times.”

Ah. Yes, in hindsight that made *entirely* too much sense. Enough so that Luffy mentally kicked himself for being surprised. Clearing his throat to regather attention, he brought them back to the point.

“With that ringing endorsement by our own Princess, a visit to Spa Island to recover for a week or two after our harsh training is also a possibility. One we may not get again as we might not be able to *find* it again. All in favor?”

Luffy wasn’t at all surprised when everyone but Zoro and Yamato raised their hands. When Kuina and Robin respectively leaned to whisper in an ear for each of them, both of them flushed and *their* hands shot up too. Chuckling, he brought the topic to a close.

“By unanimous vote, Spa Island it is! Navigator! According to Shaaky, Spa Island is currently near Jaya! Which apparently has a new forward fleet base for the Alabastian Alliance. So we’ll be sailing into friendly waters! Get us moving at best speed, if you please.”

Nami hopped up with manic energy, calling for Dis as she headed to the pilot house. Chuckling, knowing that Nami had been increasingly irked at the hard training without breaks longer than a day at a time, he headed after her at a much calmer pace. Hopefully, Spa Island would be a nice break before they started hitting some of the places his Map was showing, on their way out of the Grand Line entirely to hit Torino Kingdom and its extensive library...

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