

This has only been edited by myself and Hiryo, who specializes in Ranma/One Piece spelling issues and other mistakes rather than grammar/word choice. So there will no doubt be mistakes.

Chapter 16: Heaven Ain't a Place on Earth

Luffy cursed as the spray off the Knockup Stream turning Luffy back into a girl. But as he worked the rudder at Nami's direction, this irritation faded under the awed shock he was feeling towards what they were doing. Thanks to Nami and the modifications to the ship, they were somehow navigating along the side of the Knockup Stream, heading straight upwards at a 90° angle straight. Under Nami's orders they had shifted the sails so that the wind pushed on the ship in such a way as to push the Resolve against the water, which carried them straight upwards.

It wasn't easy, for either his crew or their ship, and more than once he'd heard something creak alarmingly. Despite Robin's last-minute defense the Resolve had been battered off their perfect position on the stream's top by the larger marine galleon's ramming them in the final minutes of the battle they'd just left far below, and now they were paying for it.

Even as she continued following Nami's orders, Luffy thought about that, and smiled. *That must've been the largest construct Robin's ever created. Our trainings already had an impact!* A glance to the left of his own ship though brought Luffy's attention back to what they were doing.

To one side of the smaller schooner, the marine galleon was having a lot of trouble. Every second or so the ship would yaw one way or the other, or be in danger of lifting off the stream as gravity attempted to reassert its control over the wind's attempt to push them against the water of the stream. Their navigator was not nearly as good as Nami even working off her shouted calculations. Yet even so, it was obvious to Luffy that it was only Nami's continued orders and corrections that were keeping both ships from falling down to a thunderous death far below. She waited until Nami paused in shouting orders to mention that, "slapping the other girl encouragingly on the shoulder. "You're doing great, keep at it!"

Nami nodded, her head twisted towards the wind before she barked out orders towards Sanji and Chopper. Zoro was elsewhere on the ship, helping Makino

and Robin down. Thanks to suddenly going ninety degrees to the direction, it had been laying in before many of the cannons had been smashed loose of their lines, and needed someone down below who could tie them down. Luffy also vaguely remembered Robin shouting something about them taking on water, a few minutes ago, but she trusted her first mate and the rest of her crew to see to that.

“What about them?” Nami asked during the next lull, gesturing over towards the marine ship.

Luffy glanced over, and asked, “You think they’re going to make it?”

“I don't know. Their ships are a lot tougher than ours I think, more metal in its hull. But they’re out of position and if not for those wings that Captain Hina created, they'd already have fallen.”

“Keep at it, and keep an eye on them I suppose,” Luffy said. “I might not like Marines, but they don't deserve to die like this for just following orders.”

“One way or another it’ll be over soon!” Nami replied, before going back to shouting orders as the air flow changed slightly, necessitating the sails to be changed to match.

Ahead of them Luffy saw what Nami had meant, for there loomed the massive cloud that was their destination, covering the sky from one end to another, the Knockup Stream entering it to the creation of thousands of squares of steam. “Well... Shit,” Luffy muttered.

OOOOOOO

Below Blackbeard sat on one of the pieces of his shattered ship to one side of the Knockup Stream, while around him his crew clung to their own bits of jetsam. Their ship had been half on and half off the Knockup Stream, and the force of the impact had just about shattered half their ship. “That was interesting,” he said at last,

staring up at the massive spray of water that was carrying his chosen prey and the Marine warship up like so many leaves in a gale.

“How can you say that captain?! Our ship’s been smashed, and our prey’s gotten away,” Burgess shouted from where he clung like a limpet to a large piece of outer hull.

“ZAHAAHAAH, mah, calm down Burgess,” captain said with a laugh. “If it was our fates to catch them here we would have, and it is our fates to meet them again we will. There is no point in getting angry about it.”

“Indeed,” Augur cut in. He was sitting sedately on the remains of the crow’s nest and was actually dry unlike all the others as he stared upwards through his monocle. “This world moves to the dictates of the strong. Luck itself can be thought of as a strength but it can only take them so far after.”

“ZAHAAHAAH, well said. Now,” Blackbeard went on, pointing to the nearest pirate ship that was still afloat. This luckily for the Saruyama Alliance this wasn't one of their ships. Rather, it was one of the ones that was still barely afloat from the pounding it had taken from the marines on their pell-mell charge towards the Resolve. “Let’s go commandeer that ship and get back to land. I want me some grog!”

OOOOOOO

About 15 minutes after the Knockup Stream had begun, Luffy stared ahead of them at the incoming cloud of seastone infused clouds, which was looking a lot denser from this close than a cloud really should be. “Brace for impact!” she roared, looking over at Nami whose eyes had just widened.

In a split second, she grabbed Nami and pushed Nami down between Luffy’s legs and the wheel, holding her there with her legs while still steering the wheel. Up in the rigging, Chopper and Sanji both tied themselves to the masts, watching in shock as the oncoming wall of white cloud came towards them, the Knockup Stream smashing into and through it ahead of them carrying the ships in with it. They

thankfully had also all breathed in, so when they hit the water on the other side of the clouds they were able to get through it.

A second later the ship knifed into and through into the other side. As Luffy had known it would thanks to Cricket, the interior of the cloud was quite dense on the underside thanks to the gaseous version of seastone that went into their creation. Above that was an area that was almost like the ocean, only not quite because the Knockup Stream was still powerful enough to keep the ship going through it. Eventually it pushed the two ships up and out where they landed on the surface of this new, strange ocean.

The Resolve was pushed out directly on its aft end and then as the power of the Knockup Stream dissipated, slowly came down onto its keel with a mighty splash. The impact jarred even Luffy's teeth for a moment, but then it was over, and Luffy pushed herself away from the wheel and Nami to stare around in all.

The sun was brighter here, but Luffy could already tell it was slightly cooler here, and the air was far thinner, much thinner than Luffy had ever felt in this world before this, both of which made sense given how high they were. And all around them was an ocean of white. The top of the cloud cover looked almost like an ocean made of fluffy cloud, which their ship gently settled down into as Luffy looked around. It really did look like a slice of the Catholic version of Heaven and the redhead shook her head. "God I love the Grand Line!"

Then she shook her head, pulling her hat away from her neck where it had fallen as she felt something squirming underneath it against her back. She pulled out some kind of fish, and stared at it. "A flatfish. Weird looking sucker aren't you?"

"It's possibly evolved to live in this ocean like any fish down on the normal sea would have, having a greater size and being so flat would probably allow you to deal with the fact the ocean here isn't as dense as the one we are used to," Robin's voice said from one side. As Luffy turned towards her, Robin took the fish from the shorter girl, holding it her in her hands as she examined it with amused delight clear on her face. That was possibly the most honest open expression of simple delight Luffy had ever seen on her crewmate's face, and Luffy could feel a smile widening over her own face.

Behind Robin came Makino and Zoro. The swordsman looked a little weary, but he held up a thumb towards Luffy. “The ship still in one piece generally speaking captain, we took a pounding, and a lot of our cannons were damaged and tossed out of their runs, and we took on a lot of water, especially forward, but we’re still seaworthy. That martial arts constructions trick you taught me worked really damn well.”

Luffy nodded at that, then they all looked to one side as the marine galleon burst out of the water nearby. It too came out like a whale bursting out of the water, but unlike the Resolve, it slowly started to capsize as it came down. When it slammed down side on, its masts snapped with a horrible cracking noise, and the wings that had helped propel it along the Knockup Stream disappeared instantly as a cry of pain was heard, audible over the rest of the shouts, cracks and various other noises of the disaster.

“Shit!” Luffy grumbled before shaking her head. The one thing Luffy still had from his time as Ranma, was an urge to protect people. If they had still been fighting him, he would've let the ship capsize. But here, now, they were just sailors, sailors who were going to drown. “Sanji, Zoro with me, Makino, Chopper, get ready for the wounded, Robin, Nami, check the ship for more damage and get some planks up to block the entrances down into the ship.”

With that, Luffy leaped up into the air, and used Geppo to head over to the ship. It was a lot tougher than it should've been, and he had to compensate a few times, the air being so much thinner and even Luffy was feeling a bit out of breath after only a few hops. Behind her, Luff heard Sanji curse, the chef nearly falling into the water. A second later Zoro did fall in, before kicking out of it rapidly, moving towards the Marine ship with his captain.

Luffy gripped the side of the ship, her muscles bulging as she slowly twisted the entire ship around, trying to set it up right again, roaring out to the others to cut the sales off, so they didn't drag. Soon the redhead had the ship upright, to the shock and awe of many of the Marines who clung to it.

But that didn't stop many of them from pulling out guns, pistols for the most part, and aiming at Luffy and the others as they landed. Luffy just ignored them though, shouting orders still. “Sanji, you're the best swimmer, get in the water!”

“Right!” Sanji said, canceling his technique and plummeting down into the water, and soon tossing Marines who had been close to drowning a moment ago up onto the side of the ship.

“Where’s Hina?” Luffy asked looking at the Marines. She ducked under a bullet from one of them, catching it as it flew through her former position and then dropping it to one side glaring at the marines. “You people are no goddamn position to fight. If I wanted ya all dead, I would’ve just let your ship the way it was and left ya all here!”

“Damn you pirate!” shouted one of them. He was pink haired man with large knuckledusters bolted to his knuckles. He looked vaguely familiar to Luffy, though she couldn't for the life of her think of where she’d seen him before. *Meh, must not be that important then.* “We'll never surrender to you or your captain Luffy!”

The man, a lieutenant by his ranks tabs, stood in front of the unconscious body of Hina, who lay like she was dead against one of the masts. She had been drenched by the water of this odd ocean as she was pushing her power to the greatest level she could, which had cancelled the technique and her body, in particular her arms, had taken a tremendous amount of strain. She also had a head wound, blood pooling from a nasty cut underneath her hair to cover half of her face in a wet watery liquid.

The lieutenant’s words seem to bolster the Marines, even those who had looked grateful for the assistance now grabbing up cutlasses and pistols. “That’s right Lieutenant Fullbody, we won’t give in to any pirates!”

It looked as if they were going to charge Luffy until a shout came from below. “We’re taking on water!”

Luffy looked at them all pointedly, crossing her arms. “Either accept our help, or drown here!”

Still glaring at him, Fullbody turned slightly away to shout out “How bad is it!”

“We’re losing ground quickly sir!” shouted a panicked voice. “We, we can’t stop it!”

Fullbody's fists clenched and unclenched for a time, then he's shook his head with a side. "Dammit. We surrender. With that, he turned and pointed at several of his marines. "Get over the side and see if you can put some canvas over the hull, find where the water's coming in! The rest of you, split into two groups, one head down to help bail us out, the other start moving the supplies up here."

"Food first," Luffy said moving forward to help with a few of the wounded. 'And you better cut out your doctors from the rest of your crew to care for the wounded. Let's start transfer wounded over to the Resolve."

"See to captain Hina first," Fullbody ordered.

In the water, Sanji looked at the other Marines who had doped down to try and do what they could to plug the hole in the hull. "Fuck," one of them muttered, shaking his head. "The damn keel's been broken!"

When they had dived down into the ocean, the marines had found that the keel hadn't been broken so much as shattered in numerous places. The keel itself was broken, and numerous other plates had been utterly shattered. The water flowing in was slowly tearing off a portion of the forward structure.

"Life is shitty sometimes," Sanji said philosophically.

"I seriously need a fucking smoke after this," said another marine treading water next to them.

"That we can agree on," Sanji said, right before there was a scream from nearby, and the waters around them began to thrash as something huge surged up towards them.

At the same time, Luffy, who had been transporting wounded back to the Resolve, was pulled aside by Robin between trips. "Are you sure about this? You do know that Marines and Pirates are natural enemies? Their relief at our saving their lives won't last long. Further, they will have at least a few who realize who I am, painting and even larger target on your back, while others will think they can take the ship away from us. Just locking and barring the doors won't be enough."

"No I'm not certain," Luffy said with a shrug. "But I can't exactly let them drown when I can save them. That would be downright evil. IN a fight I could kill them, even if I'd be reluctant to do it," he went on reluctantly. "But now that the battles over and we've won? No."

Robin scowled shaking her head. "You're too kind for your own good." *Still, it was that kindness that led Luffy to take on Crocodile, and to let me join Luffy's crew I suppose.* "So long as none of them try anything, I suppose I'll go along with things."

"The marines won't try anything. Just look at them Robin," Luffy said gesturing towards the wounded and the others who were coming aboard slowly from a cutter that the Marines had been able to save before the pirates arrived. Several others were dumped aboard by Zoro, carrying them over like so many sacks of wheat.

To a man the group of marines were bedraggled, bruised, and wounded, tired and shell-shocked. "They're beaten. Helped turn a few of the wounded onto their sides so Chopper could examine them. There was only one other doctor among the marines, an older man named Kyre, who seemed in awe of Chopper's medical skills. The two of them had already seen to the most seriously wounded, as well as Hina, at a speed most medical teams would have had trouble matching.

The work on the wounded was nearly done when one marine, who had scrambled up the Resolve's mainmast, shouted down from the crow's nest. "There's some other ship out there! I, it looks like a large Galleon, I..." he broke off in a gasp, as the ship exploded. The sound didn't carry far enough, but he saw the flash, and then saw the ship coming apart. "What the flying fuck?"

Luffy looked up at him quizzically, having been helping set the arm of a wounded man next to Chopper, who didn't look up from where he was working on another wounded man's leg. "Speak clearly man!" he shouted up at the look out. "What's going on?"

At the brusque order from the pirate, the man stiffened but replied professionally. "I spotted a large galleon out there, but before I could spot too many details, it exploded. It seems to have been under attack by something small. Someth...erm, someone, who um, who is zooming along the water, and um, is wearing some kind of bull mask sir," the Marine finished, his tone hesitant, though whether

that was from what he was saying or addressing a pirate as sir (or indeed a woman as sir) Ranma couldn't tell and didn't care about.

"Where away?" Luffy asked, taking that in stride. It wouldn't be the most unusual thing Luffy had seen in this world after all.

Once Luffy learned the direction she hopped into the air, then made her way forward towards the contact, hovering in the air her arms crossed as she glared in that direction. Sure enough, Luffy saw what looked like some kind of primitive warrior with a giant bazooka of some kind on one arm, a shield on the other, and a large mask that made him look like some kind of bull. The most interesting thing though was that he was using a pair of skates that allowed him to zoom over the ocean's waves at a speed well above that of a normal ship. Indeed, he was moving so fast, Luffy would more liken it to the speed of running horse than any ship on water in this world. *Damn me if that don't look like some kind of Jet Ski Boots! Awesome. I might have to steal those if this guy proves to be an enemy.*

Zoro too moved over, once more wearing all three of his swords. As the bull got closer, Luffy shouted "Oy, what's your business with us? State your intentions!"

In reply the man in the bull mask shouted, "I will reject you!" A second later, he raised his bazooka to point towards the Resolve. A large beam of something that looked like heated and compressed gas of some kind, looking almost like a flamethrower but not quite, flashed towards the ship.

At that, Luffy swiftly raised his hands and sent out two Rankyaku attacks, impacting the incoming attack from the bazooka. This barely worked to deflect the attack down into the water that steamed and hissed, covering Bull-mask's continued advance for a brief moment.

"Spread out in a staggered defense, don't let that attack hit the ship!" Luffy ordered, and Zoro pushed himself back towards the ship, while Sanji leaped out to join the defense and the marines started to panic along with Nami, Chopper and even Makino. Fire like that against a wooden hulled ship would be a true nightmare, especially if it hit their stored gunpowder.

Of course, this didn't do anything but tire them out all the faster, given the lack of air. Not a single one of the marines looked fit to fight, and Nami and Chopper

weren't much better despite their lack of strenuous activity up to this point. Makino was at least doing something, having pulled out a few pistols and stationed herself on the starboard side of the ship facing the incoming attacker.

Robin however simply cocked her head to one side, thinking. "Mah, I wonder if that attack will flash fry our bodies quickly enough so that we don't have time to feel pain before we die, or if it will simply destroy the ship and send us all to a watery grave?"

"So scary!" Chopper shrieked, while at the same time Nami and Makino roared, "Don't say such things with such a calm tone Robin!"

Luffy charged forward into the water vapor trying to guess where the Bull-masked man was, and found herself bouncing right over the water directly in front of the man. Both of their vision was badly obscured, but the man's instincts served him well, and the instant he saw a shape in front of them he lashed out with another blast from the bazooka, which would have caught Luffy in the legs.

In return Luffy roared and lashed out with both hands so fast she created shock waves in the air, much like a Rankyaku attack only far less contained and shaped. The fists of air smashed the attack further down, creating an explosion of hot water in every direction.

This triggered Luffy's change while the man cursed and backed away, portions of his skin scalded by the hot water. Luffy followed, and the two burst out of the steam racing forward of and around the Resolve. Luffy caught up to him, but the man turned and not even noticing Luffy's change lashed out with a palm strike, his palm having some odd wrapping around it. Luffy ducked backwards, smacking the hand to one side as he brought his leg up in a kick that caught the edge of the bull mask, shattering it and throwing the man away.

Bull Mask bounced a few times off the surface of the water before righting himself. He tried to turn towards the ship rather than Luffy, only to face Zoro, who had been shifting his position around the ship to match the fight.

Now he attacked, getting in close, his sort out in flashing as he hopped past the man. Bull Mask's shield was sliced in two but the man had been able to dodge the blow from Zoro's sword, and the swordsman took a kick into the side of the head

as he passed, which upended him into the water. Zoro then had to deal with a few sharks that thought he looked tasty and hadn't fled the area yet from the earlier attacks Luffy had sent into the ocean. With Luffy racing up behind him Bull Mask roared on, now firing at the Resolve with his bazooka.

Sanji got in the way shouting, "You dare point your weapon at ladies! Tekkai, Leg!" Twirling, he brought a leg around into the beam of plasma, shouting "Tekkai!" as he did. Moving like that while using Tekkai was difficult, but Sanji had perfected the ability to harden a single limb, a preparatory move to using Busoshoku, Armament Haki. It wasn't a patch on truly using Haki, but it was still enough to smash the attack aside from the Resolve.

And then Luffy was back in the fight, crashing down on top of the man with a kick the man didn't even see coming. It slammed into the man's shoulder, hurling him sideways with a cry of agony to once more bounce off the top of the waters before righting himself. This finally seemed to break the man from his single-minded attack, and he growled angrily raising his bazooka again and tossing away his ruined shield, fishing out a long dagger to use in his other hand. But then he spotted something up in the sky and scowled, twisting away and racing off over the ocean faster than any of the others could follow. "This is not your land, Blue Sea Landers! You would do well to remember that!"

"Come back and say that to my face coward!" Luffy roared, before turning his own gaze skywards to the thing the man had spotted a second ago.

Flying down towards their ship, like a bolt from a crossbow was a large bird flew carrying someone completely clad in plate mail armor wielding a lance. As the attacker moved off the bird slowed its descent, until it hovered in the air above Luffy for a moment. This allowed Luffy to see the man in armor was an old man, thin, almost gaunt, but spry with a long white beard down to his stomach. He nodded politely to Luffy, then moved on towards the ship, where the bird alighted on the prow.

There he waited for Luffy, Zoro and Sanji to join him, smiling and bowing to the ladies there as he looked around the ship with keen eyes. "That was most impressive Blue Lander," he said to Luffy. "The number of your people that can fight

so well upon their arrival here on our White Sea is very small. The atmosphere seems to get to most of you.”

“It did to us too, at least at first, but my crew at least have already gotten over it or will soon,” Luffy said with a snort.

“Really?” the older man asked sweatdropping slightly. He would normally have questioned a statement like that, but since the man in front of him had chased off the man in the bull mask, who the old man knew of as a very tough opponent he let it slide. “Ahahah, I see. Well, at any rate introductions are in order, I am the Knight of the Sky.”

“Monkey D. Luffy, captain of the pirate ship Resolve, and this is my crew,” Ranma said, gesturing to his crew, all of whom had crowded forward. Chopper seemed in awe of the knight, staring at his armored form with sparkling eyes. Robin was simply looking at him speculatively while Nami and Makino were more voluble, thanking the man for his help in defusing the recent fight. Zoro and Sanji just nodded at the old man when introduced.

At the same time the marines down on the main deck finally seemed to realize that yes, their eyes hadn’t been playing tricks on them, they had indeed seen Ranma change forms a moment ago. Many of them began to gag, while Fullbody just smacked his head several times with his metal clad knuckles.

Turning to them Ranma scowled, waving the old man to silence. “Alright you lot! Let’s get this out of the way right now! Yes, I’m the same redhead as before. I was exposed to a freaky Devil Fruit when I was younger, and I change gender when wet, cold changes me into a girl, hot into a boy. It’s a secret, and I will make keeping it a secret part of the agreement I’ll make with your captain when she recovers for your safe passage to the nearest island.”

“What!? That’s just like a damn pirate, trying to get something out of us in a situation like this!” shouted Fullbody, getting over his shock and revulsion at Ranma’s curse to glare at him.

“OY!” Zoro growled, pawing at Wado and his other blades, feeling the bloodlust of Kitetsu but ignoring it. “You lot were the ones chasing us down below,

you started the fight and we would've been well within our rights to let you all drown! My captain's kindness saved your lives, remember that!"

"True. We could have let all you stinking men drown after saving the lovely Captain Hina," Sanji said coolly, blowing out a smoke ring. "Or do you really think you lot could have survived on a pair of dinghies in this sea without knowing anything about where you are, where to go or what you might be facing?"

As the marines grumbled amongst themselves, the Knight of the sky chuckled. "I see. This is the remainder of two competing ships crews? And you lost one of your ships? Still, that is to be expected from going up the Knockup Stream."

"Wait?" Nami said, almost glaring at him. "The way you're talking, that makes me think there's some other way some normal way of getting up here. Is that true?"

"Of course there is," the older man said with another chuckle.

"You see Luffy!" Nami shouted reaching over and tugging at Luffy's pigtail, causing Robin to frown slightly as Nami tugged at Luffy's hair. "There was no reason to go up the Knockup Stream!"

Luffy took it stoically, looking back at the old man who continued laughing, even as he interjected. "Ah my dear, wait, wait. Tell me, how many people did you lose?"

"I didn't lose anyone," Luffy said with a smirk, pulling away from Nami before sighing and gesturing over to the Marines. "They lost some people though. How many did you all lose?" he asked Fullbody.

"We lost two dead in the fight below," Fullbody said with a growl. "Lots of wounded, I think we lost six overboard in the Knockup Stream. We lost a few more when the ship capsized though, crushed inside by falling debris and cannons being smashed out of their lines."

And if not for Chopper and his medical knowledge, they would have lost far more than that in the end, something both Fullbody and Luffy knew. Chopper had performed miracles in the last few minutes, and was even now heading back down to

resume his work among the wounded, leaving the discussion with the old man to the others, but near enough to listen in.

The man nodded gravely bowing and clapping his hands as he offered his condolences while Luffy and the pirates simply nodded. “Still, that is far less than you would have lost if you went any other way. Most of the time when people from the Blue Sea come up to the White Sea, they will lose at least half of their crew in the attempt.”

The Marines grumbled at that, since all told they'd lost about a third of their crew thanks to the fight and the Knockup Stream. But the old man went on looking at them thoughtfully looking directly at the marines and in particular the still unconscious Hina and Fullbody. “You all wear a uniform however, might I ask what that signifies?”

“We are Marines!” said Fullbody, proudly, standing up straight and crossing his arms, actually flexing his muscles, as if anyone there would have been impressed by such. “We serve the World Government and justice!”

“I see,” the old man went on, looking at Fullbody thoughtfully. “However, you should know that you have no jurisdiction up here. No nation on the White Sea has ever joined this World Government of yours. The only law in this territory is God's words. You would do well to remember that.”

“God?” Luffy asked frowning, while Fullbody and the other marines scowled or grumbled. “What do you mean by God?”

The man turned away, saying nothing more as he leaped back up onto his bird. “I had thought to offer my aid, but it seems as if your crews is strong enough to get by for at least a little while without it. Still, I will leave this as a service,” he said, tossing a whistle to Nami who caught it quickly.

It wasn't made of steel, but some kind of stone to her surprise. “Blow on that, and I will hear it, or birds will pass on word to my steed, and I will come to aid you at need.”

“Ara, that was almost poetic,” Robin murmured.

“He’s a poet, and didn’t know it,” Luffy whispered back, with a smirk on his face. Robin let loose a little giggle at that before their attention was brought back to the Knight of the Sky.

“By the way, has anyone ever heard of the legend of Pegasus?” the man asked with a grin.

“The horse that can fly?” Robin asked. “Of course.” Nami too answered in the affirmative, as did Makino, both looking on in interest.

“Indeed! My bird Pierre ate the Pegasus fruit, and can thus change his form! Behold!” The pink polka-dotted bird changed under his rider’s verbal command, but the new form...wasn’t what the girls had hoped for. Yes, it was a horse, but it looked more like a donkey, with wide, rather nasty looking nostrils, big teeth, and it retained the rather silly looking pink with black polka dots look the bird had.

The others sweatdropped at the sight, and Nami groaned. “There goes one girlhood dream.”

For his part despite his earlier moment of levity, Luffy was rather irritated as the old man ascended into the sky. “He could have given us more information you know! I’m almost tempted to blow that whistle now and demand some more answers.”

“OH hell no!” Nami shouted, pointing at him angrily.

“That would be a very bad use of a one-time item. In fact, I put forth the motion that Luffy, Zoro and Sanji are not to be allowed to even touch it. It should stay with me, Nami or Chopper, the three weakest on this crew.” Makino said. She would have honestly put her strength above Robin in a one on one contest, but was dealing with some issues mentally about how high they currently were. That, and Robin had shown marked improvement in the last few days, and moreover, wasn’t the type to call for help in the first place.

“Oy! What about us!” Fullbody said.

“Are you saying you’re weaker than little old me?” Nami asked, posing sexily one finger on her pouting lips.

“Indeed, surely you big, strong marine men are stronger than us?” Makino asked, cocking her head to one side, letting her green hair fall down to cover that side of her face, an image of more adult beauty, which also came across as more innocent than Nami’s display.

That shut up the marines to a man, causing many of them to blush and look away, mumbling as they turned away, starting to see to their clothing, gear or the wounded. Sanji however roared out, leaping among the unwounded marines and kicking out in a rage. “You bastards don’t you dare sully Nami-swan or Makino-chwan with those dirty eyes of yours!”

The marines instantly started to fight back with Fullbody roaring “Oh that’s rich coming from you Flirt Cook! You might not remember me but I sure as hell remember you messing up my date at the Baratie!”

With that objection dealt with, Luffy and Robin turned back to look at the whistle in Nami’s hand. A few of the wounded marines stared between them and the ongoing beatdown Sanji was dishing out, sweatdrops dripping down their heads at how blasé they seemed to be at the ongoing violence.

Indeed, Luffy and the others had something else entirely on their minds. “Personally I do not like the way he spoke then clamped up on this God issue,” Robin spoke up first, a frown on her face. “Do you think he was speaking about a person rather than religiously?”

“What’s that mean?” Chopper asked innocently from where he had begun to work on extracting a piece of shrapnel.

Robin smiled. “Essentially, I was simply wondering if God was simply a title given to their ruler or if the locals were truly following a set of laws laid out by what they think of God. There have been numerous countries in history that have given their leaders both religious and secular titles.”

“The whole ‘chosen by god’ thing kind of makes more sense if you can also claim to be the head of the religion of your realm I guess,” Luffy said with a scoff.

“Well whatever,” Sanji said, turning from the battered forms of Fullbody and several other marines, turning back to what he had been doing near the side of the ship when the bull-masked man had shown up. “Help me out here Luffy.”

Luffy moved over, and between of the two of them, they pulled the remains of the shark up onto the deck next to the crowd of wounded Marines. None of them had been allowed inside the ship per Luffy’s orders, with Makino standing guard over the entrance way into the kitchen until the Bull mask had appeared, and even now she was keeping a close eye on all of them. They weren’t going to let the marines know how much gold and other stuff they were carrying right now. They might be helping the Marines, and would even feed them for a time, but they weren’t friends or even allies.

While Sanji began to cut the shark into manageable chunks along with a few of the marines Robin took it upon herself to make certain the none of the marines ventured farther from the galley, and Nami figured out which direction to go. She soon had several of the fitter marines up moving under her direction on the sails, while others joined Luffy to help with the repairs, though none of them were really all that useful given how they had to stop every few minutes to catch their breath.

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“Yo, you’re returning early from patrol aren’t you Wiper?” a large, overweight man asked of the bull-masked man who had attacked the Resolve. He paused as he took in his friend’s appearance and shook his head. “What the heck happened to you?”

“Nothing, nothing that will stop me from taking part in tomorrow’s attack anyway.” The man called Wiper growled, pulling his ruined mask away from his face and tossing it to the side as he entered their village, which itself was hidden under several layers of cloud stuff.

He paused a moment to pull out a cigar and light it, wincing at the movement of his shoulder as he did. That one blow that had landed cleanly had nearly shattered

his clavicle and shoulder bones. *If not for my toughening myself up as much as possible to use my secret weapon against God that could well have ended my fighting day's right there.* “Just ran into some strong Blue Sea Dwellers. We'll see if they are smart enough to stay out of our business, but if not, what's one more group of enemies to us?”

OOOOOOO

The sound of hammering slowly woke Hina up from her pain-induced sleep. She looked around groggily, half of her eye being under some kind of bandage, and a small youngish voice she'd heard once before said, “Ah, good you're awake. Bu, ah, but you shouldn't try to move!”

One of her crewmen said “Captain! We didn't expect you to wake up for at least another two hours even after Chopper-san told us you would wake up some time! But I suppose that's Captain Hina for you. Still, don't try to move, you're arms are still...”

Despite their words, Hina first tried to lift her arms, then rolled to the side and heaved herself to her feet, body checking the man she now knew as one of her gunner's mates away. This was hard, since every bone in her arm almost felt as if they had been dislocated, then put back together badly and her arms sent flashes of agony through her at every twitch, but she ignored that too. She was a captain of marines. She would not lie on her back while others looked on.

Standing on her own, she stared first at Fullbody then Luffy who had moved towards her through the crowd of injured and exhausted marines as soon as they notice she was awake. Fullbody looked as if he was about to cry in happiness that his captain was all right, but Luffy was simply looking at her, an odd, almost compassionate look on his face as he looked back at her and shrugged. “Luck of the draw,” he said simply.

Hina frowned at that, then shook her head staring around them past the ship now out on to this highly unusual ocean. “Hina has heard rumors of an ocean like

this, but to see it in reality, that is something else entirely. Hina shocked.” Shaking that observation off, she looked back at Luffy, tensing her body even through the agony it caused. “I take it we are your prisoners then?”

“Nothing so formal as all that, I mean, we don't have enough cells to put you all in. But your ship...” Luffy gestured with one hand towards Hina, who reluctantly followed him to the edge of his own ship, where they saw...nothing. Not a single thing of her ship remained there, not even debris.

“We couldn't save it!” Fullbody said, nearly crying at having failed his captain. “The keel was shattered in multiple places. I'm sorry but...”

Hina glared Fullbody to silence before looking at Luffy, then down at her arms, which were bandaged from the fingertips up to the shoulders and then even under her shirt. Looking back up she asked simply “What are your terms?”

Luffy frowned. He sat down on the edge of the railing, looking at her thoughtfully. “Well first, I'll demand a temporary cease-fire. Your troops all carried pistols and cutlasses, and not a lot of gunpowder. You're no threat to us as you are and that's fact, and we don't want to have to put you all over the side if you try anything.”

At that Hina bristled, but nodded, biting back a scowl. The compassion she saw in Luffy's face was worse than hatred would have been and made her feel rather odd. On the one side, she hated seeing a face like that on a pirate. It was as if he was looking down at her in that he was in a position to show compassion to her at all. On the other hand, the fact that he was doing so spoke well of Luffy to her. It was as if she was a sparring partner rather than an enemy, and he wanted to face her at her best rather than her weakest. It was a strange, and not altogether pleasant or unpleasant feeling to be looked at like that.

“So cease-fire, you keep our secrets, and you don't chase us while we're up here, if that is you can get a ship somehow,” Luffy continued with a smirk. “That's it. Although seeing as we're well out of your jurisdiction, I guess we shouldn't have to worry about the second one there.”

Hina reared back at that, her eyes narrowing angrily, but Fullbody quickly spoke up. “Um captain, one of the locals was nearby and spoke to us. He said that

we don't have any jurisdiction up here. 'None of the governments here are part of the World Government,' and for some reason the only law is the word of God up here."

"Religious overtones, ugh," Hina said scowling at that and Luffy nodded, though he hadn't actually gotten that impression. "Still, Justice has no such limit like that."

"Really?" Luffy asked sardonically. "You're chasing me... because you think its justice? That's just stupid. Maybe I should get ya a dictionary so ya can read the definition of that word before ya toss it around."

Hina glared at him. But Luffy calmly began to mark off points on his finger. "While we are flying the pirate flag, we actually haven't done any pillaging. Since you and I met, have you actually seen me do anything? Anything evil I mean? I know you've seen me break the laws of physics occasionally, but I've seen you do the same darn thing, so if you're going to arrest me for that you'd have to arrest yourself."

Hina rolled her eyes, but retorted quickly. "Stealing books from Alabasta? Showing up Smoker by stealing a ship from him? Wiping out a hundred mercenaries? Breaking out of our cordon around Alabasta? Does any of this ring any bells? Beyond that, you're a pirate that is enough."

"You people were the ones to shoot at us when we were trying to get away from Alabasta, don't blame me for defending my crew and my ship," Luffy shot back.

"You nearly killed Vice Admiral Doberman!" Hina retorted

Luffy blinked in surprise. "Wait, you mean he's still alive?! You **idiots** kept him alive after he was going to sacrifice some of your crewmen!"

"Don't joke is if you attacked him so viciously because of that. Hina disbelieving," Hina scoffed.

"I did attack him so viciously because of that," Luffy said coldly, crossing his arms and glaring at her. "He killed two other marines to get at me and it fucking pissed me off. Not even pirates would be alright with that kind of shit." Luffy knew that was over-simplifying things, since a lot of pirates would have done just that, but

unless they were strong enough to cow the rest of their crew they would've face a lot of problems afterward.

Hina frowned and looked away. She'd heard that from a few of the survivors who had still been on the ship during that battle before Luffy and Doberman had taken to the sky, but hadn't really wanted to admit that she had officially, since that would call the honor of the marines into question.

She looked at Fullbody and waved him away, sitting down against the balcony. This part she wanted answers on one way or another. "There's also the issue with the Shichibukai Crocodile, and your association with him."

"You mean how I beat the living shit out of him and left him dead on the desert floor?" Luffy asked a wry chuckle. "I didn't have any other relationship with them other than animosity."

Hina looked at him then, after making certain none of her marines were close enough to overhear, slowly spoke again. "I will admit that she is not chasing you for justice's sake. Smoker was chasing you because he thinks you are a threat to world peace. That much I believe I agree with. But I also wanted a piece of you," she said irritably, looking down at her bandaged hands "Hina rematch!"

"Once you're better I wouldn't mind having a spar," Luffy said with a shrug. "You had shown me a few new tricks when we crossed paths during the breakout from the first time we met, that's why I said ya were a better rival than Smoker after all."

"You are a very odd pirate," Hina said with a shake of her head. "But what really happened in Alabasta? Why were you there? What happened to set you and Crocodile against one another? I know that story about you being paid then stealing the treasury of the country blind is a lie."

Luffy looked down at her for a long moment, evaluating Hina then asked slowly, "I can answer that question, but I want your word the tale won't go farther than this. Put it in among the other secrets you'll learn here." Luffy was under no illusion that making Hina promise that would have any effect on her deciding to actually keep Luffy's secrets if she was ordered to give them up. But it might, if those secrets could harm other people needlessly. Hina wasn't a blind automaton, and she

had seemed bitter and somewhat sickened by Doberman's actions when they mentioned him a moment ago.

"I Hina, promise to keep your secret so long as it does not threaten world peace." Hina said firmly, her words in a way confirming Luffy's thoughts about her. "That is the best I can give you."

Sighing, Luffy slid off the balcony to lean against it next to her, watching as their joint crew moved around the wounded, or trimmed the sails under Nami's direction as he told the tale. When Luffy finished, Hina simply gawked at him. "Are you telling me you took on a Shichibukai because you were asked to?! That's it!?"

"I had to take him out to save a friend because he was a threat to her country. The friend part there is the most important thing you should take away I think. So long as I have your word that you won't bruted about." Luffy warned again.

"I thinks no one would believe me anyway, Hina incredulous," Hina replied with a groan, shaking her head. "I just can't understand you. Why are you even a pirate!? I heard from Smoker that you stole a ship from his outpost right enough, but that's about the only pirate activity you've ever done as far as I can tell. Well that, and plundering other pirates but that is hardly stealing."

Luffy laughed at that, and Hina allowed her lips to quirk into a grin. But she was serious as he looked at her. "I would like an answer to that. Hina serious. The good you could do as a marine, you could be as big a hero as your grandfather in time."

"We're dreamers," Luffy said thoughtfully staring around at his crew one at a time, his smile softening slightly as he looked at Robin reading a book and keeping several dozen eyes on the marines at the same time. She looked up and smiled very slightly before going back to her book.

Luffy turned back to Hina, his soft smile morphing into a confident, aggressive smirk as his eyes hardened. "Me, I want to be the Pirate King, because it will be proof that I am the strongest in the world, and with that strength comes freedom. I'll be the freest person in the world, because no one will try to change me down by their rules that I don't make myself. My first mate Zoro, he wants to be the greatest swordsman in the world. The rest of my crew, they, we all have dreams were chasing,

dreams, which means we can't let ourselves care about your laws. We will fulfill them or die trying. That is the strength of our dream, our Resolve."

Hina slowly nodded. "Pirate dreamers. Smoker might be right to be worried about you then. Sometimes those pirates who dream are the most dangerous." Hina had seen the iron determination in Luffy's eyes as he spoke about his dream to be the Pirate King, and knew that from such dreams, and the will of D. miracles or disasters could be made.

But then Luffy's eyes went cold. "We're not bound by your laws," he said again, "and I'm not blind to your bullshit." Hina's back stiffened, and she opened her mouth to retort, but Luffy pointed a steel hard finger at her. "The human slave market," he said coldly. "The slaves that the so-called Tenryubito keep. The way they can order anyone else to their knees, rip apart families, slaughter people on a whim! Look me in the eye and say that is for justice."

Hina shivered, and it took all of her will to keep from looking away. She held his gaze for a time, saying nothing, and Luffy's rage slowly subsided. "I don't hate you Marines," he said with a growl, looking away himself. "But that doesn't mean I'm blind to the fact that you also allow a lot of evil to exist in this world and you don't challenge it because you aren't allowed to look at your own World Government."

For a moment the two of them sat there silently looking away from one another, as the crew began to form up now for the food Sanji had been preparing. "What happened to Smoker?" Luffy asked as he stood up, looking back at her.

Hina stood up with difficulty unable to use her hands and arms yet, but Luffy didn't offer to help her, which she actually appreciated since that would've hurt her pride even further than it had since she had woken up. "Smoker was ordered to stay behind in Alabasta with the wounded Vice Admiral until a ship arrived to take him back to Marijoa. After all, Doberman is a vice admiral, and many a pirate would love to make a name for themselves by killing him in his horribly weakened state. Plus Smoker had lost his own galleon, and I would never have allowed him to command mine without orders. If he hadn't, Smoker would've been right alongside me in chasing you down."

"Sorry to hear that," Luffy said, "though I'm not sorry I hurt dog-face."

Hina just nodded wearily, something about the conversation having tired her out almost as much as her wounds had. *Perhaps that is because I wasn't really able to fight against any of his points. It is obvious Luffy could not be a marine, but it is equally obvious that he is no normal pirate.*

As they two of them joined the throng of her own crew and his around the entrance way into the small dining area, Hina whistled drawing her crew's attention. After they had yelled themselves hoarse about how happy they were to see her up, she glared them into silence. "Hina has agreed to a truce. Given the skills of the Pirates, my own injuries," she said, trying to hold up her hands, but even that motion failing her thanks to her elbows refused to respond to her commands. "And the fact we have no ship of our own and are only really alive at all thanks to their largesse. For now we will follow their orders, unless they perform some act of villainy in front of us," she finished, looking sternly at Luffy.

He frowned and pointed a finger up in the air "does defending ourselves count? As we've already run into one asshole on this sea."

A few of the Marines chuckled at that one, as did Luffy's crew.

Makino also spoke up as she moved to stand by Hina. "And what about excessive flirting? Can that be considered harassment perhaps?"

Hina blinked, then stared at where Makino was pointing, only to gasp and back away, slightly as Sanji suddenly appeared in a whirl a few feet in front of her, holding out a dish of shark steak and the aroma of which caused Hina to almost drool. "My lady! Surely, the marines are blessed to have such a beauty among them. Please, take this small offering of my humble delight in your presence among this filthy crew."

"I still say we're not filthy," Luffy said as he moved around his cook with a laugh, heading over to where Robin had sat down, along with Nami near on the steps leading up to the aft deck.

Chopper nodded seriously. "I make sure everyone aboard washes regularly, even those of us with Devil Fruit difficulties."

"See what I mean," Makino asked, moving closer to Hina and whispering in her ear, ignoring Luffy and Chopper.

Hina frowned at her, then tried to raise her hands again, only for Makino to move forward, and cut out a steaming forkful, holding it in front of her mouth. Hina glared at the woman, but bit down. "Hina humiliated..." she began before the taste of the food hit her. "Amazing! Astonishing! This is soooo goood!"

"Your words fill me with joy!" Sanji shouted, throwing his hands out and spinning wildly.

"Love cook," Zoro groaned putting a hand over his eyes. "Could you not embarrass us in front of the Marines?"

"Does the National Treasure want to go!?" Sanji roared, slamming his forehead against Zoro's.

"I'm sorry, I don't speak stupid, could you repeat that Curly brow!"

Watching this the Marines began to laugh, shaking their heads and chuckling as they took some food for themselves, moving around the ship, leaving Makino to lead Hina over to where the other two girls were sitting along with Luffy, and Chopper. "See what I mean?"

"Hina thinks flirting is fine if he can make food like this, I'll put up with it," Hina said, as Makino fed her another piece of food.

Robin chuckled at that as did Luffy, but Robin's eyes were still narrowed as she looked at the Marines one after another, wondering if all of them would abide by Hina's declaration. Nami on the other hand was staring at Hina, not trusting her for some reason.

As she watched, a thought suddenly occurred to Hina, and she turned to look at Luffy. "Wait, beyond what we talked about, what secrets are we talking about?"

"This one!" Fullbody shouted, tossing a glass of water at Luffy.

Luffy could have dodged it, but after a brief second's reflection, decided not to. *After all, seeing is believing, especially about something like the curse.*

The change happened, and Hina gawked. "Bounty Hunter Ranko!?" her eyes narrowed. "What in the world is going on here!?"

After once more explaining what occurred, Hina slowly shook her head. Like Robin, she knew there was something off about this tale. No Devil Fruit had the power to create such a change in another body, especially not one that stuck after so long. Still, she kept that to herself, while Sanji and more than a few of her own marines looked avidly at Luffy now, muttering to themselves that he/she should stay in his female form forever.

She spoke up just as Luffy was about to wail on the marine who had said that comment just a bit too loudly. "Hina agrees."

Luffy turned to her a pout on her face that was just far too cute to be seen on a pirate or bounty hunter, but then it morphed into a positively wicked smirk as Luffy sidled towards her, a light blush on her cheeks but her body language beyond that turning almost seductive. "Oh, that's interesting Hina, so does that mean you prefer this kind of body to my normal one? I wonder how many hearts the world over would break if they knew Black Cage Hina preferred women to men."

More than one man, even Zoro, stared into nothing for a moment at that, blood starting to drip from their nostrils. Sanji too started out like that but Fullbody and more than a few marines started wailing like children. "No!!!! Captain Hina, say it isn't so!!"

"GAH NO!!" Hina roared, leaping forward and kicking out at the nearest men showing signs of letting their thoughts wander then attempted to tag Luffy, who dodged around with a laugh on her lips before Robin, deciding her captain had had enough fun for one day, dumped some of her tea over Luffy's head while also grabbing at Hina's legs with several conjured hands. Makino then led her back to the table, where Luffy, still chuckling joined them a moment ago.

As she calmed down, Hina glared at the once-more-Luffy. "Not like that! It's just a pity that you don't want to be pirate queen. Women always need more representation in the top echelons of power, marine or pirate. At the moment the strongest woman in the world is Charlotte Linlin, and she isn't exactly the best representative of womanhood out there.

“And you think a guy turned girl who sees his female form as just another ability at best and an irritation at worst would be better? Luffy asked dryly, his eyes widening when Hina simply nodded. “Ouch.”

OOOOOOO

“I am still against this change to the Pacifista project!” Bellowed an old man, his form hidden in the shadows of the lab around them.

“I understand your concerns, but with Doberman’s injuries, we have been given a massive opportunity Doctor. Remember that the higher ups have always worried about Kuma’s loyalty even though he volunteered for this project. This way, we can eventually have both an utterly loyal Shichibukai, and ensure the loyalty of the main line of Pacifista.”

“... Fine. But you’d best get Doberman back here quickly then.”

“We have already sent Kizaru to Alabasta Doctor, along with the investigative team. Don’t worry, Doberman will still be alive when he arrives here.” The second man, Sengoku himself, sighed. “What happens to him after that, is up to you.

OOOOOOO

The Resolve slowly moved forward over this strange new world white ocean. The reason for their slowness was because Nami was insisting that they take soundings every few minutes. “Just to make certain that there were no hidden reefs or shoals or the equivalent anyway in this new strange sea.” There was also little to no wind, which slowed their passage considerably. The crew had to break out the oars occasionally, and once more the marines were no help. Even those few that were uninjured still couldn’t exert themselves very long thanks to the altitude.

But they were still being guided by the Log Pose. This was a very good thing, since even Nami was having trouble figuring out where they could be and what progress they had made. Oddly though, Nami also reported that the Log Pose was still pointing upwards. That meant that whatever island it had latched onto was even higher than the White Sea they were on now.

About two hours of travel saw a change in the setting. At the edges of their vision, the ocean began to give way to mountains of what looks like more fluffy white clouds, only this time they looked more solid than the bottom of the ocean they had burst through.

Staring at them, Luffy shook his head. "I'm sorry, but I just have to check this out." With that, he hopped into the air, and made his way up across to the nearest portions of the clouds, landing with a slight bounce on the white clouds. Reaching down Luffy pushed his hand into it he began to laugh as it gave only slightly then he leaped up and bounced off it like bouncy ball, laughing wildly. "I love the Grand Line!" he whooped.

"That's nice," Chopper muttered, staring at Luffy having fun.

Zoro heard him, and lifted him up onto the railing. "'Then why don't you go over?" Chopper glanced down at the ocean then to Zoro who shrugged. "Take a chance. We'd get you out if you fell, and come on, you need to get over letting that issue control you. You can't always expect to get away with not using Geppo when we're out at sea."

Sighing, Chopper hopped up into the air, and bounced his way across towards where Luffy was having fun. Almost as soon as he landed, he started to roll around in the awesomely soft fluffy giving white cloud mass. "This is so cool!"

"I know right," Luffy said with a laugh, bouncing up and then flopping back down on his back while the marines and the others are aboard the crew simply watched or kept the Resolve going.

For her part, Hina shook her head. "This is the mighty new pirate aboard in the Grand Line everyone," she said aloud chuckling. "Witness him in his natural environment. So childish."

Luffy heard her over the distance, and shook his head. Reaching down to the soft cloud he began to pile up some into his hands, then pulled it off and away from the rest of the mass. It worked thankfully, coming loose in his hand like silly putty almost, while feeling like the finest down, retaining its bouncy, giving nature. He hopped into the air leaving Chopper behind for a moment, and heading back to the Resolve.

There he thrust out the bundle of cloud stuff towards Hina. "Here you try."

Rolling her eyes, Hina leaned her head sideways into the fluff and gasped slightly at how soft and giving it was. "Oh my, that is really nice. We might want to figure out how to take some with us. Hina interested."

"Not a bad idea, though I'd want to ask the local some questions first, just to make certain it won't lose its properties and just return to being so much water vapor before we go mining or cutting, whatever ya'd want to call that." Luffy replied, pulling the bit of cloud away from where Hina had pushed her head against it between her head and shoulder with some difficulty, handing it over to Nami and Makino to try in turn. Robin waved him off, already having conjured some hands on the stuff of the mountain cloud.

The Resolve began to move closer and closer to the cloud mountains, the path of the White Sea narrowing and Sanji hopped into the air moving with Luffy over along with Makino on his back clinging there desperately with her eyes closed. She could forget at this point that they were so very high off what she thought of as solid ground by thinking that they were just in the normal ocean. However feeling herself being in the air like this was a terrifying experience for her, nearly breaking her mind out of that image.

Sanji of course didn't care about that. He just loved the fact that she was clinging to them. His eyes had changed into hearts once more, and his face was bright red under his blond hair. Unfortunately for him, the two of them soon sat down where Makin immediately laid out on the snow white cloud stuff sighing happily.

That was enough for Nami, and she ordered Zoro to toss the anchors out to either side, hitting the cloud mountains. She looked over at Zoro gesturing down to the marines and the doors leading deeper into the ship, where their gold and precious

loot of all sorts was stored. He nodded back, and moved to where he could see all the entrances, making no indication he was interested in the cloud stuff, which was good since, while trusting the marines would follow Hina's orders, they couldn't trust they wouldn't look around if they got the chance.

Hina looked at them all and laughed once more before looking at her own Marines, who are also looking wistfully at the cloud stuff. She shrugged her shoulders, then hopped into the air after the others. "I think you should all treat this like a weird vacation. Besides, if we get back to the Blue Sea, this will be one hell of a tale. Hina curious."

"Yes ma'am!" said more than half of the able-bodied Marines, clambering up into the rigging, then along the mast where they could hop off onto the cloud stuff.

Robin followed, looking far more agile and balanced than any of them, where she leaped off lightly, bouncing a few times forward before she came to a stop nearly Luffy. "This is an experience," she said with a laugh.

Nami too had crossed over easily, almost as agile as a cat though she did land on all fours rather than Robin on her feet alone.

She laid out, then sat up abruptly and pointed at Luffy. "We **seriously** have to think about taking some of this stuff with us."

Rolling his eyes, Luffy waved that off, repeating what he had said to Hina earlier.

Nami soon returned to the Resolve, where she directed a few of the Marines to pull out the anchors once more. Several other marines would remain behind to keep the Resolve moving, while the others bounced along on the mountain cloud for a time until one of them spotted something ahead of them.

He was an older marine with short-cropped tiger striped hair, and somewhat larger muscles than most of the others, wearing a muscle T-shirt. When he spoke his voice was raspy, the sort of voice that had become overused shouting commands. "There's some strange arch thing out there straight ahead and a slightly to the left around this strange cloud hill thing on the route the ship's taking."

Moving quickly Luffy joined him along with Hina and a few of the others. They saw the strange gate, which looked like a gold-painted star almost with a tunnel through it, with some words painted above the tunnel, unreadable at this distance. But they also saw the ocean leading up into it, then up into a spiral heading further upwards. This was most definitely the way they had to go.

Turning back to the ship, Luffy shouted out what they had seen, then told Nami to furl the sails entirely and back oars until they were all aboard. "That looks sort of like an official entrance, and I think we need to all be together when we go through." He looked around at the marines and the others. "Back to the Resolve everybody."

The Marines didn't obey until Hina nodded towards them all. "We are guests, and I doubt we couldn't just stay aboard on this cloud thing for the rest of our lives after all. Surviving out here would be difficult, Hina difficult."

Eventually they were all back aboard, and the Resolve continued on its way, moving around the cloud hill and up to the incredibly garish gateway. "Entrance to heaven? That's a little presumptuous isn't it?" Luffy asked as he read the words.

"On the other hand, it could just be following the theme that Knight said about the only law being that of God up here," Sanji said, breathing out after taking a puff of his cigarette. He was very grateful that the Marines had all mostly brought their own packs, or else he'd already be out considering how many smokers there were among them.

Luffy shrugged. "Still smacks of some weird religion to me, and that just can't be good in the long run."

"You're thinking long term?" Nami asked incredulously and then giggled as Luffy blew a long raspberry at her.

As the Resolve slowly entered the gate and up towards where it would take the strange River's further up the tide ended abruptly. To one side of the gate there was a small walkway and out from it an equally small walkway. There a short old woman the size of whom reminded Luffy strongly of Cologne, stood. But Cologne, thankfully for Ranma's tenuous grasp of sanity, didn't have wings on her back and didn't wear a flowery dress. Nor did she carry a camera rather than a cane like this

one did. "Visitors from the blue sea?" she asked her voice rather creaky. "You must pay to enter."

Luffy stepped forward before Nami could say anything, looking at her out of the corner of her eye with one eyebrow raised. She scowled a little, but stepped backwards. She didn't like paying for anything, which was one of the perks of being a pirate in her opinion. But she wasn't the captain, and had been learning not to act as if she was of late. "How much?"

"1,000,000,000 extol per person on the crew in question," the woman answered.

As Nami began to boil at the very idea and many of the marines took to muttering, Luffy asked instantly. "What's the conversion rate from Extol to Beli?"

"Beli, the currency of the Blue Sea. The currency is 10,000 Extol per one Beli."

Luffy nodded at that, then looked around at the mixed crew. Hina shrugged her shoulders eloquently, grateful the move didn't cause any more pain to shoot up her arms. Chopper's medicine was working to get her back to fighting shape far faster than anything else she'd run into. "We don't have that of course. You, you'd have to pay for my men," she said, hesitantly.

Looking over the number of marines and his own troops, Luffy frowned. Even with that excellent exchange rate, that was a hundred thousand Beli per person. His own crew could pay it easily, but adding in the marines, that would wipe out a fair amount of their ready cash.

He turned back, and asked, "What if we don't pay, what's the penalty?"

"Nothing." The old woman replied promptly.

As the rest of the mixed crew again began to exchange confused mutters, the woman went on. "Amazon is merely the gate watcher. It is not my place and it is beyond my ability to attempt to force compliance or otherwise impede your progress."

Staring hard at her, Luffy scowled inwardly while also shivering at the woman's name reminding him of Cologne again. But there was an easy way to get out of paying for some of their number at least. "My purser will tell you what we can pay," Luffy said, stepping to one side and letting Makino move forward whispering, "Try to argue her down if you can, but watch her all the time, I'll get as many of the others under cover as we can."

He looked between Amazon and the crew, then gestured to Sanji and Robin who had just been about to come out from the cafeteria, shaking his head. Chopper too he waved back into hiding where he had been standing next to a barrel, as if he thought he was hiding.

Not even nodding an acknowledgement Makino smiled pleasantly at the older woman, then asked brightly, "Considering that most of the individuals you see are not from the original crew of this ship, and further many of them heavily wounded and will no doubt die soon, can we get a discount?"

"OY!" The Marines all shouted only at the same time, but fell silent under a glare from Luffy and Zoro. "Don't mess with Makino while she's haggling Luffy growled at them all. "Just look as dead as you possibly can, unless you want to pay off your debt to us by serving on the crew for a bit? At minimum wage?"

Hina chuckled at that, but did not push herself to her feet from where she was leaning against the mast. She could already also see that several of her Marines were staring avidly at Makino from where they were laying down, beginning to groan and moan, hamming it up for her benefit, which was amusing to her. It was odd to see women on a pirate crew, and Makino's homebody sort of beauty seemed to call to a lot of her men. She didn't have as much of a 'in your face' kind of beauty as Nami. Nami was also young, and had an attitude that reminded most of the marines they are far too strongly of Hina if she was ever any judge.

Yes, most of her crew was enamored with Hina, something she had known for years and had taken advantage of occasionally. But it was more of a gaze upon in awe and reverence at her beauty sort of feeling rather than the kind you would actually try to flirt or have a relationship with. The only exceptions to that was her lieutenant, and one or two other men among her crew.

Robin too was a great beauty, even Hina could tell that, and she could also admit to some respect for the other woman, knowing that she had lived on her own on the Grand Line for so long, an astonishing feat even given Robin's abilities and the lengths she was willing to go to. But Robin was also a known terror to the marines, and none of them would think of flirting with her any more than they would want to flirt with a sea king. *But Makino, if we are on this ship overlong, I can see Sanji having some serious competition in the over the top flirting department. I wonder what Luffy and the rest will do at that point. Hina interested.*

Eventually the haggling finished, and my Makino walked back to the rest of the crew smiling thinly. "We're done here. Zoro, come with me, we'll go and get the money." She looked around the Marines smiling sweetly. "Please stay where you are," she whispered, "until we are well out of her hearing or sight. That old woman is a sharper than her looks give her credit for. And I'm sure none of you wants to go into debt to pirates correct?"

There were some mutters and grumblings at that, which quickly turned to moans of agony as Nami moved among them lightly stepping here and there. Anything to save them some money. Makino and Zoro were quickly back, and Zoro hopped over to pile up the money in front of the woman, who transferred it into her small booth inside the gate. This was a slow process but eventually they were done.

While this was going on, Makino reported to Luffy. "That really wasn't haggling, she wasn't willing to bend on any of the issues, but nor was she willing to say what the penalties would be for not paying. It was very strange. Eventually I agreed to pay for our visible crewmen and a handful of the most fit marines, but I wasn't able to get any kind of discount on the wounded." Indeed, Makino had been told there would probably be a price for burying them once they died up in Skypiea. "That's the name of the place we're heading to."

"I'm sure ya did your best Makino. I wouldn't have even bothered paying at all, but I think we want to be on good terms with the locals," Luffy confessed. "I'd like to overhaul the entire ship while we're here, and we also want to buy some of that cloud stuff, and maybe look into those weird skates Bull-mask was using. Still, let's get a move on."

So saying Luffy moved forward to take the tiller, but before they could try to move forward into the stream heading upwards in a spiral around the more solid kind of cloud, there was a loud clanging noise from either side of the Resolve. Luffy looked over quickly, and saw a giant shrimp underneath them, grabbing onto the Resolve with its claws right under where the wings had been bolted onto the sides of the ship. “What the...”

The next second they were pushed forward on the shrimp’s back into the stream. The stream quickly began to ascend, the shrimp swimming up into it and dragging the Resolve with it. Luffy blinked, staring down at the crab who was only vaguely visible besides the claws on the side of the Resolve, shaking his head. “Well,” he said mildly “this is an interesting way to travel.”

At the same time as Luffy and his crew were heading upwards, the old woman had returned to her little office, picking up a Den-Den Mushi. “There are newcomers here. They have many wounded and dying among them, remnants of two of different crews apparently. They were able to pay for many, those that would live, but they were very stingy about paying for the wounded. I feel they could be made to be criminals quite easily,” she said, a faint smirk on her face as she spoke into the receiver. “They would make fantastic offerings to God.”

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Once more, Luffy growled irritably as spray from the front of the Resolve’s passage up into another level of this strange white ocean caused him to change forms into her. Regardless she quickly wiped it away from her eyes, stared around her and forward as the shrimp thing deposited them onto this higher stage of the White Sea.

Ahead of them to the right a large island mass of cloud, but one that had actual life on it. It looked as if it was multi-tier like the White Sea itself. At the base, was what looked almost like a pristine beach. This led upwards in wide staircases up to several others islands, all of which had houses on them. The widest rose up out of sight, marked by what looked like huge hawsers of rope twined around one another. From this distance Luffy couldn’t make out any people.

Soon the ship was close to shore, carried there by a powerful tide. For a moment the marines and pirates were silent, simply staring around them in awe at what could honestly be called a scene from heaven. There was even some kind of music in the air too, which Makino and Robin at least recognized as coming from a string instrument, though at first none of them could spot who was making it.

“What is that?” Luffy asked at last, now purposefully looking around and trying to spot where the music was coming from.

“I’ll tell you what that is...” Sanji said, moving to the side of the Resolve and staring avidly at the shoreline, where under a few small canopies was a single young local woman. “That is a Conis.”

The Conis in question was possibly a little older than Nami, though her body was not quite as full as Nami’s was, with blonde hair done down her back in two long bangles, wearing a pink blouse and skirt combo which clung to her body down to mid-thigh, showing an amazingly thin waist and pristine long legs. She was strumming what looked like a large harp of some kind and from her back sprang two small wings much like those Amazon had save larger, and two little antennas sticking up from her hair.

Her eyes were closed as the Resolve slowed to a stop, two splashes signaling that the marines had dropped anchor, though looking down at the water line, Luffy doubted it was necessary given how shallow the water was at the edge of the island. She looked up at that noise and smiled at them nodding in welcome. “Heso.”

As one, Marine and pirate both cocked her head to one side. “Heso?” The word meant belly button in the common tongue.

“What’s that mean?” Chopper asked.

“Well Heso is Heso,” Zoro muttered, shaking her head. “I don’t why she’d...”

“Who cares!?” Sanji said, waving frantically back at the woman. “Perhaps it’s some kind of local thing. She can greet me however she likes!”

“Maybe,” Luffy said with a chuckle, staring around at the beach for a while. Then she looks down at the water, and smirked before turning to her crew, and laughing. “Who's up for some fun in the sun!?”

“Heck yes!” Nami said with a laugh, quickly turning and entering the Resolve. She returned dressed in an orange and black bikini with a pair of cut-off jeans on top of the lower half. Luffy took her own turn entering the ship and coming back dressed in a white and black striped one-piece suit. It was about as sexy as a paper bag next to Nami's but that was the way Luffy liked it. The two of them leaped off the edge of the ship, laughing as they landed in the shallow water and swimming on towards the shore.

While Sanji smiled and began to bow and thank god for letting him see the girls like this again after so long (since Alabasta it had only been a few weeks) Fullbody sidled up to Hina, his voice a whisper. “You know we could take the Resolve while they're off carousing, captain.”

“Even if our crew was able to move and exercise as they should, we wouldn't be able to get away with the number of people among them who can Geppo,” Hina said, indicating she'd already thought of it. “Besides, their doctor helped our wounded, and I think our crew could do with a bit of a break.”

Hina had been riding her crew hard ever since leaving Ruluka Island in an effort to catch up with the far faster Resolve. On top of that, there had been the pitched battle against the other pirates then the ride up the Knockup Stream, which had been nasty in itself, like going through a full gale hurricane, then having to scramble to save their wounded fellows and as much supplies as they could, without Hina directing them at that point, all at this new altitude that sapped their strength with every breath. They had lost friends to battle and the oceans too.

So despite the rest they'd gotten in the hours since, it was clear to Hina that most of her crew were on their last legs. A few days rest and relaxation here in neutral territory would fit the bill nicely. “Besides,” she said, gesturing around to the trees and then beyond. “I'll wager this place has some kind of boatbuilding or shipbuilding industry, we might be able to convince them to loan us a new ship.”

She turned to Makino, who had been moving towards her anyway. "I don't suppose you have a bathing suit for Hina? Hina sunbathe."

"Actually Captain, I saved a lot of your clothing," Fullbody said brightly, pulling out from somewhere a large trunk.

Hina stared at it then him, then back before saying "Hina mixed feelings." Robin and Makino both nodded at that, while the men simply looked at them quizzically, before Makino lead Hina inside and down to her room where the two of them could change.

Meanwhile, Nami and Luffy had been joined by Sanji. Sanji, somehow, had beaten them ashore, and she and Nami were right behind him as he moved towards the local girl. She smiled at them all and said, "Greetings Blue Sea dwellers, can I help you?"

"Well, the truth is madam your music has stolen my heart, and..." Sanji began, before Nami grabbed his cheek and pulled him to one side.

Luffy smiled rolling her eyes at her crew's interplay before looking at the local. "I'm Luffy, and this is my crew, the ones who're mismatched in terms of dress anyway. The rest are... acquaintances. If you could just give us an overview of this place that would be great."

Behind them Chopper had organized the marines to transport their wounded off the ship with Zoro reluctantly helping them. They had about fifteen of the wounded ashore by the time Makino and Hina came back on onto the deck. Soon enough, the two mixed crews were all ashore, with the Marines laying out here and there. Only a few of them had shown any ability to get over the lack of air up here, and were next to useless still.

Seeing this, Hina shook her head. "Hina disappointed. I thought my Marines would be tougher than this."

The fact that she still couldn't use her hands was more than irritating by this point, but Makino had helped her change, which had been an odd experience, but a pleasant one all the same as the two of them chattered away at one another about whether or not they would be able to buy any of the salt super-soft lounge chairs they

saw on the shoreline, and how long they would be here until the log pose resets. Then they had shifted into actual girl talk, which Hina, for all her professionalism, had missed for quite a few years now.

When they joined her on shore Nami was questioning the local girl, whose name was Conis, if they would have time to shop. She really wanted to see what kind of styles were available up here. “Although, if it's all as... I don't know prudish I suppose... as what Conis is wearing, it might not be worth it.”

“So this little fella is a fox?” Luffy asked, poking the little creature with a finger. She had asked several other questions, and had learned this island was called Skypiea and was home to an entire nation, if a small one, of people who lived up here. Conis had never met other Blue Sea dwellers and was interested in them in turn, and the two of them, and Sanji, had been talking for some time as the rest of the mixed crew came ashore.

The last one to come ashore was Robin and Zoro, who had made certain none of the marines had been left behind. While Luffy trusted Hina's words, she didn't have any problem with them making certain none of the marines had time or ability to explore the ship. He actually wasn't so concerned about the cash and gold they had, rather he wanted the tech they had harvested from the Rainbow Mist to be kept secret. Luffy had plans for that stuff, he just needed to find people he trusted with the know how to make it happen.

“Yes,” said Conis. “Su is my pet, and keeps me company when I'm waiting for my father to return.”

“And what does your father do?” Luffy asked.

“Oh, he's a Dial Engineer,” the woman said with a bright smile, before turning and thanking Sanji, smiling awkwardly at the praise he heaped on her as he handed her the cold dark liquid drink. Where or how Sanji had created it Luffy didn't know, but it looked nothing like Conis had ever tried before and she said so before sipping at it her eyes widening in delight. “Oh my! That is very good!”

“You have graced me with your beauty, I could not do less than my best to repay you for that,” Sanji said, causing a bright blush to cross her features.

Robin and Makino and Nami all looked at one another, then smirked, and leaned back on lounge chairs made of the local cloud stuff as Conis proffered a large odd-looking melon of some kind. "This makes one of our local drinks."

Sanji took it, turning it this way and that. "I hate to ask but..."

"Oh you have to cut into it with a knife from the bottom to get at the drink. The outer edge is not edible at all, it's actually extremely tough." Conis explained.

Luffy made a give it here gesture, and before the woman could say anything further, Sanji tossed it to her. The redhead caught it, twisted this way and that, then raised a finger and slammed it down into the top of the melon, bursting through easily. "Anyone got a straw?"

While the woman looked a little startled at that display of strength, Hina pushed her sunglasses down with some difficulty to look at Luffy over the top of them. "That looked like Shigan."

"I know it, just like all the other forms," Luffy said simply, shaking her head. "I just prefer not to use it."

"Why not?" Hina asked interestedly.

Luffy turned to look Hina directly in the face, her face hard. "I prefer not to kill," she said simply. "Or don't you remember what happened the first time you and I fought?"

Hina had the good grace to blush and look away at that. Luffy had her completely at her mercy or rather **his** at the time. And no pirate she had ever met before would have passed over the opportunity to if nothing else get a quick feel at the very least. But Luffy hadn't. Instead, he had treated her with respect and dignity and even after beating Smoker, he had left them both there without molesting either of them further.

For a time, the ladies just laid out, silent and soaking in the sun. Even Luffy, who had done something similar to this a few days before with Robin, had no objections to spending some time like that. There was something almost sensual about the way the sunlight felt on her skin like this, an idea Ranma had never been

happy about thinking about, but one that Luffy/Ranma had gotten used to thinking while in female form.

Sort of like chocolate, Luffy thought to herself with a chuckle, waving off the others as they looked at her. “Just thinking about how some things are just better in this body you know?”

“Do tell,” Hina asked looking at her quizzically.

“Chocolate for one thing. Just tastes better in this form. Laying out in the sun like this, that's another thing even if you take away the worry about being splashed. Oh and having my hair combed. I don't get that one frankly, I mean you'd think hair is the same one body to another, but no.”

“Weird,” Hina said with a sigh. “Very weird. Your curse, your attitude. Both very, very weird.”

Luffy shrugged. “Why buck the trend when I've been weird my whole damn life?”

The others laughed at that, even Hina smirking around her cigarette and went back to their sunbathing. Nearby, they could hear Sanji chatting up Conis and succeeding in doing so to a great degree apparently. Nami watched that with amusement plain on her features, then looked over to the Marines. All of them, even those uninjured were just lazing about, and she shook her head, smirking at Hina caustically. “Behold the mighty marines everyone, done in by the height of this new sea.”

Hina growled. “If Hina had the use of her arms she would smack you right now, ginger.”

Nami just laughed, and took another sip of the drink that Sanji had somehow prepared for them all. While the man was a wizard with cooking, sometimes Nami thought his ability to get the food from one place to another was just as amazing. “Your threats really don't have as much impact as they should dressed as you are right now.”

Hina too wore a bikini, more modest than Nami's but only very slightly, its color a deep burgundy. Her waist was closer to Makino, but up top, she was closer to Nami's size, her breasts large yet perky standing out proudly on her chest as she stretched. Around her waist she wore a sash. Below that, her bikini bottom was a rather daring T-back that barely covered everything it should.

In other words Hina looked very, very good. Her marines had to struggle to tear their eyes away from her, which she smirked at, although she was somewhat more pleased to note the girls looking at her with some jealousy showing from Nami and Conis and appreciation from Luffy.

Ignoring this byplay Robin took out a book whose surface had faded to nothing and began to read quietly. From where she was laying out nearby, Luffy looked at it quizzically. "Is that one of the ones from the Rainbow Mist?" she asked softly.

She nodded, tapping it once with a long delicate finger. "It seems to be some kind of fantasy novel, although the writing is quite archaic. I had hoped it was a history book, but it is still quite good reading."

Luffy twisted, and pulled the super-soft lounge chair next to Robin's, where she leaned across and began to read along with her trying to pick up the story as she did, which brought a faint smile to Robin's face. And she did nothing to push the other woman away, instead simply moving slightly closer herself, until her arm nestled against Luffy's breast on that side. She felt Luffy still for a brief moment at that contact, but the redhead didn't move away, though she did breathe a little more erratically for a few seconds before calming down, causing Robin to giggle even as she continued to read.

In fact, Robin was quite happy with how Luffy had been treating her since they had their all-too brief moment back in the resort on Jaya. In essence, beyond a few more appreciative glances and light touches like this, Luff hadn't treated her any different at all. It was evident to Robin that whatever their new understanding between them was, Luffy wasn't going to put her on a pedestal or anything like that, and wasn't going to be publicly demonstrative with her either unless she indicated she wanted it. At the moment, that fit Robin down to the ground.

Nami and Makino had missed this, continuing to watch Sanji flirt with Conis as a few of the Marines, starting to join in placing bets on how long it would be before Sanji kicked them all away. Hina however had noticed but made no sign that she had, simply turning away to look at her own Marines shaking her head at them.

She was the first to spot something incoming from the ocean, and stood up, trying to raise her hand to her eyes to shield them, and failing. "There is something out there, coming in quickly," she said.

Conis looked up from where she had just backed away from where two marines and Sanji seemed about to be coming to blows over her attention, grateful for any reprieve. "Oh, um, that must be my father." She moved to the edge of the shoreline, waving one hand above her head. "Father, Heso!"

Over the sound of the waves and the rising sound of some kind of engine noise, they barely heard the man respond "Conis, Heso!"

"Seriously, Zoro muttered, from where he had been laid out snoozing on the shoreline as Chopper began to build a giant castle over him with the odd, puttylike snow cloud. "What is it with you people and Heso?"

Chopper nodded agreement absently then looked up in horror as the man, riding some kind of thing that was booming out water behind him at a fantastic rate, slammed into the shoreline. Both the man and the odd little boat cartwheeled forward, the man smashing straight into Chopper's castle as the boat crashed down elsewhere. "No!" Chopper roared, shifting to his human form and grabbing at the man shaking him hard. "Darn it! Do you know how long it had taken me to build that?"

The answer actually wasn't that long, since the crew had been on the shore for barely forty minutes by this point. But to Chopper his huge castle had been precious.

"Now, now Doctor," Makino said, moving forward to gently touch Chopper on the shoulder. "A doctor shouldn't be shaking a possibly injured man like that so badly."

"Ah, ...sorry, sorry," the man said, "but I'm not wounded!"

“Then I can keep shaking you!!” Chopper roared back, but calmed down at another touch from Makino on the shoulder.

The newcomer was an older man, in his 50s or perhaps early 60s, with beady eyes, and a dark bushy beard all around his mouth that was invisible under it. He was bald up top save for two little antennae, and of course like Conis he had wings. He was dressed in something like Conis’ clothing, in yellow with a few designs done in black down one side of his chest. He also had a belt full of tools at his waist and a pair of goggles on top of his head.

With a final growl, Chopper let the man go and moved to start rebuilding his castle, glaring at Zoro when he made to push his way out from under it. Zoro rolled his eyes, but lay back down and let the youngster have his fun. “Greetings Blue Sea Landers,” the man said with a smile, holding up his hand “Heso!”

“Right back at you...” Luffy said with a straight face, causing Robin and a few of the others to giggle. But Luffy’s main attention was on the thing that the man had driven into the shoreline. “What is that thing?” she asked pointing at it as Sanji and a few of the marines dragged it out of the water.

“Ah, this? But of course, you don’t have these down on the Blue Sea do you. This is a Waver.” The man, who introduced himself as Pagaya, moved to the side of the small boat, pointing at a portion of it that looked like a large shell at the back of it. “It runs via this, a dial.”

“Wait, that’s the same kind of dial that Conis was talking about?” Luffy asked, looking over to the two examples Conis had been showing them at first, before getting caught up in Sanji’s flirting at which point the girls had decided to concentrate on taking in some rays.

“Of course, they come in all shapes and sizes. We use dials for practically everything up here.”

He looked over at his daughter and asked, “Conis, what have you explained about dials about them already?”

"I explained to some of their functions, the wind dial for the chimes, and the light one, as well as some of where they came from, father," Conis replied, smiling and moving to his side with Su, her little fox, in her arms.

"Excellent," the older man said with a smile, before gesturing back down to his Waver at the far back. "These dials here are called Breathe dials. They create waves through compressing air and releasing it in fast, incredibly powerful bursts, the speed of which you can control via the handle. This propels the ship forward over the water. But it is very, very hard to control, the study of a lifetime."

"I've barely gotten my apprentice Waver driver license," Conis confessed. "My father is much better than I am."

Luffy looked back at the groove Pagaya had created and the smashed castle which Chopper was still moaning about. "Uh huh," she muttered, with a sweatdrop appearing on her head, along with several of the others. Then she shook that off, and said, "Wait a minute, that looks kind of familiar."

Without another word, Luffy leaped into the air bouncing there for a moment before heading over to the Resolve. "My word!" Said Pagaya. His brown eyebrows rising up in shock, though his eyes didn't widen at all. "That was impressive. I did not know that any Blue Sea dweller could perform feats like that."

"Our crew is a bit special in that area," Robin said, kneeling beside the man and looking at the dial with interest.

Soon enough Luffy was back with the small boat they had found in the wreckage that had nearly crushed the Resolve, setting it beside Pagaya's own. Side by side it was clear the one the Straw Hats had found was indeed the same type, if far more primitive and badly damaged.

"My word!" Pagaya said, quickly going down to his knees next to the ancient boat, moving the handle this way and that for a second, then pulling out a small magnifying glass and sticking it into one of his eyes, which enlarged that eye so that he actually looked as if he was seeing something for the first time as he looked down at the dial at the back of the small boat. "This is amazing! This isn't just any dial, this is a Jet dial! They are thought to have gone extinct!"

“Do you think you can repair it?” Luffy asked. “We can pay if you can.” *And if he can fix this, maybe I can get to talk with him about a few of the other projects I’ve been thinking about with that Rainbow Mist stuff.*

“I would love to try, although, it would be incredibly difficult to handle. Perhaps some of you should try on my own before I offer?” Pagaya asked worriedly. “While it would not be illegal for Blue Sea dwellers to own such a device on your own ocean, I would prefer to know that you could handle such beasts before offering to repair this one.”

Luffy nodded and took Pagaya's own dial setting it into the ocean and hopping in. “I’ll be right back.”

He was actually back quite quickly, because not three seconds later he fell into the ocean, the dial splashing away. Luffy had to push herself up out of the water, then after it, grabbing it up and trying again and again, only to continually fall into the ocean.

During the third time she did better, bouncing around over the ocean, and hanging on for dear life but not actually directing the Waver anywhere. Eventually it flipped over and sent Luffy once more into the ocean. *FUCK! He wasn’t kidding that thing is really hard to control. I can will it one way or another, but I can’t read the oceans or the waves well enough.*

A large, puffer fish of some kind decided the redhead looked edible and tried to take a bite out of him. But Luffy did not go along with that idea. She punched out hard, sending the fish up and out of the water like it had been hit by a cannon, knocking it out and sending it to flop in the water near the shoreline. Then with a scowl, Luffy swam after the Waver, grabbing it and pulling herself out of the water, kicking out at another shark and sending it to crash in among the trees behind the beach.

Conis stared at where the shark was flopping around, then back to her father, her face rather awed. “Are all Blue Sea dwellers so strong Father?”

“I don’t know Conis, this is the first group of such I’ve ever met,” Pagaya said, also staring at the shark.

“MMM...more shark steak,” Nami muttered, to which the others, even Chopper and Zoro nodded agreement.

Finally Luffy returned, tossing the Waver to the cloud beneath them, growling angrily as she pushed her wet hair out of her face. “That thing is impossible! You have to be reading the waves, you have to read the wind, and you have to control your body and move it just so! I can do the third, but not the first two!”

“Actually, you did remarkably well for the first time,” Pagaya said looking at her in astonishment. “You were able to stay on it for more than five seconds.

“I had been trying for years before I could do even that,” said Conis with a laugh.

A second later, they heard a whooping sound and turned as Nami bounced along the waters. She laughed delightedly as she twisted the dials this way and that. “This is fantastic!” That they all stared, in shock, as she twisted her it around, controlling it with what looked like ease then bringing it back.

“Hina would like to try it,” Hina said, before glaring down at her arms. “When I’m healed anyway.”

“You should be there in a few hours,” Chopper said from where he was still working on his castle.

“Excellent,” Hina said with a grin staring at the Waver in delight.

“That's astonishing,” Pagaya breaking out of his stupor at Nami’s instant mastery of the Waver and shaking his head. “She's handling it like a natural! Do you have any idea how long it would take someone normal to train up to that level of expertise?”

Luffy laughed, crossing her arms under her test. “That's why she is our navigator!” Nearby Robin chuckled at that nodding her head as Makino did the same.

“But tell me more about these dials,” Luffy said. “How many varieties are there, Conis was saying that they’re everywhere right?”

“Sorry, indeed, dials power our entire economy and nearly everything we do. There are dials to help cool food to store it, there are dials that help heat things, there are dials to create lights, air-conditioning, heating, propulsion... There is even ways to use dials in combat, though I'm afraid I don't know much about that, sorry.” Pagaya said. It was evident that saying sorry for him was some kind of verbal tic.

“Can you show me some other examples?” Luffy asked, his eyes slowly beginning to gleam with interest. *This, this sounds damn interesting, and I wonder if we can combine it with the gear from Wettons and the stuff from that Rainbow Mist.*

Nami rode the dial back, leaping off it and giggling as she hugged the control lever to herself. “This thing is **awesome**! We’re going to buy one of these Luffy,” she said authoritatively.

“I'm actually thinking something along the same lines, although I should probably tease ya about actually wanting to pay for something,” Luffy said with a smirk. “But like he said before, Pagaya here’s already agreed to work to see if he can repair the old one we found in the wreck so we won’t need to buy a new one.”

“Hai, sorry. Working on a jet dial like this, that would be an amazing achievement for any Dial engineer,” the older man said, patting the destroyed boat with one hand.

“That would be fantastic,” Nami said excitedly, hugging Pagaya to her, causing a blush to suffuse what portions of his face were visible features before releasing him and turning to Luffy. “So, can I go exploring a bit? That Waver’s so much fun!”

Amused that Nami was even asking rather than simply doing, Luffy nodded. “But take Chopper or Makino with you. Unless Robin wants to go?”

Robin shook her head, smiling at the older man. “I'm actually quite a bit more interested in these dials. And, could you tell us anything about the history of this island? We come from the Blue Sea as you have already discerned, but down below there is an island called Jaya, and it has a legend about this place.”

“Fascinating!” Pagaya said, with a slow nod, while Conis frowned, looking away, though none of the others noticed. “I think I could tell you something about

our history, though not much. It isn't one of my better subjects am afraid. But I can certainly show you many dozens of examples of dials in our home.”

Sanji smiled back bowing slightly and taking Conis’ hand in his. “If you do so good sir, I will create a meal for you and for Conis here fit for any king and queen.”

Both of them looked a little confused at the words king and queen, but the look he gave Conis needed no translation and she blushed rosily. Yet she did not pull her hand away from Sanji's.

Robin and Luffy looked at one another, then as one smirked, and looked back at Nami, Makino and Chopper. Chopper scratched his horns then shook his head. “I should probably stay here with the Marines wounded. They only have the one doctor left, and it's nearly time for us to change some of the bandages on the severely injured.”

Hina smiled at that, gesturing at her arms and Chopper nodded. “That too. I'll undo those in a few moments to test. But I think you should be good. Devil Fruit users always heal faster than most.”

The first mates opinion wouldn't have mattered much for this discussion, but he wasn't about to give it in any event. Zoro had fallen asleep under Chopper's now massive cloud castle.

It ended up with Robin and Luffy going with Sanji and the two locals along the beach to a long stairwell leading up to a house in the distance, one of the smaller tiers that Luffy had seen earlier. But Makino went with Nami, hugging the shorter girl around the waist as the two of them stood on the Waver.

“I'm sorry I'm not Luffy,” she said teasingly into Nami's ear. “You'd probably have a lot more fun that way.”

Nami shuddered. *Only if he was in his male form then* she thought before shaking her head and replying. “I, I don't know what you're talking about.”

“I think it's time we need to talk about that...” Makino said.

Grumbling, Nami revved the dials, and they roared out from the shoreline with Makino screaming as she nearly lost her grip around Nami's waist. "I'm sorry! I can't hear you!"

OOOOOOO

After having left the beach, Robin and Luffy talked with Conis and Pagaya, who showed them examples of dials around the house. Sanji had immediately moved into the kitchen, where he started to rave about the usage of dials while creating an exorbitant meal. During that meal, Luffy went outside onto the balcony, staring down at the marines and Chopper below before shading her eyes staring out towards the ocean. "Does anyone have a magnifying glass on them?"

Robin looked up at that from where she had been trying to pin Pagaya down about the history of Skypiea. "Why?" she asked, somewhat sharply. She hadn't been getting anywhere, and was beginning to be a little concerned about it.

"I can't see Nami out there," Luffy replied, shaking her head. She was still in her female body seeing no point to changing just yet, and frankly uninterested in seeing the local's reaction to it.

Pagaya joined them along with Conis, and both of them shaded their eyes too, staring out to sea. After a few moments, they too realized they couldn't see any sign of the Waver out there. "Father..." Conis said worriedly.

"I know Conis, sorry. I'm afraid she might have gone to the Sacred Land."

"Sacred Land?" said all three Pirates together, Sanji having come out from the kitchen where he'd been cleaning.

"It is a holy land to the west of here. Only God and his chosen can go there. It is a giant jungle full of dangerous animals and other things, but it is the home of God, and is sacred. If they went there, there could be trouble, sorry." Pagaya replied.

"What kind of trouble?" Luffy asked, crossing her arms and glaring at the two locals.

"Well, we know we don't know yet if they went there, perhaps we should wait a bit," said Pagaya, stammering and looking away.

The Pirates all exchanged glances at that, and Luffy asked. "Will this God person cause trouble for you if you tell us what could happen to them?"

"A bit perhaps," Pagaya replied, while Conis flinched and Su ran away to hide under the sofa. "But it is more that we don't actually know what happens there. No one who goes there ever returns beyond those who speak for God and take him and his Enforcers food. It is simply a forbidden land."

Luffy smiled widely at that, tugging at her hat thoughtfully. "A forbidden land where no one must ever, ever go... Interesting." *I smell adventure!*

"I know that look," Sanji and Robin said as one, then looked at one another and laughed. "You can't hope that they don't return just so you can go exploring Luffy," Robin said sternly with a twitch of her lips while Sanji muttered something about his and Robin's minds being linked.

"A man can dream can't he?"

"I'm sorry, but a 'man' can dream?" Pagaya asked for real this time his brows knitting in confusion as Conis also cocked her head quizzically.

"Long story," Luffy said with a sigh. "One I'm not exactly dressed to answer right now. Unless you really do want to gouge out your own eyeballs anyway."

"Please don't ask," Sanji said with a shutter, just don't. He then brightened considerably. "In fact, if Luffy could stay in this one I would be perfectlyYYYY!"

He stopped speaking as Luffy smashed him upside the head, hard enough to leave a bump and send Sanji sprawling to the ground. "None of that," he said mildly.

Still, Luffy thought seriously as he she turned back to glance out over the ocean again. *I hope they're all right.*

OOOOOOO

Nami and Makino had in point of fact found in actual an island, one made of stone and earth rather than cloud stuff sticking up out of the white ocean to the south and east of Angel Island. But there was something really weird about it, which caused Nami to slow the engine down as they approached, both women staring at it in shock, Makino even forgetting what she wanted to talk to Nami about.

The entire island seemed covered with monstrous, vastly overgrown vegetation. A single tree, the same kind of tree they had seen on Jaya looked the size of an entire apartment complex almost, soaring into the air for several dozen stories and being wider than most houses. And the growth was from seemingly one end of the island to the other. As they coasted around, neither of them could see any break in it save for where a large river ran into the interior. There were a few other rivers here and there, all created via cloud stuff keeping up the water, but that was all.

"That's amazing," Makino muttered, staring at the growth in awe.

"It looks amazing, but how did those trees grow so huge?!" Nami muttered, staring at it in awe.

"Think about it," Makino said, resting her chin on the other girl's shoulder as they looked at the island. "The nutrients up here must've caused it somehow."

"Even the size of that bird we saw?" Nami asked. It'd taken a few minutes for both of them to realize what it was, but the bird they had spotted high in the sky turned out to be a giant version of the South Bird that had helped guide them across the ocean to the Knockup Stream.

"Even then," Makino said with a nod. "If they eat other animals which have taken in those nutrients, or even eat berries and fruits themselves that have those nutrients inside, they could grow to that size over a few generations."

“I guess that makes sense,” Nami said before going on wryly. “Or as much sense as anything on the Grand Line ever does.”

The two of them shared a low giggle at that, but inwardly they were very worried. Here and there in the foliage of the trees were small carved masks, some of them looking like do not enter signs, and others primitive but still scary masks. Occasionally they could also here the roar of animals or something deeper inside.

They rounded a small bend of the island into a culvert cut out of the island and paused as they saw a ship moored there. It was heavily damaged, and looked quite old, but it was obviously a pirate vessel judging by the skull and cross bones flag still flying from the mainmast, though that mainmast had been shattered and was hanging off the side of the ship. There was no one around, but that wasn't nearly as worrisome as the damage done to the ship.

Makino tied them up to it, and both women hopped aboard, looking around. Makino in particular looked at the damage done to the ship, frowning thoughtfully while Nami was busy looking for any treasure or logbooks.

A lot of the damage was self-explanatory, looking like massive impacts or sharp objects had struck the ship. The damage almost looked like fire damage but not quite. And it looked as if there had been some kind of fight at one end of the ship, but the two secondary masts had been destroyed by something else. *That could have been caused by lightning strikes but against both secondary masts That beggars belief. Unless...* Makino frowned, a thought trying to niggle at the back of her mind but it wouldn't quite come to the fore.

Her search was interrupted by a voice shouting out something nearby, causing her to turn quickly, her pistol suddenly in her hands. But the voice was coming from a small shell Makino recognized as a dial, which had just been pecked by a bird, the bird squawking and flying off at the voice from it.

Nami hurried up from down in the ship, and for a moment the two of them listened to the message left on the dial, shuddering a little at the sound of the background and the accompanying screams. “W, what was that?” Nami asked her eyes wide and fearful.

“I don't know,” Makino said, looking around at the ship then at the dial. “I don't know, but we'll be taking that with us and be getting back to the others right now!”

Nami nodded instantly and the two girls returned to the Waver, which they started to punt out and away from the edge of the island. They tried to be as quiet as they could, now fearful that someone was going to attack them for being there at all.

As they went they heard something in the distance, some kind of crashing noise moving through the forest and paused, ducking down and moving the Waver closer to the island so that the edge of it hid them from view. They stopped the dial engine, and hid there, with Makino getting her guns out again.

There were screams now, and the sounds of some huge animal barking. This was followed by the sound of combat, and voices arguing about who's 'pray' it was. The two women exchanged glances, and Makino nodded towards the front of the dial then back out to sea with a jerk of her head. Nami nodded, understanding that they should take this time to get out of here before anyone else notices them, regardless of the noise.

Nami was about to turn them around when a man crawling on his knees burst out of the jungle underbrush. He was dressed like a sailor, with brown hair, and a wide fearful face, his clothes and body both scuffed to a tremendous degree, blood coming from a few cuts. He looked back the way he had come fearfully, then down at the Waver, eyes widening when he saw it and the two women inside it. “You, girls! Let me on! Get me out of here!”

“Who are you?” Makino asked, her tone calm even as Nami began to tremble a little, the fear the man was showing affecting her.

“Damnit, let me on!” The man shouted, whipping out a gun and pointing it at the two of them. “They know I'm...!” He paused as Makino had quickly raised to her own pistol pointing it back at him. His eyes were wild and wide, his fingers twitching, and Makino was afraid he would fire. She was in no danger, and she could probably protect Nami too, but the shot would probably get the attention of whoever was chasing the man.

Then the man looked up into the sky as it suddenly began to blaze with light.

“Now Nami!” Makino shouted into the other girl’s ear and Nami revved the dials, pushing them away from the edge of the island. Behind them, a massive beam of light of some kind slammed down into the man. Both he and the area around him disappeared into the light, leaving behind a segment of the island that had been seemingly carved off like someone had taken a hot poker to it.

All this Makino saw as she looked back over her shoulder, with Nami pushing the dial to its fastest setting the two of them racing away faster than even Luffy could have run on dry land. The two of them stayed silent until they were out of sight of the island and turning towards where Nami could somehow tell the Resolve was. Then Makino spoke. “So, this place isn't quite the paradise we thought.”

“Something is there,” Nami replied, shaking her head, “something scary.” Then she looked over her shoulder at Makino and said deadpan “Why do I think they were going to get involved with whatever it is?”

“Because you're starting to understand how Luffy's luck works?” Makino asked innocently, causing the younger girl to groan. Then she smirked. “Now, about that talk...”

OOOOOOO

Back on the beach Hina smiled down at Chopper as he finally removed the last of the bandages on her arms. He checked first her fingers, then her hands wrists and everything else, okaying each portion as he went. “Thank you Doctor Chopper, that was very well done.” While Chopper had said that Devil Fruit users healed quickly, Hina had overused her powers before, and well knew that the wounds she had taken should have taken her out of action for at least several days, if not longer. Not even a full day after she had been injured, that was amazingly fast and spoke to Chopper's skills as a doctor.

“Your praise doesn't matter to me at all asshole!” Chopper said, dancing in place, clapping his hubs together as he did so muttering the last word several times. “Asshole, asshole!”

“Really, you look quite happy to me. Hina amused.” Hina replied with a chuckle.

With that, she stood up and stretched, cracking her knuckles explosively as she looked around at her crew. “Now,” she shouted, waking up Zoro from nearby where he'd been sleeping underneath the castle Chopper it made earlier. “It seems to Hina that she has been slacking off with training her crew! If only four of you have been able to move around and act normally up here due to the altitude, the rest of you need **far** more training!”

As they had still been staring at her bikini clad form this took a while to sink in, but when it did, the marines all started to groan. “Anyone who can stand get on your feet,” Hina roared at them. “I'm going to train you until you drop for real!”

Hina was surprised however when most of her crew obeyed quickly, lining up in front of her and staring at her avidly. It was only then that she realized she was, indeed, still wearing the bikini she had put together. *Well*, she thought philosophically, *whatever motivation they need to do better I suppose*.

“Form a line!” she said then set off at a march then a jog, then a sprint along the shoreline, bellowing behind her that if she turned around at the edge of the beach and they weren't within 50 paces of her, she'd use her lock power on them all, then force them to do squats until they their arms fell off.

With the carrot racing ahead of them in a bikini and the stick firmly in mind, the marines finished three circuits of the beach in this fashion while Zoro and Chopper looked on. But they stopped when a loud shout of “You there!” echoed from nearby. They stopped and turned to stare at a group of soldiers of some kind making their way down from the distant town towards them on the wide, long stairwell set to one side of the beach.

These men wore pantaloons and camo armor, a kind of grey and light blue and a beret on their heads. They were all men and all of course had the wings of the locals and what looked like knives or short swords at their waists. They also marched like a well-drilled unit and Hina had to give a nod to have her head instructed them. The group formed up behind whoever their officer was, who saluted quickly, staring at

the Marines and then from them to the Resolve still at anchor nearby. “Good afternoon. We are the White Berets. We keep the peace in Skypiea and I, Captain McKinley, are here to check up on a few things.”

Hina shrugged a moment please. She moved over to where she had left her marine officer’s greatcoat and pulled it on her arms and shoulders, tying it around her waist before moving towards them and snapping her fingers at her troops. “Rest at ease!” she barked.

They nodded, and stood with her hands pressed behind their backs, legs akimbo like the white berets across from them.

The fact that they stood between their wounded and these White Berets was not lost on Hina, and she nodded slightly in approval at that to Fullbody. She also saw Zoro wedging himself out from under the castle with Chopper’s help, but ignored that for now. “I am Captain Hina, these are my men. Was there something wrong with our paperwork or whatever it was Amazon needed money for?”

“Indeed,” the man said quickly and grimly, moving around her line of Marines and gesturing towards the wounded. “It was our understanding that these wounded would die shortly upon arrival, and would be buried at sea. That they have not died means we must check on their health, and if they are healthy enough to live, they will need to pay the entrance fine as well.”

Hina's eyes narrowed, but she slowly nodded, willing to obey the local laws so long as they did not get in her way overmuch. “How much is that?”

“Since you did not pay the fine for these men immediately upon entrance, it will be doubled,” the man said briskly, looking at each of the wounded in turn and then gesturing towards the boat. “Further, there is a fee for docking here, even if you do not go to the actual docks.”

He then spotted the large fat fish that had attempted to take a chomp out of Luffy earlier when he had been trying out Pagaya’s Waver. “And this fish, good grief! This fish is an endangered species! That is yet another fine!”

Hina's eyebrows rose before she let a smirk appear on her face. “Hina will agree to pay for her men either in Beli or in some kind of work release concept. The

fish will need to be paid for by the captain of the Resolve, along with the fine for dropping anchor here.”

“And where is that Captain?” McKinley asked coolly.

Zoro stepped forward now, his arms crossed, and all three of his swords at his side. Hina wondered where they'd come from, since he hadn't had them on when he'd been buried underneath Chopper's castle but set that minor mystery aside as Zoro spoke. “My captain and a few of our crew aren't here. I'm the first mate. How much is this fine, and what is the exchange rate again?”

He waited calmly as the other man spoke, his eyes narrowing as he glared at the man. “And what will you do if we can't pay?”

“We will impound your ship and take your wounded under custody, until they are paid for. Luckily nothing you have done so far is much worse than a Class Four crime, so jail time will help offset some of your costs, but you will have to work to pay it back if you do not have the ready cash available. And I am afraid it will have to be in Extol. We do not allow monetary exchanges anywhere but at the gateway.” McKinley said coldly.

“And if we don't want you to take our wounded?” Hina asked coldly, taking a long drag from her cigarette and blowing it out, before snuffing it out and replacing it in her small pouch of her greatcoat. She'd been willing to go along with the local laws up to a certain point, but she surely was not going to let them take her wounded.

“That would be a Class Five crime, resisting arrest,” McKinley said grimly, pulling out his swords and twirling them expertly. “We would have to take you all into custody by force.”

Zoro smirked evilly, pulling out his own twin swords, not even bothering to place Wado Ichimonji into his mouth. “In that case, you can come and try.”

Hina shrugged, cracked her neck and shoulders and then her fingers, before closing them into fists. Behind her, her fellow Marines all did the equivalent, pulling out pistols and cutlasses while Fullbody stepped forward, slamming his steel knuckles together with a resounding clang. “Bring it on!”

“Foolish Blue Sea dwellers” McKinley shouted, one hand reaching down to his pocket and throwing out a dial, which rapidly bloomed into a thin road made of white cloud, which he leaped onto, zooming towards them on small dials on his feet. At the same time the rest of them flew every which way, pulling out bows and arrows while flying using the same method as McKinley did. “You think you can fight our Dial Combat!?”

In reply Zoro leaped up to land on top of it, but found his footing kind of not the best. His feet actually sunk into the cloud, reducing his movement speed. He was forced to defend himself with his swords for a time, before slicing out at one man’s waste then at another's ankles. McKinley, the first one, blocked the blow with his knife, but the second scored, cutting along that man’s legs, and dumping him off his cloud with a cry of agony.

Seeing this, Hina did not follow suit, staying grounded. She raced forward, twisting this way and that, slamming out with her Lock-lock power every time she touched one of them or one of the clouds. This caused trouble for all of them, dumping three of them flying away, rolling off of their roads as if they'd hit a roadblock. Once they were on the ground they were dealt with by her men, who at her shouted orders took them prisoner.

But the archers who had decided to get some distance began to fire down at the Marines, who were quick to spread out and fire back. A few of the bullets hit some of the wounded, and one of them died before Chopper was there, moving this way and that, in guard point mode, blocking the bullets further. “Damn you! What the hell did we ever do to you?!”

The leader of the White Berets engaged Zoro sword to sword, zooming this way and that, flipping up and around, trying to get through Zoro's defense, using his mobility to his greatest advantage. But the difference in skill was just too great, and he couldn't break Zoro's defense even though Zoro could not move.

But seeing the others being hard-pressed Zoro pushed away from him getting a little bit of a distance and reached down to his waist pulling out his third sword which he clamped into his mouth.

“You think adding a third sword is going to make any difference!” McKinley shouted, having now gathered several others around him and zoomed higher into the air to get away from Hina’s bizarre powers. They now all charged Zoro. McKinley had been able to tell by this point that he, Hina, and Fullbody, who had already been taken out, were the main threats here. The others didn't seem able to deal with their dial combat style.

Zoro smirked at them all and then his swords flashed forward as he snarled out “36 Pouno Ho (36 pound cannon)!”

The air attack zoomed forward from his outstretched hands, slicing into the roads and the people. The air hurled them backwards in a welter of blood and bits of sliced clouds and dials having shattered their swords.

Of course this commotion had garnered some attention from the nearby house, and Sani and Luffy arrived quickly. Seeing this, one of the White Berets called a retreat, and carrying their leader away, those White Berets still on their feet retreated quickly up the stairs they had arrived by.

Meeting Luffy as she landed, Hina growled angrily, pointing up after the retreating White Berets, explaining what had been going on. “Did they honestly think any captain worth their salt would've let you take their wounded! Hina disgusted! We would have been accommodating, if they had been accommodating in turn. They were trying to create jumped up charges for us from the very beginning, that is not the law, that is gross corruption!

“W, what have you done?” shouted Pagaya, from where he had hurried down to the beach with Conis and Ranma staring at the half dozen White Berets who had been abandoned by their fellows. Conis was staring in horror her hands covering her mouth as Pagaya spoke. “This is a Class Six crime! This will be bring God's wrath down on you”

The two of them looked at one another and backed away quickly. “As such,” Pagaya went on. “I'm sorry, but we can no longer associate with you. I will bring your jet dial down when I am finished preparing it, but please stay away from our house for now.”

Luffy shrugged, exchanging a glance with Robin before moving over to lay back out on some of the lounge chairs, Robin following her with a small frown on her face. “We might as well make ourselves comfortable.”

“I just hope Nami and Makino are all right!” Sanji said, staring out to sea.

“We’re fine too love cook, thanks for asking” Zoro grumped.

“Bah, who cares about you!?” Sanji shouted back, butting heads while Luffy shook her head staring out to sea and willing Nami and Makino to hurry up and get back. She was getting bored here, and this entire island smelled too much of adventure for that to last.

End Chapter

From here on out I get to play with nearly everything that makes up the Skypiea arc, and I will love it HAHAAHHA. Stay tuned, and when I post the January small story poll, remember to vote!