

Not Oda or Rumiko.

This is going to be the last chapter in this fic until the end of November. I feel this is the best place to cut off the story here on fanfic. I will update the remaining chapters in two groups, one at the end of November, and one in December. Hope you enjoy it.

Once more this has only been edited by myself and Hiryo, so there will no doubt be mistakes within it.

Chapter 5: Seahorse Trumps Shark

Nami woke up the next day and the first thing she saw was Luffy's straw hat, his treasure as he had called it more than a few times, on her bedside table. At the sight of the hat the memory of last night flooded back and unfortunately so did her fear of Arlong. His shadow had dominated her life for so long, from the moment the Fishmen Pirates had shown up in the archipelago and killed Bellemere right there in front of her. Even now Arlong was still there in her mind, unstoppable, terrible.

And yet the longer she looked at that straw hat and was reminded of the man who wore it (man/woman anyway) Nami felt that fear being washed away like a sand castle facing a storm. After what she had seen, after what she had **felt** from Luffy, that monster within him that Luffy had chained, there was no doubt in Nami's conscious mind any longer that Luffy could do it. Luffy could beat Arlong, he could save both her and her village, and he would.

Exiting her room out onto the Bastard's deck Nami found the crew, and Jonny and Yosaku moving around as they could, with their newest member Sanji complaining volubly about the amount of work it took for seven people to man the large ship. "Join the damn club, curly brow!" Zoro replied as she opened her door, grunting as he heaved on the lines in the face of a pretty decent clip wind from almost dead astern.

Nami rolled her eyes, moving forward quickly as she felt the direction of the wind on her skin before barking out orders. "Luffy get aloft and trim the sails to..." she rattled off a few more orders then looked at the four boys still remaining on the deck and gave them similar orders. With that done she raced up the short staircase to the

tiller on the aft deck, and she and Makino pulled the tiller around to let the wind carry them forward.

That wind continued to carry them from almost directly astern for about an hour, then died down to practically nothing. Again Nami bellowed orders to trim the sails in a different direction, but after that, they could practically leave the ship on its own, with Luffy holding the tiller steady.

At that point Nami sighed, looking around the crew before bowing her head. "Thank you all, from the bottom of my heart," she said sincerely. "Thank you for helping me and my village. I, I have no right to ask that of you, I was, I was planning to leave you all in the lurch, to steal your gold in order to pay Arlong off, and yet you still..."

"But you didn't!" Makino said, throwing one arm around the younger girl and pulling her into a hug. "Thoughts do not condemn us, only actions Nami. You didn't steal from us. Yes, you might have lied about your past somewhat, you might have lied about your willingness to join us. But your lies didn't hurt any of us, and you only truly lied because you were worried for **us** instead of yourself, weren't you?"

Nami trembled, biting her lip as she fought to keep tears from her eyes. She wasn't used to being so easily read, let alone understood. She was used to being spat upon, to being condemned by her fellow villagers for working with Arlong, and hated and attacked by the pirates she stole from for betraying them.

"All right that's enough of this sappy nonsense," Zoro broke in, shaking his head. "That's not the witch I've grown to know. Where is the moneygrubbing, where's the anger and the violence?"

Luffy laughed staying silent as Nami rounded on Zoro, about to bash his head in when someone else beat her to it. Sanji launched himself into a kick that nearly took Zoro's head off, landing delicately on his feet on Zoro's other side as he glared at the swordsman. "How dare you talk to a lady like that you bastard!"

Then he turned, twirling in place like a ballerina before going to his knees in front of Nami. "Oh such sorrow, such melancholy that you had to deal with Nami-swan! And that I could not have seen it first and properly put myself at your beck and call, I am ashamed, ashamed I say that I did not realize the straits you were in. But

never fear, your gallant knight will free you from this vile miscreant who has you under his thrall!"

"You're making me want to puke," Zoro muttered.

A second later Sanji was suddenly in his face. "Hoh, did the national treasure say something?"

"Oh no, I didn't say anything," Zoro said shaking his head and looking away. "I'm sorry, I just don't speak snail."

Rolling his eyes Luffy decided to cut things off before the two other men could antagonize one another further. *One's a swordsman, the other sounds almost like Kuno, so very, very weird...* He had no idea why the two had taken such instant dislike of one another, but he couldn't help but find it funny regardless.

Still right now wasn't the time for a comedy act. "Why don't you tell us about this Arlong character and his crew anyway Nami? How many fish-men are we talking about here, do they have spies among the villagers?"

"And why in the world haven't the Marines already taken them out anyway? Even here in East Blue the marines shouldn't allow pirates to build up that kind of power base without being challenged." Makino said seriously, exchanging a glance with Luffy.

Luffy sighed but nodded reluctantly. As much as he and his grandfather hadn't parted ways very amicably the last time they had seen one another, right after the Grey Terminal fire, he knew Garp would've come down on Arlong like a ton of cannonballs, possibly literally, if he had known the former Grand Line pirate was here. *That is unless he had orders not to...*

"Arlong has around 75 fish-men with him, though only three of them are officers. One of them is a hand-to-hand fighter. Kuroobi's his name, and he might be the smartest on the crew. Another is a long ranger sniper named Chew. He spits out water from his mouth that moves so fast it puts musket balls to shame and his like a cannon ball. Another is Hachi. He's an octopus type fish-man with eight arms who uses swords in all them."

Nami was interrupted at that point by Zoro, his eyes gleaming. "Did you say swordsman?"

The orange haired girl shook her head. "Your one track mind disturbs me." She exchanged a sneer with Zoro who had just flipped her the bird then watched in amusement as Makino quickly stepped between Sanji and Zoro before the chef could attack Zoro again for that, acting like the smallest peace force in the world.

Even so her voice was still serious as she continued to speak. "And then there's Arlong himself he is strong, monstrously so." "I've seen him lift an entire house out of its foundations and just flip it, and he's immune to bullets. They just bounce off his skin." *Bellemere...*

"Wait," said Johnny exchanging a glance with Yosaku. The two of them had been silent up to this point, not having any idea what was going on since they hadn't been part of last night's discussion among the crew and had sort of been in the dog house with Luffy. They had led the chefs of the Baratie in tying up and gathering the former Krieg pirates, and had accidentally let Gin, Don Krieg's right hand man, escape. Luffy had no idea where the man had gone, and really didn't care overmuch, but it was still irritating.

Nami had honestly forgotten they were even there, and from the looks on her crew's faces, they had too. *Guess they're just forgettable like that*, she thought, looking over at Luffy who was blinking at the two as if surprised they were still on the ship.

The two bounty hunters missed this exchange as Yosaku took over. "You guys are going to take on Arlong?! You can't! He used to be part of the crew of the Royal Shichibukaijinbei, he's a monster in the shape of a man!"

"But he's not anymore right?" Luffy asked intently. *If that was still the case, that could be why none of the Marines in the area wanted to take him on.*

"Well, the rumor is he was expelled for some reason," said Johnny. "But he's still super strong! He's a real Grand Line veteran."

"And yet he's here in East Blue," Luffy said shaking his head.

Zoro nodded. "I've heard of Arlong, but I never heard anything much about how strong he was in comparison to other Grand Line Pirates. And his crew doesn't sound like much either not after the training we've been doing. And if worse comes to worse, Luffy can breakout that pressure thing he used that we still haven't talked about..." he said looking over at Luffy who looked away sheepishly.

"I don't really want to have to use my Haoshoku haki, that's its name, again. I sort of, that was just a loss of control that I'm not really proud of. It won't happen again, and I don't want to use it given how much attention it would get us from the Marines, although if you could not get yourself cut up into pieces that would be great." He said looking from Zoro to his other crewmen.

"That brings up another point!" said Yosaku, pointing at Zoro dramatically, shivering slightly as he decided to ignore that event entirely, the memory was just too terrifying. "How can you even think about getting into another fight so soon after being injured!? In fact how the hell are you even moving Aniki!?"

"Bah its nothing," Zoro said shaking his head. "Willpower can conquer all."

"That, and the painkiller I've been putting in your food since you were injured~," Makino said sweetly bursting his bubble with a certain amount of malicious amusement.

Zoro glared at her but she simply smiled back amiably, and his glare subsided quickly. The last time he argued with Makino, he nearly caught a black-covered finger in the eye for his troubles.

"Anyway, screw that," Zoro said, shaking his head. "Wounds or no wounds I'm going to take part in this. I might not be fond of the ginger witch, but she's still part of our group, and this bastard took away years of her life."

"There are parts of that sentence that I don't like..." Nami growled, before shaking her head and smiling at Zoro. "But thanks for the sentiment anyway."

"So how are we going to do this?" Luffy asked, from where he was still standing by the tiller. Nami waved a hand at him indicating he should wait then raced back into her room before coming back with a map.

The others crowded around the tiller as she laid the map out on the ground where Luffy could see it without moving away from the wheel. "We're here I think," Nami said staring up into the daytime sky then over the sides.

Noting the movement of the water below the ship and then calculating how far they could've gone in the night before she moved the stone marker she was using to mark their ship's position slightly. "It will take us three day's sailing to get there. We're well away from the Baratie, to the east of the route we would need to have used if we were going from there to Logue Town."

"But technically speaking Conomi's closer to Logue Town than the Baratie?" Luffy asked frowning as he took in the map.

"We are, but as I said were quite a ways off the beaten path," Nami cautioned.

"But even so in total terms you're close."

Nami nodded, and Makino frowned at Luffy before she got it. "There's supposed to be a strong Marine presence in Logue Town isn't there, a commodore from what I found out on the Baratie, though I only found out his rank and name," She said slowly. "There's no way they could have heard rumors of the very least."

"That's part of why we never wanted to go to the Marines. That, and my mother was part of the Marines of course before she ran off after saving me and Nojiko when we were babies. She couldn't do anything to Arlong, so a lot of the townsfolk just sort of figured he was too strong unless we could get some of the big-name Marines to come, but **no** Marines have **ever** come by, not once since Arlong showed up." Nami replied, her voice an alloy of bitterness and grief.

Luffy growled, and the others could hear the wood of the steering wheel crunch under his grip before he pushed himself away, nodding to Makino to take over. They noticed that the two spokes he had gripped had shattered in his hands, but didn't comment. "Right," he growled, "when we get to Logue Town I'm going to have a talk with whoever is in charge there. For now, why don't we just sail straight in and beat the ever-living crap out of this Arlong and his crew? I'm not a big fan of overthinking things."

Nami looked at him for a moment and he groaned, clapping a hand to his forehead. "I can't believe I just gave you that big an opening."

"You did, but I'll be magnanimous and not take it," Nami said poking him in the leg from where she still sat next to the map before going on seriously. "As to what we should do...we should probably go out of our ways slightly to come around the island like this. I'd like to see my sister before we move in on Arlong. The worst thing we could do is to attack Arlong Park, only to find that Arlong was elsewhere at the time."

"That's actually a pretty good point," Luffy allowed nodding his head. "For now though, isn't the wind picking up a little?"

Nami looked up in surprise at Luffy having felt that before she could, but she nodded quickly getting to her feet, pointing a finger up at into the air as she felt the wind's direction. Johnny, Yosaku, Zoro and Makino moved off to take over the sales, while Sanji still knelt down in front of Nami. "Your plans are amazing Nami-swan, a true sign of the brilliance of your mind!"

With that he hopped to his feet, about to race off to help the others, but then paused looking at Luffy. "By the way, where is Ranko-chan?"

"Dealing with a feminine issue," Luffy lied glibly. "Trust me, you do not want to be around her right now."

Sanji almost visibly shivered, thinking of Ranko, who might be as strong as Luffy had proven to be, with that particular issue.

"It's the stuff of nightmares," Luffy supplied without prompting and watched Sanji shot off like a rocket to help the others.

With that Nami and Luffy were left alone on the aft deck, and Nami leaned in nudging him lightly with her shoulder. Part of her wanted to thank Luffy again, but Zoro might have been rude but he was also right. She really wasn't the sort to do the whole weepy emotional thing. So she said the next best thing that came to mind. "By the way, when are you going to tell Sanji about your curse?"

"Probably before we get to Conomi. I want to time it perfectly," Luffy said with a grin that was almost but not quite pure evil.

"I'll have my camera ready," Nami replied with a laugh before she started to bark out orders.

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"Captain Buggy sir, Lady Alvida ma'am, I don't mean to sound ungrateful or anything," said a sort of wheezing voice. Anyone listening to it would be able to tell the speaker was injured. "But could one of you tell me why we're making for Logue Town, which is known as one of the strongest Marine bases in East Blue!?"

"Simple Usopp, we're looking for a certain band of bounty hunters, a group strong enough that no doubt they'll be making their way to the Grand Line eventually. And the only way to the Grand Line is through Logue Town up Reverse Mountain." Said captain Buggy, before pouring a glass of wine for his companion.

She was a truly beautiful woman, standing about his own height with curves that could have been designed to inflame a man's desires with an unblemished face of an angel, marked only by red lipstick and framed by cascading tresses of black hair. "Agreed, if they'll be anywhere, they'll be there. And we can finally have our revenge." Even the woman's voice was gorgeous, a light alto that almost oozed sensuality.

As the pirate captain who had saved his life and the admittedly drop-dead gorgeous woman who had come in with a suborned former marine ship shared a laugh, Usopp once again wondered if he might have been a little too hasty in his decision to not try to return to his home town. The life at sea was turning out to be a lot more fraught than he had imagined.

OOOOOOO

That night found Sanji making his first full meal on the *Inglorious Bastard* talking to Makino as she moved around the kitchen helping out. "You really don't have to do this Makino-chan," he said, looking at her with hearts in his eyes, literally. "A woman of your beauty should only sit and let me wait on you hand and foot!"

Fighting to not roll her eyes Makino sighed. Sanji's attitude had been amusing at first, but since he evidently acted like this to every woman he met, it lost a lot of its impact. "You really shouldn't hit on someone who's older than you Sanji."

"Bah, I won't hear it!" Sanji said turning away from the meal he was preparing to grab Makino's hand in his, bringing it to his lips and kissing it gently. "You're not old, you are simply a flower that has reached its most beautiful time of life!"

Again Makino fought not to roll her eyes. "Sanji, what is your dream? Luffy said you had one, but we didn't hear you actually talk about it."

"I want to find a legendary ocean called All Blue," Sanji said seriously, turning back to his meal. "It's a sort of Mecca for chefs where all the fish of every ocean gathers. I think it might be the oceans by Raftel, but no one knows for certain."

"That sounds both ambitious and quite fascinating," Makino replied. *So we have a chef who wants to find the greatest ocean of them all, a swordsman who wants to be the greatest swordsman in the world, Luffy who wants to be the Pirate King, and Nami.* She looked over at Nami, who had just come in, taking a seat at the table they were using for meals, wincing occasionally from a training session with Luffy. *Luffy said Arlong had taken away her dream, but I wonder what it was in the first place.*

That had been a part of Nami's story that Luffy hadn't told anyone else, thinking it wasn't his place to do so. Nami had always loved maps and navigation, having become interested in them at an early age and finding that she had a true talent for it. She had dreamed of travelling, going to every island and ocean and making a map of the entire world. But while Arlong had gone out of his way to help her, having seen the talent the girl already had which was beyond any navigator he had ever seen, he had also basically ruined her dream for her, making it seem as if her ability was a curse.

Deciding not to ask just yet, Makino turned back to Sanji. "Hmm, well my dreams a little different. I don't want to become anything or find a place like your All Blue. Instead I want to find a single person: Red-haired Shanks. Have you heard of him?"

Sanji had been smoking and working on dinner at the same time, somehow keeping the ash from his cigarette out of the food which was just as amazing as his actual cooking skills in Makino's mind. Now he choked on his cigarette, gasping and thumping his chest as he turned quickly to look at Makino, his eyes bulging. "Why do you want to find one of the Yonkou!?"

Makino laughed. It was not a nice sound. It was cold, high, and possibly the scariest thing that Sanji had ever heard. Her eyes seemed to become pits of hell, and her fingers turned black, like Luffy's arms had been when fighting Hawkeyes. "It's personal," she said in a voice that reminded Sanji for some reason of the clanking of stones against one another.

However Sanji couldn't stop himself. "If that is what you want my lady, then I will help you gladly," he said vowing quickly, both as part of his routine and so he didn't have to look Makino in the scary, **scary** face any longer. "After all, the cook of a Pirate King should be able to beat up a mere Yonkou shouldn't he?"

Both his listeners laughed at that, and he grinned as Makino returned to normal.

A second later, Sanji looked up from his work putting the finishing touches on dinner as 'Ranko' came in yawning and scratching at her stomach. She was wearing short pants and a loose white shirt which somehow still emphasized her curves, giving her a very sexy girl next door look, if Sanji was any judge. He almost swooned, then did swoon as she moved over to him, leaning over one of his arms and sniffing at the food. "That smells great, I don't suppose I could have some now before you serve everyone else?" she asked.

"Of course my beauty!" Sanji shouted, quickly twirling away and whipping up a plate for her holding it out as if he was presenting it to royalty. "I hope this pleases your delicate palate."

"My palate's not that delicate, but thank you Sanji," 'Ranko' said dryly.

With that she moved over to the table, sitting down, leaning over the table to eat. She didn't seem to notice she was thrusting out chest but Sanji's eyes almost couldn't help but track down to them, ostensibly to pull a bowl of fruit towards her.

Then from beside 'Ranko', Nami splashed her with the cup of hot water that she had been hiding underneath the table since she sat down. "And while you got the flirting thing going on pretty well Sanji," Luffy said as he leaned back up. "I have to tell you you're not my type." The two of them had decided to get this out of the way now last night, figuring that Sanji would suspect something the more he didn't see 'Ranko' around.

For a moment it was as if Sanji had turned to stone, his eyes which had heretofore been hearts as he stared down at 'Ranko's' chest freezing in their bugged out position. Then he seemed to crumble to the side, fainting dead away.

"That was magnificent." Nami said as she put down her camera as she broke out into laughter along with Luffy while Makino giggled from her place across from them.

"I'm here, wait for me!" Zoro said smashing open the door into the training room. He looked down at Sanji's comatose form and cursed before glaring up at Luffy. "God dammit!"

It took them a few moments to revive the cook then about 15 minutes to explain Luffy's curse to the now gently rocking and possibly scarred for life Sanji. He didn't look up from his position on the floor, his arms crossed over his face shaking his head again and again as Luffy explained the curse. The others were silent watching this with various levels of amusement until Luffy fell silent, waiting for Sanji to come back to himself.

He did so slowly, looking up at Luffy with soulful eyes. "Why did you do that to me?! I, I, am so **traumatized** right now! I never ever want to meet the person who did that to you!"

Shakily Sanji got to his feet, moving over to light up another cigarette from the stove taking a long inhalation before blowing it out and shaking himself. "On the other hand," he murmured as if to himself before flinging water into his new captain's face, staring again at Luffy's female form as Luffy irritably wiped water out of her face. "If you could somehow remove it after you had used it to get to a certain level of experience..."

Sanji didn't finish speaking before Luffy's kick caught in the diaphragm doubling him over. "Pervert! Why the hell would I do that, that's so disturbing on so many levels!" Luffy didn't like this. Sanji had, in that one sentence, turned the disturbed train on him.

Johnny, Yosaku and Nami all looked at him in shock and Nami asked incredulously, "Wait, you mean you haven't taken advantage of that form!?"

"Sure I have," Luffy said cocking her head in confusion. "You saw me just now. I use it to mooch food, hide my identity, and fool people. What else would it be good for?"

"That is kind of disturbing," Nami said shaking his head. "I mean I wouldn't want to be stuck with a guy's body, but I think I'd probably not be able to stop myself experimenting with it."

"Huh? What do you mean?" Luffy asked, still cocking his head, while inside he was rolling his eyes.

Makino did so visibly from where she had finished setting out dinner having taken over that task during Sanji's freak out moment. "I doubt Luffy has ever even done... that... as a guy."

She didn't like to think about it, after all Luffy was her younger brother in many ways. But to the best of her knowledge, Luffy had never really shown an interest in romance or sex or anything of that nature. He understood it, and she had caught him once or twice blushing when he looked at a few girls, so she knew he had a sex drive, but that was about it. It showed a frightening amount of both control and focus to Makino's mind.

"Again, that is somewhat disturbing." Nami replied drolly, looking at Luffy who was still looking at her quizzically.

"Why?" Zoro grunted. "Who has time for that kind of thing when they could be training to get better?"

Everyone else in the room stared at Luffy and Zoro, then looked at one another sharing a thought wondering if abstaining from such activities had anything to do with how scary the two of them were. *All that pent-up frustration...* Nami wondered. Even she had experimented a few times after hitting puberty, though she had done her best to hide her interest in that direction from Arlong and his crew.

"Let's leave this topic right now," Makino said cheerfully. But there was steel in her tone, and the others all shook their heads and nodded as one sitting down to Sanji's wonderful meal.

The rest of the trip was uneventful for the next two days despite the *Inglorious Bastard* being its normal fat pig in a washtub occasionally during a brief squall. But the three new hands helped tremendously.

Luffy and the others were amused to find that Sanji still couldn't quite get over the fact that Luffy was able to change, or rather that he wasn't two different people. Whenever he saw Luffy's female form, he would somehow forget that 'Ranko' and Luffy were one and the same, going into his whole flirtatious spiel with her like he did with Makino and Nami for a few seconds before reality reasserted itself in his mind. Luffy had used this twice already to get the same quality of food that the two girls were being given whenever they even mentioned being peckish or whenever Sanji thought they needed to drink something.

It was on the third day that something interesting happened. The crew was sitting down to a meal outside in the bright sunlight, and Sanji was talking to Nami about the fruits available on Conomi when the sea in front of the ship erupted. Out from the depths came... a giant cow.

Luffy blinked then blinked again. "What the hell am I seeing? I mean it's the size of a sea monster, but it looks like a cow."

"It does look strangely tasty," Zoro said, clicking one of his swords in its hilt. He'd replaced the two shattered ones from their armory and eight more since in training with Luffy over the past few days. The two of them and Sanji had trained every chance they could. Nami had in turn begun training with Makino, her and she had activated a rudimentary level of Kami-E but she lacked the hitting power Luffy felt she needed so had to learn how to be more precise.

"That looks like Mohmoo," said Nami, looking up at it and shaking her head. She used to be so terrified of that animal, but the others were taking its arrival in such a blasé manner she just couldn't work up the energy. "It belongs to Arlong, he uses Mohmoo to terrorize the few ships that came to our islands and the coastline occasionally."

"So should we kill it?" Zoro asked looking at the giant beast thoughtfully as it loomed over their ship. It was at least a full story taller than the top of the *Inglorious*

Bastard's mainmasts or at least the portion sticking out of the water was. "Because I agree with Luffy, that thing looks like steak-to-be to me."

"Morons!" Sanji said, breathing deeply from his cigarette. "Whatever it looks like, it's still a fish, no red meat for you until we get to land. If you wanted some, you should've stolen some from the shitty geezer back on the *Baratie*."

"Yeah but if we'd done that you would've tried to 'shitty' kill us," Luffy said with a grin at his cook, who smirked back at him before they turned their attention back to the sea monster.

It seemed to have had enough of being ignored at this point and roared like an angry steer, diving down towards him. Its cow mouth opened showing fangs since Sanji was right, whatever it looked like it was still a sea monster, and a meat eater.

"Besides," Sanji said, stepping towards the creature holding out a large plate of seared tuna on a bed of tomato and basil leaves, olives and other things. "It's just hungry."

The beast paused in its attack, sniffing at the food, then opened its maw again, slowly leaning in to take this offering. Just as it was about to take a bite however, Sanji quickly twisted away, his leg rocketing out to slam into the side of the creature's head with enough force to knock it out entirely of the water and into the air, unconscious before it slammed back down, sinking quickly.

"What was that for!?" Nami exclaimed. She had been honestly touched by Sanji being nice to the dumb creature and his attack had caught her and the others completely by surprise.

"It was going to bite me Nami-swan," Sanji said calmly. "I'll feed anyone man or beast but if they're going to try to eat me at the same time as they try my food, that's where I draw the line."

Around them the rest of the crew began to laugh, and Nami groaned shaking her head. "You're going to fit right in with this crew, you're certifiable!"

"And what does that say about you Nami-chan?" Makino asked with a smirk.

"That I've been led astray by good company?" Nami asked batting her eye-lashes at the older woman to the general laughter of the rest of the crew.

Leaning back in her chair to stare up into the gorgeous blue sky above them Nami couldn't help but grin. This, she decided hearing the crew all around her laugh and joke with one another, this was the life. *The only thing that would make this better is Arlong already being taken care of, but that will come soon enough*, Nami thought evilly.

The next day thanks to Nami's navigation skills the large ship skirted around the archipelago for a time well out to sea, too far for any lookout to see before they came back in on the main island from the other side, docking the massive ship at Cocoyashi's small jetty. Surprisingly however there was no one nearby to notice their arrival.

After tying the ship to the quay and dropping both anchors the crew was ready to go ashore with Nami leading the way, Luffy striding beside her. The others came after them quickly save for Johnny and Yosaku who had unanimously been voted into the role of ship guarding duty for the duration of their time with the crew.

As they moved into further into the town they heard a commotion in the distance. Looking at one another they sped up, moving through the small alleys between houses to come to the main thoroughfare through the town where the commotion was taking place. Lots of the locals had gathered there, lining the street from one end to another their faces sad, and looking down or otherwise beaten down.

In the center of the street stood three fish-men, facing an older man with heavy scars crisscrossing his face and for some reason a pinwheel stuck into his hat. Next to him was a large pile of swords and rifles, most of them looking as if they had seen better days but still usable. "Genzo-san?" Nami muttered. "What's going on here?"

"The pinwheel is kind of funny," Luffy muttered, his eyes taking in the scene. "I bet he's great with kids. They don't know whether to be a scared of his face or laugh at it."

"That," Makino paused, one finger raised, before pausing, cocking her head to one side. "That actually isn't a bad strategy."

The group fell silent for a moment, watching, waiting for something to happen. At the same time Luffy reached out with his limited Sensing type Haki, making certain there were no other fish-men around.

As he was trying to do that, one of the fish-men spoke up. "So you admit to hoarding all these weapons?"

"That's right!" said the old man with his arms crossed in front of him as he stared up at them from where he was sitting on the ground in front of what must be his house. "It was all me!"

"You know the penalty for having weapons right?" said one of the other fish-men, laughing. "We're going to have to make an example of you now."

"Do whatever you wish to me!" the older man said. "Simply leave the rest of these folk out of it. I was the one, no one else knew about the weapons."

The three fish-men merely laughed, and Luffy nodded, having determined there weren't any other fish-men nearby and coming fully back to the here and now. "That's about enough I think. Are any of these three important?"

"No," Nami said shaking her head even as she was glaring at the scene from behind the large mass of her fellow villagers. "I bet these three were just sent out to lord it over the locals, or maybe hunt down a rumor if Genzo was really hoarding weapons."

"Sanji, Zoro, one of you to want to do the honors?" Luffy asked, pushing his hat's brim up with one finger as he glared at the fish-faced bullies.

Before he finished speaking Zoro and Sanji both raced forward, with Sanji absentmindedly jumping under some kind of pellet ball shot from a little boy who had just ducked out from underneath several people's legs to take a shot at the fish-men.

The three fish-men turned to the sound of running feet but before they could even speak it was all over. The first one got his head nearly caved in by a kick, the second's chest was sliced badly, his blood spurting everywhere, and the third was both stabbed and kicked.

"That was my kill!" Sanji and Zoro shouted as one, glaring at one another. Then they paused and said again as one "Are you blind, he was clearly dead before you hit him!"

Nami groaned shaking your head. "You know, I realize that you're stronger than Arlong, and I realize that in the great scheme of things the crew that has been dominating our lives for so long isn't really that big a deal, but seriously!" she shouted to the boys. "You're going to argue over kills?!"

The townsfolk watched this in shock, and Nami walked through them, with Luffy beside her. He watched as people made way for her, looking at her in disgust almost as if they wanted to spit on her, but stopped themselves.

The only exception was a blue-haired girl who had grabbed the young boy, pulling him back into the crowd, and Genzo, the old man. The two of them were simply staring at the newcomers and what they had just done. "Nami what, who are these boys!?" The blue haired girl asked.

"Hey sis!" Nami said, hugging the girl, which the other girl returned quickly.

"Oy, less of the boys please," Luffy muttered, shaking his head.

A second later Sanji went into a twirl towards the older girl. "I see now that beauty runs in the family for you are as beautiful as your younger sister madam. Never fear, we are here to save your village from this Arlong character."

"Do you know what you've done!?" Genzo shouted at the boys who had just taken down three of the fish-men and then argued about it. "If those fish-men don't report back, Arlong himself will come and he'll wipe us all out in retaliation!"

"Not if we do unto him first," Luffy said smirking at the older man, though the expression had little humor in it. "We've already promised to do that. Haven't we, Nami?"

Nami grinned, grabbing his arm with one of hers and pulling him over. "Genzo, Nojiko, everyone. This is Monkey D. Luffy and his crew."

Genzo cocked his head as did a few of the older people there. Disgust was still clear on a few faces, but it was slowly clearing, as they realized that Nami wasn't here as part of Arlong's crew, but with an entirely new one. "That name sounds familiar to me..." Genzo muttered.

"Let it sink in," Nami said holding up a hand to Luffy and Makino. "I want to see how long it takes them."

"Considering we actually had to spell it out for you that doesn't seem fair," Luffy said shaking his head.

To his surprise however Genzo got it quickly. "No! You can't be related to... are you a marine? But dressed like that?"

"Wait," Luffy said holding up a hand. "What's wrong with the way I dress?"

"You're a pirate," Nami said simply. "That's what's wrong with the way you dress. And yes, Luffy really is related to Garp, he's Garp's grandson apparently."

"What the hell is the grandson of that hero of the Marines doing being a pirate?!" Genzo said as more than one face in the crowd showed the same amount of astonishment.

Luffy smirked, pulling off his hat and looking down at it for a moment before looking up at the older man, the gleam in his eyes almost making Genzo step back. "Chasing a dream and keeping a promise."

"...I don't know what promise you're thinking of keeping lad, but you've stepped into it here," Genzo said after a moment gesturing down of the bodies. "You might be strong but..."

"He isn't just strong," Nami interjected waving Genzo into silence. "They're all strong. We're here to free Conomi of Arlong!"

Genzo stared at Nami. Nami, who had suffered the most out of all of them, who had slaved and lied and cheated and turned her back on everyone to play her part while at the same time trying to buy Cocoyashi village so that Arlong wouldn't be able to threaten it any longer. She'd hidden it well, but all of the townsfolk had known

about her scheme practically from the get-go. They'd simply seen no other recourse but to go along with it, so cowed by the fish-men were they, so they too had acted out their rolls. Now here she was, saying this.

"Are you telling the truth?" he asked, reaching out to grasp Nami's hand. "Are you really telling the truth? Are you saying **you** are putting your trust in these boys, Nami?"

Nami looked at him, squeezing his hands back as she nodded her head seriously. "**Yes!**"

Genzo licked his lips and looked around at the crowd, who were all looking at him for leadership, confused, worried and yet at the same time hopeful, having seen two of the boys deal with three fish-men like they were not even a threat at all. He was sort of the town mayors/sheriff, and had served as their leader for a long time.

They all looked at him then from him to Nami and then one of them spoke up, the little boy from earlier. "Wait, I thought we were supposed to hate the witch?!"

Nami twitched but her sister laughed, throwing an arm around her. "Did you really think that we all didn't know what you were doing Nami?" she said softly. "Everyone's known for a long while."

At that Nami looked around her in shock, her eyes tearing up as all the villagers nodded as one, smiling at her for the first time in years. Genzo chuckled, laying a hand on her shoulder. "You're a good girl Nami and a good actor, but we've known about the burden you took on. While I'm happy that your friends have decided to try and free us, I also am glad you won't have to bear that weight any longer."

Genzo turned to Luffy seriously, looking at the boy. "But I don't think you know how strong the fish-men really are. We managed to get a word out recently to a marine base and they sent a galleon and a full crew of marines, but the fish-men sunk their ship and killed them all so easily. And even if you could beat the rest of the crew like you did these three, there's Arlong. He's a monster on a whole other level. I can tell by the look in your eye you want to try, but frankly, I'd be happier if you just took Nami and ran..."

He was interrupted at that point both by Luffy laughing coldly and Nami shaking her head furiously. "Not going to happen!"

"She's right. Arlong might be strong and all, but even if he was really a Grand Line level pirate I'd still want to bash his head in because he made Nami cry." Nami flushed as Luffy said that, trying desperately to not let her sister catch her eye.

Luffy was oblivious to this as he went on. "Now, why don't we get this party on the road?"

OOOOOOO

At the same time Luffy and his crew were talking to the villagers, the target of their ire was talking to a Marine captain who looked remarkably like a cross between a mouse and a weasel given human form. "Yes, your information on that galleon coming our ways was spot on, almost as good as Nami's map of the ocean floor. You've earned your money again Nezumi."

"Che che che happy to be of service of course Arlong-san. You scratch my back, I scratch yours. But tell me, why do you want me to confiscate that girl's treasure?"

"Heheh, Nami thinks she's so clever, that her defiance is so well hidden. But she isn't as smart as she thinks she is, especially if she thinks that I would **ever** let her go. She'll keep on working for me for the rest of her life, but that last bit of defiance needs to be crushed. It serves no purpose now, especially since she's been gone so long this time." Arlong laughed. "A cat needs to be broken in a bit so it knows not to wander off."

"Hhmmm, you really are an unpleasant sort aren't you Arlong-san, to so shatter the dreams of freedom of that poor girl che che che," Nezumi said, chuckling his mouse-like chuckle before turning away. "Well, who am I to argue. I will return here with your 80% of the cut after you send word that she's either left again or the coast is clear otherwise."

"Of course take your time, we can't let anyone even here on Conomi realize we have an arrangement. I trust you to give me my share of the money Nezumi when

you return. You know what I'll do to you and your 16th branch if you don't." Arlong said, his shark teeth flashing.

Nezumi shuddered but moved off leading a squad of ten marines, heading overland to the small hidden cove where they had anchored their schooner. They couldn't be seen to interact with Arlong and his crew after all.

Halfway there, the back scout came rushing up to Nezumi. "Captain, some people are on the trail heading to Arlong Park. One of them is the orange haired girl the fish-man mentioned."

"Hmm... interesting. We'll have to come back and see what's going on, but for now let's head on to Cocoyashi." Nezumi mused. "Let's go overland for now though, cut through the woods straight there just in case something dangerous is going on..."

OOOOOOO

"That's a big tower, think he's overcompensating for something?" Sanji quipped, before taking a drag from his cigarette, cocking an eyebrow at Luffy and Zoro in possibly the first real moment of solidarity all three of them had shared outside of training since they met.

Luffy laughed from where he had just given Nami his hat to look after as Zoro snorted, wanting to make a quip about that taking someone to know one, but refraining. Nami and Makino giggled before Nami frowned over at Genzo, the doctor and the two other chosen witnesses before looking at her sister. "I understand wanting to see this first hand, but I don't want any of you getting too close, okay? Let those three do the fighting."

"Oy, you're gonna be fighting too Nami," Luffy said looking over his shoulder. When she made to protest he turned to face her, wagging a finger in her face. "Do you really just want to stand there and watch as someone else fights to free you from Arlong?"

That brought Nami up short, and she nodded reluctant agreement. Besides, she was part of this crew too. "Alright, Makino and I will take team one of the officers, there's three of them. If you all can cut down the rest of the crew and handle the last two?"

"Hmm, I would rather have handled the rest of the crew, but alright." Makino nodded agreement, pulling out her handgun and loading it quickly. "Remind me however that we need to start training you further on something beyond that staff of yours Nami-chan. A distant weapon and a hand to hand style I think."

Nami nodded, wondering why everyone in the crew, even she, was simply assuming that she would be joining the crew full time. After all, the whole reason she had even become a thief and even gone to sea was to gather the money needed to buy her village so Arlong couldn't harm them anymore. With him gone, she wouldn't have any reason to keep going, would she?

She remembered all the talk about dreams, when she told Luffy that night she had confessed everything about how she had always dreamed about maps and traveling the world. But she was too old for dreams, right? *But isn't it his dream that's made Luffy so strong?*

Setting that thought aside Nami came back to the here and now only to sweatdrop at the sight of Luffy and Zoro playing rock paper scissors, with Sanji pouting nearby. "Yes!" Zoro hissed before she could ask what they were playing for, holding up his hand formed into scissors, or as he put it twin swords, triumphantly.

Makino leaned in, whispering. "Zoro gets to take out the rest of the crew along with, Hachi was it? The sword using octopus?"

"Yes," Nami said slowly, shaking her head at the idea of playing a silly game like that to decide who they would take on in a fight.

Luffy joined Sanji in pouting but with that sorted out the group made their way towards the large doorway which led into Arlong Park, ignoring the goggling eyes of the four villagers chosen by Genzo to accompany them as witnesses or the snickering Nojiko. The blue skinned girl seemed to have grasped the idea this crew was really strong enough to deal with Arlong far quicker than the rest, and now was just amused at their tension-draining antics.

This was proven a second later as Ranma reared back then punched the doorway, just one to each door. The first flew off its hinges flinging it through into Arlong

Park. The second joined it an instant later, slamming into the gathering of fish-men beyond. An even dozen went down, smashed and broken by the wooden and metal doors coming at them at speed.

Sitting in a chair that looked a cross between a thrown and a lounge chair from a hotel sat the fish-man Luffy figured was Arlong. He was a larger than the rest of his crew, though it was hard to tell with him sitting down he looked broader in the shoulders and at least a foot taller than even the tallest of his followers. His skin was blue, with a wide sneering mouth full of shark teeth under a long saw-pointed nose, just like a saw-tooth shark. He wore what Luffy/Ranma thought of as a Hawaiian shirt and shorts, matching the luau-like feel of the rest of Arlong Park's interior and making the dimensional traveler recall a certain crazy principal for a moment.

Shaking that thought off Luffy walked forward as his crew came in behind him, spreading out. Cracking his neck he looked at the gathered fish-men then to the one sitting in the throne. "You Arlong?"

In response Arlong leaned back glaring at the interlopers, his eyes finding Nami quickly. "Who wants to know?"

"Monkey D. Luffy, future Pirate King, and Nami's captain." With that Luffy disappeared from the sight of all save Arlong and Zoro, reappearing with his fist smashing with steel shattering force into Arlong's face. "More importantly her friend!"

Arlong found himself lifted up out of his chair and hurled through the air into the far wall of Arlong Park by the force of the blow, his teeth shattering, only his being a fish-man and with superior strength and in particular a jaw stronger than normal Fishmen kept said jaw from joining them. *Damn human! That punch felt like one from one of my former captains!*

"Arlong-san!" Shrieked more than one of his crew, before racing forward to attack Luffy. "How dare you strike Arlong-san like that! Get him!"

They never reached their target. Instead they found a bandana clad swordsman in their way, holding a sword in each hand and another in his teeth. "Tatsumaki!" Zoro growled around the hilt he was holding in his teeth, twirling in place and sending more than half the Fish-men into the sky with the air cyclone attack, the closest of whom had been cut to ribbons by his blades.

"Damn you, you foolish humans! Chew, grab Nami, she's the one behind all this!" Ordered a fish-man who looked like a cross between a man and a manta ray. "Hachi, deal with the swordsmen! I'll take on this fool before Arlong-san becomes too angry and goes on rampage!"

"How dare you threaten Nami-chan you shitty fish, I'll fillet you!" Shouted the blonde intruder, and the manta-ray grunted, using his arm to block a kick that sent him skidding backwards.

Chew, a fish-men with a mouth that stuck out like no fish Luffy could bring to mind shot out a ball of water from his mouth as fast as bullet towards Nami, but Makino quickly raised her handgun, firing a bullet of her own. The water was intercepted, and Nami raced forward, her staff coming together in her hands.

"Fool girl, you might've convinced this lot to come and die for you but I would've thought you would know that no mere human can stand against one of the superior fish-men race!" Chew bellowed reaching forward to grab Nami. Her maps were after all still valuable, which meant they couldn't kill her like they could her friends.

To his surprise however Nami adroitly dodged, moving around the blow like a piece of paper in the wind. An instant later, her staff found one of his eyes, and he howled in pain. No matter how tough he was getting hit there hurt. "You stupid bitcGAHH!" The next second a bullet from Makino's handgun smacked into his chest, causing him to stumble backwards. It didn't penetrate his superior Fishman skin, but it hurt like all blazes.

As this was going on the last of Arlong's officers had attacked Zoro, trying to stop the swordsmen from cutting his crew to pieces. It was admittedly a little late, since Zoro had by that point added ten more to his tally, while Ranma had taken out five on his slow, methodical tramp towards where Arlong was pulling himself slowly out of the rubble.

Unlike the other fish-men, this one, an octopus type with eight octopus tentacle arms each holding a sword, seemed to be almost enjoying this. "I see, I see, heheheh, you've tried to overcome your natural disadvantage by adding a third sword,

but sorry, you can't match my blades in number or in weight! Each of my swords weighs eight hundred pounds, and I have eight of them to your three!"

"You know nothing of the weight of my swords!" Zoro snarled slamming into and smashing the Octopus's blades to either side before nearly cutting at Hachi's body forcing Hachi to back off, blocking his attempt at a headbutt.

The two swordsmen began to exchange blows as Luffy reached Arlong, who had belatedly noticed that the brat who had hit him seemed to know Rokushiki. How else would Nami kami-e have learned it after all. *If he knows some of the others, this could be a tough fight. Best to take it seriously from the get go.* "So what did Nami promise you? Money, her body? I'm curious," he said getting into a fighting stance.

"She's my friend, I'm kicking your ass because you made her cry Arlong, nothing more!" Luffy growled, and disappeared hopping into the air. "Rankyaku!"

Arlong growled, gathering a handful of water into his palm and shooting it out quickly to intersect the air cutter. The two attacks slammed into one another in midair between the two combatants and Arlong turned, his other palm barely intercepting a punch that would have caught him in the ribs. He didn't block the kick which scythed his legs out from under him, but was able to roll away from the heel stomp which cratered the concrete where his head had been.

A return kick was blocked, his foot grabbed and Arlong found himself once again in the air hurled into and through the wall of Arlong Park. Grunting in pain, Arlong snarled, reaching further into the rubble to pull out his massive sword. *Shit this kid is good! Where in the hells did someone this strong come from here in East Blue! Still, he's a mere human and a brat, he'll make a mistake and I will show him the superiority of the Fishman race!*

For his part Luffy was somewhat impressed. Arlong knew about the Rokushiki that was certain, and was able to counter them somewhat. The rest of his crew though either had bought into his 'superior race' Kool-Aid, or were too busy trying to survive to analyze Luffy's crew and their fighting ability. Luffy took a brief moment to look over the fight, noticing that the two girls were having some trouble, but also what they were planning and had to smile before turning back to his own part of the battle as Arlong swung his saw-tooth sword at Luffy.

Chew finally managed to catch Nami's staff. It shattered in his grip but she again she dodged his follow-on punch, though that was fine with him. Instead of trying to attack the witch again Chew dodged to one side, rolling on the ground and sprinting forward, dodging bullets as he went. *Yes, the one with green hair is a pure distance fighter, take her out, then I can join Kuroobi to kill the blond one, he seems to be having the most problems between him and Hachi.*

This was true, as Zoro's wounds were starting to catch up with his exertions. Mihawk might not have killed Zoro outright, but he had surely given him a wound that would have killed any normal man within a few hours even with medical aid. Hachi kept on trying to take advantage of this, but couldn't break Zoro's defense to attack his bleeding chest.

Ignoring that for now Chew closed on Makino grinning evilly as she tried desperately to reload her handgun. "Got you now bitch! This'll teach you take on a superior fish-man!"

"How exactly are you superior?" Makino quipped, just as her fist turned black and she thrust forward. The Haki infused punch didn't last very long, indeed you would have had to be looking at her fist to have noticed it at all, but it lasted long enough to catch Chew in the chest, shattering his ribs and hurling him back to land in the water of the small dock that led out into an ocean.

"CHEWW! You bitch I'll kill you!" shouted Kuroobi only to turn around quickly trying to block another blow from his own opponent.

"Don't you dare say such things to the lovely Makino-swan!" Sanji bellowed, just as his kick crunched into Kuroobi's side. "Mutton Shot!"

Kuroobi gasped in agony as he was launched through the air like Arlong had been earlier, though even faster and on a far straighter trajectory. He was already unconscious however before he cleared the rocky outcrop separating the ocean from one side of the dock.

Luffy laughed as he dodged another blow from Arlong's sword, launching his own punch which Arlong dodged under. "And then there were two."

"Damn you!" Arlong shouted, literally seeing red, his eyes going bloodshot. Like a berserker his anger seemed to fuel him somewhat, but Ranma didn't care. He matched his opponent blow for blow his Tekkai up to the task of letting his hands and feet block the saw tooth sword. "You, what've you done to my crew! When I kill you I'm going to enjoy killing your crew one after another!"

Arlong was then forced to clench his teeth as a kick caught his chin flinging him up into the air. Arlong twisted however, slashing down at Luffy before he could follow up, then dropped his sword, jumping back into the water. *I'll show you damn it, I'll show you how powerful we are!*

Luffy's foot shattered the sword halfway up its length and he glared into the water. "Come out little fishy, I'm not done with you yet!"

"Damn it he's really got no fear does he?" Genzo muttered, the first word he or any of the other locals had been able to speak as they watched the fish-men, the titans who had dominated their lives for so long, be utterly destroyed.

"Shark on Dart!" Arlong shouted coming out of the water faster than a bullet, faster than a Rankyaku straight at Luffy, his nose pointing straight at Luffy. It was so fast and so sudden Luffy had no chance but to use his Tekkai to take the blow, and found himself blasted off his feet into the tower behind him slamming into and through the outer wall on the second story of the building.

"Luffy!" Nami shouted worriedly making to rush forward, but Sanji stepped in her way. Before he could speak a sudden shout from nearby took their attention, and they turned to see Zoro slicing Hachi down, the octopus' swords shattered along with Zoro's own.

Makino reached the swordsman before he could fall, his clothing and the bandages underneath soaked with so much blood it looked like he had been sprayed by a fountain. Catching him she gently lowered the heftier Zoro to the ground as she quickly turned her head, shouting, "Is there a doctor here!? He needs help!"

The others quickly moved to join the downed swordsman, though Nami kept on glancing to the tower, where the sounds of battle could still be heard. *Please be all right Luffy!* It didn't occur to Nami then, nor would it for some time, but at that mo-

ment she hadn't thought about what would happen to her, or even her sister and fellow villagers. Her concern had all been for the young man who had held out his hand to her in friendship regardless of her harsh words to him or her lies.

Inside the tower Luffy had been slammed into a few interior walls before he could bring himself to a stop, somehow flipping himself up and over Arlong's body. Arlong tried to reach for him, astonished the boy's Tekkai had been able to sustain his Shark on Dart attack. Arlong's nose had only cut into his chest slightly instead of skewering him.

His attempt to grab Luffy failed and a punch from Luffy slammed Arlong into the floor of the room they had found themselves in. Arlong rolled away once more then turning like a spring to bring up an uppercut but Luffy had jumped away, putting some distance between them.

Luffy looked around them, frowning as he noticed maps everywhere. Maps covered the walls, maps were stacked against every wall, hanging from ropes here and there. There was a drying table to one side, another desk along the outer wall under a tiny window with an empty lamp and stacks of maps or blank parchment and a thick, blood soaked quill, the kind a young child would use. "What, what is all this..." Luffy muttered, his voice low as he picked up the pen.

"Heh, this is Nami's precious map room! Hahahah, you know it too don't you?" Arlong said with a laugh as he stood up wiping the bit of blood he'd gotten on his nose from his attempt to skewer Ranma off. "That girl, her skill at mapping is phenomenal. With her maps of the sea routes and the ocean floors I will be able to conquer all of East Blue soon. Her skill is necessary for my ambition! That's why I'll never let her go, I'll keep her here like a pet, keep using her for the rest of her life!"

"**USE?!**" Luffy growled, the quill not so much shattering as crumbling in his grip as he turned, and the look in his eyes made Arlong back up for a brief moment. That was why he was completely caught off guard as Luffy lashed out smashing the desk into and out through the outer wall behind it.

"Rankyaku!" Luffy shouted, and several of the air cutter attacks lashed out, not at Arlong who had quickly prepared himself to dodge, but at the piles of maps all around them.

"Wha-stop it! What the hell are you doing!?" Arlong shouted rushing forward, trying to land a punch on Luffy, who dodged around him, lashing out with kicks and punches still attacking the room around them. "Stop it, my maps and my ambition!"

"I'm destroying this room you bastard!" Luffy roared back, even as he dodged Arlong's attacks. "This room, where you twisted Nami's dreams into a nightmare!"

As Arlong screamed wordless fury and tried to close once more this activity was noticed by most of the onlookers. "Paper?" one man muttered, staring at the odd rain of debris, which thanks to Luffy's Rankyaku looked more like confetti than actual pieces of parchment.

Only Nami realized the significance of this, and she turned from looking at Zoro to look at where her desk had landed and shattered. She had hated that desk, where she had been forced to slave under Arlong to make the bastard his maps, first learning then making her own. She had been punished for every mistake and left to cry herself to sleep at more often than not in her younger years.

She stared up at the tower, and knew what Luffy was doing and why. Tears began to show in her eyes, and she brought a hand up to wipe them away, shaking her head. *Luffy, thank you!*

Inside with the destruction of all the maps complete Luffy had stopped running from Arlong's attacks, catching the fish-man's fist in his own and delivering a kick that cracked a few of Arlong's ribs. Arlong grunted in agony but lunged forward, his maw gapping as he tried to bring his bite into play.

"Tekkai!" Luffy stated simply, and Arlong found his teeth unable to sink in. Before Arlong could pull back Luffy smashed his knee up into Arlong's already broken ribs, causing even more damage and lifting Arlong off the floor into the air, where a punch to the chin launched Arlong up and through the roof of the room and the third level of Arlong Park above them out into the air.

Arlong righted himself, flipping around in midair as he howled, his mouth full of blood from internal bleeding. "DAMN YOU!" he roared. "I won't be beaten, not like this, not from some no name human pirate!"

"I wasn't here to beat you Arlong, I was here to break you." Luffy voice said from above Arlong, where he had used Geppo to get above the Fishman. Before Arlong could turn Ranma brought his clenched fists down in a hammer blow to his spine, the fists glowing black with Haki for the first time in this fight.

"GAHHHHH!" There was an audible crunching sound as Arlong's spine was shattered, and he screamed in agony as his broken body was hurled downward to slam into and through the building to land among its foundations. So strong was the impact that the building, already badly weakened from the number of Rankyakus and other damage that Luffy had already done, collapsed with a roaring boom around its master, burying his shattered form in its depths.

"Is, is this a dream?" Nojiko breathed, shaking her head where she had raced forward with the doctor to help Zoro out. "I mean, I thought they were strong, Nami wouldn't have put so much trust in them if they weren't, but this is..."

"Arlong, Arlong Park, it's fallen." Said the doctor, shaking his head before bending down to his work as Zoro, who somehow was awake, tried to push his hands away and stand up to see.

Luffy landed next to Nami, smirking at her as he gestured over his shoulder to the ruins with a thumb. "Shoddy construction, huh Nami?"

Nami giggled wetly, shaking her head as she placed Luffy's hat back on his head, fighting the urge to hug him in front of so many witnesses. "Luffy, thank you!"

"That's what friends are for Nami." Luffy said, his smirk becoming softer, causing Nami to blush. "Especially crew yeah?"

Before Nami could reply a nasally voice interrupted them from the ruins of the entrance to the park. "Che che, I think I might have to thank you for this, pirates. Who ever thought Arlong could be beaten like this? Still, that's fine by me."

Everyone there turned to stare at a large squad of marines, who had somehow snuck up on them while they were all busy watching the fight or tending to Zoro. In their lead was a small, mousy man who, in Luffy's opinion, looked like someone had tried to create a mouse/human hybrid for some no doubt disturbing reason.

The man seemed to have an ego many times his body size however, or simply an inability to discern reality because not only had he interrupted the moment, but he seemed to think he could issue declarations. "Everyone here, both Arlong pirates and you lot are under arrest by Marine captain Nezumi! Surrender!"

Whatever reaction he was expecting he did not get it. Zoro weakly pushed to his feet to one side as Sanji turned from where he had been busy tying up the merely injured among the fish-men, taking a long drag on his cigarette as he did so. Makino stood up from where she had been working on Zoro with the doctor, pulling her hair behind her head once more as her normally kind eyes narrowed angrily. Nami just stared, her face so deadpan it could have been used as a dictionary example of the term.

As for Luffy he just laughed a bright merry chuckle that reverberated all around the park. "What kind of pirate would ever listen to a marine, especially a weak little rat face fucker like you?" He asked between chuckles shaking his head before looking over at Sanji as Nezumi spluttered and the marines behind him raised their rifles to their shoulders.

"Hey Sanji?" When Sanji looked at him, his one visible, oh-so curly eyebrow cocked in query, Luffy went on, gesturing to the marines with a wave of his hand. "Consolation prize."

Sanji grinned getting it as did Nojiko and Makino though Nami and Zoro were a little slower on the uptake. By the time they figured it out Sanji had already rocketed forward, landing in among the marines. His feet lashed out, smashing them to and fro like ninepins before they could bring their rifles to bear. Another kick sent Nezumi flying forward to land at Nami's feet.

A second later, he twirled through the debris of the marine squad, before going to his knees in front of Nami, one hand to his chest the other raised to one side as he bowed grandly. "Nami-chan, I have dealt with the interlopers as you can see!"

"Hmm, good work Sanji-kun." Nami said, about to reach down to give Nezumi a piece of her mind, such as 'why the hell he was there' where were the marines most of her life, that kind of thing.

But before she could, a few of the villagers they had left behind raced in. Or they had started racing, they had slowed to a stumbling, shocked stumble at the sight of Arlong Park. One of them however shook his shock off quickly, pointing at Nami. "Nami! That marine, he, he dug up yours and Nojiko's tangerine grove and he found your money!"

"HE WHAT!?" Nami roared her foot suddenly slamming into Nezumi's face hurling him backwards just as he had begun to mumble some dire threat or other. She grabbed him, choking the life out of the asshole. "Where's my money you!?" Nearby Nojiko had much the same reaction, only for Genzo to restrain her as the crew looked on with various stages of amusement.

Luffy let Nami's throttling of Nezumi go on for a bit before stepping in to stop Nami from killing him. "I don't think ya want to add murder to your personal rap sheet Nami, besides, if you kill him who's going to tell us where he hid your money?"

Dropping the now bleeding bruised wreck to the ground, Nami nodded, glaring down at him. "Good point Luffy. So spill Nezumi, where's your ship docked!?"

It took Sanji, Nami and Nojiko barely an hour to find and loot Nezumi's ship. Zoro was forcibly taken back to the clinic by the doctor and Makino while Luffy and the villagers gathered the downed marines, dumping them on a rowboat from Arlong Park while he and the villagers took the merely wounded fish-men, to the marine's ship, a schooner, as well. Despite having no desire to kill them, they were still pirates and had still taken part in terrorizing the people of the Conami Islands, so he had even less desire to let them remain free.

He also dumped the bodies of Arlong and his officers on the ship, though he was surprised to find that Hachi at least was still alive. The others weren't. Chew had, ironically, drowned, his ribs and gills mangled. Kuroobi was dead, his neck broken from Sanji's kick. Arlong was also of course dead, his spine shattered along with numerous internal wounds and having been buried even for so short a time had seen to that.

By the time Luffy returned to Cocoyashi, the villagers had all gathered once more, and a party was in full swing. He laughed, shaking his head and racing forward to join the merriment followed by his helpers.

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A few moments after everyone had left Arlong Park for the last time Nezumi and his marines regained consciousness. Making their way back to their schooner took the battered group a while, and by the time they did, Luffy and everyone else had come and gone. The bodies of the fish-men stacked on deck and the wounded ones placed in the ship's small limited brig shocked all of them, but Nezumi had no eyes for any of this beyond Arlong's body and his own wounds.

He raced down into the ship's com room, he grabbed up the ship's one Den Den Mushi, which linked him to the nearest base. "Hello, Hello, base, base, anyone there, this is captain Nezumi, I have a new pirate to report that needs a bounty!"

"This is base ten," said a calmer voice on the other hand, his tone almost dismissive. "Captain Nezumi, what is this all about? You were supposed to be looking into rumors about Arlong being somewhere in East Blue."

"I, I found him, he was here, but this new pirate, he, he killed Arlong then attacked me and my crew when we tried to apprehend him! We were able to retreat and come back later and round up the wounded fish-men, and their dead though!" Nezumi said, lying as easily as breathing. "This new pirate, Monkey D. Luffy, he knows Haki!"

"What!?" the other voice barked, losing its calm tone. "Are you certain!?"

Nezumi nodded before answering verbally since of course the man on the other end of the line wasn't here. He and his men had arrived in time to see the final blow Luffy had landed on Arlong, though they had missed the fight up to that point. Nezumi had heard of haki through the marine rumor mill and had known that the black covering Luffy's hands, visible even from outside the park, were a sign of Busoshoku Haki.

"Yes, he knows at least Armor Haki, it's how he beat Arlong!" Nezumi replied, before going on to the most important part in his mind. "And, and he's not afraid of marines, he attacked us, badly wounding my crew and I!"

"Rumors have already been going around about this same Luffy having destroyed the Krieg pirates too. The only one of that sorry lot still at large is Gin, the sub commander. He killed Krieg too." The man on the other end murmured. "Very well Nezumi, can you tell me anything about his crew, and did you have the opportunity to take any pictures?"

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Back on the island the party had reached full tilt. Sanji proved immensely popular, surrounded by several of the local ladies, with even the two bounty brothers joyfully taking in some of the reflected limelight despite not having been involved in the battle. Luffy was having fun too, drinking and talking and eating as he moved through the crowd, smiling and happy as he talked to Makino about where they would from here while being on the lookout for Nami.

Realizing he also couldn't spot his first mate, Luffy moved over to the small house where the doctor ran his practice. "Geeze, I just can't understand how you thought you should be moving let alone fighting like this."

"Bah, just slap some stitches on it, I'll be fine." Zoro said.

Sticking his head through the doctor's window Luffy smirked down at him. "Yo Zoro, have you seen Nami around?"

"No, haven't seen the witch since we all separated back at... what was the name again Arbong something?"

"Call it Overcompensation Tower, Sanji had that spot on." Luffy replied, causing Zoro to chuckle.

"You two are insane," the doctor said dryly. "Still, Nami wouldn't have trusted you if you weren't strong at the same time. Still, you lot set out to see without a doctor? That's not just insane, it goes past insane to the suicidally moronic."

"Hmm, that's a point. I don't suppose you know any young doctors with a dream to be the best around here do you?" Luffy asked, only half-whimsically.

"The best?" Zoro grunted as the doctor worked on redoing some of his stitches. Makino and the others had done their best, but none of them were doctors, and they had barely been able to use staples to try and close the wound.

"You have to have a dream to the best or at least a dream on the same level if you're going to be part of the crew of the future Pirate King," Luffy said simply. "Just like you, nah first mate?"

Zoro laughed, raising his fist to bump it against Luffy's before his captain turned away.

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Nami wasn't the only one currently missing from the party. Nojiko and Genzo were also missing, having come to find her where they knew she would be, Bellemere's grave. It was a simple wooden cross and stone brick stuck on the edge of a cliff overlooking the ocean, but Nami always came here whenever she returned to Cocoyashi and Nojiko always took care of the little stone brick on which their mother's name was carved into.

The three of them were silent, standing, or in Nami's case sitting by the grave and looking at it as they remembered the vibrant, loving woman who was buried under it. Nami broke the silence. "Hey Nojiko, Genzo, if I said I wanted to run away to be a pirate, do you think Bellemere-san would've stopped me?"

Genzo opened his mouth to say of course she would have but Nojiko cut him off, laughing. "Hah, she'd say that's fine as long as you stay true to yourself. Besides, even if she did say something, would that stop you?"

"Absolutely not!" Nami said, poking her tongue out at the grave as the two girls shared a laugh and Genzo shook his head resignedly, setting his pinwheel to spin gently.

They all looked up as Luffy walked out of the darkness around them. He took in the scene before walking forward to join them, quickly sweeping his hat off holding it to his chest as he bowed to the grave. Nojiko smiled at him, patting the younger boy's shoulder gently before walking off, intent on leaving her sister and her captain alone for a moment.

Genzo moved to follow only to stop, reaching out a hand to grab that same shoulder. Luffy looked up at him, his other hand still holding his hat to his chest. "I know Nami's going to go with you, I know I can't stop her. But boy, promise me she won't cry again, she won't be hurt again!"

Luffy met the scarred man's gaze steadily. "I can't promise she won't be hurt or that something else won't make her cry if she's part of my crew. The world's not

that kind. But I can promise I won't hurt her or that she will ever cry because of me." Luffy promised then smirked. "Well, outside of training anyway."

Giggling Nami got to her feet, pushing Genzo past Luffy before coming back to stand beside him. Luffy continued to look at the grave which marked Nami's adoptive mother, having been told about the woman when Nami had confessed to him and asked for his help. "My grandpa would have loved her I think." He said absentmindedly as Nami rejoined him. "She sounds like his kind of marine."

"From what you've told me, maybe, right up until she heard about the way he was training you. Then they'd have had problems," Nami replied, and the two laughed. For some reason Nami went on from there, telling Luffy more about the redoubtable woman who had taken her and Nojiko in when she had found them in a town wrecked by a battle between pirates and marines.

Luffy listened, laughing and asking questions when appropriate. They stayed there for a while like that, until Nami ran out of stories to tell. Luffy then smiled at her. "Heh, you know, Genzo said you wanted to leave with us, but we might as well make this official yeah? So Nami, will you be my navigator?"

"Hai captain!" Nami replied grinning at him, then feeling somewhat daring leaned up to kiss him lightly on the lips before grabbing the now flushed Luffy's hand. "Come on, let's get back to the party!"

The next day found Luffy and the others once more aboard the Bastard. Johnny and Yosaku had already made their farewells after the party had ended. Both of them had their own journey to get back to, and had never been part of the crew officially anyway. They were somewhat sad to leave their aniki, but realized trying to follow him to the Grand Line was foolish in the extreme. They would simply be burdens with their skills, and honestly had no desire to head to the Grand Line in the first place.

"Oh shitty straw hat, are you certain Nami-chan's leaving with us!? Without her here I lose 50% of my reason for being here you know!" Sanji shouted angrily, from where he and Luffy had just finished transplanting seven of Nami and Nojiko's tangerine trees, which the two had been ordered to do earlier that morning by the girl in question. "I'd have to force you to stay in female form for half of every day to make up for it!"

Luffy smirked, then splashed himself with some water from a cup of water he'd grabbed to wash out the remnants of the beer he'd drunk with everyone the night before. "Force Sanji-san?" she asked pouting and putting her hands together below her chest. "You wouldn't do that to me would you?"

"OF course not my beautiful flower!" Sanji said before he could stop himself, then he cursed, almost gagging and swallowing his cigarette as he realized what Luffy had just done. "GAAHHH!"

"Hehe, this is going to be fun." Luffy said shaking her head, ignoring the shocked exclamations from the large crowd which had come to see them off, including Nojiko and Genzo.

She then turned as Nami's voice reached them, shouting, "Set sail!"

"You heard the lady, let's get this Bastard ready to go." Luffy said, before Zoro and she went to work on the sails while Makino and Sanji pulled up the two anchors. With that done Zoro and Luffy went to work using the oars to slowly push the large ship away from shore.

Even so they still saw Nami racing through the crowd, not responding to their shouts trying to make her stop or to say goodbye in a more normal manner. She jumped the intervening distance, grabbing onto and flipping herself over the side of the ship to land while wallets began to fall out from under her shirt.

While the crowd began to frantically check their pockets, Nami pulled out beli note and kissed it, before looking over the side. "Ja-ne everyone!"

"Damn you brat, you better come back!" was the general consensus as Sanji rejoiced and Luffy and Zoro laughed, still rowing the large ship further away from the docks.

Nami spent a few minutes shouting goodbyes particularly to her sister. They had talked, but Nojiko didn't have the wanderlust Nami had, and someone had to watch the rest of Bellemere's trees.

As the wind finally began to push the ship along rather than their oars Luffy and Zoro set the oars aside and Luffy cocked her head at Nami, scratching under her straw hat for a moment. "You sure that's the way you want to leave?"

"Hehehe, yeah, that's just about the best way I can think of." Nami chuckled, staring up at the sky as she tested the wind before moving to the tiller, bumping her hip against the boy-turned-girl. "So **captain**, where to now?"

Luffy looked around at the others who all nodded at her. "Set course for Logue Town navigator. We'll see if we can sell the Bastard there, if not we'll just ditch it and find a smaller ship. No way could the five of us alone sail this big Bastard in the weather we'll run into on the Grand Line."

"Hai~!" Nami chirped as the rest of the crew cheered.

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A day later found them on the open ocean making their way to their new destination. The wind was just enough to move the ship, and Zoro was up in the crow's nest, ostensibly on watch, though he was also lifting weights at the same time, still getting in some more exercise even after training all morning with Luffy in an attempt to help him with his air pressure attack. Luffy had spent the morning bouncing around the ocean as a target for him until Zoro got too tired to lift even one sword let alone all three.

Now however while Sanji was busy in the galley, the two natural girls and Luffy in his/her female form were laid out in the sun. Luffy was in her regular clothing, wanting to get dry after having been splashed earlier. and the aquatranssexual couldn't deny the sun felt really good on her skin.

Beside her Nami stirred, rolling over onto her back, pulling her glasses down to stare at the one piece bathing suit the redhead was wearing. "First chance I get I am taking you shopping Luffy, you've got a decent body, you need to start dressing to show it off more."

"Blech, I do that when I have to Nami, the rest of the time I'd rather dress down then dress to impress y'know." Luffy laughed, sticking out his tongue and making a disgusted face.

Makino sighed, turning on her back as well to look over Luffy's body to Nami. "Don't bother Nami-chan, I've tried before, Luffy has no concept of feminine vanity."

"Che, seems a waste. But then if that's the case, I don't see why you're so willing to use it at all."

"Free eats is free eats Nami-chan," Luffy replied chirpily, winking at her.

The other girl rolled her eyes at the wink while also flushing at the -chan there before resolutely turning to Makino. "Still that disguise you came up with is pretty good Makino, if we ever have to sneak around I'd vote for putting you in charge in a heartbeat."

Nami and Makino both nearly jumped as Sanji banged his way out of the galley, carrying a tray of tall fruity drinks. "Ladies, I have prepared a most succulent treat for you all! I hope you like this, my cold tangerine soda."

"Thank you Sanji-kun," Nami replied, taking one as did the others, amused by how Sanji couldn't stop himself from treating Luffy like a normal girl when he was using this form.

Luffy had stood up, moving to the side of the ship, only to pause, frowning. "Hey which of us has a newspaper prescription?"

"Oh that's mine!" Nami said sitting up quickly and waving the messenger gull down. She scowled at the amount of beli written on the thing's change box. "Hey, hasn't the price gone up again, what's up with that? This is highway robbery."

"Why should you care about that Nami-chan?" Makino asked, passing the gull a beli while Nami scowled. "I would think that the news is important enough, and you don't have a reason to hoard.... Oh."

"Heh, yep, seems our Nami's a regular old Grinch when it comes to money." Luffy said, poking Nami in the shoulder. "That's why she's **not** our bursar."

"Tch, whatever just give me the paper." Nami spent a few minutes reading the paper, pointedly ignoring Luffy's smirk at her expense before she nearly shrieked. "What, so soon!?"

Luffy looked at her quizzically, and Nami shook the paper at her. "Bounties, bounties for you, Sanji, and Zoro!"

"Awesome!" Luffy said quickly sitting up, as Zoro hopped down from the crow's nest. Luffy shouted for Sanji to join them and the three boys crowded around.

Zoro already had a picture from a previous bounty he had gotten during his time as a bounty hunter, but it had been small, only 6,000. The only thing that had changed on his bounty was the amount, which had rocketed up to 30,000,000. "Huh, nice for a start I suppose."

The other two men hadn't had their pictures taken, instead they had drawings. Luffy's showed his face as this narrow sort of foxlike face, with the correct color hair though they missed his pigtail, concentrating instead on his straw hat and his wide, dangerous looking smile. "Straw hat Luffy? Gah, really, so if I take my hat off I'm no longer wanted? That'd be hilarious, though I can't argue with the amount." Luffy's bounty was 65,000,000.

"Black, black leg Sanji huh... that, that's alright but what, what the hell is wrong with this picture huh!?" Sanji too didn't have a photo, instead he had a picture, a horribly drawn picture. His amount was 15,000,000

"I'd say it's a work of art ero-cook." Zoro said, chuckling. "Then again, maybe if you raise your bounty up to my level you might warrant an actual photo?"

"GAH! What the hell, why'd the Aho-swordsman get a better bounty he was freaking sleeping when the shitty marines showed up, I was the one who beat the shit out of them! I'm going to find a way to complain see if I don't!" Sanji shouted, before pointing a finger at Zoro. "And don't get cocky marimo, I'll catch up and pass you soon enough!"

Luffy laughed again, shaking his head. "Well, our lives as pirates have really started now!"

End Chapter

I had honestly wanted to get through the Logue Town scenes in this chapter, but I decided they were coming out a little too rushed, and frankly too similar to canon. Given the changes I've already made and the fact Raffy isn't canon Luffy that just wasn't going to happen. Anyway, hope you liked this chapter!