

I don't draw. Trust me, coming up with a design for the new ship would have been much easier if I could.

Sorry this is out so much later than normal folks. I finished it in time to put it out in June when it won the small story poll, but not in time for Tomon, who is my big 'keep it in character' and One Piece Info guy, to go over it, or for me to Grammarly it. Both he and Hiryo, who does the same thing on the the Ranma side of the spectrum, have seen it now and I have given it the Grammarly treatment. No doubt there will be small mistakes, but hopefully no big ones.

The small story poll for July will be up tomorrow, and this will be on it. I want to see if we can finish this arc before I give this story a break so some of my other small stories can hopefully get updated.

I will also be updating **Semblance of Hope** and **Making Waves** both as a very belated July 4 present for my fans and as an apology for missing Father's Day and getting this chapter out so late.

Chapter 27: Storms and Recruitment

With Chopper leading them, the local doctors and nurses had put together a decent field hospital down by the Pirate's cove, since the island's single hospital was up in the center of the city, too far to carry the worst wounded even with Yagara bulls. Once the battle had ended, the locals, the Franky Family and the marines had worked hard to gather their wounded. Many of the marines had been shocked when Luffy joined in after making certain Resolve was okay, hidden away from the marines. The sight of him carrying the worst wounded to Chopper as fast as their own officers and with more willingness than most that had caused many of the marines to gape in astonishment.

It had also nearly caused another incident when Onigumo protested having a pirate help them. The spider-arm using vice-admiral was still of the opinion they should have pushed the battle to its conclusion, even if it meant wiping out Water 7. But all three of his fellows, even Strawberry, argued him down. Although, all of them had looked spooked when they realized that Robin was using her powers to direct people through the ruined Pirates Cove. But it hadn't, thankfully, been enough to restart the violence.

That had been several hours ago. The fires had been mostly put out, the wounded and dead found.

There were more of them than Luffy had hoped. Around eighty men and women had been caught in the battle in the bay who hadn't been pirates or Marines or even combatants at all. Several of the Franky family had been wounded near the end of the battle as well. They and a few bands of shipwrights had been fighting the marines before Luffy had even noticed them. But that was a small minority of the wounded. The majority were the shipwrights and few civilians in the area of the marine's bombardment and the marines themselves.

Work had even begun marking out where the marine vessels had sunk, which would let the locals refloat them, although work on that wouldn't begin until the next day. The nurses and doctors were still working frantically, but the marines and locals had even begun to transport their wounded out of the previous battle zone into the city proper.

Now it was just past sunset. Thankfully for all concerned, Water 7 had electricity, and work continued unabated not just in the makeshift hospital but also throughout the city, where the locals were going through a slow but steady evacuation from the lower echelons into the portion of the city above the large, inner wall.

Iceburg had said something about a massive storm coming early the next day but since he hadn't seemed all that worried about it, Luffy hadn't bothered to ask for more information. At the moment, he and Robin were standing by Chopper, telling him they were heading to the train station to meet with their missing crewmen.

Around them, several of the Franky Family moved into the makeshift hospital. The Kairiki Destroyers weren't the best or most gentle nurses, but that wasn't their purpose anyway. They, and Zambai, who was nearby, were here to protect Chopper, taking over from Robin, Lulu and Paulie, who had been pulled into helping Iceburg earlier. Laki was also hidden somewhere around the place, watching the hospital through her sniper scope. Despite the halt of hostilities, Luffy wasn't willing to leave Chopper there without backup.

"You're sure you want to stay and help the Marines more?" Luffy questioned once more, looking at Chopper closely.

Chopper nodded, not even looking up from where he was doing some work on a local's stomach, cursing mentally as he had to hold his hand still for a moment. He had been a millisecond from making a mistake there. The man had been caught by a particularly jagged bit of shrapnel and sewing shut the wound was tough. Especially with only having one eye now. *Darn it, I would've liked a few days experimenting with this whole having one eye thing, but no, I had to sew up Zoro's crazy ass, ooh and I so use that term with feeling and then all this!*

Luckily for Chopper, Doctorine had forced him to sometimes practice surgeries and several different operations with one hand, one eye or even on himself. He could hear her voice now. "Kahk Kahk Kahk, you think just because you're a doctor, you'll never be hurt yourself?! Get real, Chopper! At sea, at life, injuries can happen at any time to anyone. Best to get used to it now."

Aloud, Chopper answered, "I'm certain. I may be a pirate, but I'm a doctor too. Helping people is what I do. And there's way too many wounded for the locals to see to anyway. None are as hammered as Zoro was before he finally collapsed, but none of these guys have his durability. Honestly, there has to be a limit to how hard you can push your body."

Smirking, Luffy leaned down into Chopper's face, showing all of his teeth to the little reindeer Zoan, his voice a drawl. "No, there doesn't, and I'll thump ya harder in our next training session if you think there is."

That caused Chopper to laugh but he still shook his head at his captain. "Well, whatever you might think, Zoro's going to be out of it for several days. He's just too damn battered."

One hoof raised to his face, touching the area under his missing left eye as he hopped away from his current patient, moving on to the next one as he mumbled, "He's not the only one who's going to have scars after this day. Doctorine's training notwithstanding, this is going to take me some time to get used to."

A hand touched his shoulder, and Robbin turned Chopper around slightly to smile at him. "And yet, you're still better than any of the local doctors. And working faster."

"Baka!" Chopper exclaimed, dancing in place but only a little bit. Despite his Zoan endurance, Chopper was pushing the ragged edge of exhaustion right now. And he needed all the energy he could get to keep going. "That doesn't make me happy at all to hear that, baka!"

"You look pretty happy there," Luffy chuckled before he and Robin moved off through the hospital beds. Soon they were out of the area lit by torches and emergency lights, moving through the darkened city via Yagara bull, staring around them at the waterways lit up by numerous streetlamps as they headed for the searain station. It was situated down by the water line, connected to the rest of the island by a series of wide stairs, much like that which lined the walkways leading up to the middle section of the city.

As they moved through the city, Robin looked around, seeing the controlled haste with which most of the inhabitants were moving. Most were loading Yagara bulls. Others were walking briskly along the few walkways, moving up towards the central, raised area of the city. *Is the storm they were mentioning that dangerous?*

Luffy didn't notice, too busy being thankful he hadn't faced the Jaguar Zoan. That might've caused issues. Large cats could trigger his Neko-ken fear, if not to the same extent as the little monsters themselves, so Luffy figured that it was a fifty/fifty chance that a fury-monster type Zoan of that type would trigger his fear.

Either I would've automatically reacted by becoming lightning, giving away that secret, frozen and let him have a few free shots, or just run away and been completely out of the fight

for too darn long. I would've gotten over it eventually, but in time enough to defend Robin and the others, I don't think so.

Neither pirate spoke as they moved through the nighttime town, simply enjoying the quiet among the hustle and bustle all around them, although neither made a move to hold hands. They soon arrived at the train station, the area lit up even better than the rest of the town, with far more lights around lining the staircases and ensconced on the various pillars around the station itself.

The two of them moved down the stairs, taking place in a corner to the far back of the station just as the train pulled in. But it didn't stop. Instead, the searain kept going into a tunnel set to one side of the main track, which had opened up. The train slowly moved into it until the engine was within the tunnel, where it stopped and people began to disembark from the rest of it.

Moments later, Luffy saw a familiar top of bright orange hair through the crowd. "Oy, Sanji, Nami, over here!"

Instantly, Nami began to push through the crowd towards the voice, saying something over her shoulder and the others on the train with her came out. With Franky with them, most of the civilians quickly began to give them a wide birth and they easily made their way over to Luffy.

The group coming towards Luffy looked somewhat battered to Luffy's eyes. In particular, there was a spectacular bruise on Makino's neck, covering half of it in bright black and blue, while the two twins looked like they'd been kicked around quite a bit. Sanji was also limping, a bad sign for someone like him, given how reliant he was on his legs. Nami was on the other side of the spectrum with few wounds beyond a few cuts here and there.

Luffy moved over to Sanji, tapping him on the chest. "You look like you got through the wringer."

"You might say that, but the 'wringer' didn't survive, while we all did." Sanji shrugged nonchalantly, and with a certain amount of gravitas, pulled out a cigarette, lighting it up and taking a long, delighted drag after being stuck on the no-smoking train for so long. But there was a question in Sanji's eyes as he looked at his captain. "So, what was going on, really?"

"The Marines were gunning for us, duh," Luffy drawled, although he kept his voice low. "I think it had something to do with the fact that I was able to fight Aokiji. Meh, it's over now. I'm more worried about what's coming next. The marines are kind of stuck here for a bit, and my Gramps is coming to take over here, make nice with the locals and other stuff."

"Wa, ahhhh," Sanji coughed, hammering his chest as some of the smoke went down the wrong tube and he stared at Luffy in shock. "Wh, Garp's coming here!?"

"I know, it's terrifying," Luffy agreed, nodding his head sagely. "But the Resolve was hammered, and we can't set sail until Franky repairs it."

"Ara, it's been a while since I've seen Garp-san. I wonder how he's doing," Makino mused, moving to cock her head then pausing, wincing, her hands both moving to her neck in some distress.

"Wait, wait. Before we talk about the freaking **hero of the marines** coming here, you can't just brush off the marines purposefully targeting us!" Nami protested. "What happened?"

Just to annoy her, Luffy deadpanned, "Well, since we're all alive, we won. What else matters?"

Nami growled and thumped Luffy on the shoulder before Robin spoke up, gently touch Makino's neck, watching as the woman winced, despite Robin touching the other side of her neck from the bruise. "I have some salve that Chopper gave me for bruises I have on my legs. I'll share it with you tonight when we get back to where we're staying."

When Makino nodded, the tanned woman went on looking over at the others. "Luffy is underplaying things. It was a Buster Call," she said simply, and everyone there, including Franky, hissed in shock, though Mozu and Kiwi were looking on in confusion, not having heard the term before. "They called down a Buster Call on us, on the Resolve and the Straw Hats specifically, combined with a group assassins called CP9 from the World Government, who had their own plan to deal with us away from the ship. Half of which I believe you all ran into. The other half fought myself, Zoro and Chopper, while Laki and Luffy faced the might of the marines. Honestly, the number of horrible ways we could have all died is somewhat fascinating to think about."

"GAH, not funny, Robin!" Nami barely stopped herself from shouting, looking at Robin and Luffy, shaking her head in shock and horror.

"Bah! If they had hurt a hair of your head Robin-chwan, or that of any of the lovely ladies on our crew, I would have hunted them down to Raftel itself!" Sanji declared, dancing around the group.

"None of that," Makino murmured, pulling him to a stop while Mozu and Kiwi giggled.

"Seriously! We're not that big of a deal, are we?" Nami muttered, still looking shaken. Indeed, the very idea terrified her. Of course, Nami knew what a Buster Call was: six battleships, four vice admirals, assorted others, who would just basically come and erase whatever they were pointed at from the world. But her captain was still here. Robin was still here. And that, and the smiles they were both wearing as they looked back at her and the others, slowly got through to Nami to regain control of herself. *If Robin can smile like that after*

coming so close to her particular bogeyman, then I suppose we all got out of this one as best we could. But even so...

"Honestly, as a crew, I don't think so. But obviously, someone in the marines did." Luffy shrugged, then smirked. "They also failed, miserably. I'll tell you all about it later, but right now, I'm just glad to see all of you in one piece. Was there any trouble after you all finished your fight from the rest of the passengers or anything?"

"No, most of them seemed a little too scared of us to approach. My reputation was doing a super job of keeping the civvies away," Franky spoke up for the first time since getting off the train. Then he looked over to the side, seeming to nod in something like approval, causing everyone else to look in that direction as the rest of the train was slowly pulled into the tunnel which the train engine had already entered.

Behind it, another seatrain was waiting for its turn to enter the tunnel, and Luffy frowned, noticing that the door was extremely thick. "What's up with that? I thought the seatrains ran night and day."

Before Franky could answer, a childish voice rose out of the din of the crowd, moving past the immobile group of pirates in their corner. Seemingly uncaring of the fact that no one else was coming close to them, including a few of the station workers, "Hey, if it isn't the pirates who left us such yummy food! Straw Hat, do you still think you'll be the Pirate King?" she asked in the tone of someone humoring the insane man.

"Thinking doesn't enter into it, kiddo," Luffy chuckled, winking at her as he tipped up his hat with a finger. "I **know** I'll be the Pirate King. It's just a matter of time before the rest of the world understands that it's on the losing side of that fight."

The little girl laughed, and her little bunny cat thing laughed with her. Behind Chimney came the old woman Kokoro, and her perennial smile, if you could call it that, seemed to become even wider as she saw Franky. "Well now, Franky, I haven't seen you around during the day for a long while. How are you, young'un?" she asked, moving closer to the gang leader without even a sign of fear.

"I'm doing suuuper as always!" Franky shouted, posing for a second, then becoming a little more serious, ignoring the group of Water 7 natives who were now staring at them in shock. "What about you, you and Chimney doing okay?"

"Nagagagaga, we're all doing jus' fine," Kokoro cackled as she moved toward Franky, passing by Makino who recoiled from the older woman, the booze on her breath was so strong it stung the former bartender's eyes. "Jus' fine! Knew the Aqua Laguna was coming lon' before we even got the note. Had us all packed up, ready to go, all good for the last train stopped by," she slurred.

At that, Nami cocked her head in confusion, then, feeling a faint breeze, looked around them. She took a few steps away from the old woman, sniffing the air like a dog on a scent for a second, a frown appearing on her features.

Franky seemed to understand what the old woman met and nodded, looking over at Luffy and his crew. "That's good. Listen Straw Hat, I gotta get back to my gang, see how well they dealt with all of this. When the Adam wood arrives and the marines are gone, I'll start rebuilding your ship for you."

"Eh, we might not have that luxury with Gramps on the way," Luffy shivered morosely. "Let's just hope that wood arrives quick." Then he seemed to gather himself. "Er, in much better news, your family was a big help near the end of the fight. Iceburg somehow convinced them to help deal with some of the fires in Pirate's Cove and to show the Marines that they were on the losing side. Then they helped us get Resolve undercover, which is actually way more important to me and mine."

Franky nodded thoughtfully at that, although inside, he was really annoyed that Iceburg had been able to convince his family to work with his own shipwrights. *Come on, guys! We're supposed to be the bad guys, the power in the underworld of Water 7. We're not supposed to work with the authorities! Still, I suppose we didn't really work with the authorities as that would be the Marines. Instead, Iceburg joined us on the dark side! Yeah, when you put it that way, this is super! I am going to have to talk to him, though, both because of that and other things too.*

Luffy's last words about Resolve, though, pulled Nami away from her sudden interest in the movement of the air and the smell coming off the nearby ocean. "What about Resolve?" she asked quickly. "Is she alright?"

"The ship is fine," Luffy motioned with one hand to Nami to lower her voice as still more people started to move around them, heading up the stairs to the rest of the city.

"We lost several of our crew throughout the battle against the Buster Call fleet," Robin interjected, deliberately winking at the younger girl in a way that the others caught. "But the ship itself is still in one piece. After all, a... ship doesn't die until it is sunk, correct?"

"Heh, that's common practice, though I'll be checking your keel regardless," Franky grunted as if he didn't care, but he had pulled his glasses down to stare, searching at Luffy. "Remember it was already injured before you arrived here."

Luffy winced, knowing that Resolve – the spirit, not the ship – was, while no longer visibly bleeding or anything, still in a lot of pain the last time they had spoken. "Yeah, well, your family were the ones who decided on where to hide the Resolve, so you'll know when to find us. They even helped us patch her up a bit, but if you have anything you think we can do better, I'll be all for it."

Franky made to move off, but Luffy wasn't done talking to him just yet. "Hey, wait!"

He gestured the others on with Robin, heading up to the staircase to the rest of the town and a waiting Yagara bull that would take them further up through the city to where the Resolve was hidden.

"Listen, Franky, I think we're going to have more to talk about than just the ship when you come by later, and I want you to start thinking about it now because I got no idea how long this truce with the marines will last..."

"Huh? What do you mean? I thought you won?"

"We did. And if my Gramps is coming on his own, yeah! All we'll need to fear are his Fists of Love," Luffy began, only to be interrupted by Mozu.

"Wait, what? Garp the Fist, the greatest hero of the marines, has a move called the Fists of Love!?" she and her twin laughed.

"Heh, you won't find it so funny when he hits you with 'em, believe me," Luffy grumbled, then became serious. "Anyway, I wanted to say... well I ain't gonna beat around the bush Franky, I want you as our shipwright. I want you to join my crew."

"What?!" Franky exclaimed, seeming to oppose automatically, staring at Luffy in some surprise, joined by the twins although they too were stunned. "Hah, I thought we were clear Straw Hat! As super as I am, I'm just building your ship. it's up to you to make it last you as you go around the world."

"But it doesn't have to be," Luffy shot back. "You said it yourself. You want to build a ship to match the Oro Jackson, one which could sail the whole world. What better way of doing that is there than joining the crew that's going to sail it?"

"You're assuming I want to travel Straw Hat, and even if I did, why would I want to leave behind my own family to simply become a part of your crew?" Franky scoffed, downplaying that. "Seems like a major downgrade, know what I mean?" then he laughed. "Thanks for believing I'm that super, but no way. I've got my gang to look after, and this is my home. I ain't leavin'."

Luffy sighed, shaking his head. "Maybe not willingly but you might not have a choice."

"What do you mean by that?!" Kiwi growled. "Do you think we'll let you just, just shanghai, Aniki!?"

"Not me, girl!" Luffy said with a chuckle, but he still looked serious as he played with the edge of his straw hat. "But you did fight with my crewmen on the train, right?"

Franky slowly nodded while Kiwi fell silent, her eyes widening as she suddenly understood where this might be going. She exchanged a look with her twin, a joint thought being shared between them. *SHIT!! Not only Aniki but the two of us might...*

As much as both girls wanted that thought to remain unspoken, Luffy continued without any hesitation. "Then the Marines might decide you're part of my crew already. The World Government might decide to come after you regardless."

Franky glared at him, crossing his arms. "And whose fault would that be, huh!? Since you're the one who barged into my House like you did."

"Yeah, that was my fault," Luffy replied honestly, seeing no point in trying and lie. "I looked for you. I pulled you into helping us. It was because of me and your own information that you were on the train with my crew. But do you really think that's going to matter at all to the WeeGee?"

"Weegee?" Mozu interrupted, snorting.

"Heh, well, I usually call 'em just WG but making certain ya hear the 'Wee' part makes my opinion of 'em plain. They ain't worth weeing on, if they were on fire," Luffy explained with a smirk before becoming serious, looking back at Franky. "But regardless of my opinion of them, if the WeeGee comes after you, do you think your family is going to be able to stand up against them?"

Franky scowled, looking away from him. *Fuck it, he's right. And he doesn't even know that I've got another reason for the WG to be after me.*

That thought reminded him of the fact this crew already had Nico Robin on it. The woman he and Iceburg had been concerned would throw the world into turmoil so much that they had hidden the map for Pluton to use against her. *But I've not seen her or Luffy show any sign they'd be interested in that kind of super stupidity.* With that in mind, he looked back at Luffy and asked, "Question, what would you do if you could have a ship powerful enough to threaten the whole world?" *It ain't subtle, but neither are either of us.*

Luffy frowned cocking his head to one side. "You can make the Resolve that powerful?"

Franky waved that off. "Nah, not really. I'm just asking what you would do with that kind of power."

Brows furrowing, Luffy made a face. "This is one of those hypothetical things, then? I didn't think you would be into that kind of thing, Franky."

Franky guffawed, shaking his head. "I'm not, but I am asking you for a super reason, you know. So why don't you going to answer the question."

At that, Luffy just shrugged. "Nothing."

Franky stared at him, and Luffy smirked. "I don't like threatening people... well unless they're assholes or trying to hurt someone else. I ain't power-hungry. Skill-hungry, sure, I'm always willing to become a better fighter. But you're not talking about becoming better. You're talking about becoming a danger to the world or whatever. That ain't something I'm interested in. All I want is enough power to be free, to protect my crew and friends and help us all achieve our dreams."

As Luffy spoke, the face of Vivi appeared in his mind, followed by Bon Clay and a few of the other friends they'd made along the trip. He wondered how they were all doing but shook it off, staring back at Franky. "I'm not the kind to lord my power over people. I'm the kind to stop other people from lording it over me."

Franky stared at him, then nodded slowly. "I believe you." With that, he turned around, giving Luffy a thumbs up as he walked away. "And I think that's Suuuuupppper!!"

"Why?" Luffy shouted to his back. "Ya can't just ask someone a question like that without reason."

"I'll tell you later. I gotta get going now." He then smirked at Luffy. "Besides, I sure as hell can. Walking away after a question like that is a lot coo..."

"Wait a minute!" Nami shouted. She and the others had stopped to wait for Luffy instead of moving on.

Now, Nami was staring up at the sky, particularly at a few clouds on the edge of the horizon, which were darker than the other clouds in sight, although, with night now on them, that wasn't saying much. But looking in that direction, Luffy reflected those clouds did seem to be moving a bit faster than they should. *Almost as if we're no longer in Water 7's seasonal area and back among the chaos of the Grand Line.*

While the others were looking at Nami confused about what she could be sensing that they couldn't, Nami moved over to Luffy, holding her arms up to him, saying brusquely. "Get me into the air, as high as you can go."

"Heh, that sounds like a challenge, ya know?" Luffy snorted, but at the look on Nami's face, he sobered and lifted Nami into his arms in a Princess carry. "Just tell me when." He looked over at Robin, then shrugged his shoulders and said. "Lead the rest of them to where Resolve's hidden. I'll meet you there. Just make sure you and Sanji keep a Den Den Mushi on ya, okay?"

As chef and archaeologist both nodded, Luffy looked over to Franky. "Remember what we were talking about before you got all hypothetical on me."

Franky barked a laugh, nodding, and he, Mozu and Kiwi watched as the two pirates bounced up into the air and away. The twins then looked at Franky, then one another, a silent conversation passing between them. Because Luffy was right. Whatever else had happened, the World Government was not going to just let this slide.

OOOOOOO

Bouncing up into the air until they were equal to the tallest position on the island, Luffy grimaced as three of the four vice-admirals bounced up into the air towards them. "Hold on a sec."

"Wai, wha KYAA!!!" Nami shrieked as she found herself tossed lightly into the air. She had been somewhat enjoying the experience until then, though most of her mind was busy trying to read the weather around them. Now she had a brief second to squawk before she was falling down onto his back, where she clung, gasping. Then, her eyes turning into small fires of anger, she wrapped around her in his neck in a chokehold. "You bastard, you could've warned me! What the hell was that for anyway?"

"Stop looking up, and look around," Luffy gagged as he was choked. *God damn it, if women could somehow weaponize feminine fury, how terrifying would that be?*

Nami did so, gasping for a new reason and shrinking slightly behind him, when she saw the marines.

"I wasn't going to fight them with you in my arms," Luffy quipped. "I'm not that good or that stupid."

"Ugh, let's hope it doesn't come to that," Nami grumbled, releasing the chokehold.

The first to reach them was Strawberry, the most stoic and personally angry of the officers. Even now, hours after the battle had ended, he still wasn't over the loss of his Meito blade, Hanabira Suraisa, to Luffy. As he did, one hand closed to the hilt of his remaining blade, his eyes blazing with anger. "What you intend to do up here, Straw Hat?"

"Don't ask me," Luffy grumbled, reaching up with a hand to flick Nami on the nose with a finger before returning that hand to where he had been holding her thighs. "This one ordered me to bring her up here. I don't know why. But, seriously, do you honestly think I'd fight all of you with a crew member clinging to my back?"

Nami absently smacked him upside the head. "Now isn't the time to be so passive-aggressive or whatever you'd call it," she muttered, then smirked as the marines made no move to attack them. "Besides, I know lots of men who would pay to be in this position with me. To emphasize why she pressed her chest into his back.

Luffy blushed slightly but didn't respond otherwise, simply staring back at Strawberry. *Choose your moment to tease someone better Nami, seriously!*

Shaking her head at that, Nami turned her attention back to the weather around them, holding a hand up and away from Luffy's body. She felt the wind slowly starting to pick up, watched the distant clouds coming in, and from this high up, she could tell there were more behind them, way more! Like a vast wall of cloud that went from as high up as Nami could see down to the edge of the horizon. *And they are close enough to see with the naked eye!* "Oh... that isn't good...."

Frowning, Momonga, who had just reached them, looked at her in confusion. "What is she talking about?" Turning in the direction the pirate was staring, his frown deepened. "It just looks like a regular storm to me."

"There is nothing regular about that! Nami said, shaking her head. "That is going to be the mother of all storms!" She tugged at Luffy's pigtail under his hat, barking out a command as if she was the one in charge. "Get me down to the waterline. I need to check something."

Strawberry frowned at them both, then looked over at his fellow vice-admiral. Dalmatian was unable to walk thanks to the beating Luffy had given him. As for Onigumo, he was, even in Strawberry's opinion, sulking right now. "Let me get this straight, you came up here to look at the weather?"

"She is my navigator," Luffy answered with a shrug. "It's kind of what she does."

Frowning thoughtfully, Momonga stated, "In that case, you wouldn't mind if I follow you?"

"Honestly, what the hell do you people think I'm going to do, huh?" Luffy grumbled even as he began to drop down over the city, heading towards the port and Strawberry fell back towards where he had begun his ascent.

"Eh, I gotta see their point, mister 'I make tornadoes'," Nami teased before they were down at the edge of the Pirate's Cove. Looking around, she could still see about fifty marines moving around the area with an equal number of locals. The locals were emptying out the few warehouses still standing around the cove while the marines were bringing across supplies and other things from their two remaining ships.

These were mostly medical supplies, what little the ships had aboard them. Buster Call ships were not fitted out for long voyages in terms of food or indeed any supply but gunpowder and shot. If they had to go far away from any marine base, they would be assigned a corresponding supply fleet.

Meanwhile, in the distance near where they had gotten Yagara bulls that first day on Water 7, Nami could see a large number of lights in one area, which Luffy explained was the medical station. That caused her to gulp, but she moved resolutely onto one of the unburned or shattered docks, shouting out, "Who's in charge here?"

She didn't even take the time to tease Luffy again despite a small part of her wondering how having her on his back stacked up against having had Robin in the same position, and she thought the word 'stacked' with intent. But while teasing her captain was fun, Nami knew it at this point it wasn't going to go anywhere. And there were way more important things to do right now.

Momonga looked around for a moment, then spotted a man with a sergeant's rank tabs, winning a mental nod from Luffy. When in doubt, always look for the noncommissioned officers. That was something that Luffy had learned from his grandfather. "Stephen, get over here."

"Sir!" The grizzled Marine marched over, looked at the pirates quizzically. But unlike a few of the other younger Marines around them, he didn't show any hate or anger towards Luffy or Nami. He simply was confused at their presence. "What do you need?"

Momonga shrugged, looking over at Nami, who spoke up before he could say anything, her questions coming out rapid-fire. "Have you all noticed something with the water? Is the tide ebbing and flowing normally or heavily? How high was it when you got here? Has that changed, more, less, or what?"

The man frowned, then answered the pirate woman's questions as best he could. "I have noticed the water receding a bit, but I thought we were just hitting low tide. It's gone down a good bit, and it doesn't seem to be showing signs of stopping...."

As he spoke, Stephen frowned, his eyes narrowing as he turned to look out at sea, as did a few of the other older Marines nearby who had heard the questions. Momonga also turned in that direction as they all realized why Nami was asking those questions. "You think there's a tsunami coming?" Momonga guessed.

Luffy paled at that. As Ranma, he had been a native to Japan in his previous life and knew precisely how damaging those things could be to any island. And Water 7 was a lot smaller than most of Japan's islands were.

Instead of replying, Nami lay down at the edge of the dock, shouting out, "Light!" thrusting her arm back. When one was given to her, she held it low over the water, staring. As she did, Nami saw what she had been worried about: the water was visibly receding away from the island. A bit came back, but not as much as was being pulled away. Standing up, Nami looked around the area, shivering in fear. "This isn't going to be a regular tsunami or a regular storm. This is going to be something way worse."

“The locals have mentioned some kind of regional storm. They call it an Aqua Laguna,” Stephen spoke up, staring at the pirate woman. Normally he would have questioned her abilities, but the way she was speaking so decisively made him wonder if she really understood what she was talking about. “It’s supposed to bring incredibly high waters. But you’re not talking about that either, are you?”

“No. If I’m right, this is going to be way more dangerous than that.” She turned her gaze out to the ocean, then to the Marines around her, all of whom had stopped working when they had heard the word tsunami. “I think, I think we need to get as far in land and as high up as possible. I’d wondered why Water 7 was built like it was, now I’m certain. We all need to be above the inner wall, at the very least. I just pray that’s enough.”

Momonga instantly slammed his hands together, causing all of the workers and men around them to look in his direction. “All work is to halt immediately! Fall back to the hospital. Any wounded are to begin moving up whatever their injuries! I will be there shortly to talk with Onigumo.”

And to kick his rear into moving if I have to, Momonga reflected on Onigumo, who he and Strawberry had browbeaten to take command of moving the wounded from the emergency hospital up to the normal hospitals or the hotels the marines had commandeered. This is the woman who Hina said was able to somehow predict the weather of the Grand Line. So if she’s scared, I am not going to argue, despite her being a pirate.

At his words, the Marines scattered, and Luffy looked at Nami. “Do you think the locals know how bad this is going to get?”

“It can’t hurt to tell them, and it isn’t just how bad it’s going to be, but how quick it’s going to arrive.” With that, Nami held up her arms towards him again, and Luffy scooped her up into his arms, nodded once to Momonga, and bounded up into the air again, racing towards where he knew Iceburg was. That was actually nearby, just up on the second level of the town, the segment where houses and so forth began instead of up beyond the inner walls.

Iceburg had moved there with Paulie and Lulu once the pirates returned to help their doctor and had begun organizing the evacuation of the area. While everything else going on had taken his mind away from it, Iceburg was still an old hand at dealing with Aqua Laguna and thought he knew what to expect.

Luffy and Nami entered the house Iceburg was using as his headquarters, while scattered raindrops began to fall all around them. Once inside, Luffy breathed a sigh of relief at getting under cover before getting too wet and gestured to one of the guards. “This is my navigator, Nami. She has something she needs to talk to Iceburg about. Show her to him, would ya?”

With that, he turned away, and from his ki space, pulled out a large, indeed quite massive poncho, pulling it on quickly but leaving the hood off for a second. It was the only way to make certain that none of the rainfall could touch his skin. The last thing that Luffy wanted to deal with was his curse coming out while marines were still around.

Further inside the house, Iceburg was laid out on a sofa issuing orders but paused to hear Nami out as she quickly relayed what she had found. When she finished, his face was pale, and there was a scowl on his face. "You're certain it's going to be that bad? You should have seen we're already starting to prepare for it. Normally, we are well ahead of Aqua Laguna, but given the events of today?" He shrugged. "No one was really taking notice of it except the seatrain operators. Still, we should have until tomorrow morning to prepare"

"I'm positive," Nami nodded firmly, her face somewhat pale. "I don't, I don't know if it'll be powerful enough to reach the inner wall, but it's certainly going to hit this island really, really hard. I don't think that anyone should be left below the second wall." She glanced over her shoulder, shivering. "I think we've got another twenty minutes before visibility's gone, then another hour after that before the first waves hit."

Staring at her, Iceburg couldn't detect any lie in her tone and eventually nodded. "I believe you." He turned to Lulu. "Get on the Den Den Mushis. We don't have until tomorrow morning, we need everyone evacuated from the lower areas within the hour. No one is to be allowed to bring anything more than what they can carry. Paulie, I want you out there, choose ten men, then start moving through the streets, shouting the news."

As Lulu picked up the Den Den Mushi and Paulie raced out, Iceburg addressed the biggest problem with this idea. "Get the Marines in here," Iceburg ordered, "We'll need to speed up getting their wounded out from the Pirate's cove." Iceburg grimaced, knowing how much of his shipwrights were down from the fighting earlier. Tilestone and the others who had gotten between Rob Lucci and Zoro weren't the only ones who had died today. "And we need their manpower to get people moving!"

Soon, Momonga and two still mobile vice-admirals arrived, looking grave. But the moment he saw Luffy, Onigumo snarled, but instead of causing trouble, he turned aside, refusing to even enter the room with the pirates there. He didn't move out of hearing range though, which was enough for now. Iceburg quickly explained the problem, then asked the marines for their help to get the word out about the danger and help evacuate people. Even Onigumo could agree to that, and nodded, then got down to work organizing things.

Luffy tapped Nami on the arm, whispering, "I'm going to take you to the place the crew is holed up in. I don't think the locals are ready for this. So, I'll want Sanji out and helping the locals with me and Robin helping coordinate things. That means you and Makino will be watching the ship, okay?"

Nami nodded, reflecting once more that Luffy had a far more altruistic soul than any pirate really should. Something she had both benefited from and enjoyed seeing now.

With that, the two pirates left, heading out into the currently desultory rain, where Luffy's poncho and extra-large hood went to work, thankfully keeping his curse at bay.

OOOOOOO

The drydock that the Franky Family had hauled the Resolve to was one of the most unusual examples of a drydock on Water 7. First, it was nearly hidden inside an arch of the wide wall that separated the lower area of the city from the main section. Only by standing inside the arch could you see where it was, and to get to the drydock and its accompanying workshop, you had to enter it either from a nearly forgotten maintenance entrance or from the entryway to the drydock itself, which was reached by pulling the ship up from water far below. That water came from under Water 7, disgorging out into the ocean below in a waterfall more than a dozen stories tall.

Getting the ship up there had been a chore since the drydock was, while large enough to house the frigate, not really made to do so. But the Franky Family had done it, and it was here that Zoro had been hidden. As Luffy and Nami arrived via Geppo, the others were just arriving the old-fashioned way, having been slowed down tremendously by the rain, with only Robin's ability to conjure eyes had led them through the still unexplored city.

The workshop's interior was well lit, the area small but kind of homey, with a few sofas scattered around the area. There was a small fridge and an equally small kitchen, along with several fully outfitted workstations. At the far side of the entrance was another door leading out to a series of walkways overlooking the drydock where the Resolve hung suspended in the air via numerous iron chains next to a long window.

Wanting to see the damage for themselves, Nami, Makino and Sanji made their way toward the interior door, slapping the light switch as they went only to pause in shock staring at the damage the ship had taken. "WH, what the FUCK!?" Nami and Makino shrieked as one.

The Resolve did not look good, to put it mildly. Indeed, with all its masts gone again, the holes in the ship's side, a few shattered planks near the prow, and the wheel missing, it looked more like scrap than a ship.

Nami felt tears well up in her eyes while Makino shivered, moving forward to look at the damage more closely. Then the Klabautermann appeared in one of the ragged holes below the waterline, "Boogie Woogie Woogie!"

"Gah!" Nami stumbled back, her staff in her hand and going through Resolve before she could stop it. Makino too fell back, her hand going to her chest as Sanji screamed like a little girl and leaped away.

“Haha, you should have seen your faces,” Resolve laughed, staying within the hole rent in the frigate’s side. As a Klabautermann, she couldn’t leave the confines of the ship. ‘And Sanji, you scream like a girl!’”

For a moment, the others stared. While the Resolve was in a bad way, Resolve looked worse, although most of that was simply because she was a person rather than a large vessel. She was literally covered in bandages, but there was blood showing in numerous places. Her feet were the most heavily bandaged for some reason, and the spirit seemed to move slowly. But for all of that, the spirit was actually quite upbeat.

“Are, are you certain you’re all right, Resolve?” Makino demanded, swinging herself up the gantry connecting the ship to the walkway.

Resolve disappeared from where she had been, coming out of the remnants of the main deck, waving at Makino. “Oh, don’t worry, I’m fine. Remember, we were kind of experimenting with me being able to pull my spirit away. Well, I was able to do that most of the time before those bits got hit.”

Narrowing her eyes, Makino poked at the spirit at a point right above where there seemed to be quite a bit of blood on the spirit’s bandages. “Oh, really?”

“Ouch!” Resolve grunted, then found herself pulled into a hug by the older woman. This wasn’t the first time Makino had done this to her, but it still felt nice. “Okay, so maybe I wasn’t able to do it all the time. Just um, for the masts and the main deck hits, really. The others surprised me. It um, it’s really, really hard keeping an eye on everything going on all around me at once!”

“That’s more honest, I think. But I am glad that your spirit, if not your physical body, is in one peace,” Makino answered brightly, while Nami followed the other woman up, with Robin following after.

By this point, Sanji had turned back to join Luffy by the doorway. Robin had already left, heading to the mayor’s office which would by this point have become Iceburg’s headquarters once more. “We’re leaving now girls.”

“Wait, where’s Zoro?” Nami asked quickly.

Sweat dropping, Luffy pointed to one side, where the swordsman was laid out on top of one of the sofas, having been placed there by Robin before she had raced back out. “You didn’t see him? Priorities, much?”

“Bah, who cares about the shitty swordsman, huh?” Sanji grumbled before waving goodbye at the ladies, ending with, “Parting is such sweet sorrow, but do not fear, I will cook you an amazing meal to make up for it upon my return.”

Outside in the maintenance tunnel, Sanji found Luffy pulling on the same giant poncho he had put on while meeting with Iceburg. Once away from the ladies, Sanji smirked at his captain, shaking his head, as he leaned his head up and took in the slow rainfall. "You look like one of those odd South Blue dolls, the ones that people hang up to ward away bad weather."

"That's both fucking ironic and not at all funny as you seem to think, Screw Queen. Just be glad Zoro's out of it, or you'd never live that down," Luffy retorted, causing Sanji to stammer. "Whatever, let's get going."

OOOOOOO

Luffy paused, staring down at a procession of Marines moving through the lower edge of the town. They carried most of the wounded who hadn't already been moved up to the main city, the Yagara bulls being busy transporting the locals. *Best let this area to them. I'll head to the other side of the island.* The lower city spread out beyond the walls of the main city on several sides built up around the various lower ports. That, and Scrap Island, anyway.

As Luffy turned away, a conspiracy was being hatched among a few of the marines. A conspiracy centered around Chopper. "Come on, it might technically be kidnapping, but do any of you want to go back to our normal doctors after this?" one Marine questioned, waving a hand that he had feared he would lose mere hours ago. Shrapnel had gone through his palm and forearm, and that amount of damage would have made most doctors the young marine had ever met decide that the only way to save the rest of the limb was to chop it off at the elbow.

But the Straw Hats doctor, Chopper? He had poured some powder over the wounds that had deadened all the pain his patient had been feeling, removed the shrapnel, and then set the broken bones within the arm. The wounds were then sewed closed, and then Chopper had made a cast around the wound, lined with some kind of green goop that was supposed to help the healing process and keep the pain down.

And that was among the least of Chopper's life-saving medical operations. Another Marine close by to the one who had nearly lost his arm, had taken a piece of shrapnel to the back of the neck that had just barely missed his spine. His friends had stanching the blood so quickly that he hadn't died right away but they had kept the piece of wood in place for fear of their friend bleeding out the moment it was removed.

Chopper had somehow been able to redirect the flow of blood via a few needles set right below the neck, then removed the piece of wood. Then Chopper quickly sewed it shut so fast that what little blood was still going through the man's neck hadn't had time to escape. The only downside was the man had been unconscious due to the lack of blood flow to the brain for a time, and, apparently, would be disoriented and twitchy once he recovered for a few weeks.

Compared to the normal doctors marine ships had to deal with, it was like comparing night to day. Normal marine doctors were not called sawbones without reason, after all, and it certainly wasn't an affectionate term.

"Maybe you're right, but who here wants to fight that crew again? Especially now. There's a rumor going along that most of their officers were away doing something else at the time we were fighting their Captain and the rest of the crew," another marine warned.

"It just means we might have to be sneaky. It's not impossible!"

There were some looks exchanged at that but most of them were approving. It was clear to every marine there that Chopper's skill as a doctor was something to be cherished. And all of the marines who had even the slightest knowledge of what it was like to change from having two working eyes to one were in awe at how well he had done with a recent wound.

"Why is the pirate doctor so skilled anyway? I mean, I know I'm not the most experienced one here, but I've never seen anyone mention that pirate doctors being any better than ours. If anything, they are normally worse!" Muttered one young Marine, tapping his leg. A leg whose every bone below halfway up his thigh had been broken by a falling spar. He had been worried he would be crippled for life, but all of the bones had been set, and, like with the man who had feared a loss of his forearm, the leg had been encased in a cast lined with green goop to help speed the healing process. Now he was able to limp along with his fellows, although he couldn't help them lift their even still more wounded comrades.

"I don't know, but maybe there are pirates and then there are pirates?" mused another marine.

"That's stupid! Pirates are pirates. They are the scum of the seas!" Barked another one. "There's only one way to deal with such scum, and that is to show them the power of Absolute Justice!"

"Then why is Chopper working himself to exhaustion to help the locals and us, their former enemies?" The more philosophical Marine shot back, rolling his eyes at the other man's stupidity. He then gestured upwards to where Luffy could be seen bouncing across the rooftops, currently carrying several laughing youngsters on his back, with two parents under his arms. *Damn me, but that is a huge poncho. Kind of funny looking.* "Why is their captain even now helping the locals like that? Why is Nico Robin, the Devil Child, helping to coordinate this evacuation?"

"To keep an eye on us!" The Marine who believed in Absolute Justice growled out, although it was a very lukewarm sort of growl. They had all heard by this point that it had been the Straw Hats who had protected the local mayor from assassination by a band from the Capone pirates. They had also learned that it had been the navigator of the Straw Hats who

had realized that the storm coming towards them even now was going to get so bad. Considering that visibility was starting to disappear already, that was not a small thing.

Despite that, elsewhere, the marines were doing what they could to help, something the common crewmen had jumped at. Not only because doing so was supposed to be part of their job, but also because many just could not deal with the mental/reality dissonance they were currently being exposed to: that they, the marines, were being seen as the bad guys. That the pirates had turned out to be on the side of the angels.

This, combined with how badly the Buster Call had done against the Straw Hat's captain, had put many of the low-ranking marines in an introspective frame of mind. "Maybe, maybe not. I'm not seeing any eyeballs around here, are you? The Demon Child is busy helping the locals evacuate. Makes you wonder, doesn't it?"

"Whatever the reason, her lack of attention is a good thing for us," the first Marine spoke up again, "or else our plan to kidnap Chopper would never have gotten out of the slipway. And that is what we are really talking about here, people. Not the strangeness of the Straw Hats or, or anything else. So, all those in favor of stealing away their doctor say aye."

OOOOOOO

Within minutes of Luffy returning from with his first batch of the locals, the rain, which had been simply pelting down out of the nighttime sky, became sheets of rain. Not only did this hamper visibility, but it made footwork treacherous across the island for anyone who wasn't already using one of the waterways via Yagara bull. And even the animals were having trouble seeing very far. The impact of the water was also intense, and few children below four feet or so could move at all, it was so intense. It was cold too, sapping the strength of anyone without appropriate gear who didn't already have immense endurance.

Despite the lack of poncho or anything else, Sanji was able to make his way through it. Sanji's chief problem was that, once more, he was being deprived of a cigarette. Lamenting that loss, Sanji wondered what he had done to God to deserve this. Going from the auction house and its totalitarian rules to the train, which had only allowed him to do so outside, where the wind made his cigarettes go out more often than not, and now to this, where even attempting to light up a match would've been the height of stupidity.

Like Luffy, Sanji was busy trying to evacuate the lower echelons of the town up into the higher levels. Currently, he had a young lady on his back, a most fortuitous moment, considering that both of them were drenched and he could feel every bit of curve against his back. This was only slightly ruined by the fact that he was also carrying her elderly parents as he leaped over the rooftops.

"Dammit, dammit! We shouldn't've had to leave everything behind," grumbled of the grandfather, loud enough to be heard over the rainfall all around them. "And now we're relying on the pirates whose presence caused us to be taken by surprise like this?!"

"Oh, hush up, Father. It's not their fault. It's the Marines," the woman on his back muttered. "Don't take what he's saying to heart, Sanji." Sanji had introduced himself before offering his aid, naturally. "We really should have had more time and preparation in place before Aqua Laguna hit. But everyone was so distracted by the attempt on Iceburg and then the fighting that no one really realized it was coming, beyond the people who were running the trains and they didn't get the word out well enough."

"See! It is their fault." The old man muttered.

"No, it's also because the buildup for this has been so much faster than normal," the mother stated, shaking her head. "Still, I'm very much worried for our home. Hopefully, the doors will stop the rising tide from doing too much damage to the interior..."

Dropping that group off on the area right inside the city's inner walls, Sanji looked around for his captain but was told that Luffy was already out and about once more. He had gone to the entirely opposite side of the island from where the Marines were operating, and Sanji decided to join him.

By this point, Luffy was a 'her', not a 'him' any longer. The rain had gotten to the point where his poncho, scarf and hood hadn't been able to stop Luffy's face from getting wet, which had triggered the change. When it happened, Luffy paused, staring down at her chest as it pushed out from her poncho, cursing a bit. *Damn it, should I stop helping the locals now? The last thing I want is for my curse form to be seen here with the marines so close.* After a moment, Luffy scowled. *Well, we're almost done and there aren't any marines in this area anyway.*

By Luffy's estimate, about an hour and a half of frantic efforts had let them nearly evacuate the lower areas of the town. There were still a few random people, mostly families who, for one reason or another, had trouble transporting themselves or hadn't been able to get out to one of the main areas to hitch a ride on the Yagara bulls. Although the main roads had been getting clogged the last time Luffy had dropped off some locals.

Moments later, hearing the tramp of feet through the noise of the rain, Luffy looked up from where she had been stuffing the luggage of such a family. She made it disappear into her ki space, chuckling at the young boy's look of awe, before turning to see Franky leading a posse of his gang, including the girls who were still wearing their bikini-like outfits despite the chill of the rain. *On the one hand, yeah, they're bikinis, meant to be wet, but on the other... aren't they cold?* "Yo, Franky."

Most of Franky's family had already been up and moved into the main city, but Franky, knowing that Scrap Island and their house was going to take a pounding, had gone back with a

few of them to grab as much stuff as they could carry. He'd also had to order the families King Bulls out to sea since they could only fit through a few of the main waterways, which were already clogged. And they would be safer riding Aqua Laguna out at sea.

Now they were on the way back, but Franky paused, staring at the woman in the poncho watching as she hefted up an old man in a wheelchair up in the air. The old man was covered by an even larger poncho and seemed to be grumbling as the woman hefted him into the air, while a young man and boy clambered onto the woman's back.

Franky and his gang stared as the woman leaped off, shaking their heads in some shock. "Who the heck was that?"

"I don't know, but she was talking as if she knew you, waina," Mozu muttered.

"Could that have been one of the Straw Hats? She was using the same kind of skills Luffy, Sanji and Makino did, waina," Kiwi added.

"Eh, I don't think so. That wasn't a voice I recognize. Is there another member of the Straw Hat crew we didn't meet?"

Franky and his family were near one of the city's main riverways when they saw the poncho-clad woman again hopping across the rooftops as if it was the easiest thing in the world despite the insane amount of rain pummeling down. "Oy, you, get down here for a second!"

Looking down, Luffy grumbled a bit, then hopped down, alighting on a balcony above Franky. "What do ya want Franky?"

"Why're you talking to me as if we've already met," Franky shook his head, and Luffy noted that his pompadour was still standing upright despite the rain, while Mozu and Kiwi's squares had been flattened.

Sighing, Luffy bit the bullet. *Pamphlets, I need pamphlets for this, man.* "This ain't the way I wanted to introduce my curse to you, but you would be astonished at how often life forces that issue." Luffy looked around for a moment, then used a pulse of ki sense before deciding to explain. Unlike the use of Kenbunshoku, using a ki pulse didn't fry his head with over-stimulation. *I seriously need to experiment with that more. I'm obviously doing something wrong but what could it be?* "It's me, Luffy."

"Oh, crud. The girl's escape from an insane asylum," Franky muttered, backing away, wary now.

"Wait, Water 7 doesn't have an insane asylum, waina," Kiwi pointed out.

"I don't want to hear that from a freaking Cyborg who built his own damn self!" Luffy barked somewhat miffed about the insane asylum crack. In a world with Devil Fruits, insane geography, islands in the sky, and, last but not least, the idea that her curse was so unbelievable as to warrant such a comment from a self-made cyborg was beyond annoying.

Grumbling a bit, Luffy regained control of herself. "Check in with the rest of my crew. They'll tell you I'm telling the truth. But do so discreetly. This is a secret I want to keep. Above and beyond anything else, bar Resolve."

And that includes my lightning fruit, which you also don't know about yet. I'm looking forward to seeing your face when you do! Luffy thought, before going on.

"Anyway, I'm Luffy. I turn into a woman when I get hit by cold water. Hot water changes me back. That's why I'm wearing this oversized poncho and everything. But even that didn't stop me from being splashed. As for the actual curse, I've got a theory that I met some kind of devil fruit user when I was very young named Ivankov and his power somehow affected me permanently. Yes, it's a full-body change. No, it doesn't change my mind except for my taste buds. Now, do you have any more questions, or can I go?" Luffy growled.

Franky stared at her, lowering his glasses, which he was still wearing even at night for some reason. Luffy wondered how the hell he could see out of them, but Franky spoke up before Luffy could ask. "Er, I suppose I can at least check in with the rest of the Straw Hats and make sure that they know that a crazy person is trying to act like their..."

"The first time you met me, you accused Robin and me of flirting, and then the two of us proceeded to kick the crap out of you and your entire gang before giving you an offer to help rebuild our ship, which has a certain little secret on it, one way bigger for us than your own, Tom's apprentice," Luffy growled out.

That was enough to convince Franky. "Okay, fine! But don't use that name around here, several of the oldsters, and heck, even a few of the middle-aged people, remember Tom's Workers. I don't want them linking that name to the current Suuuper me!"

Luffy nodded firmly and then was off once more, leaving Franky and his somewhat confused gang behind her. "Now I've seen everything," one of them muttered.

He was instantly hit upside the head by Mozu as Kiwi drawled, "Why the heck did you just tempt fate like that, waina?"

Luffy kept moving around this area of the island, helping a few more locals evacuate, but then the Marines began to move into the same area, doing a final sweep. This forced Luffy to retreat. Indeed, helping a local family whose kid had tried to run away to find their Yagara bull, and then finding and saving a baby Yagara bull it had discovered, made him too slow to do

so, and a few of the Marines spotted her moving around the rooftops. "Hey, do the Straw Hats have any redheads among their crew?"

"Their navigator's got orange hair, not red. That's the closest, I think. Why?"

"I just saw someone hopping along the rooftops like the officers and Straw Hat can. I could've sworn she had red hair." The other Marines looked in the same direction but saw no hint of the individual that's the first Marine had spotted.

"You know about the difference between fantasy and reality, right? We don't need to hear about your fantasies or anything, man."

"Oh, shut up! I did see her! A short redhead, sort of gangly looking, with a tomboy sort of body dressed in a large poncho that was open down the front."

"Eh, sounds like a fantasy to me!" another marine drawled.

As the marines began to pile ridicule on their fellow, Luffy had ducked into an open window - well, it was open once Luffy's foot hit it - and now she lay on the floor of the apartment there, cursing a blue streak inside her head. *Dammit, what was I thinking! I should've stopped helping the locals the moment the curse hit. Now it will just take just one person to mention the redhead who helped them, just one and my cover will be blown sky-high! I'm going to have to come up with some kind of story to pass around just in case. Maybe a story about bounty Hunter Luffy being here? Or is even that too close for comfort?*

For now, Luffy was sort of stuck here for a bit with the Marines now in the area and the rain negating his use of the Umi-Sen-Ken. The rain would give her position away, and so much water hitting the 'anti-ki field' made it impossible to hold.

With nothing better to do, Luffy pulled off her poncho and the thoroughly drenched scarf that she had used to cover most of her face before it had gotten soaked through by a puddle that had turned out to be a bit deeper than Luffy had expected. Then, pulling out a teakettle from her ki space, Luffy began to heat it up, using water from a nearby sink. *Anyway, If I'm stuck here, I might as well experiment with my lightning powers. And I can't use them in my female form.*

Soon, Luffy held up his hand, willing it to change into lightning, but without changing its exterior form. Much like Enel and Aokiji had been able to, Luffy was still human-shaped, but when he placed his hand down on top of a nearby table, the woods began to scorch under his fingers. This technique hadn't been nearly as hard as Luffy had expected. Indeed, what had initially been hard was to change back into a solid-state human being rather than a human being made out of lightning. Now, Luffy was wondering what more he could do with it.

Could I use this to cover myself with an illusion? Aokiji didn't show any sign of that ability, but Enel had created that giant Buddha form. Could he have made it look like a human being instead of a giant person made out of lightning?

Suddenly, another thought occurred to Luffy, and he slowly stuck his hand out onto the balcony, along the bottom of it so that the hand could not be seen from below. Instantly, rain began to pummel it, causing a bit of mist to appear as water met lightning. He pulled it back in, clenching his hand again. *I wonder... Lightning also creates or generates heat. That's why lightning burns and heat-based burns look so similar. So can I create a, a heat haze around me?*

With that, Luffy reformed his hand into his normal human body then stuck his hand outside. Watching the hand, which wasn't a large enough part of his body to force him to change into his cursed form, Luffy began to slowly cover it with lightning, watching as the water began to hit it again. And began to become hot. Closing his eyes, Luffy couldn't feel any of the raindrops actually hitting his hand.

A few seconds later, as the last of the marines moved out of sight, Luffy gulped, then with a whisper of, "Here goes nothing," stepped outside, making certain that the heat haze that his lightning body had created was covering him, creating a visible aura of crackling yellow light all around him. He stood there, leaning his head back so that the rain continued to pelt down on him, becoming hot before touching his body.

It would take a lot of work. He certainly couldn't go around with a haze of yellow surrounding his body all the time. But it was definitely a way to finally do away with the chaotic nature of his curse. *And hold on, doesn't hot air make things rise?* With that, Luffy moved back inside, pulled on his poncho, and then began to create the heat haze about his skin. His skin, not the poncho. Which began to rise, puffing out over his skin. It no doubt looked even sillier than it had before, but given the upside, Luffy couldn't care less.

Luffy stared down at himself, incidental laughed wildly, more cackling than laughing really, as he stared up at the sky, giving it the finger. "Screw you, Urd! Hahahah, I win, you Gyaruu gal! First not only does your little trick remove the main Devil Fruit weakness, but now I can even control my curse! So, your skanky tanned ass can suck it!"

OOOOOOO

Back in Luffy's home dimension, Urd had no way of knowing at all what was going on in another universe. She wasn't that high up Heaven's organizational ladder, so to speak, despite her actual power being among the highest in Heaven. However, some things were universal. So as Luffy was cursing her, Urd sneezed violently, so much so that her head came forward, slamming her forehead into the desk in front of her.

Rubbing her forehead, Urd glared around angrily at all the passersby, who suddenly found their own work so engrossing they couldn't even look away from their screens for a

second. Then she turned back to her own work, muttering heatedly under her breath. Someone out there was talking shit about her, and here Urd was, still doing the punishments she had earned when she had made certain that Luffy would keep his curse. *The brat should've thanked me! I mean, didn't it turn out that once he ate a Devil Fruit Ranma could use his curse form to get around the whole weakness to sea water thing? My instincts were spot on, it wasn't even a punishment, it was a, a way to help him that Ranma would not have ever accepted on his own. This whole punishment thing is just unfair!*

There was a dinging noise, and looking up, Urd groaned, seeing the time left on her punishment had gone up again before turning back to her work once more.

OOOOOOO

Elsewhere on the island, Luffy's laughter was heard, sending shivers up and down many a spine. It was the most depraved laugh any of them had ever heard, save for the Straw Hats. "Gahh! Wh, what was that!?" muttered one of the local doctors, pulling back as his patient flinched at the sound.

"Don't know, don't care! I need some gauze here, and make sure those tools are dozed with alcohol and hot water before you bring them back!" Chopper barked, clearly uninterested as he continued to work on his current patient, who had also flinched at the laugh. "And the next time you move, I'm going to scrub out the anesthetic understood!?"

Sanji heard it as well, but like Chopper he didn't care because something else had grabbed his attention. Having not found any of the locals to help for a few streets and having seen the marines pulling back to the main waterways, Sanji had done the same when the laugh hit. At the same time, he saw that the last of the Yagara bulls were moving chaotically, pressing into one another and charging forward, whinnying in terror.

Dropping down next to one of the Yagara bulls, Sanji reached out to soothe it only to almost get his hand bitten off for his troubles. But then the one in front of it moved, and the Yagara bull twisted to one side down a side street, moving rapidly away and hopefully upward, carrying a very worried looking family in its boat. "What was that about?"

One of the Marines nearby answered him, even though he looked a little annoyed at his very presence. "Something spooked them all over. We're getting reports that it's the same at all the other entranceways."

Frowning, Sanji stared down at the water, watching the rain splash into it, so much so that at first, he missed it. Then, as one of the Marines vice admirals hopped down from a nearby roof to redirect his troops, Sanji asked slowly, "Why is the water dropping when there's so much rain?"

The Vice-Admiral in question, Momonga, turned, frowning for a brief second at Sanji, before turning his attention to the water. Slowly, his eyes widened, and he barked out orders. "Nevermind what I was just saying, evacuate now! If you see any stragglers, grab them, dump anything and every piece of luggage or whatever they have and press them hard, we need to move!" He looked over at Sanji, shaking his head. "Your navigator's warning about a tsunami is going to be proven true soon enough!"

The Marines, a group of ten who were among the last in the lower city in this area, obeyed with alacrity, and Sanji quickly hastened his own steps to catch up with the Marine Vice-Admiral who strode down the street, sending Marines down a few side streets for a time before calling them back, staring at the main waterway they were running alongside as the water within receded even more and more quickly. Soon, they, and the last of the Yagara bulls, were leaving the lower area of the city behind, but not fast enough.

Behind them, many of the Marines began to hear a roar. They turned, staring around the buildings, wondering where the sound was coming from, only to scream out, "What is that?!"

In the distance, looming higher than the skyline of the buildings around the marines was a massive wave. A second later, the wave crashed into the island. The bedrock of the island shivered, some of it cracking and torn away, including the place where Luffy and the Straw Hats first talked to the locals in the form of the three old fishermen. Scrap Island too was shattered and torn away.

The human construction of the town fared no better. The already ruined Pirates Cove was smashed to flinders, as were the other ports destroying several civilian ships there. Dozens of buildings in the outskirts of the town were smashed into pieces. Stone or wood, it didn't matter to the power of that wave.

Seeing the oncoming wave, many of the marines began to scream in fear, and Sanji nearly stumbled staring. "Davy Jones Saggy Crotch, what is that!?"

Thinking quickly, Momonga turned back, racing towards the wave, his sword in hand. "Water Cleaving Strike!"

The strike sliced cleanly through the oncoming wave, which crashed into the area all around his men, wiping away houses and tearing them asunder. Of course, water being water, it would then have flowed back into the protected area, dragging the marines away. But by that point, the marines were already on the steps leading up to the rest of the town, the last of the refugees from the town and their Yagara bulls racing deepened inland along the upward-moving waterfall. This meant that the water only slammed into their legs, hurling many off their feet but not dragging them to their deaths quickly.

Paulie was up top, having just led a group of shipwrights who had helped the last of the locals reach safety. And seeing the ten marines go down below shouted out, "Bone Hitch Rope," hurling bits of rope out from his wrists and then tying them to a nearby tree, using himself like a lever. His rope caught the marines, and between them, Sanji and Momonga helped them to their feet, pushing them higher up the stairs.

At the top, they turned, staring down at the rain-drenched ruined landscape below alongside several of the locals as the water receded, and then another wave crashed in, obliterating much of the stairs. "Aqua Laguna," one of them muttered, shivering in fear. "The terror of the sea."

"Maybe, but it's never been this bad," wailed a woman, also staring at the debris down below, which included her house. "What, what are we going to do now? How is Water 7 supposed to survive if Aqua Laguna can be so powerful?!"

To that, none of the people around her had any answer. And after a moment, Momonga shook his head, nodded once to Sanji, and gathered up his Marines. He thanked Paulie for his help, much more politely than he had Sanji, and then gestured them and the locals on. "Come on, there's nothing you can do here. Let's all of us get inside and see if we can find some warmth. There's nothing we can do here," he repeated, staring out and down into the town, shaking his head in shock.

"When you're done getting your people situated, sir, Mayor Iceburg would like to speak to you," Paulie stated, passing on a message he had been given right before coming out here.

Momonga nodded at that, then turned again to look at the sea before turning back and following the last of the stragglers deeper into the safe area of the city.

OOOOOOO

After getting over his case of the mad cackles, a now male Luffy skipped through the downpour, his poncho was now puffier than it had been before as faint wisps of steam came from underneath it. So happy was he that he didn't even care about the destruction going on below him from the monster wave. After all, the people in this area had already been evacuated, and things, even houses, could always be rebuilt. Soon he was knocking at the door to the workstation that was set next to the drydock. From inside, Laki's voice came. "Password?"

"Nice try, Laki. Now let me in," Luffy laughed.

Moments later, Luffy was inside with the rest of his crew, even Chopper. The little doctor was looking as if he was both pouting and ready to keel over in exhaustion. It was a somewhat hilarious look for the young Zoan, especially, although this was kind of gruesome to

think, because of his new eyepatch, which Luffy's eyes locked onto like a lodestone. "Wh, what the heck, where'd you get the eyepatch Chopper?"

The eyepatch in question was a velvet patch of deep blue. On this background, the image of a closed eye with large eyelashes had been sewn in, below which was a hint of pink that looked like a blush.

Looking up from his own annoyance, Chopper allowed his pout to disappear for a moment to be replaced by a smile. "Makino made it for me the moment Laki, and I came in. It has a narrowed, angry eye on the other side, so I thought it was cool." He pouted again after that. "But I should still be out there, you know. There were still six cases I should have finished off, and then going back and double-checking my earlier work and..."

"And there would always be something you would want to do, Chopper. Best to cut it off now. Unless you're telling me Water 7's own doctors couldn't save them?" Laki asked archly. "From what I saw, I didn't think so."

She held Chopper's eye until he nodded, indicating that was the case. He had seen to all the worst wounded even before night had fallen. While Chopper would undoubtedly do a better job on the others, they could still be seen by the other doctors.

"That's what I thought. And I wasn't really comfortable leaving Chopper there, even with the Franky Family watching him from close by, Luffy. Some of those marines were looking at him a bit too... interestedly?" Laki frowned a bit, shrugging her shoulders. "Not certain how to describe it, really."

"That's fine, Laki. I put you in charge of guarding Chopper, not just from other people but from himself," Luffy both teased and praised in one sentence, smiling at Laki.

She smiled wearily back, then moved directly to one of the sofas and collapsed. "I will move for food, but nothing else."

Laughing at that, Luffy looked over at Sanji. "That sounds like a good idea to me. Sanji, food."

Chuckling at that, Sanji headed up into the Resolve and spent only around twenty minutes in the larger kitchen their ship provided before providing a feast of various finger foods. Laki instantly woke up, moving her hand as if trying to summon the food to her before Luffy made up a plate. At the same time, Robin, who had returned earlier, worked the cream Chopper had given her into Makino's neck, causing the woman to sigh in relief as the pain of the massive bruise there disappeared.

As he grabbed a plate for himself and sat next to his lover, Luffy looked over at Nami and Sanji. "So, how about you lot start us off. Tell us about the fight and how you think you did. Then Robin can tell us about the fight around the mayor's mansion and I'll go last."

This talk wasn't as complete as it would have been if Zoro was awake, of course. But when Sanji pointed this out and raised a boot to wake him with, Chopper's eye burst open, and he suddenly launched himself forward, transforming midair. In his Heavy Point form, Chopper grabbed Sanji's head between his fists and ground them together, growling out, "If you even think of waking him up, or hurting Zoro further in any way until he is healed, I am going to remove your tonsils with a spoon! He took enough damage to kill any normal human at least seven times over, and I will not have his recuperation interfered with!"

Chopper's eyepatch was no longer cute this close, especially when paired with his remaining, currently bloodshot, eye.

"I think we can ignore Zoro's fight until he wakes up. We already know that Zoro killed two of CP9's top fighters and wounded the third enough that between us, Chopper and I were able to finish him off," Robin interjected diplomatically.

"More like I held him off until you arrived, but thanks for the vote of confidence." Chopper mumbled, "After, um, facing Kalifa, I er..."

"Wait! It was that bitch who took your eye!?" Makino gasped and would have stood up if Robin wasn't holding her in place with a few hands and rubbing the salve into her neck with another. Just the rubbing felt good at this point. "She was part of CP9!?"

Starting from the beginning of that portion of the fight took a bit, and when he heard about how Robin had thrown off Jabra's attempt to mess with her mind, Luffy pulled Robin into his arms hugging her tightly. "Hope I showed your faith wasn't misplaced," he teased, but the hug and his tone conveyed that he was grateful that she had been able to push past her fear and that he was proud of her.

"MMM... I suppose so, seeing as you held off an entire Buster Call between you, Resolve and Laki," Robin chuckled throatily, leaning into his neck and kissing him there for a moment until Sanji coughed delicately, and she turned her attention to the cook only to see him nearly in tears. Nami, on the other hand, was simply rolling her eyes and not looking their way. "Ara, I do apologize. We'll stop."

"The kissing anyway," Luffy snorted, leaving his arms around Robin, although he let her turn around in his lap so she could face the others.

As the tale wound from Robin's part of the conflict to Chopper's, the atmosphere shifted dramatically as Chopper explained how Kalifa had nearly killed him and had literally poked one of his eyes out with a Shigan before he finished her off, sending her to the

waterways far below. As the young Zoan finished speaking, Makino looked at Luffy in distress. "Can you do something for his eye? I mean, you've practically regenerated most of your body, right?"

"I... I might be able to if I had ever had to regrow an eye, Makino," Luffy admitted, causing Chopper to shake his head and make a new entry into his book of 'Impossible things my Captain can do.' It was quite a big book at this point. "But I haven't. I wouldn't even know where to begin and books wouldn't help me with that. Maybe once Chopper has enough ki of his own, then he could do it."

"And how long do you think that is going to take, captain?" Sanji questioned, his tone oddly formal. "I have to say, I would like us all to be able to heal ourselves like you can."

"Heh, while that might kind of put me out of a job, I have to agree with that," Chopper agreed.

Luffy winced. "I, um, I'd like you to be able to use ki healing too. The problem is that is one of the hardest things to be able to do. First, you must have enough life force to have a reserve of ki in the first place. Second, you have to train your body to use that ki to heal yourself, which is really... really only possible by, um, getting hurt and healing yourself without a doctor's help. Erm, I, I think Chopper might be close to the point he could use ki space, which is good, but that's about as far as even Ace was able to get. The rest is still a bit beyond even Ace, who trained with me for years after I figured out ki myself."

"Shit," Sanji muttered, while the rest were dismayed beyond Chopper, who asked why Luffy thought he was close to creating his own ki space.

"Heh, because I've seen you whip out that doctor's bag of yours from nowhere, Chopper. That means you're using ki space unconsciously. The next thing to do is use it consciously," Luffy explained. *And it could be just my imagination but is Chopper giving some life to that eyepatch of his?*

While Chopper grinned happily at that, Makino wondered aloud, "I have to think that's because Chopper is a Zoan type. I believe Shanks once said that Zoan types are the easiest Devil Fruits to what he called Awaken. He never explained what that was, but he did tell me once about Zoan type who could heal from any wound they were given below those which instantly killed them."

"That makes sense. And I'll start to work with you about using your ki space consciously, Chopper. If you can start to use ki healing, with your knowledge of medicine and how the body works, you might be able to regrow your eye in the future. But for now, Sanji, tell us more about the fights on the searain," Luffy ordered.

Hearing how those fights went, Luffy was immensely pleased by how they had all fought, especially Nami with her teamwork and her new staff's abilities. Considering how tricky Devil Fruit users could be, Sanji's fight was also okay in his opinion, but Luffy made a point to work on his defenses more. Blueno should not have given him that much trouble, really, despite his Devil Fruit.

His own tale followed although it was interrupted by Laki's interjections, and Nami groaning aloud as she muttered, "Of course he created another tornado, because why not?"

"Hah, I bet you could do something similar with your Dial Staff," Luffy retorted but then fell silent as the door from the maintenance tunnel unlocked and Franky entered.

"Wow! It is totally not super out there, let me tell you. Cats and dogs have nothing on what's coming down out there, and the damage Aqua Laguna did," Franky shook his head, then stared over everyone's heads at the Resolve. The sight of the frigate's wounds was enough to drive the memory of Luffy's curse out of his mind. "Wh, what the hell!? I thought you said your ship was alright!?"

"I said Ressa was alright, not the Resolve," Luffy shook his head.

"Don't call me Ressa!" shouted the Klabautermann. "Just because I can't step off my hull doesn't mean that I don't hear you."

Franky breathed a sigh of relief at hearing Resolve's voice. Having now met a legendary Klabautermann, hearing it had been hurt had been a wrench.

Talk about the various battles ended then as they all turned his attention to watching Franky move around the Resolve. Franky ignored them and indeed, the questions that had built up in his mind about Luffy's curse, grimacing as he took in the damages, snorting when he saw the makeshift repairs that Luffy had put in place to allow his gang to move it to the drydock in the first place. Franky then moved underneath the ship, clocking in at something he found there, staring hard at the area where the Resolve had already been damaged before their arrival here in Water 7.

"If your keel hadn't already been repaired as well as you could, I would've said this ship was only fit for the breakers whatever we do. But, since that's still in place, we could..." Franky paused, hopping back up to the main gantry, staring into one of the holes in the side of the Resolve to where the Klabautermann sat awaiting his words with both sides of her personality united in interest for once. "How exactly... That is," Franky stumbled over his words, grumbling angrily. "Dammit, I'm a shipwright, not a doctor. I'm not used to talking to my patients or caring about whether or not my work hurts them!"

Taking a deep breath, he began again. "Can you... that is how small an area can your spirit shrink into? How much of the ship can you make, er, lifeless at any given time?"

Hearing that question, Luffy came out, followed by the others, as they stared up at Resolve too. In return, the Klabautermann disappeared for a second, her words, "Wait a second," echoing back to them for a moment.

Touching the hull with his hand, Luffy closed his eyes, concentrating on his ki sense. He could feel the same kind of vague awareness of another person which had first told Luffy that the Resolve had developed a Klabautermann, fading away. First, the spirit's life force pulled back away from the various wounds, particularly the remnants of the masts and the damage done to the main deck, which Luffy realized Ressay had been keeping her spirit from re-inhabiting. *I wonder if she was doing that on purpose or if it was an automatic thing, like not poking at a wound.*

Regardless, it was a good sign for Ressay's growing abilities with her powers. And as the Klabautermann pulled back from the ship, Luffy could tell where her spirit still resided. He could also feel something of the strain Ressay was putting herself under and whispered out a few words of encouragement. "That's the way Resolve, you're doing great."

"Glad you didn't call me Ressay this time," Resolve muttered back, her voice coming from everywhere within the ship at once, taut with the strain she was putting herself under. This wasn't exactly a natural thing for her race. *If that label is actually accurate at all. It isn't as if I've ever met any other spirit or that we propagate or whatever it is that humans do.*

Eventually, Resolve had pulled her spirit out of the majority of the ship, the last bits being a large portion towards the prow and the keel. "That's it! I can't pull my spirit for that further!"

"She's inhabiting the prow of the ship, most of the prow below the waterline, and the keel," Luffy reported quickly. "Let it go, Resolve."

At her captain's order, Resolve gratefully released pressure, her spirit flashing back out to every inhabit the rest of the ship so fast Luffy had trouble tracking it. "That wasn't easy! By the depths of the fucking sea, that was downright hard!" The Klabautermann slowly formed again, gasping as if she just ran a marathon, pointing at the rest of the crew. "I am so sorry I made fun of you all so often when Luffy forced you to train. I know your pain now."

"Thank you for those kind words," everyone but Franky and Luffy said as one, bowing to the Klabautermann in thanks.

"Oy!" Luffy grumbled, "I'm not that hard on you all... am I?"

"Yes, you are!" Everyone else replied but then Robin went on. "Considering that most pirates don't train as you force us to, only getting stronger through battles or the use Devil Fruits, you are indeed incredibly hard on us. But seeing as your training is what got us all through this recent battle so well, I, at least, am not complaining, simply acknowledging that

your training is difficult. And I believe Resolve is doing the same, considering that this new type of training will allow us to rebuild her physical body and let Resolve's spirit inhabit the new portions, correct?"

"Yeah, I guess so," Franky said, scratching at the back of his head with one of his massive hands. "I will want to know how quickly your spirit can re-inhabit areas that I replace, a but, if that's possible, then we can... We can transfer your spirit to an entirely new hull."

"Transfer?" Resolve and Luffy asked as one.

"Right. Like everyone has been telling you hardheaded bastards since you arrived here, a damaged keel will never be as super as one that isn't damaged. And if we're going to use Adam wood for the rest of the ship, which is also denser than normal wood, it will create a nasty imbalance and that in turn would degrade the keel further and the ship's overall ability."

Luffy made a get on with it gesture, and Franky did so. "Resolve, do you think you could inhabit say just main tap and prow?"

"I wish you had asked before I tried that," Resolve grumbled, shaking her fist to Franky, causing everyone to chuckle. "But yeah, I think I could."

"We can make what is called a fake main deck. Replace the deck with that for now. Have Resolve inhabit it, then lay the new ship alongside it, everything from the keel to the ribs. Shift the fake deck onto the top, Resolve transfers her spirit again while we build up from the bottom, replacing the fake deck when we get to it," Franky said, gesticulating with his large hands in the air in front of him.

"That sounds like a good idea, if difficult on Resolve. And I will want to be here during the transfer process," Luffy mused, hopping up to the hole Resolve was sitting in and ruffling her hair until she batted his hand away. The pirate half of her looked embarrassed, while the Marine half just looked annoyed, causing her lips to twitch this way and that as it became a visible sign of the battle between the spirit's two halves.

Chuckling at that, Luffy looked back at the rest of his crew, then gestured to Franky. "So, just so we all are on the same page, I offered Franky a place on the crew. Any objections?"

"I've got an objection!" Franky shouted before anyone could say anything, thrusting up his arms in both directions. "I haven't agreed yet!"

"Word of advice, when Luffy decides that you're part of his crew, it's best to give up right away," Nami advised with a laugh, looking over at Robin. "It makes everything much easier. Still, I've got no objections."

"I don't know. I feel almost obligated to object simply because of Franky's bizarre mode of dress. However, I will abstain from voting," Makino teased. "We certainly do need a shipwright as part of the crew regardless of who it is."

Franky growled. "I haven't agreed yet, you dicks!"

"I rather think that you might not have a choice Franky," Robin said almost mockingly, yet also sympathetically. "I also agree. Both with the idea of Franky joining and the fact that his clothing is the only reason I would object."

Shrugging, Sanji was the easiest of all to give his approval. "He fought with the ladies against the CP9 members who got past me as well as the government flunkies. So, for protecting the treasures of our crew, he gets my vote."

"What is with the Speedo thing anyway?" Resolve asked innocently. "Do you just like swimming that much?"

"None of you are listening to my protests about not joining!" Franky grumbled, looking away. Then, when Laki and Chopper added their voices to the agreement, without any sartorial concerns and joined in looking at Franky in question, Franky sighed. "I still ain't saying I'm joining up, but I suppose I can tell you this. Pants hate me."

"Wait, what?" Sanji's visible brow furrowed. The cook had taken the time to comb his hair into his normal shape once more after having gotten it so wet in the rain outside.

Grumbling, Franky headed back into the work area and claimed one of the sofas, looking at Zoro curiously, taking in the number of bandages around him as well as how bloody some of the bandages were. "Is he really going to be okay?"

Chopper snorted. "I don't think you can call any of this crew okay, if by that you mean normal. But Zoro will be back on his feet at some point. How long depends on him, and I will repeat that if anyone tries to wake him up, for any reason, I am going to take my biggest catheter and..."

"Okay! That's super enough information!" Franky interrupted, shivering at the look in the doctor's eye. *And is it just me, or did that patch suddenly go from looking cute to looking angry?*

Zoro had exasperated his wounds tremendously after the battle, forcing himself to join Iceburg and the others as they met with the Marines in an attempt to end the fighting. His pride had cost him at least several more days' worth of recuperation and Chopper was determined that he would get all the rest he needed.

"We were asking about your pants, Franky. Or rather your assertion that said item of clothing hates you. I realize that with Resolve looking at us from her perch in our ship's side that this argument isn't going to have the same impact as it normally should, but inanimate objects do not normally have feelings," Robin began dryly.

"Eh, Zoro says his swords have a kind of sentience," Luffy wagged his hand this way and that. "Still, pants would be a new one." Luffy thought about a few of his adventures as Ranma, and a sweatdrop began to form as he remembered a certain possessed item of clothing that had given him issues, the battle gi that Akane had somehow bonded with. And even before that had been the weird panda doodle which had come alive and forced him to 'date' it in order to exorcise it, and the cursed bathing suit too.

"You'd think so, wouldn't you? But..." From there, Franky described a few of the issues he'd run into while wearing pants both when he was Cutty Flam and then again as Franky. These boiled down to causing him to have accidents of various types whenever he wore pants. The bottom would trip him, the crotch of the pants would act as a lodestone to any dangerous objects around, he would be randomly attacked by dogs or other animals, the stories went on and on.

Everyone laughed at that, not maliciously, but seeing the comedy in all these misadventures like they would Zoro's lack of direction, Nami's overly abundant love of gold and Luffy's love of bizarre training concepts. And hearing their good-natured ribbing, Franky now looked back on some of those moments with humor himself. When even Makino admitted that perhaps pants really did have some kind of grudge against him, he pointed at Luffy. "It isn't as if you lot haven't seen stranger. I ran into this one in his female form a few hours ago, and that has to be one of the strangest things anyone could ever encounter, even here on the Grand Line!"

"I wish I could disagree," Nami said, laughing.

"I actually came here to question you all about that, but Resolve distracted me. So, it's real?" Franky questioned now. "I mean, I saw it, heard things only one of you lot would have known, but even so..."

Hearing a faint noise behind him, Luffy quickly turned, staring at Laki, who held up a glass of cold water. "Don't you do it!"

Pouting, Laki moved away, but Sanji got Luffy from behind with another cup, saying to Franky, "Seeing is believing!"

In Luffy's opinion, the cook royally deserved the kick to the face this earned him, which sent Sanji flying through the doorway and into the side of Resolve. Thankfully, Sanji didn't hit with enough force to further damage the ship, although you wouldn't have thought that by the Klabautermann's growl of anger.

Luffy was forced to go through a series of changes between his cursed form and his normal body, grumbling all the while, while also looking forward to the moment where he would reveal his logia powers. *The look on Franky's face is going to be priceless.* But then, as the novelty wore off, Luffy switched the group's attention back to Franky. "But we've only covered half of Franky's weird wardrobe choices. What the heck is the with the open Hawaiian shirt look?"

"That is even simpler," Franky answered, moving to sit down, smiling at the crew. They were a weird bunch, but their camaraderie was such that it put him in mind of his own gang. Except here, Franky was just one of them, not the central figure. And oddly enough, Franky found he liked that. "My shirt would get in the way of some of my mecha-powers, just like pants would these days.

At that point, Chopper and Luffy talked over one another in eagerness to get Franky to show them some more things. A second later, Luffy nearly fell off of his sofa, laughing at the whole nipple flashlight, while Chopper was enthusiastic about seeing Franky once more opening his stomach to reveal his cola containers.

"And then there is the Coup de Boo," Franky began, smirking at Chopper, Sanji and Luffy's looks of admiration. Truly being a cyborg was a man's romance.

That name was enough of a warning to the girls to stop the silliness with Makino speaking for all of the ladies. "That doesn't sound like a pleasant technique to be nearby. So instead, Franky, I know you were working on something after the fight on the sea train. What can you tell us that what you're planning for the Resolve?"

"Are you going to keep calling your ship Resolve? With how unhappy she is being called Ressa, you might want to change that," Franky teased lightly before shrugging his shoulders. "I've been reading those books you brought from where was it the Rainbow Mist? And it got a lot of stuff!"

He stood up, pointing to the ship, explaining how the new ship would be both thinner and have a higher prow, even sharper than the frigate's prow already was. "There won't be any room for a figure on the prow, but I figure the proper paint job might make an even better impression."

"But even more importantly, was a few notes on a suuuper method of propulsion. The book calls it a screw or a propeller and even had the design of one. I think that, combined with something like steam power, could make even a little wheel ship looks slow!" Franky explained, grinning now as he talked shop about what was, despite all the time he spent with his gang and acting the part of a gangster, his real passion. Tom had instilled this love in both Franky and Iceburg, and after so long, it was almost as if a dam had burst.

“The propeller sounds almost like the things that the ARC Maxim used to move forward, or was it to stay in the air?” Laki murmured, tugging at the end of her long, black hair thoughtfully. “You’re saying that kind of thing would work in the water as well as in the air?”

This demanded some explanation, but eventually, Franky got the idea and now understood where many of the jet dials had come from. “Yeah, in a propeller working the water just as well as in the air, better even. It won’t have to spin as fast to propel the ship.”

Franky scratched at the back of his head again, then pointed a large finger towards the ship. The only issue with that kind of propulsion is its power. With a paddlewheel, steam can propel them quickly enough. But, for something like this, you might want a little bit more power.”

Snorting, Laki pointed to Luffy. “We’ve got power aplenty.”

Franky laughed and was about to explain what he meant in more detail when Luffy held up a hand. That hand slowly transformed into lightning, crackling up into the ceiling, then down, as Luffy’s body shifted into a lightning bolt flashing from one place to another and back again. “She’s right. We’ve got power aplenty. But I definitely do not want us to rely solely on my own abilities. So, we would need a secondary power source, which would take up a bit more space.”

The shipwright’s face was everything Luffy had hoped for. His jaw dislocated, his tongue lolled out, and his eyes widened in such shock that everyone there snickered.

It took several minutes, but then Franky shook his head and rolled his tongue back into his mouth. “You, you can’t just show that you’re a Logia user and then set it aside as if it’s nothing! That, how the!? Why haven’t you shown that suuuper power before! None of my family said you used that against the Marines!”

“I didn’t. I didn’t want to show it, not just yet. Not with us stuck here, so close to Enies Lobby. Even with Goro Goro no Mi, it’s not like I’m invincible after all,” Luffy spat out that word as it left a bad taste in his mouth, which it really did.

Looking back on his past life as Ranma, Luffy understood that he had been grossly arrogant at times. Now admittedly, quite a large portion of that had been because of how he had been raised, but even so, a lot of the time it had led Ranma into situations some forethought could have. That wasn’t to say that as Luffy he was all that better, but Ranma/Luffy liked to think he had learned something about that over the years. Although, one thing that hadn’t changed was that Luffy disliked being a one-trick pony, which was why he said, “Besides which, logia users who rely on their Devil Fruit powers alone die in the New World.”

“But you can use it freely?”

“Yep, and I’m willing to put it to work for you when we are constructing the ship, Franky.” In lieu of an explanation, Luffy moved over to a box of random stuff, then pulled up a nail, melted it, then reformed it into a nail, setting it down to cool. Next, he did much the same thing to two nails, melding their heads together but letting the rest stay the shape they had been.

Franky stared at him, then back over at the ship, then began to laugh, cackling like Luffy had earlier, when he had figured out how to use his new powers to somewhat control the impact of his curse. “Oh, man! We are going to make super sparks, baby!”

“Was that a pun?” Luffy questioned, frowning before a yawn erupted from him. It was getting kind of late, and Chopper had already returned to the sofa Zoro was lying on, climbing up one side of it and resting on the back cushion. Laki, Makino and Robin had also turned aside, leaving Nami Sanji and Luffy to talk to Franky.

But Franky didn’t respond to them. Instead, he hopped up onto the Resolve, shouting out the Klabautermann’s name as he moved into its interior. “Let’s get to work. We’ll put down the fake main hull first, then you can start to inhabit it. Well need to know how fast that process is, and then you and I will talk about weapons. Because you better believe that Luffy’s powers give me a whole lot of ideas.”

Shaking his head as he stared after Franky, Luffy turned to Sanji and Nami. “You too can head to bed as well, I’ll...”

“Hell no!” Nami said, making a T shape in midair with her hands. “You fought an entire Buster Call, don’t tell me you’re not tired. Sanji and I will keep watch and answer any questions Franky has.”

“Nami-chwan is right, Luffy. You need some rest too, you know.” Sanji smirked. “If only to run us ragged in the next few days in training anyway.”

Chuckling at that, Luffy punched his cook in the shoulder, nodded to Nami, smiling internally at how she had stepped up there before heading back into the workroom.

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Elsewhere, the marine vice-admirals had commandeered one of the best hotels in the city, mostly because of its central location, and the fact that it was one of the taller buildings below where Iceburg’s and the other mansions began. All of them, even Dalmatian from his bed, were listening as Momonga explained the destruction he had seen.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen any reports about Aqua Laguna being this bad. This is an opportunity,” Strawberry mused. “We can score some more points with the locals by helping them through this.”

"I suppose we'll have to, for now anyway. Hopefully at some point in the future, we can punish these pirate lovers like they deserve!" Onigumo growled.

Momonga stayed silent, not wanting to bring up that one of those pirates had helped him save several of their Marines earlier that night. Nor did he mention the proposition that Iceburg had passed on to him for Sengoku.

Dalmatian, who was still unable to move but was at least conscious now, agreed with Strawberry and added, "There is even going to be an instant payoff for us. The more we help the locals, the more the locals will be enthusiastic about repairing our ships. If any of them survived that, anyway."

"The locals had us moved to one of their better coves, but I suppose that we'll have to see. And if they've been destroyed, the locals might be willing to help build entirely new one for us, depending on how we act," Strawberry replied.

Nodding at that, Momonga was just about to say that they should head inside when a Den Den Mushi that Onigumo had brought outside with him rang with an incoming call. The four flag officers stared at it, watching as the face shifted.

Only Onigumo knew the face it eventually shifted into and for the first time since the battle ended, his anger disappeared, replaced by simple annoyance. "Please, not that idiot!"

The others looked at him, and Onigumo sighed. "As willing as I was to back CP9 up in this fight, that had everything to do with the mission we were on and my admiration for their best agent, Rob Lucci. Spandam is a complete incompetent who got his position through nepotism of the worst sort. I honestly have no idea what he's calling for, but whatever it is, it can't be good."

The gray-skinned follower of Absolute Justice smiled then, his eyes alight with sudden eagerness. "Unless he's calling with the World Government's permission to resume hostilities!"

Momonga wondered how Onigumo could even think that would be a good thing for them, exchanging a glance with Strawberry who looked just as worried. Momonga was many things, but he was very much a realist when it came to combat. Even though their first mate remained out of action with all of their other officers together, the pirates were actually in a stronger position than they had been before. And as furious as he still was at Straw Hat for the destruction of Hanabira Suraisa, Strawberry agreed.

But before either could speak up, Onigumo quickly pulled up the Den Den Mushi, barking into it, "This is Onigumo."

"I know who you are, fool! You and your duuumbass poor excuses for soldiers! You and the rest of CP9 had one job, one, **one**! A measly pirate crew was supposed to be destroyed. And you couldn't even do that!?" the whiny, overbearing voice on the other side barked out.

"Their strength was surprising, even separated as they were. And your CP9 didn't perform any better than we did! In fact, weren't they completely wiped out?" Dalmatian growled from his bed.

"I know, and you have to understand how annoyed that makes me." Despite his words, there was no hint of actual concern or grief in Spandam's voice, and Dalmatian growled again, the sound even more doglike than before. "But, with all of you Marines there still, we can achieve something from this! The Devil Child and Franky. At this point, I'm inclined to act as if Kalifa's last report on Frank possibly having the plans for Pluton in his possession is accurate. And with the truce called, the Straw Hats will not be on their guard."

Dalmatian winced, while Strawberry and Onigumo both shook their head. Even Onigumo didn't look pleased at that, knowing that idea was ridiculously stupid. The pirates would be even further on their guard and how this idiot could believe anything else was beyond him.

"So I'm hereby ordering you, by the power vested in me by the World Government to..."

There was a crashing noise from the other side of the communications, a sudden shriek of fear like a little girl, and a booming voice that all four of the flag officers knew shouting out, "That's about enough out of you!"

On Enies Lobby, Spandam hid behind his desk as the door to his office, located high up in the Tower of Justice was sent over his head and out of the window. Somehow a part of his mind was still in one piece, while the stone around the door had been shattered and was currently crumbling to the floor.

Admiral Garp strode in, his face thunderous. "I am now damn glad that Sengoku told me to check in here with you and make sure that you weren't going to pile stupidity on stupidity! Every word out of your mouth just now convinces me that your Daddy showing you how to breathe and bitch at the same time is the only thing that keeps you alive, let alone actually holding down this job! I wouldn't trust you to bail out a dinghy, let alone lead a group like CP9!"

"What, wait a minute, just because you're a Vice-Admiral doesn't mean you can just barge in here..." Spandam stuttered. "I don't care what your rank is or the stories about you! I'll have your head. I have connections!"

"Shut up!" Garp bellowed, stepping forward. When the elephant attempted to move in his direction, Garp just glared at him. Although Garp did not have the Haoshoku, that glare was enough to cause the elephant to shrink back, moving back against the far wall. And then,

showing far more intelligence than most pachyderms would have, began to move along it towards the open doorway, leaving his master to his fate.

"I hate elephants. Their faces are stupid, but not as stupid as you!" Garp growled, smashing the table to one side and grabbing up Spandam by the face, gripping his face in one hand, until whatever's bleating fell silent. "You are a moron! You and Akainu both gambled, gambled with way more than you should have, if you weren't afraid to lose it! Your part in this incompetence not only cost you all of your trained agents but you too will have to pay for it!"

With that, he tossed the man towards a few other marines who had followed him in, one of whom Luffy would've recognized, if with quite a bit of difficulty. Coby had come a long way from the scared weakling he had once been. "Take them away."

Released from Garp's grip, Spandam seems to come back to himself, shaking his head and shouting out, "You can't do this to me! I have connections. I had the authority for everything I did from the World Government! Do you even know why I was given the okay for this operation!? The battleship, Pluton! Even in comparison to the devil child, those plans are more important! With them, the World Governments' power would be unstoppable!"

"Right, and you thought that if you gained that kind of power, they let you keep it?" Garp scoffed, shaking his head. "Even the World Government wouldn't want someone like you possessing that kind of power. Hell, I think that anyone possessing that kind of powers asking for trouble."

"But Franky, he's the one that has the plans, and Straw Hat Luffy has Nico Robin the Devil Child on his crew! They'll be able to use those plans!"

"That just shows you don't know my grandson," Garp said with a guffaw, his tone turning proud now as he slammed one meaty fist into his chest. "He's not the kind to ever want that kind of power. Skill and physical strength sure but that kind of power no."

Garp shook his head, his smile becoming a bit thin as if he had tasted poison in his food. "And the people who gave you that authority are now cursing themselves for fools. Your plan was overly complicated, had too many goals, and was too damn stupid!"

As bullheaded and straightforward as Garp normally was, he was a Vice-Admiral and that meant he had indeed led large-scale operations. Mostly by saying 'Follow me' and charging, admittedly. But sometimes, Garp had been forced to make more complicated plans.

And he knew that there had been a lot of mistakes made with this plan. The biggest one on the marine's side was underestimating the impact of the Haoshoku and assuming that their ship's firepower would matter worth a damn against someone like his grandson. The mistake on CP9's part was to go for too many targets. If they had concentrated on the pirates who remained on Water 7 rather than splitting their forces, then at least Nico Robin would have

been taken into custody and there would've been no witnesses to their attempted murder on Iceburg. At which point they could've piled in on Luffy.

"It was your orders, which both forced the one called Kalifa to question Iceburg and split your forces to attack Franky! The one who planned that aspect should also take some of the blame, but it was your orders who okayed that plan and you should've been the one to notice!"

With that, Garp waved his hand, shaking his head at Coby, who knocked Spandam out, while Garp moved over to grab up the Den Den Mushi. "And you idiots better not think for a second that because I came down on him like a house of brick, that you lot are getting off the hook!"

The four supposedly equally ranked marines on Water 7 all flinched, the smiles that had been on their faces at hearing Spandam being told the facts of life disappearing instantly. While they technically had the same rank, all Marines knew that Garp's position within the organization was such that only Sengoku could be said to have a higher authority. It was just that Garp very rarely used that authority. He preferred to use his fists.

Hearing that he would do so in response to their own part in this debacle caused all four of them to shiver in fear.

Garp's next words did not help matters. "I am leaving with the dawn tide, and I'll be there in a few days. Do nothing until I get there. And know that my grandson isn't the only one who has an appointment with my fists!"

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The next day, Luffy was woken up from his position by the doorway as it opened, causing him to roll to one side and twist around to face the doorway, one hand pressing down onto the ground, the other one cocked back. He stopped when he saw Iceburg standing there alone, missing his two self-appointed bodyguards for the first time since the attack on him. Iceburg smiled at him and at the others who were slowly waking up, then over their heads towards the ship, shaking his head in some dismay at the damage still apparently there.

"You sure you should be moving about without help?" Luffy whispered, a snicker on his lips as he gestured towards the sleeping Chopper. "Our doctor might object kinda forcefully, ya know?"

"I'll take my chances, I think. Besides, Lulu and Paulie both needed sleep," Iceburg retorted, but his eyes concentrated more on where Franky was, even now winching out a

portion of the shattered mainmast, while nearby replacement beams waited to be emplaced instead for what Franky had called the fake main deck and his smile turned wry. "It's funny to see him at this again, after so long."

Franky heard him and called over, waking up most of the rest of the crew, bar Zoro. "If you're just here to gawk, get out, Bakaburg!"

"What, you would actually accept my help, Fool?" Iceburg scoffed.

Franky actually thought about it for a moment, then shrugged. "Maybe after the Adam wood arrives."

Luffy and the others looked on as Iceburg blinked, then slowly smiled. That offer of help and its acceptance obviously meant a lot more to these two men than it must have seemed on the surface.

Leading his two fellows through the band of slowly wakening pirates, Iceburg allowed himself to be helped up onto the deck of the ship, looking around and shaking his head. "This ship looks as if it fought a war single-handed! And you still think you can repair it? You saw the damage to the keel just as much as I did."

"That's what the client wants, and believe me, he's got some reasons for it," Franky admitted, not wanting to mention the Klabautermann unless he got the okay from Luffy and the others.

"Well, regardless, do you want another set of eyes on your plans? Not that you need them, but you are a little out of practice in actually building ships, Franky," Iceburg began. And again, his tone and expression seem to imply a lot more than the words themselves would have.

For their part, after grumbling a bit, the pirates started to get up. Sanji quickly made them a meal. Chopper ate quickly, intending to head to the hospital, but Luffy broached the subject about what they would be doing, while Franky was working on their ship. As he was going into the specifics of their training regimes while they were here, which would be both more tailored to the individual than when they had been doing on the ship up to this point, Iceburg came in, with Franky following after.

He paused, staring at them all, then coughed, getting their attention. "I, I have to apologize for my part in baiting the trap. Kalifa and the others used my pre-existing concerns about you, Robin, and your long-term goals, against me. The Devil Child..." He paused as nearly every pirate there snarled at the name before hurrying along. "And her movements across the Grand Line have been such that like most people who have never met you, I was of the firm belief that you are someone who wanted to overthrow the status quo. That you are searching for things that you could use against the World Government."

"If by that you mean the truth beyond the Void Century, then you would be correct," Robin said crisply. "Beyond that, I've never acted in any manner to undermine the World Government beyond my simple survival. My dream is to know of the Void Century, of what that hides, that is all."

"Your captain there, he said that none of you are the type to care about power for power's sake or to want to conquer the world. Is that true?" Franky asked quickly.

"Is this about the plans that Kalifa was asking about?" Chopper piped up innocently. "She was really questioning you hard on that score Mr. Mayor."

Iceburg grimaced but nodded. "The World Government has for many decades believed that somewhere on Water 7 were the plans of an ancient weapon and have long coveted it."

Robin frowned at that, looking away, then when she felt Luffy's hand touch her side, she turned back. "I...I know another place where similar plans can be found. Indeed, I read a few lines of that plan. The man I was working for, Crocodile, was interested in. It would've made Alabasta the center of a new Empire, with him at its head. But I didn't have any interest then and I don't now. All I have ever desired is knowledge of the void century of history. Not of weapons, not of power, only of freedom and the past."

She leaned against Luffy for a second, then sat straight. "I not only stopped reading those plans, but I had my new captain here destroy the Poneglyph in question. Both its owners and we too agreed that such knowledge was not necessary in this world."

The two former apprentices of Tom's Workers looked at one another, and after a moment, Iceburg nodded. This final admission, this final sign that the Devil Child was anything but, removed the last of his worries about needing the plans for Pluton, and the very idea of getting rid of it was a massive relief to him.

With a smile Franky reached into his chest once more, shifting his hand up and above where the three cola bottles fit in, before pulling down an ancient-looking scroll. "Agreed, and if you aren't interested in it, then the only people who could use that power are the World Government. And I'd rather die than hand it to them!"

With that, he used a Fresh Fire to burn the map, then clapped his large hands together to get rid of the soot on them. "Now, let's talk more about the interior of the ship you wanted..."

End Chapter

So this chapter doesn't quite cover as much as I wanted it to. Still, it starts a few hijinks type stuff that will be continued, shows Spandam being spanked, secrets coming out and Franky taking several conscious steps towards joining the Straw Hat crew. In the future I won't show as much 'talk about it' type scenes, but here, I felt that showing some character interaction after so much combat was a nice change of pace.