

Ranma's Rumiko's bleep and One Piece is Oda's.

This is my One Piece/Ranma crossover story. If you haven't read about it on my profile or when I have mentioned it in my other stories end notes, it may come as a surprise. I plan to upload the first three chapters over the next few days, then update it two chapters a month until I catch up to where it is on Pat R on. That will be at the end of the Alabasta arc, which I will finish this coming month.

After that, it will join the monthly poll to see if it continues to get updated, and I will replace it on Pat R on with another Pat R on only story, or keep updating it monthly depending on a poll I put up after the next chapter over there.

This has been edited by Hiryo and myself, but I doubt we got all the little mistakes that are in it. Just hope we got the big ones LOL!

Prologue: New Acquaintances, Same Old Foot-in-Mouth Disease

"Hey Saotome, you can skive off now."

Ranma looked up with dull, uninterested eyes from where he was putting the finishing touches on the wall he was working on. The rest of the house, most of which he'd built, or rather rebuilt, was almost finished too, and after only three days too. "But we're not done yet."

The foreman for this job shook his head. "All we need to do is the electrical line on the second floor and make sure the heater's working kid, we can do that." He stared down at the boy who was undoubtedly his best worker, and by a margin so wide it wasn't even funny. This would be the twentieth house Ranma had repaired in three months, all of which had been more rubble than house frankly.

The kid should have been making a fortune with his skills... "Here, it's your living allowance for the week kid." The foreman held out a small envelope containing enough yen to live on for a week if you were frugal. The rest of Ranma's money... well the foreman really didn't like to think about how Ranma had been shafted so he shook his head, smacking the pigtailed young man on his back. "We'll need to see if you can

branch out away from simple houses kiddo, you're beginning to look a little bored there."

"Bored? Yeah, I guess ya could say that." Ranma looked away from the man, sighing faintly. "Thanks for the cash boss, I'll see you tomorrow."

With that Ranma turned, pulling off the hardhat and vest he'd been wearing, dropping them off in the construction zone's locker room before leaping up onto a rooftop nearby. One he'd actually built a few days ago. Behind him the foreman watched him go, shaking his head. "Poor kid."

"Bored, bored, bored!" Ranma muttered, leaping over the rooftops of Juuban district to the house the government had bought for him, the easier to keep an eye on him. "Blergh, if you had told me a year ago that I'd actually hate days where no-one attacked me or tried ta kidnap my female form or Akane or issued some weird ass challenge, I'd probably've punched you." He sighed, staring out over the nearby rooftops. "How's that old song go, 'you never know what you have until it's gone', damn if that ain't true."

It hadn't happened all at once admittedly. His life at the Tendo dojo seemed to return to somewhat to normal after the Wedding Fiasco. His rivals still came around even if Ryoga was now more of a friendly one than before, having officially hooked up with Akari. Shampoo, Cologne and Mousse were still the same, even if they had sworn off further magic tricks. Saffron's defeat had won him a lot of good will with the Amazons, even if it took a while for that to actually sink in with Shampoo and Mousse. Even Happosai had been leery of angering Ranma for a while after that, not that it lasted long.

Heck, he and Akane had been... not getting along better, but no worse either. It seemed as if Akane just wanted to forget everything since the Phoenix tribe showed up hadn't happened, good and bad, and though Ranma had been sort of angry at that, at least she was no longer blaming him for the Wedding Fiasco

Then Ukyo had backed off. It hadn't really been sudden, she had always been the least intense about chasing after him of his three so-called 'official' fiancés, and after the wedding had cooled off even further. She seemed to realize that while no one had officially won the competition yet, she wasn't going to win.

While Ukyo still liked him a lot, she had realized she never really loved him, been infatuated with sure, but Ukyo was the most, at the time his mother called it emotionally mature, of his three fiancés, and was able to move on. Ranma hadn't known what to make of it at the time, but looking back on it he simply felt she was more mature full stop than the others. *And me too if I'm honest about it.*

They'd still been friends, but she and Konatsu had eventually left Nerima wanting to hunt down a rumor that there was someone else using the Kuonji Style out there. Ranma had volunteered to go with them, but Ukyo told him this was something she had to handle alone, and was only taking Konatsu along because he would've simply followed her anyway. A few months passed after that, his and Akane's relationship going up and down as normal, with more down than up if he was honest because of their continued use of insults, with Shampoo, Mousse, Kuno and even Kodachi acting as they always did.

Then the two of them had graduated from Furinkan, and Ranma hadn't been able to go on to college, not even a community college. His grades weren't abysmal, but they weren't good, and even Nabiki had run into trouble getting into a college after she graduated the year before. He hadn't thought of that as a great hardship of course having no interest in college or further classes about boring stuff he couldn't care less about.

But surprisingly Akane had gotten a full acting scholarship. She'd always been much more passionate about acting than her martial arts, and her limited martial arts skills had allowed her to act out a lot more roles than any other actress on the market.

And by that point their relationship, whatever it had been had died out. Looking back at it Ranma knew the two of them had simply gotten too much into a rut in terms of how they showed affection towards one another. The words might not have meant much at first but their simple inability to communicate like normal people, the insults on his side, the lack of trust on hers, had begun to kill off whatever spark had ever been there. Akane's decision to pursue her scholarship and leave the Tendo Dojo while Ranma was still more interested in the martial arts than anything else, had marked the official end of their relationship despite Genma and Soun's best efforts.

And then came the flood, Ranma thought sardonically, shaking his head as he thought back to that first time the Tendo Dojo's doorbell had rung. It had interrupted

an argument between Akane and the two fathers that for once Ranma had successfully stayed away from. That should have been his clue something was going to go wrong, which was proven when a man dressed like a lawyer had handed Kasumi papers for Genma Saotome.

It turned out his old man hadn't just sold Ranma off to Ukyo, the Tendos, and few others, but **hundreds** of others. Worse, there were hundreds more families that had never agreed to the deal, making Genma a simple thief. There were others too, lots more debtors, all of whom had joined forces to find Genma and even gone to the government for help. Over the next few days the argument about Akane's future was forgotten as more and more of them showed up, including a government official. The total debt the government felt Genma owned: 86.66 trillion yen spread out in several different countries. And that was before interest and the other 'fiancé families' were added in.

Of course Genma had reacted predictably: he ran off. Heck even Happosai made himself scarce, unwilling to chance the government coming down on him for some reason Ranma never discovered. Cologne, after recovering from a minor heart-attack, had done the same, unwilling to let Shampoo continue her pursuit when doing so would either bankrupt her tribe or make them an enemy in not only Japan, but China and elsewhere. Soun of course did much the same, but he actually did the semi-honorable thing by cutting his losses and ending the agreement between their families. That was the last Ranma had seen of Soun or Kasumi, who had still been living at home when he was kicked out the door.

Ranma might well have run off too, if not for the government placing his mother under 'protective custody'. It had originally been an attempt to get Genma to turn himself in, but it hadn't worked. Ranma however did love his mom and he had turned himself in. The government had come up with a way to have him pay his father's debtors, and Ranma had entered the world of construction. He occasionally was called in to help the police with a martial artist type problem, but those were few and far between.

In other words, Ranma's life had escaped the original, if exciting rut, and fallen into a new one which was about as much fun for the adrenaline junkie as watching paint dry.

Ranma looked up from his musings as a small explosion occurred nearby, a surge of interest shooting through him for a moment. Then he shook his head irritably as he heard a male voice pontificating about something or other, his voice loud and manic. "Damn it, false alarm."

As Ranma continued on his way he began to make out the actual words. "But this time Sailor soldiers, there will be no salvation, my Queen will have your powers and souls, and this world will be ripe for conquest!"

"Uggh..." Ranma rolled his eyes, shaking his head and muttering "bored," under his breath Ranma made his way in that direction. He arrived just in time to watch Sailor Moon take her pose and begin her speech. Smirking slightly Ranma faded out of the background to land a kick on the back of the Negaverse general of the week, he thought it was the one called Calcite or something? Frankly they were all the same, stupid pretty boys who liked to mouth off rather than actually fight.

The kick sent the general forward over the rooftop to land face first among a group of his minions. The next second a dozen vacuum blades accompanied by several of the Sailor Scouts attacks shredded the small group of Negative animals or whatever they were called, thought the general was able to get out of the way by rolling and diving wildly. That was until Ranma leaped down, landing on top of the general's head smashing him into the concrete.

Still standing on the back of the general's head, Ranma shook his own. "Man, when will you lot learn? You lot should know when I'm around by this point, it ain't like my schedules a big mystery. Didn't the lesson I gave the last guy, what's his name Benzite or something, take? I'd have thought having his own sword's hilt shoved down his throat would've given you lot the clue."

He turned, waving his hand at the girls. "Hi Pluto, hi Jupiter, er, hey girls."

"Hi Ranma," the two women addressed by name said in very different tones, while the others simply waved or glared.

Pluto was a tall what his mother would call statuesque woman with long green hair and darkly tanned skin. She was the oldest of the Sailor Scouts by a considerable margin, and the most professional of them in Ranma's opinion. Jupiter on the other hand Ranma had actually trained at one point after his life in Nerima collapse the

girl having looked him up after he'd stepped in to stop an attack on one of the malls in the area by a negaverse monster. She'd gotten a lot better under his tutelage since then.

The others Ranma wasn't nearly so friendly with because three of them, Moon, Mars and Mercury, were among the girls who his father had promised his hand to in their normal lives. Calling him a two-timing womanizer, Rei had attacked him upon meeting him and then turned around and practically demanded Ranma teach her martial arts in recompense.

That he wouldn't until she got her temper under control was a major bone between them. After all, an angry girl was one thing, an angry girl with the power to control fire and an inclination to attack first ask questions never was another. Rei also refused to sign up with the rest of the debtors, adding that compensation to the total amount, which was another source of his irritation with her.

Amis family had added the amount they were owed to the list, she simply didn't want anything to do with him after learning about the debt. She also found him uncouth and rather offensive at times, but that could be put down to how easily he warped what she thought of as scientific laws rather than anything personal.

Moon's family, had been among the first to add their debt to the pile rather than continue to pursue Ranma himself helped by the age difference and the fact Usagi had a secret boyfriend already. She didn't like him for an entirely different reason and possibly the most understandable of the three.

Ranma smirked at Sailor Moon shaking his head. "What've I told ya about making speeches?"

The odangoed blonde pouted, but when she noticed his fingers twitching quickly grabbed her hair protectively then recited quickly "'don't make them unless it's over the smoking bodies of your enemies!' Please don't dye my hair again you meanie!"

"Good girl," Ranma murmured, winking at Pluto who chuckled quietly shaking her head. Even the other two Outer Scouts, neither of whom liked Ranma all that much (at least not this male body) chuckled at that. "I'd ask what was going on, and what my footstool's scheme was, but frankly I can't be bothered. Can you lot at least

try to keep the fights to a minimum around here? I just finished a job cleaning up after the last of your fights as it is."

The girls all looked abashed at that and Ranma chuckled, deliberately not looking in Jupiter's direction. Makoto was tall for her age, almost meeting Ranma's height in his male body, and very... well-grown. Besides her body Makoto was also the kind of girl he wouldn't mind getting to know better, but her age and his negative relationships with her teammates, plus the fact he could tell Venus also seemed interested in him, meant he wouldn't even try to get closer to her, no matter how interested she might be.

After all, I'm 20 now, and she's just past sixteen. There's an ugly word for people who date minors. Especially ones who haven't actually developed yet, speaking of which... Ranma quickly knelt, grabbing up a piece of rubble and hurling it to the side and up towards a nearby chimney. A loud 'bonk' followed by a cry of pain followed, and a tuxedo-clad man in a mask fell out his hiding place behind the chimney, nearly skidding off the tilted roof before righting himself. "If you're just gonna act like a stalker stay home Tux-pedo!"

While the Outers and Jupiter began to laugh, Mars, Venus, Mercury and Moon scowled at Ranma before making their way toward the bruised Tuxedo Kamen. Ranma would've continued teasing the girls, it was one of the funnier things he was allowed these days, but his stomach chose that moment to rumble and he sighed. "Mom's expecting me home so I'm gonna head off, you lot clean up after yourselves or else!"

With that Ranma turned away, shuddering slightly as he saw a smirk on Pluto's face. That kind of smirk told Ranma the wearer knew something he didn't, and giving his life to date having someone around that worried him.

The house the government allowed Ranma and, occasionally his mom to stay in was a very small one-story house without even a yard to call its own except a small one at the back where his mother was attempting to grow herbs. It wasn't much, and most of the time it was a pretty lonely place, but at least today his mom would be there tonight.

Ranma opened the door, calling out, "I'm home."

Nodoka replied from the kitchen. "Dinner is almost ready Ranma, why don't you go up and take a shower, then set out some plates for us".

Ranma answered in the affirmative, heading up to take a shower, washing himself first with cold water, checking herself in the mirror as she did so before hopping into the shower. Ranma's female form hadn't gained any height, which he always though was weird since his male form had. He was now as tall as Kuno had been the last time that moron had shown up, his shoulders almost as broad too. But the only change on his female body had been her face had thinned a little, and her chest had grown somewhat.

Sighing she stepped into the shower, letting the water transform his body once more, cracking his neck and shoulders. After a shower he went to his room calling out to his mom, "I saw the Sailor Scouts out again just so you know, your minders might be late."

Making no comment on that last, Nodoka addressed his mentioning Pluto and company. "Oh that's nice, did you take my advice and ask Jupiter-chan out? Four years difference isn't that much, and she likes you, anyone can tell."

"Mom!" Ranma groaned. "She's pretty, but four years is a big difference to me, and besides, I taught her martial arts! There are strict rules about master/student relationships."

"Yes, in the old days it was assumed the master would teach the student more than martial arts." Nodoka replied. "And she's not your student **now**, is she?"

Ranma groaned even louder this time, shaking his head. *Gah, mom always does this every time she's allowed to visit, but what kind of girl'd be willing to go out with a guy who's got Genma's debt's hanging over our heads? Thank god that's all she's doing, not pushing for grandbabies anymore.*

Despite the debt and Ranma being so busy trying to pay it off, Nodoka was of the opinion he had to enjoy life and getting a girlfriend was part of that. Ranma could even understand her point, he just couldn't work up enough interest to go out in search of one, and he really did think that Makoto was too young. Setsuna might have been a better bet, but she saw **him** as too young. And going out partying simply to meet people just did not appeal at all.

As he exited the bathroom, the phone rang, and Ranma scowled, while in the kitchen Nodoka sighed. "Could you get that Ranma?"

Ranma nodded, grabbing up the one phone in the house, fully expecting it to be one of the government minders who routinely drove Nodoka to and from her safe house and Ranma's for these little weekly visits. *I suppose after my old man showed up and tried to get her out it that first month after the debtors showed up it makes sense, but damn it, it's been months now, can't they just let her live me and watch her here? Assholes.*

Ranma opened his mouth to give the man on the other end an earful but before he could speak, the person on the other line spoke. And instead of a man's voice it was a woman's voice, a deep, sultry voice with an odd accent. "Hello, this is the Goddess helpline, your representative goddess will be there in a moment to fill your wish. Please stay on the line big boy."

Ranma blinked, then pulled the phone away from his ear to look at it strangely, then out the door towards the kitchen. *If this is one of my mom's ideas to teach me about women, it's a bit more elaborate than the last one.* That had consisted of tricking Ranma into entering a brothel which one of her old friends owned (and no Ranma did not want to think about how his mom knew a madam) to deal with a supposed ghost sighting. Ranma didn't think he had broken the sound barrier as he escaped, but it had been a close call and he knew he'd needed a blood transfusion afterwards.

"Hey, um, mo..." Ranma trailed off as his eyes caught sight of the mirror over the small dresser, out of which a silver haired, dusky woman was slowly pulling herself out of grumbling all the while.

"What the in the name of Father is up with this area? Why the hells does every teleportation spell go wonky here? Also, geeze kiddo, you need to get a bigger mirror." She grunted waving her hand all along the mirror's edge, and suddenly the small mirror was twice again its size. "Oh, that worked!? Meh, not going to complain."

Before she could complete the process however Ranma was in front of her, pushing her head back in. "Yeah, no. I don't want whatever quest or task or whatever yer selling witch lady, back you go!"

The girl gasped, then tried to fight him off with one hand, the other holding onto the mirror's edge. "Hey, wait, I'm not a, gah, just, I'm not...! Screw it, Supreme Lightning Blast!"

Ranma jerked back, but a bolt of lightning appeared midair behind the woman, flashing forward to slam into his shoulder, hurling him backward. It didn't hurt much, he'd taken ki blasts from Herb and others that hurt a lot more, but before he could regain his feet, the woman in the mirror had pulled herself out, hopping to the floor.

In the kitchen Nodoka heard the sound of combat then smiled as the sound of lightning reached her. *It seems as if Makoto-chan has decided to take matters into her own hands, good for her!* She turned back to her work a small smile still on her face.

She was dressed in a white one piece dress that, while covering everything adequately, also put everything on display in a way that would have made Ranma blush under more normal circumstances. Now however his pulse was pounding, and he was feeling excitement for the first time in months so he could care less what she looked like.

She seemed to take a deep breath, possibly reining in her temper, before throwing her hair back like a runaway model. "Hello Ranma Saotome, I'm here to make your dreams come true."

"What kind of dreams you think I've got that a magical hooker like you could make 'em come true?" Ranma growled, coming up out of his crouch into a rising kick aimed at the woman's face.

"What'd you cAAA!" The woman yelped as she ducked backwards, her eyes widening in surprise right before a punch caught her in the chest hurling her back into the dresser. "Oh, that's it punk!"

Lightning arced from her fingers for a moment, but Ranma didn't let her set herself for whatever spell she was trying to use. He was in her face, feet and hands flashing far faster than a normal human could follow. Ranma had perfected the Amiguriken technique to a level even Cologne had never seen before.

The woman grunted a few times, then her own hands began to flash, nearly matching Ranma's speed. A kick lashed out, trying to catch Ranma on the thigh, but he jumped over it, remaining in the air and kicking out himself, nearly taking her head off. "CRa, damn it kid!"

"If you're tired you can go back to your old folk's home lady, I could do this all day!" Ranma laughed, enjoying himself for the first time in a long while. The woman had next to no technique, but her strength and speed were beyond anything he had dealt with before, indeed it seemed as if she was getting faster as the fight went on.

"OLD!? Okay mortal, if you want a beat down you've got it!" the woman growled, her hand flashing out and grabbing Ranma's arm with one of her own faster than he could dodge. Her other hand shot out, a right hook smashing into Ranma's jaw. But Ranma retaliated, a series of kicks to the chest that sent the woman down the hallway.

Before the woman could set herself again Ranma was in her, a punch smashing into her face and throwing her sideways out the window. "Let's take this outside old lady!"

Inside the house Nodoka frowned, having heard that shout. "Hmm... perhaps Setsuna instead? I do hope they don't use all their energy arguing, they won't have any energy left after he finally gives in... oh my."

The Kasumi impersonation was caused by the water in front of her suddenly glowing white, then showing the face of a remarkably pretty young woman. She had light brown hair, pale white skin, a pretty smile, and several odd marks on her cheek and forehead, which reminded Nodoka of those strange red dots she had seen Indian women wear in movies.

Cocking her head thoughtfully Nodoka stepped back slightly as the girl actually pushed her head out of the water. "Would you like some help dear?"

"Oh, yes please, I'm sorry to bother you." The young woman replied politely. "Transportation spells don't seem to work appropriately here in Juuban. They are supposed to teleport me through the medium not actually inside it. And I was supposed to appear in a mirror..."

Nodoka quickly moved forward, taking the girls outstretched hand and helping her pull herself out of the water, noting absently that the girl didn't feel wet to the touch. Seconds later the woman, clad in an elaborate white and blue dress with gold sewing here and there, stood in the kitchen. "Now, may I ask who you are, and why you're here?"

"My name is Belldandy Nodoka-san, and I am afraid here to help my older sister on an assignment of hers. She was supposed to talk to Ranma-san, but apparently their meeting turned poorly."

"Ah, in that case you'll find your sister outside with Ranma." Nodoka replied, shaking her head and finally realizing her assumptions had been off for a while, but still somewhat upbeat. "Why don't you go and get them, and I'll finish setting out the food. We can sit down and talk about whatever two beautiful magical girls need my son for."

"That sound's lovely Nodoka-San." Belldandy replied, then waved one hand over the food for a moment, doubling the amount of food available. "But we're not magical girls, though I can see why you made that assumption, we're goddesses."

Outside the fight was still going on. "Father damn it stop with the old lady thing, I'm not even past thirty in human years!" The woman replied to another quip about her age, still trying to get some distance between them. Arcs of lightning and wind flew from her fingers, none of them powerful because she couldn't concentrate enough to build them up, but fast.

"Sure as hell don't look it with that skin of yours. Whatsamatter, ya spend too much time in the tanning salon Yankee?" Ranma quipped, dodging around her attacks, trying to keep the fight up close and personal. It was obvious the woman was a long range fighter, and given that first blast Ranma didn't want to see what else she could do.

"My skin's naturally this way, and I'll have you know mortals would kill to look this good! You just don't know the first thing about women little boy, or should that be little girl given your curse?" The woman smirked seeing that hit home and continued quickly, completely forgetting for a moment why she was here in the first place. Ranma wasn't the only one that had a thing for adrenaline.

The two continued to dance around one another, neither able to land a blow for now. She could fly and dodge faster than any mortal, while Ranma was about as in home in the air as a bird, and twice as agile. "That's right little boy, I know all about your curse. But given how often it's helped you, and how much fun you've had with it, I wonder did you fall into that pool deliberately?"

"You don't know what you're talking about lady," Ranma said, his voice devoid of any humor, and suddenly a punch which should have gone towards the woman's chest found her chin instead, hitting hard enough to make her see stars. "Demon hooker or whatever the hell you are you got no idea about what I've been through!"

"You'd be surprised, little boy!" The girl grunted, then lashed out, a full wind shot curled up in her palm, releasing as she struck Ranma's shoulder, hurling him away and down. A blue-white ki blast however came back at her smashing her face and leaving it smoking for a moment before she waved her hand around, dispelling the smoke to glare, uninjured, at Ranma. "Was that supposed to hurt little boy?"

The two of them were interrupted at that point by another female voice shouting, "Urd, stop that at once! You were supposed to talk to him, not fight him."

Ranma turned and nearly gaped at another girl, who was simply beautiful. Oh, Ranma wasn't immune to the fact the girl he'd been fighting, Urd, was gorgeous, but this girl's beauty was a softer, less aggressive sort. And she hadn't appeared magically, at least not in front of him that was a plus.

"You didn't hear what he called me Bell! Besides he was the one who stopped me from coming through the mirror before even hearing what I had to say!"

"Given his life up to this point you can hardly blame him sister." Belldandy replied, frowning at her.

Urd still glared at Ranma, but she visibly calmed herself under her sister's glare. "Fine, I'll let it go so long as he apologizes for what he called me."

Belldandy nodded before turning the same look on Ranma. Like Urd, Ranma caved quickly, and turned slightly bowing his head toward Urd. "I'm sorry I called you an old demon hooker."

"That **really** didn't sound like you meant it." Urd growled, lightning sparking from her fingers.

"Sister, this is going to be a tough enough conversation as it is without your temper." Belldandy said, moving forward to touch her sister gently on the shoulder. "You read his file, you know why Ranma is almost completely unable to stop himself from mouthing off like that."

"I did, and I thought I was ready for it. You really do know how to get under people's skins don't you?" Urd growled, but she calmed down even more actually leaning against Belldandy for a moment.

Ranma pulled at his pigtail self-consciously. By this point the adrenaline was gone, and he was really feeling stupid now under Belldandy's eyes. "All right, I am really sorry. My mouth does tend to get away from me sometimes, and, well you showing up like that, it was the first exciting thing that's happened in months, and I just didn't want it to end."

"There see everything's settled now." Belldandy said smiling lightly. "Now, come back inside, both of you. How far did my sister get in explaining why she was here Ranma?" she asked.

"Not very," he said sheepishly. "She said she was here to make my dreams come true and things sort of went downhill from there." Belldandy blinked, and Urd nodded just as sheepishly as Ranma did. "I did say I was sorry."

Belldandy sighed, then gestured her older sister to start speaking. "Okay kid," she said, glaring for a moment at Ranma as they entered his house once more before shaking her anger away again. "We're goddesses okay? Lightning bolts, flying, spell-casting, teleportation, the whole nine yards. And yes before you say anything, I know you've met up with the Sailor Scouts, and I know they can do some of those things, but **not** on the scale we can. Do you want Tokyo to be destroyed? We could do that, do you want China sunk into the sea? We'd prefer not to, but we could do that too. That's the kind power we're talking about here, okay?"

"Okay, say I believe you are goddesses, why are you here, and what was up with the weird-ass phone number?" Ranma asked, sitting down at the dining table.

"We gods and our counterparts demons run, call them help lines. Random souls, pure souls for us, corrupted souls for them, are chosen at times to be given wishes, which we will grant for them in order to create more belief, which in turn feeds the systems we gods take our energy from."

"Okay, I'm going to have to stop you again right there." Ranma glanced a little guiltily at his mom, who laughed at him, and Belldandy, who smiled warmly at him, before he went on. "Er, I, I'm not exactly a 'pure soul', so why the heck am I being given it wish?"

"You're not, not really," Urd said shaking her head. "Here's where it gets kind of complicated, and why I was sent personally. I'm not one of the regulars assigned to the helpline kid, I'm a system administrator, so this kind of grunt work is usually well below my area of expertise."

She exchanged a look with her sister, and Belldandy thankfully took up the tale from there. "Ranma, did you ever wonder why your life was so chaotic, so strange in comparison to the norm?"

"I figured my old man was an idiot and pissed off some deity somewhere." Ranma said bluntly, shaking his head.

"That... is actually rather close to what actually occurred." Belldandy replied, her smile twitching as a sweatdrop appeared on both her and her sister. "You see, one of your ancestors was cursed to live in 'interesting times', as the Chinese say, and that passes randomly down your line. Most of the time that sort of thing fades, but several of the chaos gods decided to continue using your line as Chaotic Loci, for, I'm afraid it must be said, mostly their own enjoyment rather than any defensible reason."

Nodoka and Ranma exchanged a glance then said as one, "That makes sense."

Belldandy blinked oddly disturbed at how easily they believed her. But Urd, who had read Ranma's entire file unlike her sister, laughed and took up the tale again. "So most of the things you've done in your life good or bad can be traced back to that curse, except for one thing: stopping Saffron. That, well....I don't know how much you know about his resurrection process, but each time he's resurrected, there's a chance that he'll go off the deep end. This last time he was going to, if slowly."

The two goddesses sighed in unison, sharing a glance. "Saffron was actually a god at one point, not very powerful as deities go, but still, he could have done incalculable harm if he wasn't stopped, and we and our opposite number couldn't have done anything unless someone wished for it, we're forbidden from interacting with the human world otherwise." Belldandy said.

"But you stopped him, you stopped him when you shouldn't have been able to, which not only pissed off a lot of chaos gods who were betting against you, but also won you a lot of good will from other gods and even demons too. We can't offer you an actual wish because like you said you're not exactly a pure soul, or even all that good, don't bother to deny it kiddo. You're too self-serving, arrogant and combative for that." Urd said, shaking her head.

"And the other side can't offer me anything 'cause I ain't exactly bad either." Ranma said nodding her head. "I get it, hell I agree with it. So what **are** you offering?"

"That's what took us so long after Saffron's death to figure out. Our Father had to discuss this with his alternate number hence why my sister was sent, as she hinted earlier." Belldandy replied delicately looking at her older sister and squeezing her hand.

Urd scowled but squeezed Belldandy's hand back before turning to Ranma again. "Basically, we've come up with an idea to give you the one thing you want in your life most of all, and to also make use of your unique talents, killing two birds with one stone as it were, or if things work out, lots of birds with one stone."

Ranma leaned back, staring up at the ceiling as he thought about what he really wanted out of life. There were lots of little things, setting up his mom for life, paying off the fucking debt, continuing to get better in the art, finding Genma and turning him into a rug... But those were all small things.

The big thing really didn't take all that time to think about, but the implication was one he wasn't certain he liked. "...Excitement. The thing I most want out of life is excitement, but how exactly are you going to go about giving that to me? I don't want to get involved in any kind of religious quarrel between your two sides or anything like that. If I wanted to get involved in a battle between the so-called good guys and the

dark side, I'd be more involved with the Sailor Scouts regardless of five of them not liking me."

"First of all, part of what we're offering you taking care of the problems Genma foisted off you. This includes paying off the families that have gone to the government, and finding ways to deal with girls who are still after you for various reasons, including Mars."

"Before you ask, beyond what's already come up there isn't anything major, the biggest is..." Urd paused, then pulled out a large scroll from her hidden weapons space or Ranma supposed it was anyway, he'd never thought of putting one 'her' cleavage. She read the scroll for a moment then put it back smirking as she noticed Ranma looking away with a blush. "The biggest problem he left behind is a series of stolen scrolls which have ended up in different people's hands, and that Ryu character. We can shut all that down with a bit of leg work."

"As for what we're offering you personally, that takes some more explanation. You see, while my sister and I can only appear on this world, our... organization... oversees several other dimensions, all of them very, very different, and most of them none of us can appear in personally, this world's actually quite odd in that way. In those dimensions there are chosen heroes, people who are supposed to clean up the universe or do things in such a way as to keep the universe and its people, generally speaking, happy and moving on their way. Sometimes however those people fail."

"What we would ask you or to do would be to become a sort of interdimensional troubleshooter. In essence, your spirit would be sent into other universes in order to take over the bodies of the heroes who have failed sometime before they began their journey. You would remain there until your chosen task is done."

"What exactly would these chosen tasks be?" Ranma asked frowning thoughtfully. He liked the idea of exploring new worlds, he always liked traveling and exploration, and the idea of new challenges was really interesting to him. There was also the fact that if his spirit was sent, that meant his body, with its incumbent curse, would stay here. But he wanted to make sure there weren't any hidden dangers or costs here. "I'm not a war leader, or a scientist or anything like that."

"The tasks will vary wildly. In one dimension I know about you would have to grow strong enough to fight a primordial God before your eighteenth year. In another, you have to find a certain item which can upset the balance of power in the world before several dozen different villains can." Belldandy frowned, shaking her head sadly as she thought of that particular universe.

Something about seeing the beautiful woman frown had almost as much impact on Ranma as a Kasumi Frown™. Something was seriously wrong in that universe.

"How you go about that would be up to you, though since you'd be inhabiting the chosen hero's body many of the events that happened to him would still happen to you, to keep you on the path the hero was supposed to move on. But your own personal choices would be honored of course. Free will is a gift from our Father after all, and nothing can take it away from humanity." Urd said.

"That actually makes me really happy, that even if destiny exists so does free will." Ranma said honestly smiling at her, and Belldandy's frown turned upside down, smiling back at Ranma whose own smile widened slightly as they looked at one another.

After a moment Ranma looked away blushing lightly. The girl was beautiful after all. "But why me? I can't imagine I'm the first person to meet these requirements of yours."

"Actually you are..." Urd replied, shaking her head. "Oh, there've been others who have beaten their destinies, but all of them had certain cheats. Powers they'd gained over their lives outside of the norm, non-human bloodlines, magical items, simple magic, that kind of thing."

Belldandy spoke up in turn, still smiling sweetly at Ranma. "But you're not like that, Ranma, you've pushed beyond the human norm through sheer exertion and will-power. You've become a ki master at an age where most martial artists wouldn't even know what the term meant yet."

"I have to give my old man some of the credit for that," Ranma said shaking his head. "Say what you would about the man, and most of it'd be true, but he was one hell of a trainer."

"Because he kept on pushing you beyond anything you should've been able to, the fact you survived is due to your spirit Ranma, not him." Urd said tartly, shaking her head. She'd seen some of the training Ranma had done when younger, and to call them child abuse was far too tame a term. "But that's neither here nor there. And besides your being purely human what sets you apart from anyone else is your mind: your mental flexibility and ability to adapt, to analyze your enemies' combat styles and overcome them makes you well suited to this task."

Ranma looked over at his mom. "What about my mom? I don't want to leave her all alone."

The two goddesses also looked at Nodoka, who smiled faintly. But doing so emphasized the lines on her face, lines that hadn't been there a year ago, just like the gray in her hair. The expression was at once loving yet sad. "Ranma, can you honestly say that you're happy your life right now? I've seen you growing more and more despondent as the weeks go by, you crave excitement like an alcoholic craves drink, by the time you've paid off Genma's debt, if you ever do considering he's still out there causing trouble, your spirit will never recover."

Nodoka shook her head. "What kind of parent would I be if I was willing to let my child pay for the mistakes of his sperm donor?" Belldandy blushed faintly at that while Ranma choked and Urd laughed. "So while I am happy that you're thinking about me, I'm not going to stand in the way of your happiness. Go, agree to this agreement, and I think you will find more excitement than even you can handle."

After staring at his mom for a moment trying to see if she was lying or not, Ranma nodded slowly, turning back to Urd and Belldandy, excitement rising within him once more as he struggled to keep a grin off his face. "I'll agree to the deal if after I'm done in one universe I can take what I learned from it in terms of techniques to the next. Growing strong in the art is one of my greatest motivations, and that is nonnegotiable."

The two goddesses seemed to freeze for a moment, their hands locked together on the table in front of Ranma. A white light appeared, shooting up to disappear harmlessly through the ceiling. Ranma leaped away from the table, jumping outside to stare up into the sky as the beam continued up, not seemingly having any physical form but definitely still there in some way that Ranma couldn't understand.

He was sitting back down at the table by the time the two goddesses shook off whatever the heck had happened there. "The higher-ups agreed to that, so long as the techniques are not physical enhancements but actual mental or martial techniques that you can train your new body in when you transfer from one dimension to another." Belldandy said, smiling faintly.

At the sight of that smile Ranma shook his head lightly before nodding. "So what I have to do to make this official?"

The light appeared again and Urd reached across the table, holding out her hand. "Take my hand," she said in a mechanical tone of voice. "Then wilt the agreement be sealed."

After hesitating for a moment Ranma did so, then froze in shock as something left his body. It wasn't painful, not really, but it felt like he was entire being, his soul and mind, were being weighed and analyzed somehow, Ranma didn't really have the words for it.

He shuddered and leaned back abruptly when Urd let his hand go, still speaking in that odd, mechanical yet powerful voice. "So it is agreed!"

A moment later she shook her head, leaning over against her sister, shaking her head groggily. "OOwee, that was more exhausting than I expected," the silver-haired woman murmured shaking her head slowly.

For a moment all four of them were silent, even Nodoka, shocked by what she had just seen. Then Ranma began to recover, eating the food still lying uneaten on the table in front of them, hungry beyond all reason for a moment. Urd joined in quickly, swigging down a shot of sake between each bite, recovering slowly from whatever the heck had just happened. Even Belldandy was looking a little drained from her part in it.

"Okay," Urd said shaking her head at last, setting down her sake bottle with a thump. "Like my sister said that was a bit more power intensive than we'd expected, but this was the first time either of us have been assigned anything to do with interdimensional missions. Anyway, the first universe you'll be sent into is known as the One Piece universe. The so-called chosen hero here failed miserably, despite attempts to change things locally."

Beside her Belldandy gestured speaking a few lines in that strange other tongue of theirs, and an image of the world popped into being in the middle of the table rotating slowly.

Ranma looked at it closely, noting that it was a world dominated by oceans, with no real continent to speak of except for one which seems to encircle the entire world on its equator. There was a series of numerous small islands that marked it the other way around, separating the world into fourths, with hundreds of dotted islands scattered everywhere. "Weird geography."

"Trust me, that isn't the only weird thing about it. We can't tell you everything about it of course, you'll have to learn as you go along and like I said your ability to learn was part of why you were chosen for this. So all we can tell you is that this world has some very weird geography, even the world's magnetic field is messed up in this area, which is called the Grand Line," Urd said, tapping the line of islands, her finger disappearing into the image. "Each island in this area has a varying magnetic field. Other than the geography, physics works like you're used to, and humans are pretty much the same, except for one thing, Devil Fruits."

Belldandy took up the tale, letting Urd drink some more sake for a second. "Devil Fruits are essentially fruit sized bits of chaotic energy, the very energy which can form gods or demons in sufficient amounts. As fruits however the power is contained warped somewhat to produce a single effect on the person who ate it. That effect varies wildly, from a full body change to another type of matter, say stone or steel, or even the ability to turn into specific forms of elemental energy at will."

"So wait, just eating these things can give their owners power ups? And there's no real limitation to what they can do?"

"There is no such thing as a fruit which gives purely mental powers, and they are broken down into types, but generally speaking no there is no real limitation except for the fact that all Devil fruit users cannot abide the touch of water in any form. If a person eats the devil fruit they can no longer swim."

Ranma frowned for a moment. "Wait, so you get these powers by eating a devil fruit right? But what happens if you don't eat the entire fruit? Do you get a weaker version of the power, no power at all, or what?"

The two goddesses looked blank for a moment staring at one another than back and Ranma before shrugging incomprehension. "No idea." Urd replied.

"Right, moving on." Ranma shook his head. "Why this universe? You said that the chosen hero failed miserably, so I'd be merged with him very early on, but can you tell me why he failed."

"Most of the time we won't be able to but in this case, the original Luffy is dumb as a post and twice as thick." Urd said bluntly while her sister looked rather pained but didn't disagree, which given her nature was telling. "Our Father's agents, even our opposite numbers have tried time and time again to change random events in his favor, ranging from small to large. But his general lack of intelligence and attention span, physical things we can't effect for various reasons you wouldn't understand and I'm authorized to tell you always remains the same."

"And his lack of intelligence and stubbornness kept on getting him into problems that he simply can't power his way through physically," Belldandy sighed, looking so dejected Ranma had to fight the urge to give her a hug or something to cheer her up. "He still overcame many problems in that manner, but eventually his tendency to charge forward always overcomes his ability to survive. His adaptability in combat was amazing and often covered for his general lack of intelligence and worldly knowledge, but he simply couldn't understand the need to train himself all the time. Even when he was shown how weak he was in relation to the real world powers, he didn't train long enough."

"Like my sister said, he was still able to overcome a lot of the problem in his way, Luffy's stupidity was only matched by his strength of will, but that was unable to really breach the difference in strength between him and the enemies he has to face." Urd said, shaking her head.

Belldandy took up the tale again, shaking her head. "You have to understand that he was essentially someone your own age or younger, facing against 40-year-olds who unlike your own father who had in your own parlance taken their training seriously from the start. Picture a Happosai who hadn't given himself entirely over to hedonism for example but trained seriously his entire life faced against someone like we have described."

Ranma shivered at the thought but nodded his head. "Okay I can understand that. So how young am I going to be when I merge with this Luffy guy?"

"You'll see," Urd said smirking evilly. "We're not going to tell you everything after all, where would the fun in that be?"

Ranma groaned but nodded. "Fine, so how do we do this?"

"If you're ready to go, we can do it now. Just step over in front of the TV." Belldandy replied.

Sharing a glance with his mother, Ranma hesitated a final moment then nodded decisively. "Best to get it over with now after all." Frankly it was all Ranma could do to sit still, excitement building at the thought of facing a whole new world. Only the fact he'd be leaving his mother behind put a damper on it.

He reached over, pulling his mother into a hug, holding it for a moment, before pulling back. "I, mom I'm sorry it all turned out like this, I just, I hope you can be happy after this?" He finished rather lamely, still unused to talking about emotions or soft squishy things like that.

"Oh Ranma," Nodoka said, chuckling as she held her son for what might be the last time. "I'll miss you too my dear. But mothers have always faced their children leaving home, and I know how unhappy you have been of late. Belldandy and Urd-san have made an excellent agreement with us, I'll be fine here. Besides that, I think this is something you need to do. Go, find the excitement you crave, make me proud."

The two stood together for a moment then Ranma moved away, moving to stand in front of the TV.

Belldandy and Urd moved around the table to stand to either side of Ranma and began to intone something in that odd, musical yet mechanical language of theirs. Lines of glowing script which looked like a cross between musical notes and some kind of ancient language appeared on the ground and in the air swirling around Ranma as he stood there.

Staring at the magic all around him Ranma began to have cold feet. *I wonder if it's too late to back out... probably. Oh well, I signed on for this, let's see where it takes*

me. The magic chose that moment to escalate, glowing ever brighter, and suddenly between one second and the next Ranma was gone his body disappearing as his soul was transported elsewhere.

OOOOOOO

"...sister..." Belldandy said softly staring hard at her older sister. "I detected a bit of a change there from the spell we were supposed to use, something you sent along with Ranma... May I ask why?"

"Oh trust me Bell, Ranma will thank me eventually." *Figuring out how to get him cursed again was hard, but rewarding heh. That's what he gets for calling me a hooker.*

OOOOOOO

Everything was disjointed, that was the first thing Ranma realized and thinking was **really** hard! He couldn't connect the words couldn't think clearly, couldn't even use his senses very well. Eventually he was able to construct the thought, *Urd and Bell-dandy said I'd be sent back a long ways...* the instant that thought finished fear gripped Ranma, a sharp thought going across his mind. *Oh please don't let me be a baby! I don't think I could handle breast-feeding.*

Luckily once he was able to actually concentrate on his senses Ranma couldn't hear any female voices. That came as something of a relief. Sure, the idea of getting to know his 'new mom' might be nice, but the whole breast-feeding thing...

The voices all around him sounded rather panicked. It took several moments for that to sink in, but Ranma wasn't in a position to do anything about it of course, hell it was all he could do to concentrate on his hearing and making his thoughts actually makes sense for brief moments.

Eventually he was able to concentrate enough to actually understand the words being spoken around. "When I left my son and, you'll note I said **son** with you, Luffy was, again, my **son**!" Said a deep baritone voice, its concise tone brimming with anger. "Would you care to explain to me why that is no longer the case?"

"I don't know what's going on, Dragon!" said another voice, one that sounded much higher pitched but not quite female in tone. "I was just trying out my powers as normal. Some of your men passed by with a mirror, my beam hit it and bounced into your son's room. No problem, I would just turn Luffy back. Then today, when the nurse was giving him a bath, he changed gender! I don't know why!"

The one called dragon growled something back, and Ranma found himself being picked up and looked at by a middle-aged man with short black hair, intense eyes and a strange tattoo on one side of his face. But that didn't matter to Ranma right now, right now he was using all his considerable willpower to concentrate on thinking about what he'd just heard.

"What, no, but the curse was on my body not, oh you've gotta be... that goddess, damn you URD!" The laughter of the crazy goddess rang in his ears, and that was the last coherent thought Ranma had for a long while.

OOOOOOO

Months passed, while Ranma got used to his new circumstances as much as he could. Though he didn't really want to thank the two goddesses for anything at this point, his new body was now that of a two-year-old toddler, which put him beyond the nursing stage. On the other side of the scale, just as Ranma had feared from that first conversation he still had his curse. Ranma vowed that he and Urd would have words about that in the future.

It continually surprised Ranma how much trouble he had controlling his new body. Ranma had never realized it but the minds grew physically as they did mentally: A baby's mind simply couldn't handle an adult's ability to think. His attention span for example was simply horrible. He was also constantly hungry of shitting, which irritated Ranma no end.

Nonetheless, Ranma, or Luffy as he was now known was able to push his little body far than a toddler should be able to, his coordination and general physical skills simply better than a toddler's should be thanks to the memories of being Ranma.

Luckily the tattooed person who was apparently his father in this dimension didn't seem to notice. And Ranma made certain that his ability to understand the conversations around him was a secret. He learned a bit of information about Dragon and

his budding Revolutionary Army this way, as well as what they were fighting against, though not as much about either as he would have liked.

This was why he overheard the discussion between Dragon and an older man that he called father. "I can't keep him with me, he would be in constant danger, better to hide him away with you father."

Ranma's hearing was able to make out the older man grumbled something about not being a nursing service, and his father replied. "Whatever the blood you passed on to him Garp, you know he will still be hated for sharing mine. That is how the World government works, or did the Bateria Massacre teach you nothing?"

"You know I'll raise him to be a strong Marine right!?" The man apparently named Garp replied after a moment. He was taller than Dragon by at least a foot, and Dragon wasn't a short man by any means. He was also wider, looking like an adult Luffy perhaps, but for all his bulk he moved lightly on his feet, and his craggy face, marked by a scar on one cheek and topped with black hair slowly going gray, showed some actual affection for Dragon as well as the toddler in his arms.

"I know you'll try," Dragon replied, laughing quietly. "One thing the UN the world government have never really understood is the concept of free will however, which is prevalent in every man large or small, young or old."

The older gentleman frowned lightly at that, though what part of that statement made him frown was beyond Ranma, but nodded slowly. "Alright I'll take him, but I swear at least one of these children of mine are going to become Marines! And if I ever see you again son, I'll do my duty, you know that."

"I know you are an honorable man father, it is just a pity your masters are not worth your loyalty." Dragon replied, actually smiling as he handed Ranma/Luffy over to the older man. "Oh, I should warn you about something about young Luffy. We still don't know how or why, but you know my subordinate Ivankov?"

"The really disturbing one with the blue hair and huge face?" Garp grumbled. "Yeah, what about him?"

Dragon explained the cruse, showing it to Garp much to his son/daughter's vocal displeasure, and Garp gaped at him then the toddler for a moment before shaking

his head. "I might just hunt Ivankov down for this, though I've never heard of an effect like that becoming permanent either, and certainly not changing with water, weird, I might ask Vegapunk how such a thing is possible at all. I trust you dealt with him?"

"In my own way yes." Dragon chuckled, then sober, reaching out to grasp his father's wide shoulders staring into the older man's face for a moment. Both men fell silent, knowing this would be the last time they would meet without being enemies. "Be well father."

Garp scowled again breaking the younger man's grip and raising a fist nearly the size of the toddler, once more a boy and silent, now cradled against his chest. "Get out of here Dragon before I try to arrest you right now!"

Dragon laughed and between one second and the next disappeared. Ranma blinked, his little toddler face scrunching into a frown. His apparent grandfather noticed this, and raise him in the air, making those idiotic noises adults always do the children. "Who is going to be a strong Marine noooow? That's right Luffy, you!"

Ranma let his child responses take over for a moment, while he tried to figure out what Dragon had done to disappear like that. He couldn't think of anything though, and eventually came back to the here and now.

With his new caretaker Ranma/Luffy soon found himself on a large ship, with several hundred or so armed and uniformed people, ostensibly this Marine group his father was a part of. Ranma thought that was a weird name for a navy, but then again no one had asked his opinion.

A few weeks went by on the ocean, while Ranma continued to get better at controlling his new body, and began to think of himself as Luffy more, thanks to his grandfather calling him that. This time was interspersed with two battles, though of course Ranma didn't take part. In the room he shared with his grandfather he heard the stamping of feet and the booming of canons, and then shouts of terror from their enemies.

Most of these were along the line of, "Oh shit, it really is Garp the Fist's ship!" Or "Ah, please let us go Mister Garp sir!" Whenever he heard those Ranma/Luffy couldn't help but giggle and clap his hands, which always freaked out the marine assigned to watch him for the day.

Days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months. Ranma/Luffy began to walk, then run, then climb, his physical skills and drive bringing a happy tear to his grandfather's eyes. Ranma however felt potty training himself was the highlight of those first few years...

Despite this and his growing older however, Ranma was astonished to find his appetite was still monstrous. He found himself with a noticeable preference towards meat, something Ranma had to put down to Luffy's body since Ranma had been far more partial to fish. One thing however that he was also happy about was that despite Urd somehow fixing it so he still changed genders at the application of water (and breaking several local laws to do it, Ranma really hoped she was getting into trouble because of that with whoever was in charge) the water attraction part of the cruse hadn't carried over. Ranma/Luffy went days on end on a ship at sea without getting splashed, a godsend really.

Around the time Ranma/Luffy began to talk, Garp began to train him first simply giving him various exercises, all of which Ranma/Luffy took to like a duck to water of course then taking things to an extreme Ranma could all too easily see Genma having done to him. This continued, with Ranma living among the marines on Garp's ship as months turned into years and Ranma turned six.

Then Ranma/Luffy began to talk back, irritated by how little real techniques the old man was showing him. "All I've seen from your Marines old man is following your training and swinging those swords around like they barely know what they're doing." Ranma/Luffy said, once again showing diction and word use that a toddler probably shouldn't be able to.

But his grandfather, as Ranma had found out quickly, simply laughed such oddities off and even his crew took it for granted after the first few days. It was like going to Furinkan all over again only at a far higher level, the odd becoming normal not only quickly but easily. It was pretty obvious that this world had a much higher level of the 'crazy is normal' quotient than his old one, which was probably a good thing. Some things still startled them thankfully, just not Ranma's intelligence or body control.

"Bah, you don't know anything!" the old man said, shaking his head angrily. "Just because you were able to climb up that cliff on the last island doesn't mean you are ready for **true** Marine training brat!"

"Training?" Ranma/Luffy grunted. "You say it's training, but you don't actually give me anything, throwing me off a cliff or into the jungle isn't training! Unless you call survival training combat training!"

"You weren't saying that the other day when I made you fight those wolves brat!"

Around them some of the Marines stopped what they were working on and stared at their Admiral, then at Ranma/Luffy. "You heard him!" Ranma/Luffy said jumping to his feet and pointing angrily at the old man. "You all heard him! If that isn't child abuse I don'tGA!"

The old man quickly grabbed Ranma/Luffy around the mouth shutting him up, looking around wildly, his face set in a rictus of a smile. "What an imagination the brat has! Nothing to see here, no need to report anything that would get back to Tsuru, right!?"

After a few moments the Marines who'd been staring at the two of them shook simply shook their heads and turned away, simply muttering up about it being a moment of 'Monkey D. stupidity'.

"All right brat," Garp growled staring down at his grandson, rather fondly despite the last few moments. The boy was so set on getting stronger and training, it was amazing, and he'd already survived dozens of things that Garp thought he might've had to save him from. *He is truly my grandson* Garp thought fondly, *what a Marine he'll make.*

That thought neatly brought Garp back to the here and now: the boy had to be shown something, or else he might actually look beyond his grandfather for training. That would never do. He wasn't about to teach the brat about haki, but showing him some of the Rokushiki should work. "All right brat, watch this! Soru."

With that word, Garp disappeared from view. Ranma/Luffy stared at where he had been then turned, ducking under a blow from behind. "Soru."

AS he watched Garp disappeared again to appear on top of the mainmast. "This is Soru, the first of the Rokushiki or six powers, techniques only taught to high level marines or World Government agents, brat. And this is Geppo!"

With that word Garp leaped off into the air, but didn't fall. For a moment it was all Ranma could do to stare up at where Gramps was now standing on midair, simply hopping there as if it was solid ground, little puffs of air coming up from his feet.

Then the young boy began to laugh. "Haha, hahahaha, haahahha, hahahaha-hahahhaahaaa!"

It wasn't a happy laugh. It was the laugh of someone who had just been handed the final key to his plans for world domination. It was such a laugh that a young boy should never be able to do, and despite all the strangeness they were, as Garp's crew, completely inured to all work on the ship stopped as every Marine on deck or up in the rigging stared at Luffy and then began to back away fearfully. Some of them even nearly fell out of said rigging so scared were they by the demonic laughter.

Only Garp wasn't affected, and he simply smiled staring down at the youngster until he finally stopped laughing. "Okay Ji-kure (grandpa crazy), that right there, if you can teach me that **maybe** I'll join the Marines when I'm older."

Garp laughed then suddenly used Sour again to appear Ranna/Luffy's face smashing him to the floor with a hard punch, the so-called Fist of Love doing its work. "What if I told you about that nickname brat?!"

OOOOOOO

The next time they were off the ship, was about a year after that discussion and when they did Luffy/Ranma discovered they had made port at a small village, barely twelve different houses clustered together around a few larger buildings. and it was obvious that the old man was well known here. He was stopped by every person who saw him, waving their hands at him or shouting his name as he made his way towards onone of the central buildings which had a tavern sort of look.

Inside the tavern was a woman Luffy/Ranma estimated as being just past her teenage years with green hair and a tall willowy frame. She must've been stronger than she looked however, because she was lifting a large barrel of ale onto the counter as they came in. She looked up, and her welcoming smile widened into a real one

when she caught a glimpse of Garp. "Garp-san! You didn't send a message ahead, how are you doing?"

"I'm fine Makino-chan, still keeping the tavern together?" The old man asked with his booming laugh that always brought a smile to Luffy's face despite his best efforts.

"Yep ,Yep," she replied, then she spotted the young girl that the old man was carrying like a stray cat. "And who is this?"

"This is Luffy, he's going to be a strong Marine when he grows up! Unfortunately, I've been called back to headquarters for some such thing, and the Grand Line is no place for a youngster. I'm afraid I'm going to have to leave her here for a bit. Do you think you can watch her for me?"

"I told you Ji-kure I can look after myself!" Ranma/Luffy muttered, breaking out of his gramp's grip. The bastard had splashed him during that morning's breakfast, and hadn't let her have any time to change back since.

Garp smacked Ranma upside the head, sending her careening forward. "And I told you not to call me Ji-kure brat!"

Ranma rolled with the blow, coming up and turning quickly launching herself backwards to punch the older man in the balls. "Only a crazy old man would hit a toddler like you do!"

But she was anticipated, and Garp smacked her aside again right before her blow was about to land. "And only a crazy brat would try to kick her loving grandfather in the balls! Where did I go wrong raising you!?"

"You didn't ever even try to raise me, you just tried to train me!" Ranma grunted, pushing herself out of the debris from the chair she'd just crashed into bowing her head towards the older girl, who was looking at them both, her face torn between shock and amusement. "Sorry about the furniture, Ji-kure will pay for it!"

"Damn brat!" That old man bellowed, but was shaking his head at the same time chuckling. He tossed Makino a large bag of gold coins, which she caught deftly before hiding it behind the counter. "That'll pay for food and such like, and the broken

furniture. Trust me, with him around it won't be the last time. Brat, be good for Makino, and I'll be back for you in a few years or so."

"Wait a few years!?" Luffy/Ranma said, frowning angrily. Luffy/Ranma launched herself at the man angrily. "Whatt'dya mean I have to stay here a few years!"

"A few months I said a few months," Garp said, waving his hand airily, not incidentally smacking Luffy away like a soccer ball. "Whatever. See ya later brat."

With that the old man left before Luffy/Ranma could fully extricate herself from the debris of the table she'd just smashed into. Luffy stared after him, then shook her head looking up at Makino. "See now why I call him Ji-kure?"

Makino laughed quietly shaking her head. "I think you'll like it here anyway Luffy-chan. How old are you anyway?"

Luffy counted on her fingers for a moment. "Somewhere between five and seven I think," Luffy/Ranma said shaking her head. "Don't know if I missed a few birthdays or not, I know I didn't have a birthday until a year or so back when Ji-kure suddenly remembered them, then we had two in like three months."

Makino laughed again. "That's Garp-san for you. He's not one to sweat the small stuff."

"Say that after you've felt his Fist of Love a few times," Ranma grumbled. "Anyway, just let me get to work on this, it won't take but a moment," she said, righting the table and pulling out a set of tools from his/her, extremely small at this point, weapons space.

Makino gasped before swiftly throwing herself over the counter in an acrobatic display that Ranma had to blink at. Between one second and the next the green-haired woman was next to her, trying to grab the tools out of Ranma/Luffy's hands. "Little girls shouldn't hold sharp objects like that!"

Ranma/Luffy blinked at her. "I've spent at least three maybe as many as five years on a Marine warship. And you're worried about me having some woodworking tools?" She asked, her voice the dullest of deadpan tones.

The older woman a little at that then looked down at the tool in her hand, a small saw. Ranma/Luffy hadn't even tried to stop her from taking of course. "Do you really know how to use these?"

"I'm not so good with shipbuilding, but I can at least repair any furniture I break."

"...Well then let's get to work," Makino said, rolling up her sleeves. "If you show me you know what you're doing, the two of us can get this stuff prepared, and maybe I'll let you work on some other things in the back room for me okay. But I also think I need to start teaching you some manners and how to speak properly Luffy-chan. Being raised by your grandfather among marines excuses it, but you're not among them now."

"Um..." Ranma/Luffy said, staring at her for a moment. "I think first ya probably should get a cup of hot water..."

Makino reacted to the curse about as well as could be expected, fainting but not hurting anything when she did and astonishingly taking Ranma/Luffy's explanation of it at face value. She only had to see it in action a few times to get over her shock, but remained adamant that Luffy had to learn how to speak and act properly regardless.

"How you speak tells people about you Luffy-kun, regardless of what gender you are, and if you don't want to be looked down on, you can't keep talking like a gangster. Or country bumpkin. I also see another reason why Garp might have decided to leave you here with me in a few years..." That comment seemed to cause Makino to chuckle for a moment, but it went right over Ranma's head.

Instead he simply nodded, agreeing to learn how to speak from her and the two of them set to work repairing the broken furniture at last. "By the way, how do you know Ji-kure?"

"He used to live here when he was younger. Garp-san saved my family and I from pirates when I was your age, and we settled here. Mayor Woopslap knew my father, and the three of us opened up this tavern. My parents passed away a few years ago, leaving this place to me."

Taking in the girl's facial expressions with all of the experience he'd gained his last lifetime Ranma/Luffy stayed silent. There was obviously a story about her parents there, not a happy one if he was judging her face right but he couldn't tell whether or not it was connected to their deaths or not. Regardless it wouldn't be something a five or seven-year-old, whichever he was right now, would comment on.

Between the two of them they had the table and chair fixed under an hour, though Ranma/Luffy recommended that the chair be replaced entirely. After all where the broken bits were connected were now weak points, so it was doubtful anyone bigger than Luffy/Ranma could sit on it safely.

Soon after that, the evening rush came in and Ranma/Luffy made himself busy helping Makino around the tavern, taking orders and generally meeting the town-folk. When asked why he been left behind, Ranma/Luffy told him Ji-kure had left him there because he was heading back to the Grand Line, and one or two of them asked him if he was going to become a Marine.

Ranma/Luffy simply shrugged that, saying he wasn't much of a joiner, but all of them laughed saying he was young and Garp would train him up right. The mayor in particular was behind that idea, an old man barely a foot taller than Ranma/Luffy with big glasses, who wore an absolutely vile looking Hawaiian T-shirt. Bad taste it seemed crossed realities.

Over the next few weeks Ranma/Luffy and Makino got used to living together. Makino had an easy time of it, Ranma/Luffy was eager to help out around the house, and was excellent at woodcraft. Within two days he had carved her a new seat to replace the one Ji-kure had broken and replaced several ale barrels that had been broken over the past few years, and even repaired Makino's dresser, which had become rotted along the joints. He was also a lot stronger than his age suggested, able to lift the barrels of ale just as easily as she could. His manners weren't exactly good, but that was to be expected from a child his age, and the two of them got along famously.

For his part Makino reminded Ranma of a mix of Kasumi and his mom. She had his mother's physical strength but some of Kasumi's attitude combined with a sense of humor neither of them had. She also respected Ranma/Luffy's desire to continue training, and always went out of her way to ask him to help around the tavern lifting heavy objects and such like. The mornings were also Ranma/Luffy's to do with as

he wished, while in the afternoon Makino began to teach him manners and a bit about cooking. Not that Ranma was the best pupil for the first, but at least learning the second gave Ranma a reason for already know how to cook from his last life.

Makino also tried to teach Ranma/Luffy some feminine mannerisms too. Ranma/Luffy learned them, figuring that since he was beginning so early with his curse he might as well use it to his advantage. Most of this of course wouldn't matter for a time, but eventually it might be very helpful to have a secret identity.

It was at this point that Ranma/Luffy began to fully integrate his sense of self into Luffy. Because it was at this point when Luffy's body truly began to come into its own, and Ranma realized that Luffy had been a damn monster! He could have put it down to the training he was putting himself through but there were simply areas where Luffy's body completely outperformed his older one by a significant margin. His ability to heal, his ki reserves and basic stats were all at a higher level now than Ranma could remember them being at this point as Ranma.

Moreover, when he was meditating in order to continue to grow his ki reserves, which Ranma/Luffy was irritated to find did not cross dimensions, Ranma/Luffy found another source of energy within him, some kind of **presence** that was within him. A monstrous one, something that was unique to Luffy. Ji-kure might've had it too, but Ranma/Luffy hadn't seen any sign of it over the years.

It was a very weird feeling, and when he accessed it was like becoming both an alpha predator and a black hole, creating pressure that anyone in the vicinity felt. Doing so in the forest caused all of the nearby animals to go silent, and even the wolves who'd been trying to sneak up on Ranma collapsed, foaming at the mouth. Ranma/Luffy wasn't close to understanding what it was but he knew it was there, and he had begun to make plans to train himself on it.

This routine was interrupted around four months into his stay with Makino. He came back into the town to sounds of panic several people were shouting, "Pirates are here! Pirates, a huge ship just docked!"

Ranma/Luffy frowned at that, having grown up hearing about pirates both good and bad. A few of the townspeople had either been former pirates or had stories about seeking out adventure as pirates from other people. Mayor Woopslap always

told them to shut up about it shouting out about how pirates were scum but Ranma/Luffy had stopped listening to him within five minutes of meeting the man. A lot of the stories were mixed of course, but Ranma wasn't the type to generalize anyway.

Still, he made his way home to the tavern, smiling at Makino. "What do you think of these pirates Makino?"

Without even looking up from where she was filling a flagon Makino pulled out a large handgun, setting it on the counter. The guns in this universe were simple flintlocks, things from the Meiji Revolution era or similar, but still dangerous. "That for the bad ones, this for the good ones," she said smiling and holding up the flagon. She set it next to the gun as well, smiling at Luffy, who moved over to take a seat in front of her, twirling the stool around to face the entrance.

The group who entered the tavern several minutes later was an extremely motley bunch, but they definitely did have a certain presence to them, Luffy had to concede that. In the center of the group was a red-haired man with a straw hat on his head and a gleam in his eyes. He was laughing and joking with his crew, which consisted of a tall man with wide shoulders who was smoking a pipe and carrying a rifle on his shoulders, a fat man currently munching on a shank of meat, and a man with dreadlocks who looked thin almost to the point of emaciation but with some muscles on him.

The man in the lead bowed grandiosely towards the counter, pulling off his straw hat as he did so. "Young lady, we are the Red Hair Pirates. Would you happen to have ale for a group of wayward seafarers?"

"Not five minutes and you're already flirting!" shouted one of his men, causing all the others to laugh.

The man turned and glared at them, but that didn't do anything except make them laugh harder and he shook his head. "You're all be swabbing the decks I swear!"

With his threat delivered he turned back to Makino, cocking an eyebrow at her. His eyes flicked to Luffy, then to the gun, then back to Luffy, his face twitching slightly. In response Luffy's eyebrows rose in surprise seeing the man had recognized

that Luffy was ready to launch himself at them if they were trouble. "I didn't realize this was a family establishment."

"Would you have cared if we were?" Makino asked. "And so long as you have payment for this," she said tapping the flagon of ale "you won't get this." she said tapping the gun.

"You haven't heard of the Red Hair pirates have you?" shouted one of them. "We're one of the toughest crews on the sea!"

"This isn't the sea." Makino said firmly. "This is my tavern, and here what I say goes."

"Ha well said," said Shanks with a laugh. "Far be it from us to question someone with such spirit."

"That's good." Luffy said with a nod speaking up for the first time. "If ya did I'd have to kick your asses."

After a second spent staring at the youngster the entire crew burst into laughter. "You kick our asses," howled the one with dreadlocks. "Hah that'll be the day!"

One thing that Luffy shared with Ranma was his complete inability to back down from a challenge, and if the laughter wasn't a challenge, Luffy didn't know what was. Suddenly Luffy was gone from his stool, and his fist thudded into the laughing man's stomach, sending him flying backwards. A kick to the man with the rifle was blocked, his little leg smacked upward, But Ranma moved with it, suddenly flipping in midair, then using Geppo to remain there, bouncing in the air in the middle of the tavern. "Anyone else want ta make fun of me?"

For a moment the Red-Hair pirates and Makino simply stared, then Shanks stepped forward, pushing the man with the rifle back slightly as he stared up at Ranma, his face serious, even as he secretly waved a few of his fingers at Makino behind his back. "I commend your skill kid, and even your desire to protect the pretty miss over there. However, we're not saints. We're pirates boyo, and you just attacked one of my crew. You know what I'm going to do now right?"

Suddenly Luffy felt pressure all around him pressing him down physically and mentally. It felt like the inner power he had found within his own body. Wincing Luffy had to land on the floor of the tavern but then began to bring out his own inner power, pushing against Shank's.

This caused Shank's eyes to widen, but he also began to smile. "Alright kid, that's damn impressive. But..." With that word Shanks disappeared so fast Luffy couldn't track him. His still sheathed sword came around in a wide arc, intending to smash Luffy to the ground.

But Luffy shouted out "Kami-E!" and dodged at the last second, his body bending around the blow. A fist flung out, but Shanks smacked it to the side, his smile widening. A kick was similarly blocked, and the butt of Shank's sword found Luffy's midriff, flinging him into the air.

Yet the boy somehow used the momentum of that hit to flip himself further upwards into a kick that nearly landed on Shanks' face.

Even as he dodged Shank's smile widened into a true grin. "Damn boyo, you're one tough cookie aren't you. Still, even the toughest should know when they're over-matched and just take their lumps." With that his still sheathed sword came around in an arc so fast Luffy couldn't even see it coming, and it smashed Luffy out of the air to crash into the bar.

Despite not having his water attraction curse, there were just some things that were destined so Luffy was not surprised to look up and see the flagon Makino had set out come tumbling over the side of the bar, splashing him and activating his curse. "Gah, of course, beaten and now sticky, just great."

Shanks blinked. "Ben, am I just seeing things or...?"

The man so addressed was the rifle user who had blocked Luffy's second kick. He slowly took his cigarette out of his mouth staring first at it then at the kid who had challenged their crew. "You're not seeing things cap'n. That boy just turned into a girl because of the ale..."

As one the rest of the pirate crew retreated to the doorway, causing Makino, who had remained silent during Shanks and Luffy's confrontation, to laugh aloud. She

then put her hands on her hips, glaring at them all. "I'll have you know his curse is all Luffy's, it's got nothing to do with my tavern's ale!"

She turned her glare on Shanks who winked at her before moving to stand over Luffy, the tip of his sheathed blade now pushing the kid down with a strength Luffy couldn't match despite all his training. That strength was still enough to make Shank's nearly smile, but that would break his character for the moment so he didn't. "So brat, you prepared to pay the price for attacking a pirate?"

"Feh, if yer gonna kill me do it, I ain't gonna beg." Luffy growled out, while inwardly castigating him/herself for his inability to back off from a challenge. It was obvious now Shanks and at least some of his crew were hiding a lot of their strength, but Luffy hadn't felt it.

"Good Lad, er lass!" Shanks then smacked the boy-turned girl on the head, grinding his fist in and laughing aloud, as did his crew. "Damn kid, learn some common sense! You, take on me and my entire crew, who do you think you are, Garp the Fist!?"

"How do you know my grandpa?" Luffy said cocking her head to one side in astonishment even as she tried to get away from the red-haired man.

The entire crew shut up at that, and Shanks stared at her, letting Luffy go automatically, raising a trembling hand to point at him/her. "You saying," he said slowly "that you're Monkey D. Garp's grandson?"

"Yep," Luffy said with a nod. "That's me, Ji-kure's grandkid. You would not believe the crap he's put me through before dropping me off here."

"Actually given what you just showed us we probably would..." Shanks said slowly, exchanging a glance with Ben who chuckled, blowing a smoke ring as he too stared at Luffy thoughtfully. "What's your name kid?"

"Monkey D. Luffy, grandson of Monkey D. Garp, or as I like to call him, Ji-kure." Luffy said, hopping to her feet and grinning now at the old man. "Although he ain't to blame for the curse. That, I'm not going to tell you about."

"Don't worry Luffy, everyone has secrets. Well I'm Shanks, this is Ben, that's Lucky Roo and the man you cold-cocked is Yassop. We're the Red-Haired pirates,

dreamers, treasure seekers and adventurers extraordinaire! Pull up a seat, and tell us about some of your training with the old man, and we'll tell you some of ours. Specifically, how'd you block my Haoshoku?"

And that was the first meeting between Shanks and Luffy. For the next year Shanks stayed there off and on, sometimes leaving for a few days or a week before coming back, flirting with Makino during the evenings, and training Luffy during the day. He was astonished at the speed with which Luffy learned how to fight, both unarmed and armed, even incorporating rifles into his personal repertoire thanks to Ben Beckmann and Yassop.

Shanks also showed him what a Devil Fruit looked like, and asked him if he wanted to eat it, to get an instant power up. Luffy however wasn't interested in eating some random fruit without knowing what kind of power it contained. Since Shanks couldn't tell him that, he refused. "Besides, it feels a little bit like cheating y'know? Maybe once I've mastered the six Rokushiki and Busoshoku, then I might be willing to eat a Devil Fruit. But not before."

Luffy also absorbed all the tales of adventure and thrill-seeking that the pirates could tell him. Here he learned of the mysterious One Piece, and remembering the mission he was in this dimension for, Ranma/Luffy suddenly realized that this might well be the item he was here to find. So he plied the crew with questions about it, Gold Roger, and the New World.

During these tales Shanks and Ben always took the lead. Yassop would turn the tale to his son, who he had left behind, which Luffy wasn't willing to comment on and honestly uninterested in. Lucky Roo didn't talk much, but he and Luffy had some truly incredible eating contests.

But it was Ben who explained that in this world, the reasons for someone turning to piracy varied wildly, something Luffy had already known of course, but that the greatest of pirates always were among those with the biggest dreams and the will to achieve them. "You see kiddo, the world's never been changed by anyone who's just going through the motions. Dreamers change the world, achieve their dreams, when they are willing to put **everything** they are on the line, their lives, their time, their very souls. The Pirate King wasn't just the strongest pirate, he was also the one with the biggest dream, a dream of freedom that took him to the edge of the world. The Cap'n,

the other Yonkou, Garp, Tsuru and the other admirals, they all have dreams that have pushed them to become monsters among men."

"Of course there are a lot of people out there with petty dreams and petty desires. They call themselves pirates too, but they aren't, they soil the Jolly Rogers they use, mere bandits on the sea! If you don't have a dream, an all-encompassing mission you're willing to put your life on the line for, you're not worth being called a real pirate!" Despite his laid back demeanor, Ben was a passionate man about dreams and what he called the real soul of piracy, much like his captain, who shouted his agreement at that and ordered another round of ale at the same time.

Luffy actually began to ask (or demand depending on who you talked to) that the pirates take him with them on their trips. Shanks would simply laugh, saying he was too weak to come out to sea, while Lucky Roo and Yasopp would joke that a pirate ship was no place for a girl. Luffy would be hard-pressed to say which response infuriated him more, but since all the pirates knew to take him at least semi-seriously he could no longer attack them with any real chance of success.

One day while they were partying as normal however, they were interrupted by the arrival of some scum from further inland. The door to the tavern banged opened, and Luffy, the pirates and Makino all looked up from what they were doing to stare at a group of around twenty men dressed similarly to the pirates come, in, swaggering arrogantly as they stared around at the pirates.

"So these losers are what pass as pirates these days?" Said the leader of the bandits as he walked up to the counter. He was a tall man with a long thin mustache and a seemingly permanent sneer on his face

"Hello, Is there anything I can help you with?" asked Makino, while one hand disappeared under the bar's top. Even as she prepared to defend herself Makino didn't give the man any lip. These were bandits, not pirates, a wholly different sort of fish.

She looked at Ranma who had twirled around in his stool like Shanks, and was looking at the bandits, his little face scrunched up into a calculating frown. She shook her head lightly and Luffy subsided, but she could tell he was still tense like a spring.

The leader however didn't notice Luffy as a threat, simply giving the green haired beauty an arrogant smirk .smirk. "We're Mountain Bandits, we want no trouble, we just want ten barrel of sake and we will be out of here."

"I'm sorry but we are nearly out of stock. If you come back this weekend I should have at least three barrels ready to drink by then."

"Then what the hells are they drinking?" the Bandit suddenly shouted, pointing at the pirates as his men grumbled, hands falling to weapons as they glared murderously around them. "Or is that water in those flagons of theirs?"

"They are actually drinking all the ale I have ready right now." replied Makino, shaking her head regretfully.

Shanks chose that moment to stand up, bowing his head lightly to the bandit leader. "Yeah sorry but it seems that we have drunk all of the sake in this place over the last few days." Shanks then picked up an unopened bottle of ale. "You can have this last bottle if you want, I haven't open it yet."

Either Shanks tone or the gesture set the bandit off and he grabbed the proffered bottle before smashing it over Shanks's head. Shanks fell to the ground as the man shouted, "I, Higuma the mountain bandit have a bounty of 8 million beri on my head and you offer one pitiful bottle of sake?! I should burn this place down around your misbegotten ears!"

Luffy tensed further, then calmed down as Shanks stood up, ale dripping off him but seemingly uninjured for all of that. "Great now I've got the floor wet, you got a rag Makino-chan?"

"I'll take care of it captain. ." replied Makino coming out from behind the counter, leaving her gun behind for now.

Before she could do anything, Higuma drew his sword and smashed all the stuff on the bar to the floor. Higuma never noticed that Ben had clamped down on Luffy's shoulder, keeping the kid in his stool as he turned to Makino, leering at her for a moment before he spat to the side. "You like cleaning up, clean that up! Come on boys, we can find a better place to drink than with this cowardly scum."

The bandits trooped out, and suddenly all the pirates were laughing, shaking their heads at their captain shouting how the bandit had gotten him good. Luffy too smirked, leaning back slightly. "Small dogs bark the loudest I suppose. That wasn't how I'd have handled it, but I guess it works."

"You always have to be careful Luffy, never fight when you don't really have to, and never pick on the weak." Shanks said, drying himself off and winking at Makino who was helping him, causing the young woman to blush and look away. "Even those foolish frogs who've never been out of their wells."

Luffy laughed joining the rest of them, but he also stared out the door. *I just hope those bandits aren't the type to come back here again to push their luck. I didn't like the look that bastard gave Makino.*

Of the two it would be Luffy who was proven correct. Several weeks later, after having been kicked off Shanks ship after trying to stow away, Luffy walked back to Makino's tavern in a rather down mood. Makino looked up as Luffy entered, shaking her head at the bedraggled sight. "Don't come in here like that Luffy, you know the rules, no dripping water on the floor. What happened anyway?"

"Shanks and the others know how good a swimmer I am by this points, so Ben just kicked me off the ship. When I tried to use Geppo, that bastard Yasopp got my legs with a bola." Luffy grumbled, grabbing the towel Makino threw at him out of the air. "I had to swim back to the docks, then Mayor Whiner starts on me about shaming the town as the fishermen all laugh at me."

"No cursing!" Makino scolded. "It shows a lack of intelligence. Did you hear Shanks curse? AS punishment for that you get to stay in your female body for the rest of today. And what have I told you about calling the mayor names?"

Luffy pouted at her, but nodded after a moment, knowing Makino would enforce that rule by throwing water at her if Luffy tried to regain her male body. So Luffy spent the rest of the day as a girl, and the day passed uneventfully until it was near evening. Then they had another visit from scum.

"Excuse us!" Shouted Higuma arrogantly, kicking the door to the tavern open before looking around, a sneer on his face as he stared at the few scattered villagers in

the tavern at this time of day. "Well, looks like those weak-ass pirates aren't here today." He looked at Makino, leering openly at her now. "You're not going to make up another excuse not to serve us, are you missy?"

Makino's eyes narrowed, and one hand slipped under the bar, grabbing her pistol. Yassop had given her some lessons with it, and she was even better than she had been. But the pistol only had one shot, and she'd just sent Luffy out for some firewood for the evening. *Curse it, bad timing.* "I've got ale this time, yes, and we've got two boars cooking over the fire as you can see, though they just started cooking a few minutes ago."

"Excellent, give us some ale girl!" Higuma shouted, and his men cheered, sitting down at the tables and the bar.

The green-haired young woman obeyed swiftly, tossing flagons of ale down the line then moving around the bar quickly with a tray heavy with more. For the first few moments everything was fine, then as she passed one of the bandits the man grabbed her around the middle, fondling her rear as he pulled her towards him. "How much for a night darlin'?"

Makino replied swiftly, her fist coming around in an arc that smashed into the man's head, sending him flying backwards. "I'm not for sale!"

The bandits and villagers who were in the tavern all scrambled to their feet, the bandits pulling out weapons as Higuma leered at her. "Now that wasn't very nice missy, you're gonna have to pay for that. My boys might've left you in one piece before, but now..." He waved his hand and the crowd closed in.

Makino pulled out her pistol, but she only had one shot with it and the crowd was between her and Higuma, the only target which might have made the others back off. Nevertheless her waving it around made the bandits halt for a moment, but then they closed in, knowing she could only shoot one of them just as well as she did.

The door to the backyard banged open at that moment, and Luffy, still in her female body, stood there, taking in the scene at a glance. The nearest bandits were still turning towards her when she hurled the wood she was carrying into the air. Her fists lashed out, smashing into the pieces of wood and sending them flying forward to slam into the bandits one after another. Within seconds of her arrival six of them were

down, with four more wounded. The few villagers who had remained in the tavern took this as a sign to start either running away or grabbing up weapons from the downed bandits.

But they were a mere sideshow as Luffy charged forward, shouting "Get away from her!" Hopping up over the first hastily swung blade, Luffy kicked out with enough force to break that bandit's jaw and send him flying backwards. Using a mix of Geppo and Kami-E, Luffy danced among and above the bandits smashing them to the floor with fists and feet.

During this a single gunshot rang out, and a bandit fell, his throat blown out. Makino backed away grabbing up a chair and using it to hit the first bandit that came at her, putting a table in front of her and most of the others, who thankfully seemed to mostly concentrating on Luffy now, the villagers already down or fled.

Unfortunately Higuma was not one of them. He moved around the ongoing melee, attacking Makino. His sword smashed the chair she tried to use to flinders and he ducked her wild punch, grabbing her by the hair and pushing her to the floor in front of him. "Hey girl, if you don't want yer friend here to die I suggest you give up."

Luffy looked over, seeing Makino captured and cursed himself. *If only I knew Soru, Rankyaku, Shigan or even was able to do my old air pressure attacks!* Despite his training Luffy just wasn't up to that speed yet. Indeed even Geppo was hard, his/her legs would be sore for weeks after this exercise. Luffy debated trying to use his Haoshoku, but he couldn't direct it like Shanks could, and he didn't know if Makino would be able to handle it.

With no way to cross the intervening space and now seeing more bandits pulling out their guns to point not at her but at Makino, Luffy dropped to the ground. The bandits closed in quickly, kicking punching Luffy until she was a bloody while Makino screamed at them to stop.

Higuma sneered down at her, reaching down to grab the top of her dress. "You're not in any position to make demands little missy." He was about to tear it off when the door to the tavern banged open and Shanks and his crew entered.

"What's all this then?" Shanks asked, striding forward. Even as he did so, his presence washed out, almost moving around Makino and even Luffy and the downed

villagers, touching them like a pile of feathers. At the same time it hit all ten of the remaining bandits, falling on them both in body and spirit like a mountain. Their eyes rolling back and foaming at the mouth they fell to the floor, their minds broken by the pressure.

Only Higuma remained on his feet, his eyes wide and practically unseeing. Shanks ignored him for a moment, staring at the bloody mess that was Luffy at present. "Hey Luffy, you're not looking too good there girl."

Luffy growled up at him but then coughed, her ribs creaking. *Got to look into the Breaking Point training, just because I can dodge doesn't mean I shouldn't be able to take a punch!* "Shanks..."

Shanks waved a hand, and there was a single bang. Looking over Shanks' shoulder Ranma saw Yasopp lowering his pistol. Turning his head he saw Higuma collapse backward, but somehow Yasopp had shot the man standing right behind Makino in such a way that none of his blood got on her, an astonishing feat.

"Baka!" Shanks said, smacking Luffy very lightly on the head. "What were you thinking taking them all on with how weak you are! Did you even think about shouting for help, no, what would've happened if we weren't here huh!"

"I'm not weak!" Luffy growled, pushing herself to her feet. "I was doing fine until that bastard took Makino hostage."

"Which you should've thought he might do, they're bandits, not saints! This isn't a game Luffy!"

"Then I'll get stronger, I'll protect my friends and anyone else I have to!"

"No one's that strong kid, only Gold Roger was strong enough to do that!" Shanks replied, shaking his head.

Dammit, I'll show you, I'll find One Piece before all of you, and then I'll show you how strong I am!"

"Baka!" Shanks shouted, bashing Luffy over the head again even as his crew dragged the bodies of the bandits out of the tavern. "That would make you Pirate

King!" He shook his head, laughing loudly, yet Ben smirked at him, and there was a gleam in Shanks' eyes, the same gleam that had been there since he learned Luffy had the D. in his name. "How's a weakling like you supposed to do that!?"

"Then I'll be the Pirate King!" Luffy shouted, kicking out hard and catching Shanks in the shin, causing him to shout and hop on one leg for a moment. "I'll show you I'll be the strongest, the freest man in the world!"

The rest of the crew were laughing at that until one of them said, "Wait, wouldn't that make you Pirate Queen?" The nameless pirate who said that started a new gale of laughter in his crewmen, but Luffy's shriek of fury and her assault stopped him personally from enjoying it.

OOOOOOO

A few days after that, Shanks and his crew left, leaving in the morning after a particularly boisterous night of drinking and tale-telling in Makino's bar. Luffy was there to wave goodbye to them at the harbor, and once again shout about how he was going to become King of Pirates before Shanks did.

The redheaded pirate replied by calling him 'Queenie', something that nearly made him lose his head when Luffy hurled a small brick at him, only for it to be smacked straight backwards at him by the Shank's sword. When he looked up again after shaking his head however, Luffy gaped as he saw Shanks' prized straw hat sailing through the air to land precisely on his head.

Shanks grinned at the youngster's astonished face. "Get stronger and come see me in the New World! Until then, I'm entrusting you with my treasure until you find One Piece! It's a promise Luffy!"

"I will! I'll become stronger Shanks, I'll be the Pirate King, you'll see!" Luffy waved back, surprised to find some tears trying to appear in his eyes.

In reply Shanks merely nodded, turning away as his ship's sails unfurled and they left the small harbor behind.

Luffy stared after the ship until it was out of sight, then turned away. When he got back to the tavern, he was surprised to find Makino wasn't up yet. Moving around

the bar he entered her room, asking "Hey Makino, you okay, they didn't try to get ya drunk again did theeeyyy...."

Makino looked up from where she had just pulled out of the bed, naked as the day with she was born. Luffy stared, blushed then rushed out of the room so rapidly it looked as if he'd used Soru, shouting "Sorry!" behind him. He didn't notice how rumpled the bed was or the small spot of blood and other stains on it.

Several moments later he was joined at the bar by Makino, who laughed at his embarrassment as she entered the tavern. "Its fine Luffy, it's not like that was the first time you walked in on me. We still have to get ready for the day, so why don't you bring up a new barrel of ale, the thirteenth one towards the back should be ready by now."

She stopped as she noticed a note left on the counter. Picking it up and opening it quickly she read through it and seemed to stiffen for a moment. Luffy watched perplexed as her hand came down smashing into the counter with enough force to leave cracks. Then she turned smiling brightly in a way that really, **really** worried Luffy, who remembered seeing smiles on that on girl's faces way to often back when he was Ranma. "Luffy, did Shanks and the others already set sail?" she asked sweetly.

"Y-Yes," Luffy stuttered, scared for some reason he couldn't put into words.

"I see," Makino said, calmly, very calmly, scarily so in Luffy's opinion. "In that case, why don't you start setting up the tavern instead of getting that barrel of ale? I just remembered some work I want to do in the cellar."

With that she turned, pulled on the trapdoor to the taverns cellar so hard the handle nearly broke off in her grip, and then stomping down the stairs. She delicately closed the trapdoor after her and Ranma went about his business for several hours listening to Makino shrieking and screaming as she worked off her anger. *What the hell did you do Shanks!?*

The next few days were rather nervous ones for Luffy, who walked on eggshells around Makino as did everyone else who entered the tavern. They quickly learned that Shanks was a forbidden topic. This went away slightly a few days later, when something arrived on time, making Makino really happy.

Luffy didn't realize what it was at first, then when he did blanched horribly, realizing for the first time what Shanks had done and why Makino was so pissed. That evening he brought up the subject delicately, or delicately for Luffy/Ranma anyway. "Er, so when I go out to sea do you want me to drag Shanks back here kicking and screaming, or just carve out a few pounds of his hide?"

Makino looked at the now certainly at least eight-year-old, then began to chuckle. "Do you even know what you're asking? Or why I'm angry Luffy?"

"I've been hanging around this tavern for a year, and Marines for several years longer. I might not know you know everything about..." Luffy blushed, despite actually knowing a lot more than that, he hadn't any 'hand's on experience'. "Um, Slot A into Tab B, but I know what men and women get up to when they're alone. Sorry it took so long for me to put it together."

Makino laughed, pulling the youngster into a hug, which he returned. "So that's a no then?" he asked his voice muffled against her stomach.

"That's an 'I'll think about it'," Makino said smiling wickedly. "He promised to write me, every month he said in that note. Give me one month, and then I'll give you my answer."

Luffy shrugged. "If he does come back someday and hasn't written I could train you a bit you know, so you could take a pound out of his hide yourself."

Makino frowned, remembering how helpless she had felt against the bandits. "All right, that at least I will agree to now."

Three weeks passed, then three weeks more, and no message arrived. Makino became cranky and sad in turns, staring out to sea every night, and getting up early in the morning to search the sky for a messenger-gull. But no message appeared. A week or so went by like and every night after the tavern closed Makino went down into the cellar to rant and rave before going to bed cranky only to start the whole cycle up again the next day.

Then as Makino began to show signs of getting over this emotional roller-coaster, Luffy made his suggestion again. "Seriously I will drag him back kicking and screaming if you want me to."

Makino laughed again shaking her head before staring at Luffy seriously.
"You're serious about this Pirate King thing aren't you?"

"You bet!" Luffy said with a nod, his eyes gleaming. It was a challenge, a sign that he would be not only the strongest but the freest in the world, something that Luffy/Ranma loved the idea of, irrespective of completing his so-called mission in this galaxy. Something he only vaguely remembered these days if he was honest.

"In that case, you just got your first crewmember." Makino said laughing even though there was no humor in it this time. "Shanks won't ever come back here willingly, but that doesn't mean I can't hunt him down instead."

Luffy nodded, not seeing any problem with that. Other people might have tried to dissuade her, but that wasn't Luffy/Ranma's style. "In that case, we're going to step up our training!"

OOOOOOO

About six months after Shanks left, Garp returned, and was astonished at the progress his grandson had made shouting happily, "Oh my God what a marine you'll be Luffy! Hah, I'm gonna call Tsuru right now, bet I can get her to renege that ridiculous age limit thing."

"Yeah about that Ji-Kure, I've decided I'm not going to be a Marine," Luffy said shaking his head then suddenly grinning and giving his grandfather a thumb's up. "Instead I'm going to become the King of Pirates!"

Needless to say the shouting went on for quite a while after that...

A few weeks later, Luffy was dragged kicking and screaming by Garp into the mountains, because apparently he wanted to leave Luffy with some mountain bandit he knew this time. Why he couldn't leave Luffy with Makino again Luffy didn't understand and wasn't told but given his previous experience with bandits Luffy was obviously against this. Yet the Fists of Love still found him regardless of how much he tried to dodge and so here he was.

"The bandits will train you up right brat, and besides, you can't really think that staying with Makino will make you stronger, can you."

"You'd be surprised psycho." Luffy growled.

"What no grandpa now?"

"You lost grandpa privileges the moment you mentioned dropping me off with some mountain bandits who owe you a favor!" Luffy growled.

"Such a mouth on you!" Garp said shaking his head. "And here I thought Makino would cure that for you."

Luffy growled, but stopped speaking afterwards Garp smacked him upside the head. Luffy didn't have enough brain cells for him to want to lose more in that manner. Little did he know that his meeting too would change his life in this new world...

OOOOOOO

Seven years later:

"Are you sure you still want to come with me Makino?" Luffy asked as he tossed down the last of their supplies into their before grabbing up a booklet of loose papers, flipping through them. It was a small ship, but a decent one all the same, made by Luffy himself working with the town's carpenter. It only had a single small room, but the two of them had shared a room often enough for that to not matter. Besides they weren't intending to use this ship for long.

"I'm certain Luffy," Makino said with a nod. "If Shanks thinks sending me a message whenever the mood takes him is enough to make up for leaving like he did, he is sorely mistaken."

Luffy laughed, shaking his head. "Fine, I'm not going to try again. Still have the welt from the last time I tried to talk you out of anything. It should be fun to catch up with my brothers in the New World anyway."

Makino looked over Luffy shoulder at the bounty hunters list a booklet that he had picked up somewhere with the bandits, shaking her head and laughing at the two bounties he'd pulled out. "Who knew those two kids I had to teach manners to would make names for themselves under the most feared pirate in the world?"

"Whitebeard's not feared," Luffy said shaking his head. "At least not really. Respected yeah, but feared? I've never heard any tales about Whitebeard wiping out islands or anything like that, have you? Only stories about him killing other pirates or groups which threaten his islands and crews."

"Suppose I haven't at that." Makino said and smiled. "So he's like Shanks?"

"Well in that way anyway," Luffy shrugged. "I also heard once that he calls his whole crew his family which is kind of cool."

Luffy frowned flipping through the list as Makino turned to untie the boat holding them to the docks. "Man look at these bounties, the biggest is only 20,000,000, no one in East Blue is really worth my time."

"That might be true, but remember money's always important." Makino laughed. "We won't become anything but corpses in the Grand Line with this little ship after all."

"True," Luffy said with a nod. "And we'll need to gather a crew too."

"Have you had any thoughts about that?"

"Dreams," Ranma replied promptly. "A navigator, a tough fighter for a first mate, a cook and gunner maybe, a carpenter and someone to act as bursar, but none of that is important if they don't have dreams. They must have dreams **and** the drive to reach them, because where we are going only those with the strongest wills will survive, Like Shanks and Ben said."

Makino nodded making no comment that her own dream was rather small in comparison to Luffy's as was her drive. Instead she helped pole them away from the town's wharf. Then the sails caught and they began to pull away. As it did the two of them turned staring back at the town they had just left for a moment before resolutely turning away to face their futures.

Just then a giant sea king burst out of the water, roaring at them and lunging toward the small boat.

"Can't you see we're sailing on a journey here you stupid fish!?" Luffy shouted. Suddenly he was standing in front of the thing, hopping on the air with one leg. His other leg lashed forward catching the thing with a blast of air pressure shaped like a curved blade, flinging it backwards.

"That reminds me Luffy," Makino said with a laugh. "How is your grandfather going to take the fact that you finally set off on your dream to be a pirate?"

Luffy shivered. "Let's not find out for a bit," he said, his voice cracking slightly. But as he turned to gaze out to sea that fear left him and he grinned, eager for his new adventure to begin. "I'm going to be the freest and strongest of them all! I'm going to be the Pirate King!"

End Prologue

I had intended to write up how Ace and Luffy met and some of their adventures yet when I reread it Ace came off as an asshole which is fine at first but not after they're bonded brothers, and the rest was too darn choppy to use. So that section of Luffy nee Ranma's life will be shown in random flashbacks, including the first time he goes by the name Ranko in his female form - which will be his name in that body going forward. I didn't want to become bogged down in that area, I know how irritating it can be to have to read through the background of stories like that before getting to the meat of them.

Pairing: LuRanma/Robin/maybe Nami but she has some serious attitude adjustments to go through/Margaret possibly eventually.

Anyway, I hope you all enjoyed.