

One Piece: Halfway Broken

(Chapter 94)

Novus Peregrine

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Chapter 94: Dragon Cult

Luffy and Robin hadn't waited for the rest of the crew. Luffy, in particular, considered himself genre savvy enough not to sit on his hands when a chanting cult seemed entirely too close to finishing something they'd been working on for decades. That was just *begging* fate to let them finish at the last minute, when you could have cut them off early. Though, admittedly, this wasn't a story with its epic moments pre-ordained, meaning it might *already* be too late. Either way, it didn't behoove them at all to just allow the cultists to finish what they were doing, even if they were going to be too late to save the latest victims from what Robin had already seen.

Unwilling to be overly subtle when they might *not* have to fight a dragon if they were fast enough, Luffy had gotten Robin to direct him to the hidden passage...then ordered her to cause chaos the moment he broke through. Then he tried to punch the wall, only to curse at the result. His intent had been to burst through said wall and start downing cultists, even as Robin used her Devil Fruit to do the same.

Unfortunately, it didn't work out that way.

Much to his own shock, when he'd *tried* to punch his way through the wall, using a full power hit from his Stormtiger form...the ice of the wall barely chipped. Dumbfounded, he picked up the bit that had chipped off and crushed it with ease in one fist. A second attempt at the wall produced only a second chip, much to his frustration, proving that there was something about the ice *still* part of the wall that made it resistant to damage. Something probably related to the fact his spiritual senses had flared both times he hit it. Thankfully, Robin had taken his first failure as an indication to attempt to open the secret passage, and by the time he was done attempting to break down the wall a second time, she'd figured out how to release the door she'd seen the cultist go through before.

Luffy wasn't entirely happy with that, since the passage was only big enough to go through single file. Heck, the passage wasn't even large enough for his Stormtiger form, forcing him to revert back to human. There had been a *reason* he wanted to burst in and cause chaos, rather than taking the passage as-it-was. Still, with no other options and time possibly running out on them, he forged ahead, entering the passage ahead of Robin and hustling along. Shifting his plan as they neared the end, he gave Robin instructions.

"Disrupt the chanters farthest away from the passage right before I open the door. Then work your way through them from the back while I attack them from the front. Hopefully, we can take them all down quickly and stop whatever this is in its tracks before it gets fully started."

Robin hummed and nodded acknowledgement, coming to a stop behind him as they reached the end of the passage.

“We might already be too late, the thawing is accelerating.”

Grimacing, Luffy managed to keep his cursing internal as he found the lever that worked the exit door. Thankfully, there was no complex mechanism hiding it from this side. Without a word more, he triggered the lever and threw himself against the door, forcing it to swing open faster than the normal mechanism could have, creating a horrible grinding of stone on stone. He heard shouts of confusion and anger even as the door opened, Robin working with her Devil Fruit to Clutch several cultists away from the secret passage.

The confusion she caused was enough that the majority of the cultists were looking the wrong way as Luffy rushed into the room, accelerating with *Soru* toward a man in an important looking mask. Even mid-Soru, Luffy’s reactions were fast enough by now to lash out and flatten two less important looking cultists in his path...but when he reached the end of his dash he found the one in the mask *already reacting*. Specifically, he *roared* at Luffy, the roar carrying a gout of white-hot flame that screamed *danger* to every sense Luffy had. He only just barely diverted in time to avoid it, the edges of that flame searing his skin like a nasty sunburn *despite* infusing himself with Haki at the last second.

Abruptly *far* more worried as he picked out four more men with similar masks who were all tracking him, Luffy turned to lightning just in time to dart away from four more beams of energy. Not fire this time, but lances of Ice, Lightning, Acid, and some sort of noxious smoke. Luffy sent back his own Lightning by reflex...only to watch as it was all pulled towards the cultist that had fired off his own beam of Lightning.

No. Wait. Not the *man*. The *mask*.

His Haki-laced attacks had been sucked directly into the mouth of the *mask*.

Even as he started putting two and two together, the cultist who had breathed fire was shouting.

“Attack! Do not let him steal our moment of triumph! The Great Thraaxx will reward us for slaying those who would keep him imprisoned!”

There had, at the start, been roughly thirty cultists present in the large ritual chamber, including the five in masks. Robin had already disabled the majority of the non-masked members, her particular Devil Fruit having always been good for dealing with crowds. Yet, several of the more ordinary cultists hadn’t gone down to a simple *Clutch* attack, and as they thrashed, their robes shredding on skin increasingly covered in *scales*, it was clear why they hadn’t. Well, clear in the sense that they were obviously enhanced in some dragon-related way. Not so clear in *how* all of them appeared to be undergoing something like a crude and limited Zoan transformation.

A little too busy dodging another wave of elemental ‘breath weapons,’ Luffy had to trust that Robin could handle the dozen ‘draconic warriors’ that had resisted her initial attack. She had stepped out into the open, making it obvious she was there, even as a pair of arms and hands larger than her entire body formed and brutally swatted two of those warriors into the far wall.

This time, when Luffy turned back from a momentary burst of movement in his lightning form, he'd closed with the cultist that fired beams he was assuming was a toxin of some sort. Despite the one with the Lightning-Eating mask apparently hard-countering his own Lightning attacks, Luffy felt *this one* was the more dangerous. Luffy himself was at least somewhat resistant to most poisons. Robin, so far as he was aware, wasn't anything of the sort.

Not screwing around, the fist he punched into the man's gut was both black with Armament Haki *and* channeling a brutal amount of sound energy that he released as a shockwave into the man's belly. There was a satisfying pop as he felt something give way inside the man and the cultist flew away to slam into the far wall...but frustratingly he'd felt more of those draconic scales on contact and could still sense the man with his Observation. That hadn't managed to kill him, only knock the wind out of him, and he was already stirring from that. Worse, Luffy was unable to follow up as he had to flash into lightning again with multiple AOE breath weapons filling the space where he and the cultist had just been.

Damnit. This was not going at all the way he'd hoped, and a glance showed that the Frozen Dragon was starting to shade with color as the ice melted faster and faster...drawing blood from the cultists who had been downed to do it. Fuck. They really might have been too late, the dragon was awake enough to feed on its own, or at least that was his guess. Worse, fighting in an enclosed space like this was going to become suicide, fast, if he couldn't put down at least a couple of the men with dragon masks. The fact they seemed able to fire both beams and *cones* meant they could simply fill the entire chamber with AOE and possibly bring even him down, let alone Robin.

Deciding he needed to prioritize in case there was no choice but to make a strategic withdrawal, Luffy landed behind one of the draconic warriors trying to reach Robin through her giant arms. Grabbing the cultist, Luffy turned him into a weapon by *throwing* him as hard as he could at the man with the Lightning Mask. The cultist didn't hesitate to kill his own, unleashing a beam to annihilate the warrior flying at him, but Luffy hadn't distracted *that specific* masked cultist for no reason. Gambling that the masked cultist couldn't both attack *and* absorb Luffy's lightning at the same time, Luffy forced as much Haki, both Armament and Conqueror's, as he could into a single massive bolt, launching it as the poison breath cultist as he tried to get up.

That bolt caught the staggered cultist directly in the mask, exactly as Luffy had intended, and there was a moment where reality seemed to stutter for an instant as his attack and the mask clashed. Then, his attack won and the mask snapped, the remaining lightning evaporating the cultist's head in a shower of gore. The other Masked cultists roared in anger, but Luffy was already dodging their retaliation, landing beside Robin, sword drawn and lashing out at the remaining Draconic Warriors that had cornered her, the blade easily slicing right through one of them. She'd done well, downing all but four, but she was panting...and the Dragon was *moving* now as the ice holding it in place cracked and slogged off in great chunks. He channeled Shichiseiken's ability to mimic a lesser version of Whitebeard's Devil Fruit with his next swing, the air splitting and a pressure wave turning the remaining three warriors to so much paste.

"Time to go!"

Scooping Robin up with one arm, Luffy darted back, making it into the secret passage just in time to avoid another wave of breath attacks. He threw Robin over his shoulder to narrow their

profile enough to fit and sprinted through the passage. He was confident he could have taken the other four Masked Cultists, even in an enclosed space. He wasn't *nearly* so confident he could have done that *and* dealt with the waking dragon! They needed to get out into open space and meet up with the others before they tried to play Knights in Shining Armor...

... ..

Kuina and Kaya both picked up the Marines following them. Of course they did. While the individual they figured was Strawberry had at least some control over his presence, the rest of those he'd gathered up did not. His group shadowing them as they raced toward the Frozen Library was deeply unwelcome, but there wasn't much they could do about it. Well, not much besides admit that this was going to be a clusterfuck.

Thankfully, she and Hina had decided to send Pagaya back to the *Discovery* via Vivi Express as soon as they met up outside of town. Admittedly, that was *before* the Marines gathered up and made it clear they were being followed, so the rest of the crew wouldn't be fully warned. Yet they *would* be generally warned, gathered, and waiting for orders, at least. Depending on just what sort of chaos they discovered at the Library, Vivi could quickly relay orders and get the rest of the crew moving in one direction or another. Kuina had already mentally formed at least a half dozen plans, based on how the situation panned out, though most of them boiled down to 'stand and fight all comers' or 'have Dis start sinking the Marine Fleet to force them to split their attention.'

She sort of wished she could expect 'withdraw and let the cultists and Marines fight each other' to also be an option.

Sadly, they had too many battle junkies in their ranks to consider that under anything but the most radical of odds.

With stealth basically pointless at this point, they'd sped up and covered the distance to the Library much faster than Luffy and Robin had. Which, as it happened, meant they arrived just in time to see their Captain hauling ass *out the front doors*, with Robin slung over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes. He angled toward them instantly, calling out order as he did.

"Vivi! Get Yamato and Zoro! And tell Dis to take a shot at the dragon if she gets a chance, but mind what's around it if she does! She's to follow Nami's orders when to fire or how to get a shot!"

Vivi blinked but responded to the urgency in her Captain's voice by instinctively popping an Air Door open and darting through to obey the order. Luffy turned without hesitation to look *exactly* where the Marines were hiding and raised his voice.

"Strawberry! We can sort out our petty ideological differences with suitable ultra-violence once this is over. For now, there's a fuck off huge Dragon and four powerful cultists in Dragon Masks that are about to swarm the island! I suggest we—"

While her Captain's intentions were obvious, and might even work given what Hina had said about Vice Admiral Strawberry, he didn't manage to finish his suggestion before a bellowing roar and the crash of ice and stone being rent asunder cut him off. Kuina, along with everyone else but Luffy and Robin, gaped as half the roof of the Frozen Library just *ceased to exist* in an explosion of

raw physical power. A great gust of wind, caused by a second roar from the shadowy figure that had emerged, chased away the cloud of debris and they got their first sight of what had caused the damage...

... ..

As Vice-Admiral Strawberry saw what they were facing, he was never so glad to be an adherent of Moral Justice. Dimly, he noted that currently serving under a Fleet Admiral that wouldn't execute him for following that path was a great additional advantage, assuming he survived. Yet, given that he was staring at a 150-meter-long monster he could only call a Dragon, one that was *radiating Conqueror's Haki*, he wasn't at all sure even the call from Strawhat Luffy not to fight each other was going to be enough to see them through. The only reason half his men weren't unconscious is that said pirate had responded to the wave of Haki with one of his own, one that was explicitly excluding the Marines as it buffered them from the Dragon's.

Even so, half of his men were frozen or on their knees, unable to even move under the combined pressure of the two clashing wills, even if one was actively acting to shield them from the other.

Thankfully, that very clash of wills seemed to have focused the creature's attention on the pirate Captain, giving Strawberry time to assess the situation. The creature was *massive* and bulky. His own only reference for 'Dragon' before now had been images captured of Kaidou in his transformed state, and they didn't match what he was seeing here. Not entirely, anyway. The creature was still four-legged, long, and somewhat serpentine. Yet it was thicker, bulkier. Its heavily armored body was perhaps three or four times thicker for its length than Kaidou was, with far larger legs compared to its body length.

An absent part of his mind noted that the difference in shape might well be why the island was called *Drakemine*, not *Dragonmine*. Given the sheer presence the monster radiated, Strawberry wasn't about to quibble on the topic of whether it was a dragon or not, though. If it was intelligent enough to have a preference, he'd give it the name. Nor was he going to protest overmuch about the cultists he could see now emerging from the library calling it a dragon either. Mostly, it had to be said, because he'd be much too busy trying to eviscerate them for the idiocy of waking this thing up.

"Marines! Ignore the Straw Hats for now. At least until that Dragon is dealt with! Those of you that can move, pull the others back, then concentrate on the cultists. Leave the Dragon to myself and the Pirates."

A few of those still able to move looked furious at the order, but they obeyed anyway. Strawberry noted the faces of those who looked the most mutinous. He understood that Absolute Justice had its fanatics, but fanaticism to the point it outweighed common sense wasn't something he wanted under his command. If they survived, he'd do his best to get them transferred somewhere else. Preferably to the West or North Blues where they could direct that fanaticism against the various rebel groups.

For now, he prepared to act, even as he silently noted several more of the Strawhat pirates appearing out of a door suspended in midair. Whatever that Devil Fruit was, it certainly explained

quite a few discrepancies about their crew. If he survived, he was going to have to update their information on the crew, most likely on the Albastian Princess, he thought. They knew what Devil Fruit the daughter of Kaidou had already, and he doubted it belonged to the Swordsman who had come through. That type tended to be too prideful for Devil Fruits.

All of his thoughts stalled a moment later when the Dragon *spoke*...

... ..

Luffy could freely admit his own surprise, at least to himself, when the fuck-off-huge drake spoke. He knew his dragons from his past life, and he wasn't giving the jumped-up prick the courtesy of calling him a proper dragon. Well, probably. It might depend on what it had to say.

"I am the Great Thraax. Your will is strong, little mortal. If you surrender and swear to serve me, I will overlook your transgression of destroying one of my Masks and the weakling who wore it. You need only bring me 1,000 sacrifices to atone."

Okay, yeah, no. Definitely not giving it the courtesy of considering it a dragon. The oversized bitch was a drake. He wasn't even giving it a capital letter. It could just be a drake. Maybe even a lesser drake. Actually, that was a *great* comeback. He should use it.

"I'll give *you* one chance to surrender and go back to sleep, little drakeling. So far, only your pissant little cult has actually committed murder. Go back to nap time, like a good little hatchling, and this needn't get violent."

He must have touched a nerve, as the drake's eye spoke murder as vapor leaked from the sides of its mouth.

"My dear sister isn't here to save you from your lip, fool! ***DIE!***"

The word was a roar as much as a word, a beam of frozen death as thick around as two Luffy's were tall shot from the drake's mouth...but Luffy's crew weren't idiots. Only Yamato had stayed with him, while the others had all fanned out to the sides while the drake talked, to get clear of any attack on Luffy. Needing to get some measure for just how powerful this bastard was, Luffy didn't try to dodge. Instead, he shifted into his Stormtiger form and roared his own blast of Haki-infused lightning back, pouring spiritual power into Shichiseiken in case that didn't cut it.

It didn't, but Yamato had struck only a heartbeat after he did.

Back on Sixis, when they'd discussed what Yamato could do to improve, she'd lamented that she hadn't been able to find a Kanabo that could handle the whip-crack power of her Devil Fruit enhanced body. Luffy had taken that as a challenge, firing up his forge for the first time in a while and experimenting. He wasn't yet fully happy with the results, but his access to exotic materials like Lunar Steel, combined with Kaya's help in studying Shichiseiken, had produced a unique weapon for Yamato to try out.

Nicknamed 'Takeru II,' it was a dark pink, studded kanabo made of Lunar Steel...and infused with spiritual energy that let it increase in size with an application of spiritual energy. A trick they'd managed after studying how Shichiseiken could shift into flame to twist and extend. They still hadn't figured out how to make it do the turn-to-flame thing, which would really help with

Yamato's flexible fighting style, but they'd puzzled out at least how to make it grow in size. Currently, it could increase to at least triple its original mass, so long as Yamato kept pumping her own energy into it. A trick she'd found easy to learn, even if she had little interest in wielding it otherwise. Something Luffy thought was probably due to her Devil Fruit.

Regardless, wielded by Yamato's Devil Fruit inflated arm and coated in a mix of Armament and Conqueror's Haki, 'Takeru II' dispersed the remnants of the beam attack that had gotten through Luff's own, pushing through to smash 'The Great Thraaxx' on the snout. The drake made a pained, choking noise as its head was moved...a few meters. Looking far more pissed than injured, he explosively lunged toward them, and they both leapt away. Trying to counter his breath weapon was one thing. Getting into a physical clash with a being nearly the size of the *Discovery* and still capable of moving as fast as it just did was an entirely different level of stupid neither of them wanted to commit to just yet.

Of course, Thraaxx's lunge was the cue everyone else had been waiting for to spring into action.

Kuina and Zoro had both set up to deliver their strongest sword techniques, and both flashed after the drake, aiming at what should be the hamstrings of its rear set of limbs. Both struck true and their attacks *did* do visible damage, drawing blood despite Thraaxx's thick armor. The size and thickness of that armor worked against them, though. The armor ate enough of the attacks to reduce them to little more than flesh wounds, not coming anywhere near to severing the muscles they'd been aiming for. They were forced back, blocking frantically, as Thraaxx's tail proved to have a nasty surprise of its own, the spikes there *launching* and regrowing as the tail twitched. Neither of his crew were hit, but they were momentarily forced back as they deflected the many spikes.

None of the rest of his crew had attempted to attack Thraaxx. Nojiko might have, but she'd settled for taking Robin, Vivi and Usopp airborne on a crystal platform, getting their trio of less durable teammates out of the direct line of fire. Those three, along with Hina, were now engaging a pair of the Masked cultists at range, supporting Sanji and Brook who had closed with that pair. Kaya was nowhere to be seen, and Luffy had only the vaguest sense of her moving under her stealth trick, also toward the Masked cultists. The Marines, save for Strawberry, were engaging the remaining two masked men, specifically the Fire and Acid spewing pair, while the Frost and Lighting pair were fighting his crew.

Speaking of Strawberry, the Vice Admiral had been the only other individual to target Thraaxx when he lunged. He'd been farther away and less well-positioned, but the man clearly didn't hold his rank for no reason. He'd somehow combined Soru and Geppo to get *under* Thraaxx and, a second or two after Kuina and Zoro struck, attempted his own dual-sword strike at the drake's underbelly. To the man's credit, *that* blow drew more blood than anything else had so far, and actually got the drake to respond more directly.

Unfortunately, it did that by *jumping* and twisting like a snake in midair to bring its mouth in line with where Strawberry had been. The man was already moving, but Thraaxx produced a much *wider* breath weapon this time. A cone of frost that caught the Vice-Admiral despite his dodge, though the man's skin darkened with Haki and he burst through it, only having slowed a little. That little might still have been enough to meet his end, since Thraaxx's neck lunged forward to try and

chomp down on the Admiral, but Yamato had buffed up to her full Giant Size with her Devil Fruit. Club now a one-handed affair even at its max size, she caught the drake with a blow to its throat that jerked its head away from the Marine, then followed up with a body blow with her off hand that managed to actual launch the drake back several dozen meters.

Not at all coincidentally, she'd sent it *away* from the library where the Masked Cultists were fighting the rest of the crew and the Marines, and Luffy followed up by flashing into the air right between its eyes and sending bolts of lightning at both. The drake managed to shake his head just enough to make those miss, scoring burning lines on his armor, but it certainly got his *attention*, and discourage him from shifting back toward the library.

This promised to be a long fight, considering how little damage they were doing at a time. The best thing they could do was lure it away from the cultists and pound on the monster until it went down...

... ..

Kaya was *displeased* as she mercy-killed the Masked Cultist that had been spewing lightning. He had been the most dangerous, by far, only prevented from killing anyone by the fact that she and Captain Luffy had both gone to considerable efforts to make the crew highly resistant to lightning. If he'd been allowed to engage the Marines, most of them would be dead, and even against their crew he'd been *irritating* to deal with. Apparently, he'd absorbed some of their Captain's Haki-laced lightning and had been able to spit it back up, rather than just absorbing it.

Taking him out had been the right choice, even if she still disliked killing if she could avoid it.

Her displeasure this time was at more than just needing to kill in general, though.

The vile Cultist had, to her great irritation, been incredibly resistant to harm. The scales below his robes made him tough, but even that didn't tell the full story. Nojiko had managed to turn him into a pincushion and her Usopp had put multiple special munitions into him. Unfortunately, as Kaya alone among those fighting the masked cultists had been able to tell, the *Mask* was a powerful spiritual artifact. One that had been granting him *regeneration*. He'd walked off Usopp's damage and pulled out every crystal Nojiko had pinned him with, the wounds healing in seconds.

All of which had finally forced her hand as she snuck up behind him and forced Sickness into a wound. She *loathed* using the Sick-Sick fruit for its actual, intended purpose. She took joy in subverting it for healing or improvement of others but, as a healer, its original intent repelled her. Yet, this time she'd been forced to use it, as she'd figured out from studying the energy in the Mask that it didn't protect its wearer from illness. So, she'd stabbed the man and injected hundreds of virulent super-diseases into him. Less than a minute later, he'd collapsed, blood hemorrhaging from every orifice even as she took mercy on him by removing the mask and killing him quickly...

... ..

Nojiko was more annoyed than worried now. Of the Frost and Lightning pair of Masked Cultists that had faced her and the crew, the Lightning Mask had been by far the more problematic. Even second hand and in small doses, their Captain's Haki-laced Lightning was terrifying, and only her own skill with armament reinforcing her crystals had managed to see them through having it

launched at them. With Kaya doing *something* to take that one out of the picture, though, they were managing to box the Frost Mask Cultist in.

Robin had been able to tell them that destroying the *mask* was a viable way of taking the Cultist down, Luffy having apparently managed it with a fifth one of the fuckers that spewed some sort of toxin. He'd done so with a massively powerful attack, though, and replicating that was proving to be a pain in the ass. Usopp had managed to land a pair of armor penetrating rounds on the man that had *cracked* the mask, only for their opponent to start intentionally using frost *vapor* to obscure himself. She, herself, wasn't all that good at delivering a lot of power-to-a-point.

The Crystal-Crystal Fruit was fantastic at defense, and very good at utility uses or AOE. But, even with the ability to grow exploding and electrifying crystals acquired from Wind's Home, there was a limit to her direct damage-to-a-point. She'd recently been working on workarounds for that, using combinations of Crystals, and she'd worked a few tricks out. Unfortunately, they currently all required significant setup time and something pinning the enemy in place. Eventually, she hoped to solve those issues as well, but hadn't done so yet.

Thankfully, Vivi, Hina and Robin had proven *fantastic* at limiting the bastard's movement.

While Robin couldn't, for unknown reasons, grow limbs *from* the cultist like she normally would, she'd been able to place plenty to grab at him and trip him up. Then Vivi and Hina had worked together, using a combination of Air Doors and Shackles, to slowly bind him to the point he could now barely move. All while she prepared her attack, with Brook, and Sanji harrying him to keep him from doing anything about that. Now, as he finally fell and struggled to get up, Nojiko finishing forming a 10-meter spear of complex crystal above him. Layers of explosive and air crystal to accelerate the spear, combined with her Haki-infused crystal as a densely hardened tip. All held above his face as he frantically tried to destroy it with his Frost, only for either Sanji or Brook to strike out to shift where the Frost went. Grinning wildly at actually getting to use her current strongest attack, Nojiko gave into the temptation to shout its name.

"Kesshō Kesshō no EXPLOSIVE SPEAR!"

Sure, it might not be the most exciting name ever, but as the entire sequence of explosions to make it work triggered, it sure as hell looked awesome! And, considering nothing but paste was left where the cultist's head had been, she figured she'd gotten the mask...

... ..

Looking out towards where the massive conflict between the Ice Drake Thraaxx and their most powerful fighters was still ongoing, Vivi pursed her lips. None of them, Marine or Pirate, had the fire power to add much to the fight and it didn't seem to be slowing down at all. Even Nojiko had tried another of her spears, only for the Drake to sense it coming and whack it out of the air with his tail. As for those already fighting him, all five of the fighters involved had managed to hurt Thraaxx at various points, but he'd proven to have regenerative abilities on top of everything else. Ones that seemed to have gotten *stronger* when two of the four Masks were destroyed. Likely causing fragments of power store for his servants to return to him.

Thraaxx *might* die a death-by-a-thousand-cuts eventually, or Luffy might risk his awakened form and do enough damage to end it. But neither of those seemed like great choices.

Dis's guns were another option, of course. Yet Nami had made the call not to use them just yet. For the very legitimate reason that they weren't really all that keen on revealing Dis's ability to fly to the Marines so early. Which was the only way the ship would be able to get a good enough angle on the fast-moving fight to get a shot on target. Unless things became genuinely dire, it was better to keep concealing that particular card as long as they could, since it meant the WG didn't have a good bead on where they could be at any given time.

Still, that left the current situation to deal with. Humming, she thought back on what the Drake had said when it spoke.

"Didn't this Thraaxx mention something about a sister? Do you think the locals might know where she is, and if she might help?"

Everyone, including a few tense-looking Marines who'd been willing to talk to Hina about options, looked her way. Slowly, Hina nodded.

"Hina remembers, he said his 'dear sister isn't here to save you from your lip,' when the Captain insulted him. That *does* sound like maybe she helped imprison him in the first place."

Hina turned to the most at-ease looking officer among the remaining Marines. One of the few who seemed unbothered by dealing with her or their crew.

"Captain Goldstein, are there any locals that know about the legends of the island in detail?"

The man instantly nodded.

"Yes. The Librarians of the Frozen Library. They are currently hiding out in town. Should I send for them?"

Hina shook her head.

"No need to risk civilians this close to the fight. Vivi? An Air Door to town please?"

With a nod and completely unnecessary snap of her fingers, Vivi summoned a door to the city market, near where they'd seen a number of inns earlier in the day. A quick discussion was had about who should go, and a team was split off to hopefully find some useful information...

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