# HST- The B Side of Stupid

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## HST- The B Side of Stupid

by [LadyScribe_12](#)

### Summary

Two friends, both alike in dignity, which is to say none or very little. In fair and muggy North Carolina where we lay our scene…From a gentle faire to high seas piracy. Where two friends might become enemies, might become Heroes or quite possibly wind up dead. But as many stories start, this one starts with a really Stupid dare.

### Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#).
Dustin felt like a train had hit him or maybe a small tornado hard to say lying on his back as he was. It wasn’t the first time he’d woken up like this, he worked in retail after all. Normally though, it was more of an emotional train wreck and soul sucking feeling than actual pain. “Yaaaay~~~all new pain.”

Dustin tried to sit up and quite unexpectedly-lost cohesion. The person sized vortex of air kept talking though. Although talking was a mild term for the hysterical laughter that was emanating from the whirl of air. “Holy shit! It worked, Kaze wasn’t lying at all. Fuck yes I am invincible! Hahahaha”

“Shishishi” POKE “Hey how’d you do that? OH do you have a Devil Fruit too Windy?” Dustin, shocked, tried to reform himself into a more person shaped…thing, he mostly succeeded too. The legs were a bit breezy at the moment, but the rest was definitely human shaped now. “Oh shit, am I…you’re…Is this East Blue?” Dustin was having what Taylor usually referred to as a Moment.

Again with that memorable and familiar laugh “Shishishi, yup! This is Foosha, Windy. I’m Luffy and I’m going to be the Pirate King.” Dustin can’t help himself, being here is both terrifying and a relief. He can’t hold it in anymore and bursts into another vortex. This time more mobile than the last. He heads behind a convenient boulder to emotion in private. His thoughts slow as he regains human form again. He realizes that this means no more Ingles. No more asshole managers. No More working retail. He is free, he is finally fucking free! Oddly enough it’s all thanks to anime. Oh fuck—he’s in an anime.

“You okay Windy?” came from above, it was proceeded by a loud snap of rubber appendages. Yikes that was way more disturbing looking in person. Arms just shouldn’t *do* that you know? “Uhhhhh yea, yea I think I’m okay. Luffy right?” Dustin managed to make that sound far calmer than he felt. Still reeling from fact that tomorrow he’d still be here and not at work!! The excitement was putting more emotion on his face than he could recall showing in years.

“That’s me, who are you Windy? You fell outta the sky, you know, but then you were a wind monster and then you were people again and then you were a wind monster again and now people!!! Do you poop?” Luffy delivered all that in one breath while invading Dustin’s personal space with his last question. He was staring Dustin down as if the answer was of the most importance. “The name’s D.-cough- Du-” Dustin coughs hard as he attempts to say his own name. That’s right though, there had been a price to get here. One that apparently included is real body and an inability to say his name. A price that wasn’t too much in his opinion though, thinking quickly about who exactly he’d gotten these new wind powers from he tried again *cough* “Sorry, The name is Kaz, of the-uh-Passing Wind and I sure hope I still poop.” Kaz sort of pokes at his own body, solid for the moment at least. “Either that or I fart on just an epic scale.” The newly renamed Kaz smiles back at Luffy hoping the humor isn’t lost on the other boy.

There’s little to worry about though, with another “Shishishi” Luffy falls off the top of the rock he’d been sitting on. As they share a laugh Kaz starts to think about his situation and about how to maybe befriend Luffy the best. Luffy looks a little younger than what he had at the start of the anime. Maybe that’s because this is so terrifyingly real, but Kaz doesn’t think so. He falls quite as Luffy starts poking him to see if he’ll turn all windy again. “So Luffy, you want to be the Pirate King huh?”

Luffy gets a determined gleam in his eye and for someone who normally looks so carefree
his entire demeanor shifts. Luffy looks Kaz dead in the eye and from way too close. “I will be Pirate King, Windy, just you wait.” Incredibly impressed and a little intimidated, Kaz decides it’s time to chase his own dream down too. It’s a sudden decision, but so far impulsively chasing a better life had worked for him today?...had it been a day yet? Eh well *shrug*. Besides, there can’t be a better way to become a famous author than by writing down the crazy-ass adventures of the Second Pirate King. Kaz’s smile stretches across his face “Damn, I believe you Luffy. You know what? If you’re going to be the King of Pirates then I want to be the most famous author in the world! I want to write and tell stories from all over too! ” he makes the declaration with enthusiasm and Luffy lights back up in return.

“Then Windy should join me! We can be Nakama and you can tell stories all the time and Windy can travel!” Luffy was so excited, finally someone who believed him AND wanted to be the best at something too. Only people who dreamed like that can be on the Pirate King’s crew after all. “We should celebrate! We need meat!” Luffy jumps up off the ground where they’d sat down. He starts running enthusiastically towards a town down the road nearby. Well Luffy is cutting a path through a field, but that’s Luffy.

“Shit. Really? Just like that?” The newly re-named Kaz is stunned. He seriously thought it’d be harder to earn a ride alongside Luffy, let alone be Nakama right off the bat. Kaz’s bemusement is cut short when he remembers that he had not been alone before meeting his devil fruit… “Shit, I lost Tater, she’s going to be so pissed.”

An Idiot is an Idiot No Matter the Flavor

“Ooooh that was weird. Tater did you feel that shit?” Dustin leans on his knees, waiting for the dizzying sensation that had swamped him at the forest’s edge to ease enough to open his eyes. “Ay yi yi” His last clear memory was firmly based in being at the ren faire and goading Taylor into eating a nasty smelling fruit. It had worked and Taylor had made the funniest face, but even he had to admit the fruits they’d picked up were the grossest thing he’d ever put in his mouth. Truck-stop bathrooms he’d licked previously had tasted better. Way better…and less like despair wrapped in sadness. What even had those things been…

This was not the Ren faire. It wasn’t even near a fucking forest. Upon opening his eyes Dustin had been assaulted with a strong breeze bordering on a whirlwind. It seemed to lessen up a bit and as it did he finally got to really take in the scenery. He appeared to be inside of a massive storm system. A solid wall of wind and debris was encircling him and when he looked down he startled. Immediately turning his face up and away from what appeared to be a drop of several hundred feet. With a hand clapped firmly over his eyes Dustin leans down hesitantly and pats around his feet. It feels solid enough, at least is doesn’t feel like he’s about to plummet to an incredibly messy end. Good. He can, he can work with this.

“Hey man, you got a second?” Dustin hears a lethargic voice wheeze out behind him. Dustin slowly turns his head, trying to move as slowly as possible and finds a pale eldritch looking face Far too close to his own. The face bears little to no emotion but its eyes are large and again too close. “oh shit.”

Dustin quickly steps away from the person? Being? This guy(?) had been standing right up behind him and he hadn’t even noticed. Oh, oh the other guy was smiling now. That’s too many teeth. Is this how people feel when he does that? Dustin looks down, he still appears to be in the eye of the storm though the ground beneath him continues to streak by. “Uh, well I guess I’ve got nothing but time up here.” With a vague shrug Dustin looks up again making eye contact with the creature/person/thing.
The being across from him perks up marginally. The dude is lanky, as in might not be human lanky, but there’s a strength to his limbs, Dustin is really sure this thing can kick his ass. Scary and unnerving as he was at least he didn’t look pissed off by Dustin’s retreat. He even might look pleased with his captive audience’s participation in the conversation. Little victories and all that.

“Great, my dude. I was afraid there was going to be a lot of negative feelings on your part...good to see I chose well. Now, how would you like to learn ta fly?” Again the voice sounds like a dry breeze. It’s disconcerting in someone who looks like seven foot tall washed out scarecrow. Like a hippy scarecrow in leather vest straight out of the 60’s and some bellbottom jeans with-wait was he wearing socks AND sandals?

Not really knowing how to take this weird eldritch hippy Dustin chose to ignore his pale I-might-be-a-vampire-I’m-so-white skin and hair and deal with the potential threat to his life. It would be really lame of this guy to use that as his kill line.

“If you’re just going to drop me outta the sky could you at least have a better kill line than that?” The beings eyes get impossibly wide before he answers, his face showing a slow forming confusion. Like he truly did not understand how that line sounded to normal people. Then again...

“Kill you? Man, no, I mean, not intentionally, I mean what is death but a new beginning my friend, my bro, amigo...” Okay he definitely had no concept of how normal people word-ed.

“Well look at it from my perspective, you decided to have this conversation in the middle of a hurricane. Then you asked me if I wanted to learn to fly.” Dustin’s normal monotone even managed to sound a bit strained. In his defense, this was fucking weird.

“Huh.” The creature looks about them and seems to be taking in how far off the ground they are and how large the storm system is around them. “Touché my friend, hold on let’s pull up a cloud and relax a bit yea?”

Dustin watches as the person/thing just fucking dissolves in front of him. Then a strong wind barrels past him and into the wall of the storm. “Huh, how ‘bout that” the moderate response Dustin managed to voice hid the greater ‘What The Ever Living Fuck’ factor that was seeing a Scarepire dissolve in front of you and apparently go gather some clouds?

Scare-pire had returned before Dustin could really think about what’d he had just seen, but was firmly pushing into the Thoughts-for-later box.

“Here we are amigo, chill with me a bit, let me explain somethings.” Dustin gets comfy on the cloud, which is possibly the most comfortable thing he has ever touched with his butt. Dustin groans as he relaxes, stretching out on his side and propping his fist under his cheek. “You have like two minutes before I rage nap my way out of this.” Dustin’s ability to handle this level of crazy was fast approaching its limit.

“Right, Hello. I’m Kaze or Kaz and –I– am a devil fruit.” Kaz says with an even tone and bemused grin “Now you Dustin.”

“Huh, like the uh anime devil fruit thing? Like in One Piece?” Dustin decided to ignore the whole psychically knowing his name thing. Kaz’s face lights up with a delighted gleam, “So you’ve heard of us then, well me mostly, you’re only allowed the one after all. Do not eat another.” The statement is punctuated by a loud clap of thunder. Then the air cleared and Kaz’s face went back to his previous wide eyed creeper glare by the end. Emotions were hard, Dustin understood.
“I can honestly say I didn’t plan on it” Dustin answers. Truthfully, it would be hard to plan for a fictional fruit to fall into your hands let alone two. “That’s excellent man, you’re a good dude. Now how would you like to learn to fly?” The sad part was that Kaz delivered that line with the same creep factor as before, they were just sitting down now is all.

“You should really work on your sales pitch amigo.” Dustin decided that it might move the conversation on to the actual pitch if he asked a few questions. “Why do you want to teach me to fly? Do I have to grow wings?” It was an important question.

“What? No man you’re gonna BE the air beneath other’s wings, you’re gonna soar cause that’s what air does, we like float and shit, we can’t help it. You’re gonna let loose all these burdens you got going on and just whoosh~ like a breeze...” Kaz even made a little gust flow as he ‘whooshed’ his hand between you. “Like that my dude, all you got to do is let go of your Earth stuff and embrace the inner air.”

“So just like let it ALL out? Are we talking like a belch or a fart here?” Dustin leans forward, sitting up, trying to read between all Kaz’s weird hippy talk. Where does a devil fruit even pick this shit up?

Kaz lets out a high-pitch giggle and rolls off his cloud. As he hits the pseudo floor of the storm he dispearses again and reform about 2inches in front of Dustin’s face. It’s startling for a number of reasons namely though it’s how Kaz’s hands are framing his face. And the smile is back. Too. Big. Much Creepy. “I like you little dude. We are gonna get on like Mure and things, like Magno and metal my friend. Now all you gotta do is agree to let go...

“Does ‘letting go’ mean I don’t have to go to work tomorrow?” Dustin sounds vaguely hopeful. Kaz claps his hands “You are never going to set foot in fucking Ingles ever again my dude. I promise.” Kaz holds out his hand to Dustin. Dustin hesitantly takes it and stares at Kaz expectantly. And waits…it gets awkward quick. Kaz is just sitting there staring. “Uh, Kaz? Is something supposed to be happening?”

Kaz laughs and shows an actual emotion for once. “Yea man, you gotta let go first though.”

“Oh. Uh, right” and as Dustin let’s go of Kaz’s hand and immediately starts to fall through the cloud seat and then the ‘floor’ of the storm. “KAZ” Dustin can’t see him anymore but hopes this wasn’t some elaborate trick to kill him, seriously could have saved some conversation and just gotten on with it.

“Don’t worry buddy, I told you-We FLY” Kaz shouts as he dives through the clouds. His lower half has formed a whirlwind and is propelling him downwards. Dustin takes a moment to savor the relief, right before Kaz turns into wind entirely and blitzes right into him. Dustin feels incredibly cold for a moment then loses consciousness. His last thought is to notice he is still falling and has picked up speed. This is going to hurt.

#TheB-sidePart2 #Go-gurts
Kaz—who-once-was-Dustin followed Luffy across the field and into the town. They went into a bar where Luffy headed straight for the bartender. Who happened to be a somewhat familiar face for Kaz. She could be no other than the dark-haired Makino, who had tended the bar during Shank’s visit to this island.

After introductions were made and Kaz made sure Makino did not think his name was actually ‘Windy,’ Kaz excused himself he needed a moment to just freak-out and take stock in peace. Luffy was stuffing face and unlikely to start trouble here of all places, so Kaz felt it’d be okay. He locates a bathroom and thankfully a mirror. What he sees confirms that when the devil fruit Kaze said earthly he meant No-longer-Dustin’s body as well as his name.

The new Kaz is definitely not the 27 year old Dustin was. Kaz is probably about 15 or 16 and not as tall as his devil fruit had been, but he feels more in shape than his old body ever did. Maybe he’s a little better off coming in so young. He has pale-purple hair and it is longer than Dustin had been able have in a decade, down past his shoulder blades. He could get used to this. At least he didn’t come out as scarecrow-thin as his devil fruit, still not huge but wiry instead. As long as stuck near Luffy he might even come out of this in one piece too. Heh, puns. Right, time to eat and then maybe figure out this whole…thing. Luffy probably had a plan…or a vague idea of how to train up a new devil fruit user…right? Bueller?

But then, Kaz had a more Dustin-than-Kaz thought should he hang around Luffy? Should he really risk messing up the plot line? Knowing what the fuck is going to happen is kinda Kaz’s superpower right now. What if he ruined Luffy’s character development? There’s just certain fights Luffy HAS to be a part of, things Luffy has to learn to get stronger. Or what if Kaz fucked up getting someone on the crew! Kaz really wanted to be a part of this journey. To be apart a something this huge and important. He would have to be careful, he decided. He couldn’t risk replacing any of Luffy’s crew, but he could help Luffy find them. He could keep Luffy from nearly dying so much later on too. He’d just have to watch how strong he himself really became. Or maybe just keep his true strength secret. “Argh this frustrating, how am I supposed to hide this shit from Robin?” He decided that he’d just have to give it his best shot. Besides Robin wouldn’t show up until the Grand Line any way. He could do this. He could.

Yeah. Best to hang back with Usopp and Nami. He could at least help keep them safe and their main attack was to hit and run until the Grand Line anyway. He could work with that. It was a good way to help the crew without going too far. This was going to be so stressful, but he had a feeling it’d be fucking worth it. Alright time to get shit done, with that Kaz returned to the bar area.

“Oi, Kaz-u! Come eat with me!” Luffy could speak remarkably clear for someone with what looked like an entire beef shank in his mouth. “Oh Kaz-san, you’d better hurry and grab something before Luffy-kun eats it all.” Makino was smiling at him and set a plate down at the bar….which Luffy was reaching for right now. In a bid to save his only meal today Kaz attempted to dissipate on purpose this time. Kaz could feel his body go almost shockingly cold for just a split second before he felt…different. It was odd being the wind. It was like being a floating consciousness or something. Like was this how ghosts feel? “Shit, Luffy! Put that down I’m hungry too!”

By the time Kaz got to the bar even with his wind form speed burst, Luffy had eaten all the meat on Kaz’s plate. There were just vegetables left, Luffy had even eaten the rice…this was going to be a long… ‘Shit’ Kaz realized he didn’t even know how long it’d be until Luffy left for the Grand Line. *sigh* Kaz knew he was a slow eater there was no way he’d be able to defend all his food from Luffy. That was a depressing thought, this was really going to be a long however long it was going to be. Vegetarianism was better than starvation he guessed. Kaz ate his fucking vegetables.
They finished up lunch and Luffy proceeded to drag Kaz away from the remnants of his meal. “Come on Kaz-u! We have to get back to Dadan’s before dark.”

“Geez wait up Luffy, why do we have to be there before dark?” Kaz vaguely remembered Dadan as the bandit lady who essentially raised Luffy and Ace. But he couldn’t think of why Luffy would care if it got dark or not before they go back to the bandit camp.

“Cause it’s hard to see in the dark Kaz!”

‘Ah right’ Kaz thought ‘Luffy’s sense of direction is just slightly better than Zoro’s. Best hurry and keep up’

“Uh right, you are not wrong”

And so Kaz and Luffy entered the jungle and headed towards Dadan’s Bandit camp.
“Oh god” Kaz had lost sight of Luffy for, like, 10 seconds and now he was staring down the largest fucking pig/boar thing he’d ever seen. *deep breathe* “AHHHHHHH~~~~!” Kaz bolted, Luffy had been swinging through the trees like fucking Tarzan and there was no telling how far he’d gotten. *That shitty piece of rubber...* Without being able to count on Luffy for a rescue, running was the best bet.

Kaz rushes over to a large tree and attempts to climb it unsuccessfully. As he is sliding back down he hears the boar thing crashing through brush and definitely getting closer. ‘SHIT. Where’s Luffy when you need him.’ Kaz turns and sees that the boar, definitely a boar with those tusks, has stopped about 10ft. away and is pawing the ground. As the boar lines up and charges, Kaz panics. This was not his usual standard panic. It was a Mobile Panic with wind powers. Kaz dissolves again into a much larger vortex than before. Putting more effort into it and trying to be bigger than the frankly fucking huge boar.

Lucky for Kaz the Mobile Panic works well with wind powers. Kaz creates a full body whirlwind that has enough power to suck up the boar. Kaz isn’t sure this is a good idea, it in fact ups the amount of pure fear coursing through his veins. In turn the sheer panic seems to work in his favor as the rate of rotation increases. The boar is having an equally bad time its attempts to thrash its way free only increase Kaz’s panic making the whirlwind grow in strength. It is difficult to say how long this might have gone on if not for Luffy returning.

Luffy’s shout of “KAZ!” startles and loses control of his shape just as the boar is aimed at a tree. *SMACK* Kaz slowly reforms beside a now unconscious fucking huge boar. Luffy stretches his arms down to land beside Kaz. “Good work Kaz-u I was getting hungry. That was a cool move though! What’s it called??” Kaz is stunned that he managed to knock something as big as that boar out. He honestly did not manage any of that on purpose.

“Uh, I kinda just panicked at it?”

“Shishishi idiot, that’s no good Kaz you have to have a cool name for it too!”

“Who are you calling an idiot...*sigh* I can’t really be clever when I’m hungry. Tell you what you leave me a few ribs and I’ll come up with something.”

“Eh? Sure, we have to cook the whole thing, you don’t waste meat, Kaz.”

“Right. Let’s drag this thing to the bandit’s before it wakes up then. And remember you promised, I get at least 3 ribs out this.”

“Shishishi”

“I’m fucking serious Luffy”

Luffy just continues to laugh and start dragging the boar off into the foliage. Not wanting to
get lost and get another face full of angry animal.

The duo continues on, thankfully, unmolested by any other giant ass creatures. Luffy does have to punch the boar out when it starts to come to once again, but just the once before they finally find the bandit camp where Luffy lived. Luffy rolled into the campsite yelling for Dadan. Kaz couldn’t help but think rolling up like this may not be the best idea.

Dadan hearing the commotion outside bursts out of the door “Luffy! Where have you been?”

“Hey Dadan! I brought meat, cook it for me, yeah!”

“Luffy! Who the heck is that??” Dadan shouts as she catches sight of Kaz. Kaz realizing that Dadan has a history of not being terribly happy about new faces waves sheepishly from behind Luffy. ‘I’ll just let Luffy do the talking, I think, and keep him and the pig in between me and the Ax wielding bandit lady, yup.’ Luffy, ecstatic to tell Dadan about his new found nakama gave a rapid fire and not very accurate retelling of how Luffy had found Kaz on the road to town.

Kaz was watching the vein in Dadan’s forehead pulse and grow in sick fascination when the previously knocked out giant-ass-boar woke. And it woke up angry. The only warning anyone had before chaos erupted was an explosive snort. Luffy, who had dragged the colossal boar in by its right tusk, was therefore the easiest victim for the oncoming rampage.

After the explosive snort had cut Luffy short, the boar exploded into action and grabbed Luffy by head before the kid could really get any hits in. Then of course the screaming started. Dadan was yelling at the boar or maybe at Luffy, Kaz couldn’t really tell. Kaz was personally frozen in terror for split second, before grabbing Luffy’s legs and back tracking as fast as he could. Turns out that pure panic is a hell of a motivator and wind can move fast.

The high speed retreat might have even worked…had Luffy not been made of rubber. As the stretch of Luffy’s body started to strain Kaz lost traction when he lost cohesion in his legs trying to gain more speed. The snap back of Luffy’s lower body plowed both Kaz and Luffy’s legs into the enraged boar. The boar was startled enough to let go of Luffy as it was knocked back onto its side.

Dadan swiftly gathered herself to save her charge from the giant pig and charged forward and expertly planted her ax up to the shoulder of the blade into the boar’s skull. Kaz happened to be trying to stand up and gather up Luffy as the blade struck home. The resulting spray of blood and brain matter covered him head to toe on his left side. He was drenched in the gore.

‘Oh, oh no.’ “ARRRgGH” with a horrified yell Kaz drops Luffy and tries to wipe the gore off. Luffy who, now that Kaz thought about it, probably had been in little danger of being chewed to death due to his rubber-ass was now laughing and pointing at the mess all over Kaz.

Filled with spite and the left-overs of his horrified panic at the gore on him, Kaz simultaneously thought of an attack name for his cyclone attack and something that’d shut Luffy up. ‘Well it’ll get him as nasty as I am right now and I’m petty enough to be okay with that.’

“SPIN CYCLE!” Kaz bursts into his logia form and rapidly spins as he had before. This time Kaz concentrates on ridding himself of the disgusting debris smeared across his person. To his surprise when he stops spinning, his vortex had been strong enough to splatter the majority of the clearing in front of the bandit’s house. ‘Well that’s probably not going to win me any points, but hey, clean again. That’s a win.’
It might have been a win, if Kaz had missed Dadan too. His vortex however, had evenly coated the debris to all in the clearing. Dadan wiped her face and leaving her ax embedded in the remains of the pig skull advanced on the boys.

“You little shit!” Dadan made a grab for Kaz and sensing the murder attempt in his immediate future Kaz dissipates again and appears behind Luffy. Dadan was furious, this was apparent, not that that stopped Kaz. “Hey now, I was exactly fond of getting pork brains in my hair, we’re all going to have to learn to cope with what has happened today.” Thwarted by Kaz’s ability to literally slip between her fingers, Dadan turned to yelling at the source her problems.

“Luffy, who the hell is this and what is he doing here? You’re not supposed to tell people where we live! That’s the point of living out here!”

“Shishishi. It’s okay though ‘cause Kaz is my Nakama. He won’t tell anyone.” Luffy was beaming. Clearly proud to have a Nakama before even technically being a pirate. Kaz was still keeping Luffy between him and Dadan, but leaned around Luffy’s hat brim to give Dadan a reassuring thumbs up. The reassuring part was probably not as strong as it could have, had Kaz not still been giggling nervously the entire time.

Dadan was not amused and apparently not having Luffy’s bullshit. But Luffy and her went a couple rounds of No-he-isn’t-yes-he-is-he’s-Nakama. Before Dadan relented reluctantly.

“Argh, fine Luffy ONE night. But he’s out in the morning no questions!” Dadan huffed her way back into the house, dragging the boar with her for cooking presumably. Kaz let out a sigh of relief. This had been a long day for him and he was feeling the strain of using his devil fruit so many times. ‘Admittedly, fucking cool as all hell. But I’m dead right now’

Everyone moved toward the house and seemed inured to Luffy’s nonsense has he bragged about how Kaz had taken down the boar the first time. ‘He’s definitely embellishing it a bit, but it was nice to have someone talk me up like that. Goddammit Luffy. I feel loved. Fuck, what do I even dooo with that?’

Kaz was having a moment. Luffy was really just a genuine good person. ‘Like, he’s also a pirate and a totally food thief, but...’ But Kaz could see it, he could see why people followed Luffy in that moment. Kaz wasn’t sure he’d take a hit for Luffy quite yet, dying for him was right out too, ‘but yea, I’d do a hell of a lot to travel with that guy.’

“Oi, new kid, you best hurry. Dadan’s not going to wait to cook that. If you wanna eat you gotta get in there.” Says a big guy with a weird red mohawk.

‘Oh that’s dogra? No, Mogra?...Chicken-man, MAGRA, that’s it.’

“Wait, you mean she’s already cooking that thing?”

“Oh, yea. Dadan’s real quick with the butchering. She’s probably already got it over the fire. She won’t hold any back for you though, since you won’t be staying long…and Luffy doesn’t leave leftovers.”

Kaz was already turning towards the house in dawning horror. “LUFFY! You fucking promised me a rib!” Kaz could just hear Luffy laughing from inside. ‘That little shit isn’t going to save me anything.’ And with that thought Kaz slammed his way into the house and ghosted under several legs trying to get to the front of the line where Dadan was already turning meat on a colossal cooktop inside the kitchen area. Luffy was currently rolling around Magra’s opposite Dogra of the cloth egg-head. ‘Well if Luffy isn’t paying attention, I might get meat!’
It was sadly not to be. After cooking all the meat and tossing Luffy out of the kitchen entirely twice, Dadan simply broke the boar down into what should have been individual servings, were it not for Luffy, and tossed a massive platter full right through Kaz’s head and into the waiting hands of the bandits behind him.

Kaz had to reform his head and by the time he had turned to grab some boar most of it was gone and Luffy was about to shove the last piece in his overstuffed mouth. “Damnit, Luffy!” Kaz dove into his wind form and came up on the other side of Luffy panting. He even had ~most- of a giant rib left. *Time to go!* Kaz stuffs his one chunk of meat in his mouth and starts zig-zagging through bandits to confuse the stretchy arm he can just ~feel~ catching up to him. Kaz ducks and semi-ghosts though one bandit’s legs, he hears a startled yelp and knows how close Luffy is getting.

“Kaz! Give me back my meat!”

Through a mouthful of his re-appropriated rib “NO! You pru-missd me Un.” Kaz keeps dodging Luffy and almost makes it to the door before Luffy’s arm shoots past his shoulder. In a last ditch effort to protect his meat Kaz strains to keep arms away from Luffy’s grasping hands. To his astonishment his forearms dissolve and his hands float forward. Due to his surprise at even being able to do this, Luffy catches up and snags the last bite of meat from his hands.

“GOD DAMNIT LUFFY” Kaz just watches time slow down as Luffy shoves the remaining bite in his now empty mouth and Kaz has to sigh. ‘This is going to be the saddest fucking theme of my life now. I can feel it. Should probably be grateful he can’t really chew on me, the little shit.’

Kaz lets what little fight he has left go out of him in a breath. He turns towards an unoccupied corner and leans his full weight against it. ‘I am super beat. I thought I was dead before, but using these wind powers like crazy is tiring on a whole new level. At least I won’t wake up sore as shit tomorrow. ~~Yay~~ Logia powers. ZZZzzZZZzzzz’

Kaz was out like a light and snoring in no time. He had accomplished much in his first day in One Piece. Hopefully, the second would not be as traumatic…
Kaz awoke as the bandits started to leave for the day. As they were not very quiet about it and Luffy was a heavy sleeper, Kaz even managed to snag a complete bowl of oatmeal to eat. He savored it. If things continued the way they had been going it was likely the only meal he wouldn’t have to fight Luffy for. ‘Not the breakfast I’d usually go for, but it’s hot and no one is trying to steal it. *sigh* I miss you bacon.’

Just as Kaz is finishing his breakfast, he’s tackled to the ground by an over enthusiastic Luffy. “Kaz! Let’s go find breakfast. Dadan never makes anything good here.” Kaz found it unsurprising that Luffy wouldn’t be up for oatmeal of all things. So Kaz stood up with Luffy still attached to his side like a demented koala. Luffy was shorter than Kaz by a head so it wasn’t exactly a chore to haul him around. ‘I’ll at least carry the crazy lug to the forest. But he’s walking after that. If only so he can punch all the shit that’s going to try and eat us today.’

Kaz walks to the forest edge before dissipating out from under Luffy, leaving his new captain to bounce along the ground until Kuffy can untangle the knot he’s tied himself in. “Luffy, you should be careful about tying yourself in knots. You never know what’s nearby in this crazy place.”

And as if summoned by Kaz’s comment or maybe by Luffy’s weird brand of luck, there is a distant:

>craCK*

And then a thud that both boys feel more than hear. Luffy stands and laughs “Don’t worry Kaz-u, it’s just breakfast. C’mon let’s go find it!”

“Of course you want to go towards the loud noise.” ‘On the other hand. I might get actual meat for breakfast. Instead of just sad wet oats.’ “Well let’s get a move on Luffy. I haven’t screamed in terror yet today, so we’re behind schedule.”

“Shishishi, let’s go this way!” And with that Luffy launched himself into the trees like the night before. “Ahh geez Luffy, can’t we just waaAAAHHHGH!” Kaz’s complaint turns into his first scream of the day as Luffy tosses back an arm to grab Kaz. Kaz is summarily launched past Luffy and into the trees. Trees which are blurring past at a rate that should not be experienced outside cars and rollercoasters. Kaz can just here Luffy cackling behind him ‘That bastard is having the time of his life back there. ~I’m going to die~’

Kaz is panicking until he realizes that he’s inevitably going to hit something if can’t figure out how to steer. Luffy had either accidentally or purposefully thrown him in a direction that while definitely in the forest proper, was a natural corridor. Kaz probably had about 30 seconds to panic his way into a method steering before he hit something. ‘Think man, think… fistipuffs.’

Kaz tried just to disperse one hand at a time, flicking his fingers open and closed. It worked.
Mostly. On his first attempt he dissolved his entire left arm and strafed abruptly to his left. Dangerously close to the passing trees. Trying to straighten out and get away from the tree line. Deciding to a tiny bit less oomf in the next shot, Kaz tried again. ‘Come on just the hand, just the hand. Maybe out loud like Luffy does?’ ‘Fistipuffs!’

Kaz laughs. It worked. Back safely in the middle of the natural corridor Kaz continues to weave spastically back and forth dodging vines. “Holy Shit, Luffy I think I got this!” Kaz can hear Luffy shout something behind him, but he’s actually traveling faster than the rubber Tarzan behind him. “What? Brie?...oh fuck”

Kaz turns his attention back to the direction he’s flying...only to see a fucking massive tree coming at him. The natural corridor is coming to a very solid end. Kaz has no time to dodge around it. He’s coming in to fast to really stop soon enough. ‘Well at least the pain will end when I ghost out again’ Kaz thinks dismally as he prepares for impact. ‘I can’t do this’

“AHHHHHHHHH”

Kaz lets out his second scream of terror of the day in as many minutes it seems. To his astonishment Kaz slows as his screams creates enough force in the opposite direction to slow him down. By the time Kaz is close enough to his the tree, he is no longer going so fast that he splatters into wind again. He still smacks the tree fairly hard, but he still manages to get a hold of some vines growing up this mammoth of a tree. “Oh thank God. I think that’s the first time screaming saved my life.”

*CraaaaAACCK*

“Oh boy is it time to get out of this tree. LUFFY, little help”

*CREEAAAAACCK*

Kaz felt the tree he was clinging to shudder hard as Luffy landed on his back. “Uh Luffy, that wasn’t you right? You didn’t hit this particular tree right?”

“Huh? What are you talking about Kaz? I-wh-whoooaa”

And with that the world starts to shift. ‘O-oo-h I think that’s the tree falling...the tree that we’re on...fuck.' “Luffy JUMP”

*BooOOOOOMMMM*

Kaz and Luffy jump to the ground and promptly lose their footing when the tree hits the ground behind them. The shuddering continues for some time, keeping both boys off their feet and riding the aftershocks out. As the earth calms from the tree’s fall Kaz can hear laughter. ‘That’s not Luffy’s laugh’

“WHA-ha-ha-ha! Luffy! I see you’ve been training again. Have you decided to join the Marines yet?”

Kaz stops and a high-pitched terror fueled whine escapes from his mouth, he can’t even hear Luffy’s adamant “NO, I’m going to sea to be King of the Pirates. Kaz is going write all our adventures down for us. He’s Nakama now!”

Kaz weighs what he remembers of Garp ‘Crazy, crazy-strong punches, Marine with a capitol M...no thank you’ and with that decision, Kaz attempts to stealth away. His fatigue from his flight making him sluggish he can’t disappear before Luffy singles him out as not only a pirate, but
Luff’s crew.

Kaz stops trying to disappear, knowing at this point it is probably useless against someone of Garp’s strength. ‘Goddamnit, Luffy’ Kaz takes a solid second to wonder ‘AM I Strawhat. Technically…*sigh* yes I am.

“Hey, Luffy’s Grandpa, how-how are you doing?” ‘Oh God, he looks FURIOUS’

“LUFFY! HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU TO QUIT SAYING THAT SHIT??! YOU’RE GONNA BE A MARINE!”

Luffy, as always, refuses to take that lying down and attacks Garp. Luffy gets the ever living shit punched out of him after two swings. ‘O-oh no. Well there’s no turning back now.’ Kaz takes the 10 seconds that Luffy uses to get his shit wrecked to hop back and try to two hand a fistijust into something useful. ‘If Goku taught me anything it was to use both hands and don’t think too hard.’

“Kaze…” Kaz widens his stance and cups his hands together leaving his fingers spread. Drawing them to his right side and concentrating on drawing power into the air there. ‘Holy shit this is working!’

“Hame…” Kaz looks back to Luffy to see him take the second punch and go down hard. Giving Kaz the little push he needed to get involved.

“HA!” Kaz shoves both arms forward and releases the ball of air he’d condensed at Garp’s head. It goes horrifyingly wrong from there. Kaz doesn’t quite manage to send the condensed air anywhere, instead it releases its pent up power and erupts backwards into Kaz. The generated wind tunnel shoots Kaz back and through a sapling behind him. “~ouch~”

“WHA hahaha. Good try young’n, but you’re no Marine yet. Now Luffy, you’ve got some training to do.”

Kaz drags himself out of the debris field his exit had created. *sigh* “Can I please have my Nakama back?”

“Nakama huh? You claiming this bratty Grandson of mine is your Nakama?”

Kaz inhales and grits out begrudgingly “Yeah, Luffy is my Nakama and he’s…he’s going to be King of the Pirates and I am going with him to chronicle the events…” Kaz stands tall but closes his eyes in preparation for the blow he knows is coming.

“Clearly you both need a good beating to straighten you kids out.” Garp doesn’t even wind up for the swing, just hammers down on Kaz’s head. Thankfully without the proper application of Armament Haki Kaz is simply dispersed.

“ouch, at least that was temporary pain…” Kaz mutters as he reforms and unfortunately reveals that he is a logia.

“Ohoho, a little logia user. That won’t get you out of training brat. FIST OF LOVE!” Garp’s fist is immediately coated in shiny black and it descends with a vengeance. Kaz is plowed into the ground head first.

“Well now, a logia here in East Blue of all places. You’re going to make a fine Marine one day brat! Once we beat this ‘Pirate’ nonsense out of you.” Garp has apparently decided that Luffy’s pronouncement of Kaz’s Nakama-ship is enough of a character reference to semi-adopt Kaz on the
spot. The fact the it might also mean recruiting a baby logia user into the Marines makes it all the more important the new brat get a little trained up along with Luffy. Besides the brat had heart, he’d clearly known he outmatched but had tried to come at Garp anyway.

“OWWW, There’s the pain, ah-ouch, Luffy heellllppp” Kaz hangs limply as he and a now struggling Luffy are carted off for Garp’s version of training. There was no escape at this point. Both boys were in for a week of pain. Kaz couldn’t remember exactly how this training actually went or if the anime really explained it, but he knew that at the bare minimum if he could survive this, he’d be ready to leave the island with Luffy when it was time. Kaz was determined to make it.

‘I can’t let Luffy go it alone. I WILL survive this. I hope.’

And so it begins, the long road to semi-competence.
Luffy and Kaz are out "adventuring" which Kaz knows generally means training or dicking around until someone gets hungry. Today was supposed to have been different, but now Luffy was attempting to beat a python to death with a lead pipe. It had turned into a game of whack-a-mole when the snake had taken refuge in a rock pile. ‘Whack-a-snake just sounds dirty.’

“We're supposed to be gathering supplies so we can get off this island before Garp makes us join the marines. Not re-creating carnies games. ‘Course we'd be ready to go already, but Luffy ATE most of what we’d gathered!” Kaz took another moment to wallow in frustration at Luffy’s bottomless pit of stomach. They were never going to make to another island at this pace.

“Come out snake! I’m hungry!” Luffy was using the pipe to leverage rocks off the pile now. The going was slow and Luffy was completely missing that his intended lunch was sneaking out the back of the pile behind him.

Kaz was continuing lament Luffy’s idiocy to himself. He’d learned that it would do absolutely nothing to tell Luffy off out loud. *sigh* ‘We even have the raft built already. We just need supplies. If he does it again, I will...probably just cry.’ Kaz really didn’t want to be a marine and was desperately hoping that his being…alive in general wasn’t what was taking so long for Luffy to leave. Kaz wasn’t sure he could handle being responsible for single handily derailing the entire plot for the show…or worse.

“AHA, there you are Lunch! Get on the campfire, Meat!” Luffy had at last noticed the lengthy python trying to inch away.

Kaz was sitting nearby and not particular enthused about potentially eating a snake. ‘Has to have a lot of bones in there. Though it’s not like I'll get much of it anyway. Luffy’s not eaten in like hour after all.’ Kaz's thoughts turn kind of sour at that. He had spent two years on this island with Luffy. It'd been a certain kind of hell wandering after a fellow 17 year old who acted like a younger brother who could also bench press a bus. Kaz had been dragged, cannoned, catapulted, and used as an animal trap for all of it. And that’s including all the food theft. There had been a colossal amount of blatant food thievery, Kaz had essentially been a vegetarian for two years now and not by choice.

‘I just want a whole plate of bacon to myself. Just one. Just once. Never has that been more unlikely. Tater wouldn’t have stopped from eating a whole plate of bacon. Judged me sure, mocked and shamed me for it? Most definitely, but she wouldn’t have stolen any of it.’

It hadn't been all just horrible treks through the jungle and near starvation. Though it should be noted that any day without meat, counts as “near starvation” for Kaz or Luffy, but back to those jungles. ‘I'm an indoor kid, I don't do nature. If we haven’t been training, we’ve been hiking. Adventure times used to mean car rides and maybe getting lost with Taylor, but in a car.’ Kaz was just whining at this point. And not even about the real horror that walked these woods.
Garp was determined to be in their lives, mostly at the cost of their physical well-being. *'Still can't even land a hit on him most days. Doesn't really do anything the times I do though *sigh*'* Garp dropped by at least every other week, hung out for maybe two and then dropped their beaten asses back at Dadan's place before he shipped out again. He didn't even really try to call it training anymore, just "camping" with an implied "while I kick your asses at everything and insult piracy in general."

The highlights had been any time he and Luffy could get down to Foosha and therefore see Makino. Makino who had worked hard to clothe both him and Luffy. Though recently they had both resorted to rummaging in the great trash pile of Goa. It had certainly made a comeback since being set on fire. But growing to 7 foot even in two years was hard on clothes. Especially when you were built like a toothpick. Makino had done her best. Luffy was in his standard getup, hat and all by now. Kaz...Kaz had been forced to improvise.

His current salvaged attire included a tattered formal dinner jacket with tails but now sans sleeves that was an interesting shade of charcoal gray lined with a really unflattering shade of maroon. Kaz also had found some baggy pants, that looked like real pirate pants as they tightened at the knee. Those too were a worn-out black that was fading fast. The purple-y-gray sash around his trim waist was the only thing hiding the gaping hole in the pants crotch. Kaz simply thought of it as an improvised fly. All topped off with the only pair of sneakers in all of Goa that came in shit brown. At best, Kaz’s whole look could be best described as a hot mess.

Makino had put up with all the growth spurts and training related clothes destruction and still regularly performed maintenance on their remaining clothes. She was by far the nicest person on this island and apparently the only one who felt bad if they hit you in the head. *'Even the Mayor tries to hit us with his cane, shit hurts when you’re not expecting it even as a logia'* Kaz had been caught rummaging loudly in the Mayor's cast off like an unwanted trash panda, as demonstrated by the Mayor chasing him back to treeline with his cane.

The one benefit Kaz had seen to Garp’s so-called training was that Garp emphasized stealth as part of Kaz's "training" to be "the wind" so the Mayor guy had only Kaz the once. Kaz had gotten to the point where he could go into full wind mode and actually steer now. So, progress had been made. *'Still can't punch for shit though, Luffy still has to finish off everything in this hellscape off. Garp hasn't even bothered to "train" me with my new fan.'*

Kaz had picked up a fan on one of the boy's trips to, what Kaz called the trash pile, The Dollar Store. It was mostly intact and therefore...serviceable. The addition of the ever controversial "dust devil" to the fan still made Luffy laugh. It was definitely not a poop emoji. No matter how brown it was. The lack of variety in colored paints had really come back to bite Kaz in the...well ass.

*thwack*|Thud|
a huge fucking snake though and not going to fit on the fire pit they'd made, even if he got the rest of it out of there.

As a note snake is actually eaten in many cultures and anything resembling a rattlesnake usually tastes like chicken, our heroes (?) would not be able to enjoy their meal today though. Rather unfortunately for both of these boys their meal was about to be interrupted.

In the distance Kaz caught the edge of loud *thump*. It happened in this jungle A LOT, just due to the sheer size of the local fauna. But then it happened again. Closer this time, louder. *THump*.

>>CrreeaaakkkkkCRASH<<<<

Kaz perked up and really started paying attention then. While various bumps, thuds, and fighting sounds were common. There still weren't many things out there that could knock down the overgrown trees around here. 'Unless it wasn't an animal.' And if it was who Kaz feared, he was back early this time around and the raft still wasn't stocked up. 'Oh no!'

In the distance another tree fell and it was close enough that Kaz could just make out a familiar outline inside the jungle. Equally regrettably, the figure could also see him. And it was exactly who Kaz didn't want it to be.

"There you brats are! About time you showed up!" Garp yells, like he wasn't the one who found them. "Your Advanced Training is going to start TODAY! You boys are ready to be Marines and I'm here to induct you!"

Kaz froze. 'He said Advanced Training?!? Like with the capital letters and everything!?!
~~OooOOoooh NOOoooo~~'

"Luffy we need to go NOW. I won't make it through Advanced Training Luf, I just won't." Kaz hadn't taken his eyes off Garp's shadowy form and that's when he noticed Garp was carrying something on his back.

"Luffy! Your Grandpa's brought a weapon with him"

"WhhaaaT?" Luffy thought that was just as concerning as Kaz apparently. This was NOT helping Kaz calm down any. 'If Luffy sounds panicked then it's totally fine if I do it right?' If this was a new pattern for Garp that not even Luffy had lived through? Then it was time to fucking go, for good. 'We'll just fish for our food. Yea that sounds right. Luffy only eats meat any way and if all we have is meat then I'll have some too. Totally fine. Everything is fine.'
"Don't you brats even think of running away this time! We're going to the marine base pronto to get you two signed up today" Garp was doing that extremely scary thing where he spoke in declarative statements only. It always made it seem like there was no escape.

For everyone but Luffy that is.

Luffy would not be swayed or intimidated.

Not ever.

*DEeeeeeep inhale* "I'm going to be KING OF THE PIRATES Gramps!" Luffy was also clearly gearing up for a charge and that, that was a bad idea. That was going to get them caught. Kaz had one more 'Oooh Nooooo' all to himself then dove into action.

Kaz’s speed had improved far past what he suspected. He literally blurred into action, spearing Luffy around the middle and tossing him to his own shoulder in a fireman's carry. Then Kaz did what only Usopp could claim he was better at in this series. He ran the fuck away.

@@@<<<<< Kaze-Haze-No-BYE

Kaz was going faster than he could ever remember previously being able to do. It would serve him well because Garp had very much seen where they had re-entered the forest and Monkey D. Garp wasn’t known as “Garp the Fist” for just punching things. He had the best aim and a throwing arm that could launch cannonballs faster and farther than using an actual cannon could get you. Just with his hands. He just yeets things that hard folks.

*KERthunk* ~~twaaAAaang~~

Garp had ripped a tree branch off one of the fuck-off-huge trees and thrown it like a fucking javelin at the retreating wannabe pirates. It had landed a measly half foot in front of Kaz. “AAAAHaaahaaahaha” Startling out scream out of him. Escape would not be easy. But for their dreams it must be done today. Kaz bucked up, 'Time to step up'

Kaz pushed himself as hard as he knew how and managed to turn his legs into a miniature whirlwind. Looking a bit like the Roadrunner with this impromptu technique born of blind panic and determination, Garp was left in their dust, for once. Or rather, he neglected to stop them there really. The boys weren’t going to question good fortune.

Two solid minutes of sustained half flight that Luffy, now riding Kaz's shoulders, was treating like roller coaster and then they hit the central plaza in Foosha. So far it was only dust in Kaz’s wake. Makino's place was in sight and she was in the middle of moving several barrels inside. Their goodbyes would have to brief. Kaz wasn't going to fool himself into thinking they'd actually lost Garp. He'd know where they went, he always knew.
But Kaz had a thought and sped over to her. "Makino!" Makino, angel that she was, seemed happy to see both boys again so soon.

"Hey kids, you look like you're having fun today." Makino smiled and laughed as Kaz disappeared out from under Luffy and reappeared closer to her.

Luffy landed lightly, no longer surprised when Kaz ghosted out from under him. "Shishishi. Yea, Gramps found us is trying to make us leave to be Marines and stuff, so we gotta go. Can we have some meat?"

Kaz was kind of hoping Luffy would get what he was asking for. He usually did. 'Stupid will of D gets Luffy everything. It's so unfair. He gets the Will of D and I'll get is my own Last Will and Testament.' but while they had a second…

"Yea we gotta go in like 2 minutes, but I wanted to say thanks for being awesome and putting up with us for so long. And we kinda don't have any supplies, since one of us is a bottomless pit." Kaz really did like Makino, she was the one person who was nice and normal. She's been anchor for him in the sea of chaos that constantly surrounded Luffy.

"Oh goodness, here take these two barrels. One's salt pork that was mis-shipped to me anyway, I won't miss it. The other's apples. Oh! and take this one too, you'll need water more than anything." Luffy grabbed all three barrels with rubbery arms and an excited thanks and ran to the pier they'd hid the raft under.

Makino turned to Kaz then "It's been no problem dear. You've been such a good friend to Luffy and I know you'll keep each other safe. Stay out of the water and watch out for that big seaking out in the bay. Try throwing some pork in the water. He'll leave you alone then."

'Makino is too kind for this world, I'm not going to cry, I'm not going to cry'

"Don't worry, we'll be fine!" Kaz said with false cheer. He'd just heard another ominous |THhhuud| in the distance. Garp was closing in. Kaz said farewell to Makino once more and bolted towards the pier.

"Luffy? Ready to go Captain?"

"Come on Kaz-u, time to set sail!" Luffy was beaming. It was easy to get on their, frankly, death-trap of a raft with Luffy looking like that. That unabashed confidence in himself was what Kaz really admired about Luffy.

Kaz ghosted over in his wind form and finished helping secure the barrels. Barrels which took up most of the space on this raft. 'Do we even have a sail? We do have a sail! I knew that. I can get us out of here fast with this. I can do this. Believe in yourself, like Luffy believes in you.'

"Luffy we got to go fast. Garp was at the edge of the village when we left Makino."

"AHHhhhh I don't wanna be a Marine!" Luffy starts trying to paddle with his fucking hands at that point, much to Kaz’s frustration. 'Bless his heart, he tries.'
"Yea me either, it sounds awful. Tie yourself to the mast and hold it steady there buddy." And with confidence he didn't know he even had Kaz says "Because, I? I have a plan." If it were anyone but Luffy on that raft, they'd have the common sense to be terrified at that statement. Lucky for Kaz, it was just them.

With Luffy securing the mast to their death trap raft. Kaz ties his sash around himself and the rope lashing the barrels together. He then sits on the barrel furthest back from the mast with his feet facing the sail and holding on for dear life. 'I might lose my pants doing this, but I ain't becoming a marine without a fight'

"Ready Luff?"

"Let's do it Kaz-u!"

"Sustained Kaze-HAAAAAAAHAAAAHHHHH" the blast exits Kaz's shoes in a steady burst. The raft takes off like a bullet.

!ZoooOOOo00OM!

The small craft rockets off from the pier to Kaz's screams of terror and Luffy's joyous cackling. But it seems Kaz's plan has worked. They are speeding out of the bay and Garp hasn't stopped them. It's all sunshine and screams right up to the point where the Shank's-Arm-Eating-Seaking rises out of the bay. It is ghastly in person. Growling loudly, before letting out an ear-splitting roar.

And Kaz can't help but to see and hear it. It's the largest thing he has EVER seen and he's lived on an island of giant fucking animals for two years. 'That is too many TEETH!' Blessedly, Luffy has the solution to most of life's little problems and all the big ones.

The additional benefit of moving as quickly as they are is that the Seaking doesn't even have time to react as Luffy square's up and springs out towards the monster's face. The momentum adds to Luffy's already impressive punch and Luffy KOs the big dragon looking thing back where it came from in an instant, leaving Luffy triumphant and airborne.

At least until Luffy shoots out a rubber arm to raft, steadying the spindly mast before it can break off. Luffy dares a look back to his childhood home and waves. This was it. This was the start of becoming a real Pirate!

The Seaking might be defeated, but the tidal wave of its defeat is barreling down on the two boys. Two boys who literally cannot swim to save their lives...

"AAHAAHAHAAAAAABBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB" Kaz's terror fuels his wind burst and the raft is neatly skimming the waves now, far ahead of the roaring wave behind them. Honestly, any faster and they'd likely be airborne.

Luffy whoops as he sits down in front of the mast, no longer staring back. The promise of so many adventures were out in front of him, he didn't want to miss a second of this. Luffy continues to wonder idly how far Kaz could keep this up, as Kaz's terrified screams fail to subside with their increasing distance from shore.
“Shishishi, Kaz-u’s gotten much stronger lately. We’re going to have so much fun!” Now he only needed maybe 10 more people to have full crew.

The title of Pirate King was his for the taking. He could feel it.
Kaz hadn’t realized he had passed out, not at first really. He was just floating for a second before he realized how cramped it felt. ‘Why does it feel like something is standing on me…oww.’ The pressure increases until a resounding crash has Kaz landing flat on his back. He’s definitely on a sturdier surface than the escape raft…and Luffy is fucking standing on him for some reason. “Luffy…get the fuck off me.”

“Ah? Oh Kaz-u, you’re awake. Shishishi, you made the raft go really fast! We almost flew all the way over that whirlpool! Don’t worry we’ll get it next time.” Luffy was going to be the death of him Kaz could tell.

“Oh! Suuuure we’ll just sail back around, let’s hope Gramps isn’t, oh I don’t know, out looking for us?!” Kaz snarks hard at Luffy while ghosting out from under him. Only way that ass is going to get off of him any time soon clearly.

“Wahhhhhh! NO! We can’t go back until Gramps is gone! He’ll kill us!” Luffy, the overactor, is pulling on his face and just screaming at this point. The yelling stops abruptly and Luffy sniffs the air. That’s when Kaz notices the other people in room. There’s two douchebag looking pirate types bracing a third unconscious pirate type between them.

‘Oh I remember this bit. Looks like Luffy already scared the piss out of ‘em. Yup’ Kaz is negating that, while Luffy had bitten through two swords right in front of the “douchebag[s],” Kaz had also turned into a loose breeze under Luffy and then reformed right in front of their eyes. East Blue isn’t known for its devil fruit users, so his own actions contributed to the panicked retreat now in full swing.

“Y-you you’re a devil fruit user??” a terrified voice stutters out behind Kaz.

“Oh, gross. Luffy, you missed one.” Kaz knew damn well who Coby was. He just didn’t really care for the little wimp until he found his spine, and that wasn’t happening until after the Axman Morgan fight. ‘Ugh, I’m too tired to deal with this and hungry too. Funneling that much wind at the sail was a chore. I don’t think I’ve ever been able to hold it that long. Panic greases the wheels or something something… feed me.’

Luffy laughs some more then starts heading for a double door to his right. Coby flails past Kaz in an attempt to get them to run away. Kaz just has to speak up at that point. They are clearly on a ship, where would they go?

Kaz pulled Coby off of Luffy’s arm by the t-shirt he had on. “Dude, we’re in the middle of the freaking ocean. Where exactly are we going to run to? Think about it.”

“Wahooo, Kaz look food! There’s no meat, but there’s of cheese and fruit. You like apples, right?”
Kaz just sighs, he knows it’s not intentional on Luffy’s part, but ‘Goddamnit’ out loud all Kaz asks is “What kind? Those nice red ones or the funny colored yellow ones that taste like limes? I’m not eating those again. You won’t get me twice with that you little shit.”

“Shishishi”

Kaz sets Coby down, well he drops him, and strides into the pantry. Luffy usually doesn’t scarf non-meat items with the same enthusiasm as real meat, but no sense taking chances. That’s when he notices a problem. Kaz and Luffy may have come through the whirlpool unscathed, but Kaz’s inability to consistently phase his clothes into his element has caused a fatality. ‘Fuck, I blew out my shoes. Again.’ It is not the first time nor is it likely to be the last. Kaz resolves to check all future unwary foes for replacements, there weren’t going to be any giant trash piles nearby to rummage through out here.

The boys and Coby continue on into the pantry proper and two of three dig in while Coby panics in a corner. Kaz loads up on what are definitely the good apples. Just shoving as much as he can in his mouth before also grabbing a hunk of cheese for later. Luffy is stuffing his face and asking Coby about the ship. It’s not till he hears Coby say the “Alvida-sama” that he cues into where they actually are.

‘I wonder if I can spot Nami? I know she’s here, somewhere…I’ll keep an eve out. It’d be worth it to see her in action. Oh god, I’m going to meet Nami….help.’

Kaz refocuses on Coby making some speech about being a useless little fucker. ‘Dude, 2 years on a pirate ship, why didn’t you just jump off at the dock???’ Kaz is making a face, he knows he’s making a face.

Luffy responds with a chuckling “Man, I hate you, you’re such a wimp! Shishishishi”

Kaz has to agree, this kid needs to get his life sorted. ‘Well I guess he will shortly. Just got to get to port somehow…eh Luffy will get it.’

Kaz goes back to eating while Coby tries to tell Monkey fucking D Luffy he can’t go after one piece. ‘Puh-lease’

Kaz smacks Coby in the back of the head as he starts yammering on and on about being a Marine. “Gonna stop ya there. One, I think you got the wrong audience. For Two, aren’t you like, a Pirate Busboy? Footstool? Not the best resume, right?”

“No. I’ll become a Marine and I’ll even catch Alvida-sam NO Alvida”

*CCccccrrrraaaAAASH*

“YOU’RE GOING TO CATCH WHO, COBY?” Alvida lands nearly on top of them. Kaz is just trying to process how she manages to walk around being that wide. ‘I bet she waddles. She has to waddle.’

Several swords burst through the door where Luffy is standing. But he merely moves away with a frown. “Rude. You shouldn’t attack people from behind.”

Luffy turns to Kaz who’d jump back on a ledge to dodge debris. “Who’s this big chunky lady?”

Kaz’s mouth opens before he can even think “Oh shit, Luf! Get the harpoons! Thar, she blows.” He dramatical gestures to Alvida, he wants her to know that insult is all for her. All 400lbs of her.
The shocked expression on her, the pirates peering down into the whale sized hole in the deck, and Coby make Kaz really proud of that joke. Alvida herself also looks like her head is about to explode.

There’re at least 7 veins threatening to give way in her face at both comments. “YOU BRATS”

Luffy ducks around Alvida’s spiked club and grabs Coby. “Time to go, Kaz!”

“Yup!” Kaz flies up through the gapping hole in the ceiling to find himself on deck…with the rest of Alvida’s crew… ‘shit’

Thankfully, Luffy is the main target and Kaz just takes his post by Coby while the rubber-man does his thing. Which is mostly fucking with these guys as he runs back by them with a mob on his ass. He’s cackling and doing a poor job of pretending to be scared. ‘Good thing these guys are idiots.’

Luffy is playing around and leaving unconscious pirates in his wake. Kaz subtly shuffles over to a downed enemy to see if those shoes fit. Those won’t work, so Kaz starts inspecting downed pirates further away for better footwear. ‘Oh! There’s a tall young man, with better taste than the people of Goa’s trash.’ Kaz has moved some distance away from the actual fight now. Luffy trailing opponents towards the front of the ship.

Just as he gets his torn-up sneakers off he hears Coby scream. There’s a previously downed pirate coming at him.

“Stay right there pinky, Alvida-sama can use you to make that rubber menace stand still and take his beating like a man.”

Kaz is having a problem deciding if he really has to save this little twat from being used as bait. Deep down, he knows that Coby is actually useful to the plot or something later. Luffy doesn’t care about him, yet. So, Luffy might actually let them hurt the annoying little shit. ‘Luffy’d beat the shit out of them for doing anything like that after it for sure, but…fuck. I have to save him.’

Just as the guy reaches out for Coby’s trembling, useless body, Kaz ghosts up behind Coby and readies a one-armed gust at the guy. ‘I hope this does more to him than Garp.’ Coby scrambles over to the relative safety of Luffy’s back.

“FISTI-PUFF!” Kaz shouts to throw out the swirling vortex his hand becomes. This attack rarely even makes Garp twitch. But Kaz throws his power into now. Coby makes a scrambling exit out from under Kaz, but he’s far more worried about not actually being able to pull this off than where Coby might be going.

*BAP* *Nyoooomm~~~~~~~~~~~~~*

However, to Kaz’s great surprise the attack launches this guy down the deck, clearing a path through several other pirates as well. Kaz is dumbfounded. Never, in the history of ever has he been capable of such awesome power. In fact, Kaz has just cleared the rest of the ship’s deck on his side of the ship.

“Holy shit! LUFFY did you see that?? Did you fucking see how awesome I just was?”

Kaz turns around just in time to hear the end of Coby’s second impassioned speech about “being a Marine” that again ends in screaming. And in time to see Luffy take Alvida’s last swing to the head defending Coby, of all people, then “GUM-GUM NO PISTOL”
Alvida is sent rocketing off the ship and towards the horizon. Beating Kaz’s strike by a fuck of a lot.

“…Oh fuck you.” Kaz is done with this day.

Luffy beats some guys behind him into readying them a ship without even acknowledging the cool thing Kaz just managed. ‘I helped, damnit.’ Kaz gives it up as a lost cause and goes to collect ‘his’ new shoes. He manages to lay his hands on him, as several cannon balls find the ship.

Kaz’s first heart wrenching thought is ‘Shit, Garp’s found us!’ only to remember that it’s far more likely to be Morgen’s forces. Taking a deep breath, he flies past Coby who is waffling about the whole Marine thing again. “Honestly pinky, just tell them you knocked all these ingrates out. How are they going to know the difference?”

“That’s not going to work! These guys already know I’ve been on Alivida’s ship for a while!”

Coby is literally shaking and Kaz is done. He shoves a shrieking Coby into the small escape boat with a roll of his eyes. ‘Ain’t nobody got time for this kid’s shit.’ They get into the water and he assists their escape again by providing some wind for their sails alone. Lucky for them, Coby can actually navigate. Kaz and Luffy had basically just been going wherever the wind (Kaz) took them.

As they sail towards Coby’s island and Morgen’s base of operations, Coby tells them what are clearly some made up stories about Zoro. They sound cool, but Zoro is in no way, shape or form and actual demon. Badass with a sword fetish? Yes. Mindless, bloodthirsty-beast…uh-uh. Nope. This is the same guy who let’s Chopper the adorable reindeer ride his shoulder after all.

‘That’s terrifying and all, but if we wanted to lose him all you have to do is find an intersection. He’s guaranteed to pick the wrong way to go.’

Deciding that he can’t mention that, but can pick on Coby a little more, Kaz sneaks up on Coby by ghosting from behind the sails and tapping him on the shoulder. Not unlike what Kaze no Mi did to him.

“Boo.”

“WHAAAAA!” Kaz enjoys his joke for a second as Coby tries not to have a heart-attack. “C’mon Coby, his name is ‘Pirate Hunter’ he’s practically a free lance marine. Besides you’re awfully scared of this guy for someone who’s already said what a great marine they’ll be.” Rolling his eyes, for what feels like the 80th time today, Kaz goes back to the sails hoping to speed things up.

He’s not sure how much longer he can stand to be in a boat with Coby and Coby’s anxiety. Kaz is supposed to be the anxious and depressed one around here.

“That’s not it at all, Kaz-san! He’s really dangerous! And he hunts bounties down with vicious intent! He’s nothing like a real Marine.” Coby’s defense is naïve at best. Kaz damn well knows a good handful of Marines who most certainly hunt people down with ‘vicious intent.’

Luffy breaks up the argument by asking if Kaz can make them fly again. Kaz takes a second to remind Luffy that he passed the fuck out after that. When his captain fails to see a problem with that, Kaz blows a large gust into the sails, making the boat lurch. Luffy is undeterred and calls for “Faster Windy!”

It’s been such a long day.
[1] The author in no way condones eating or even the existence of what is known as “red delicious apples” for they have been bred to look pretty at the cost of taste and are therefore abominations. Try Fuji or Honeycrisp apples.
Done with Ax-hand Morgan, the Strawhats sail into the sunset...forgetting that exactly none of them know anything about navigation.

“Let’s meet again sometime, COBY!” Luffy shouts as they sail into the rising sun the next morning. It’s abominably early and all Kaz wants to do is go back to sleep. Luffy AND Zoro snore like freight trains and since they’d shared a room between all three of them, Kaz hadn’t really been able to drop off.

Kaz waves lazily from his post against the mast and drops off nearly instantly. Missing the Marine’s salute and the remainder of the farewell and Luffy shouting about the Grandline.

Leaving Coby to the marines in charge of the island, the three members of the Strawhat crew sail out into the unknown.

Because none of them know one fucking thing about navigation…what had he signed up for…

2 days later:

“I’m so hungry~~~” Luffy is moaning from the front of the boat. Due to everyone onboard the dingy being completely stupid and Kaz did include himself in that, they had failed to get an accurate heading to the nearest island from Coby or even one of the marines.

“Everyone is hungry Luffy. You ate all the supplies yesterday. We don’t even have any apples to eat.” Kaz mutters.

“So~~~ hungry.” Luffy whines.

‘Why do I bother speaking…’ Kaz huffs to himself.

“When the hell are we going to hit land already?”

‘Great. Now Zoro’s going to bitch too.’ Kaz turns around in the bow of the boat and lets his legs dangle in the water. He’s so fucking done that he welcomes the numb ache the water brings. It’s something to feel besides hunger at least. His heavy sighs eventually drag Zoro’s attention over to him.

Luffy is thinking happy thoughts about something and not paying them any attention anymore.

“Doesn’t that hurt? You’re a Devil Fruit user like Luffy, right?” there’s a confused frown on Zoro’s face.

“Not really, anything below the knees and it’s just a cold achy feeling. More refreshing than idiot
induced hunger. Mostly.” Kaz shrugs. “Neither of us really knows how to navigate we didn’t even plan to go in this direction originally. It’s just the way we panicked in leaving Goa.”

Luffy agrees and tells Zoro about their (thanks to Kaz, if he does take the time to toot his own horn, thank you) epic escape from Fuusha’s harbor and the Seaking Luffy had decked on the way out. Zoro looks suitably impressed by the time Kaz chips in about panicking so hard he made the boat fly.

“So you guys meant that literally…you just go where Windy over there blows you?” he asks.

“That or get escorted by nervous marine wannabes with pink hair.”

Zoro looks at them like he too is not a complete moron, it’s a little annoying. “Isn’t it kinda fucked up that the guy who wants to be King of the Pirates can’t fucking navigate??”

In honor of their shared head-nod moment at Morgan’s beat down, Kaz manfully chokes back the nearly automatic bark of laughter that Zoro, of ALL people, is criticizing someone else’s ability to navigate.

“Not a Captain’s job to plot the course buckaroo, just picks the destination. Relax, we just need to find a Navigator is all” is his second choice and much more PC response. His nonchalance isn’t appreciated by a grumbling Zoro, but Luffy prevents from actually fighting.

Mostly be redirecting the fire right at himself. It’s both heartening and not to know that never really changes. At least Luffy can handle fall out.

Luffy chimes though to point out that as a bounty hunter, Zoro ought to know something about navigation as well. Zoro being about 50% cooler than anyone else on the boat props his elbows on the side of the boat. “I don’t recall ever calling myself that. Certainly, didn’t set out to sea to do it either. I set out to look for a certain man…but then I couldn’t get back to my village. I just went after pirate ships to make enough to get by.”

“Oh…so you’re lost.” Luffy states, causing Zoro to hammer his fist into his side of the boat hard enough to shake the whole dingy.

“Don’t put it like that!”

Kaz can’t help himself at this point he laughs and turns around so he can address Zoro without choking on his own spit. “If only you could figure out which way North was. You’d have caught up to him by now. Also, how do you lose a whole fucking island?”

Zoro growls, legit growls, at Kaz and lunges for him.

Kaz emits a falsely high scream and burrows under Luffy as the boat rocks dangerously. Luffy’s hat goes flying off his head and Luffy quickly shoots off after it. Leaving Kaz defenseless as Zoro regains his footing in the shaking boat.

Not willing to get as pummeled as a Logia can be, Kaz zips up the mast.

3 days later:

“Hey! Who ate all the food???” shouts a disappointed Kaz. He already knows the answer his just terminally in denial about how little food actually makes it into his mouth these days. He misses
jerky so bad.

“Sorry Kaz-u. I got hungry on watch.” Luffy, who most definitely does not know the meaning of the word repentant, doesn’t look repentant AT ALL. The ass.

“So we have no heading and no food.”

“We didn’t bring enough booze either.” Says Zoro. Who is littering by throwing the now empty bottle of wine over the side of the small ship…boat…dinghy, he decides. ‘Everyone loves a dinghy, right?’

Zoro who is clearly a man of action or a close copy of one in this moment tries to take control of the situation. As most situations seem to turn out for him, this ends poorly for Kaz.

“Oi, Windy. Which way is North?”

Kaz floats down cautiously. While he’d love to avoid Zoro until the severe scowling turned back into neutral frowning, if Zoro had any idea on how to get unstuck from the middle of the ocean, he had more than Kaz at the moment. “Uh, it’s always uh right…” he has to stop and think for a minute. NC is on the east coast…and if he faced the east coast then… “uh no sorry it’s always left of the rising sun. Sooo that way.” He pointed mostly certain he was right.

Zoro is staring at him hard. Kaz assumes he’s thinking and he doesn’t want to profile or more importantly piss off the guy who bench-presses the barbell equivalent of a Volkswagen. With that thought he manufactures a gust and “accidentally” knocks the hat off Luffy’s head. Pushing the breeze up and away from the water. He’s not stupid, he knows what that hat means to Luffy, it’s just that by this point Luffy owes him the convenient escape. It’s just this once. Really.

“I’ll get it Luffy, you stay down here!” Kaz offers as his, intentionally for once, dissipates and soars up the mast the catch Luffy’s iconic hat. Hat in hand he hands it off to his captain who is waiting on top of the sail. Having slung himself up there after his hat.

“Thanks Kaz-u!”

“No prob. Luffy. Keep a better hold of that thing, yea? It’s important.” They both drop, too heavily, down into the boat. Starting it rocking again, though this time everyone maintains their footing. Kaz is suitable impressed with himself for not face planting, once again, into the deck of the dinghy.

So, Kaz is standing, fairly still for someone who didn’t have sea legs, up until the point Zoro grabbed his shirt in blurring move of his hand and asked “You can fly right? Check for land.” He had all of 3 seconds to be terrified as he was launched skyward. Higher than he usually went on his own.

“Ahhhhhhhh!”

He’s only thought is that, while Zoro might not have Devil Fruit, Kaz was fucking certain that Zoro just did NOT need one. He managed not to have his 7th heart attack of the week after a moment and stop screaming long enough to actually get his bearings. ‘Who just yeets people 40 ft in the air??’ Then he realizes that he’s been hanging out with Luffy for two years now and Luffy? Also that kind of asshole. Kaz worries what that means for him before remembering that he’s been asked to look for land.

Using his abilities and the boost from Zoro to rise a little further, guessing that while he’s up here
he might actually see land or something. But he saw fuck all on the way up. Just lots of water and the cool breeze they’d been letting steer them all day. So, nothing to the North really.

Kaz checked to the east…diddly.

He looked to the West…fuck all there.

Alright what’s happening in the Sou…’Oh fuck, that’s a big birb.’

There’s about two seconds in between that thought and the bird diving to catch the brightly colored writer.

Initially he panics and Kaz is not afraid to admit that. The giant pelican thing had him trapped in its freaky pouch mouth and even with Kaz’s frantic thrashing the bird carried on.

And then he remembered… ‘You are a fucking logia, idiot,’ And seconds later he is trying to pry the stupid pelican’s mouth open, it fights him all the way. He finally gets his head out of the stupid things mouth, only to realize that he is very far from the boat…and Luffy and Zoro.

‘I am not flying out of this…wait a minute…this was supposed to happen to Luffy.’ Too far from the boat to fly out and now realizing that he, Kaz, has accidentally displaced Luffy in a vital plot point.

His mind spirals into panic and mortification.

‘Step 1: DO NOT fuck with the plot line

Step 2: Fucking fail step 1—SHIT FUCK GODDAMN SON OF A WHORE MOTHER-’

The cursing and violent pity of fucking up his only (self-imposed) directive sees him flailing madly inside the bird. His only hope is that Luffy and Zoro panic hard enough in the right direction…which, he thinks dejectedly, is asking for a hell of a lot…

His unexpected flight carries on in self-inflicted pity but relative comfort. At least until, far as Kaz can tell during his sudden descent, the bird randomly disintegrates around him. The concussive force of a shot he didn’t hear over his own self-loathing ruins Kaz’s cohesion as he is blasted out of the air.

Singed and not wholly together Kaz lands like a limp noodle made of air.

The PLAP is probably not the most traumatizing thing, in retrospect, as Kaz’s arm is definitely not where it should be. It doesn’t hurt overly much. Garp had done loads worse. But it does feel awfully awkward. He shakes off the disorientation of the sudden landing with a whimper and drags himself to his feet while fiddling with his dislocated arm.

Only to finally notice that he has replaced Luffy further by landing in between Nami and some of the Buggy Pirates. ‘Shit. Well I can’t let Nami handle this on her own.’

Nami however is a lot quicker on the uptake. Perhaps remembering that Kaz had already mowed down several marines on her behalf, accidental but he is counting it dammit. She’s probably hoping he’ll do it again with these weird looking assholes. Kaz likes to think of himself as a gentleman sometimes. Not all the time, he knows he can be a dick, but he’s never left a lady to distress yet. Not that he knew a lot of damsels in distress…or that Nami could even qualify as one, now that he thinks on it.

“Ah! Boss! Good timing...Again! They’re all yours. I’ll go get that thing ready…Bye!” and much
like with Luffy Nami is away before anyone can stop her, much less get a word in edgewise.

“Huh?” Is confusion is plain until he remembers that she’d done the same to Luffy. He jerks upright “Right, uh…clear out…Minion?” ‘Crap, forgot…we’re not friends yet. At least I can’t be hurt by swords here. My poor clothes on the other hand…’


Kaz interrupts and wooshes forward to clap the guy on the shoulder. “Sorry boys, but that treasure is ours now. We stole it fair and square. But more importantly, my friend, my bro, my compadre…can I get your help with this arm? I think I landed on it funny?”

The three pirates seem the appropriate levels of completely confused as Kaz’s reasonable tone. Secretly he’s channeling his inner fake salesman from the 40s as hard as he can. “Listen buddy, we don’t—”

“Roulette.” Kaz holds the Franken-pirate by the shoulder and let’s his body form a whirlwind and leans into it. Swirling harder and sucking up tweedledee and dumb. With inexpert timing he shoots all three out in a rapid fire back down the street…or he means to. Unfortunately, there’s a slight miscalculation with his timing and he accidentally-s the pirates into the building Nami is now perched on top of. And he does mean the pirates have entered the building ‘Bu-dum-tish’

He momentarily has to pause his self-congratulations on using his Roulette move, mostly right, for a moment out of panic but sees that Nami has it under control. Nami is too nimble to fall. She gracefully slides down the roof and lands on the balcony now shading the unconscious brutes who’d been chasing her.

“Ooooh, you’re a logia then? A wind one too, I think. So, Windyguy—”

‘Whhhhhhhhy’ Kaz keeps his complaints silent, but droops a bit, he consoles himself with the fact that at least he isn’t still “that constipated guy” to Nami. He’d take Windy over that any day.

“—Thanks for saving me again. You look like a nice strong logia user who can’t be stabbed and such.”

“Ummmm yes? I mean, so far so good. Except for the all shirts I’ve lost to it.” He’s preening a bit at NAMI of all people calling him strong. It is so nice to be acknowledged. First Zoro and now Nami. Maybe this week isn’t so shitty after all.

“Great! So, you want to team up? I’m an A+ navigator. We could go anywhere between me and you.” There’s like a really endearing light in her eyes as she hops down from the balcony to stand near him. She’s also like, super tiny. Like Luffy tiny, but doesn’t appear to take up as much space, fortunately he knows better than to be fooled by her appearance. Nami is likely smarter than the rest of the crew, people-wise, excluding Robin and twice as fierce. Especially when she wants something from someone.

“I uh, would. Totally. Except I can’t. I’m very bad at stealing and stealth in general.” Kaz dissembles a bit. He’d hate to outright say no…Luffy would try to get her to join no matter what, but he doesn’t have Luffy’s level of stubborn charm to fall back. He isn’t even that endearing…unless someone had a particular weakness for the socially awkward ‘Not likely. ‘And he does NOT want to be responsible for losing Nami. They need her.

“You don’t have to be sneaky. That’s what I do~” Nami stops trying to beguile him on charm alone
and adds in a more serious tone “My goal is to steal 100 million beri, no matter what it takes.”

The emotion in her words is enough to make him tear up. His own thoughts and memories of why she has need of 100 million beri finishes him off. He turns, hoping she assumes he is thinking it over and tries to keep the whimpering sobs to a minimum. *She’s such a strong person! And she shared that precious goal…with meeemeemeeme* He has to take a solid minute to hug himself and bite his lip to even slightly mask the level of touched he is by that. If he didn’t have to keep the plot on track? He’d be agreeing in a second, but he just couldn’t be the reason Luffy failed to even get to the Grandline.

*Because let’s face kids, Luffy is a hopeless navigator and no one, but no one, is better than Nami at her game.*

Kaz gathers himself and chokes back a sniffly sob. And tries to sound like he hasn’t just been shoved through the emotional wringer in under two minutes. “Look, I would, really. If I weren’t already married to the idea of being with my crew till the end. I gotta be there to write the tale, you know?”

Nami is staring at him like she might just know where he’s going with this. He can’t actually lie to her; she’d hate him forever and Kaz firmly refuses to do anything to jeopardize her joining the crew. Besides, Nami has been lied to enough and she doesn’t even know the worst one yet. He has to tell her about the Strawhats at least, plant the idea…subtle-like. He knows she’ll hate the idea on principle, but Luffy would be along soon to make the official offer, save the town from Buggy, and charm his way into Nami’s heart. *Here goes nothing.*

“But hey, the Strawhat Pirates are totally looking for a navigator though! Why don’t you join us instead?” He admits, it is not as subtle as he wished, but it’s the best she’s getting from him. He can’t be expected to be his wittiest in front of Nami, who acknowledged him like 5 seconds ago. The plot has to be corrected even if he has to take Luffy’s place for a hot second, but there is no way he can charm his way out of this. *Where are they anyway? Eh, thoughts for later.*

Nami’s face drops and she props one hand on her hip so she can wave the other more emphatically under his nose. “You’re a pirate? Hell no. There’s nothing else on this planet that I hate more than Pirates.” And Kaz isn’t scared to admit the expected venom in her voice does sting a bit. He pouts visibly, hoping to look pathetic enough that she doesn’t outright deck him like she’ll later be prone to doing to Luffy. Nami continues, adding firmly that “I only like tangerines and money. Nothing more!”

Kaz feels properly cowed by all the fierce yelling she’s doing and holds his hands up to surrender the point visibly. Not daring to speak, lest she take offense and change her mind about deckng him. While he can avoid most pain, he isn’t willing to test it too often.

Luckily for Kaz’s goal of getting the plot back on the right track, his gesture of surrender and Nami’s verbal corning of him is seen. Three more of Buggy’s goons turn the corner behind Nami, who either sees them out of the corner of her or catches the widening of Kaz’s own. Kaz, even knowing Nami, is still a little shocked at how quickly she moves from yelling at him to figuring out how to get away from these guys. It takes mere seconds for her to look at what’s coming and hear the threats they’re shouting out her.

Nami is suddenly as in his face as she can be and whispers “I need your help to get close to Buggy. Agree to help and I’ll consider joining you.” She’s batting her eyes at him and trying to look sweet. But Kaz is wise to her shenanigans, however, moving towards Buggy is where Luffy, now substituted for Kaz, is supposed to be…so he fakes it. Pulling on all his dramatic talents.
“Oh! Cool. Yeah sure do-uh-do I need to get rid of those guy---where did you get that rope from???” Kaz realizes that Nami had finessed both his hands into tight knot of rope. He knows he could easily breeze out of this…he hopes Nami realizes that too, but this *is* where he needs to be.

“It’s a secret.” She chirps. She then puts on a show for thugs running for them. It’s, honestly, a hilarious event to watch. Nami has those guys so confused in under a minute that they might legit believe she caught Kaz all by herself and is using him to bargain for inclusion into Buggy’s crew. ‘She’s my hero, look at these shmucks. They are actually escorting us all the way to Buggy himself…’

He gets to watch in absolute amazement when she does it again right in front of Buggy himself. And the wierdo buys it. It still ends with Kaz in a tiny-ass little cage that his lanky frame does not fit comfortably into, but the sheer brass Nami has impresses him even more. He would have put money on that not being possible. And sure Kaz technically knew Buggy would fall for it. However, this being as real as real gets…he had certainly expected more convincing dialogue between them than what he’d seen in the anime, but… ‘Fuck me, I don’t think she even really tried’ is all he can think as the Buggy start gathering for a party to welcome Nami into the crew. Meanwhile he’s stuck in a five-foot square block and he can’t even risk trying to whirlwind some of the delicious smelling roasted meat they are having into his mouth… ‘FML’

On the other hand, his tears of frustration are really selling his apparent misery over Nami’s “betrayal” handily. ‘God, I hope the crew shows up soon. I can’t be tortured like this much longer.’ Kaz barely keeps himself entertained by taking his cracked goggles off and clinking them slowly against the bars of his cage. He’d prefer a mug, but apparently no one taught these goofs anything about the Geneva Convention. He has rights! And he would prefer if they came with meat, especially now…while Luffy isn’t within thieving range.

But everything is going along as it should, with or without snacks, and Kaz is just starting to wonder when Buggy is going try shooting him with a cannon. Cause this? It’s really boring and borderline torture with the food just out of reach.

Buggy, for once, has exceptionally good timing though. Taking Kaz’s apparent despondency over the lack of meat in his diet as true melancholy over what Nami allegedly did, Buggy starts trying to taunt him and drags Nami into it as well.

Though now that Kaz thinks about it, maybe Buggy is keeping her close because he doesn’t quite believe her. Even with Kaz trapped in the world’s smallest cell meters away from braised beef goodness ‘Refocus, now is not the time, unfortunately’

“How pathetic” Buggy calls, using his Imma-a-scary-pirate voice. Nami hesitantly agrees with Buggy’s assessment of Kaz’s alleged leadership abilities. ‘Joke’s on them, I’m a follower.’ Kaz doesn’t really think Buggy’s piss-poor taunts deserve a verbal response, but he does blow the loudest razzberry possible at Buggy and clink his goggles harder against the bars. Kaz has never, will never, claimed to be mature.

CLINK Clink CLANK ClinkClinkClink CLANK

Hoping to annoy the shit out of Buggy and get this party rolling. Kaz is confident that he can blow out the fuse as long as it takes for Luffy and Zoro to catch up. In anime time they should be really close by right now, close enough to hear the test shot ring out over the town.

“Right Nami? This is your chance to *prove* your loyalty…and you are loyal right? Do it. I’m being so generous as to give you a Buggy Ball. Bring Nami the cannon!” he shouts to his minions.
And the large black, still smoking, cannon is trundled forth to aim directly at Kaz.

‘Huh, that is a very large bomb... and I have never been so glad to be partially intangible.’

That thought is quickly replaced with concern over Nami, who looks like she’s scared out of her mind. ‘Poor Nami. This is a little traumatic for her. What with Bellemere and Arlong and all that.’

Kaz decides to put her at ease the only way he can. “Hey. Don’t worry so much. Pirates are pirates because they chose they risk. Do what you have to tangerine-girl. I choose to be here, ya know?” Hoping that his encouragement and subtle reminder that he is technically made of air helps. She looks a little less scared, but slightly confused now.

Nami’s indecision prompts one of the clown-ier pirates to steal the matches and light one. He gets dangerously close to lighting the fuse. Kaz is taking a deep breath in preparation to snuff out the burning fuse when Nami surprises the lot of them by cold-cocking the pirate with her staff. It was a hell of a hit and the guy is out cold. The ferocity of the action seems to stun Nami as much as everyone else. Except for Kaz, who already knows that beneath that tough-as-nails persona, Nami is a good person. And good people don’t blow up someone who’s as dorky and helpful as Kaz has been.

Sadly, the falling match still manages to catch the fuse. Nami turns as Kaz quietly sighs and utters a dejected “oh dear” and sees the lit fuse. Kaz was still certain that while being blown up may not feel great, being a Logia has its perks and he’d certainly be back to rights within minutes. Nami, does not appear to know that though, perhaps thinking his wind abilities are a paramecia derived fruit instead. ‘Hell, she may not know more about Devil Fruits than anyone else in East Blue either.’

Not wanting her to get burned for his sake, not when he isn’t really in that much danger. He waits until he sees Nami’s instinctive wince before she touches something she knows will burn her…and he snuffs the flame. ‘The important part is that she tried to save a pirate. That’s the character development that’s important here. Right? Right.’

Nami rotates through a series of emotions within a second just rapid-fire expectation of pain-surprise-outrage at the trick-and settles somewhere between wary and impressed. Kaz doesn’t hesitate to offer a cheesy grin and a wink. Her expression drops a bit, but there’s no time for her to yell at him. The Buggy pirates have regain what few wits they have and are egged forth to hurt Nami by Buggy. ‘That dick. And I can’t get a clear shot at them either! ’

Kaz draws Nami’s attention away from the crowd praying she’ll trust at least once more. “Nami! Duck!!!!’

Kaz uses his wind abilities to free his hands and as Nami ducks behind the cannon draws wind together in his open cupped palms, letting swirl violently and build “Kaze-haaaaaze---”

“GUM GUM ROCKET!”

Luffy has launched himself and Zoro from a nearby building, judging from the angle. Luffy either releases Zoro to deal with the pirates or Zoro, seeing that no good could come of landing alongside Luffy, jumps ship early. Regardless the result is that Zoro is launched into the crowd like someone playing 30-pin bowling. Zoro scores a respectable 15 out of 30 pirates down in the crash. He even checks on a shocked Nami.

Luffy, however, not reading the situation right, has aimed right for Kaz. Not given a chance to brace for impact, Luffy blitzes into the cage shoving Kaz’s airy body through the slats on the other
side… and locking his dumb ass in the cage…

Kaz is wholly unprepared for the sudden transition into air and it takes most of a minute to right himself. Nami probably sensing or hoping for safety quickly dodges away from the fight brewing between Zoro and Buggy. Kaz knows what’s coming and isn’t going to stop it. Zoro and Luffy can take the hits they receive just fine. Nami is the only physically fragile one right now.

Besides, he just got the plot back to where it is supposed to be, there will be no more deviation from the planned route, dammit.

Still, watching Zoro get stabbed is not fun. He flinches just thinking about how stabbing would feel were he not wind. ‘Yay, Logia Fruit!’ Luffy doesn’t like it either and quickly pulls Buggy’s attention back to him, where he is still trapped by the cage. ‘Zoro’s probably the only one outright strong enough to just yank Luffy out of there the same way he got in. And Zoro currently has a hole in him, so doesn’t look like that’s an option right now.’

Luffy shouts “OI, stabbing him from behind is unfair, red nose!” Buggy, flustered sends his disembodied hand with a single dagger hurling at Luffy. It doesn’t even seem to faze Buggy that Luffy bites through his dagger. He just withdraws his hand and leaps back at Zoro.

When Luffy tells them to run, they refuse. Kaz blasts himself over to the cannon and shouts for Zoro to keep the spastic clown-man busy. Zoro, like the tank he is, leaps in front of Kaz. Stalling Buggy long enough for Kaz to get lay under the cannon and try is ultimate technique again.

Over the clang and clash of knives and swords Kaz again cups his hands and gathers his element to them. “Kazeee-Haze-HAAAA” launching a spiraling blast up and flipping the cannon over so that it is now aimed right at Buggy and his remaining goons.

Nami, ever quick to see an advantage is already striking the match to light the fuse. Kaz quickly ghosts out from under the cannon as the Buggy Pirates scramble to avoid the oncoming blast. Thanks to it already being burned down from earlier they don’t have time to get clear.

Zoro is already dragging the cage and Luffy off the roof as Kaz gusts down the roof behind Nami. They just get clear of the rooftop when the blast shakes the house down to its foundations.

Zoro is struggling under the weight of the cage with Luffy still in it and Kaz moves to help. He doesn’t like the way it looks like Zoro is tearing his wound wider with each step. Not that it’s slowing him down much or stopping the stoic guy from verbally berating Luffy.

“How did you even get in there?? I though Kaz was in the fucking cage! He could have got out on his own!”

“Hey Zoro, you’re hurt ya know?” Luffy asks, as if the big guy hadn’t noticed and completely ignoring what Zoro is fussing about.

“You just stay in there. I’m going to do things my way!”

Nami still hasn’t been introduced to the crew yet and is standing in stunned silence befoeo she gathers herself to ask in dumbfounded wonder “Who are you guys??” She’s watching Zoro bleed while still adamantly refusing to lower the cage, Kaz is helping, but it is still a struggle.

Luffy finally clues into their tag-a-long as they start retreating into the city. Kaz has no intention of having a meet and greet right in front of Buggy…and what’s left of his crew. He knows they are all dead, so he shoves and Zoro pulls the cage down the line of roofs they have managed to jump to.
“Who are you??” Luffy finally thinks to ask. Staring blankly at a still stunned looking Nami. Kaz chimes in, his voice strained with effort.

“That..is Nami—she’s a great navigator Luffy. We should hire her.”

“OOOH! That’s great! You should could come with us. I’m Luffy and I’m going to be King of the Pirates!” says the young boy made of rubber, who trapped himself in a concrete cage…

"You did promise to consider it." Kaz reminds her. Luffy hears him and starts cheering like she's already agreed. To Kaz, that just means it's only a matter of time until Nami gives and joins up for good. He still rolls his eyes at Luffy's antics and shouts for him to keep still, all that wiggling is not making this easier.

Zoro must feel Kaz rolling his eyes or he is just that done with today, because he snorts and mutters “King of the Idiots today” loud enough for all of them to hear. Their witty banter doesn’t seem to have cleared things up for Nami. To be fair, she has had a day. She met a guy made of wind, one made of rubber, and Zoro who is probably 90% determination.

‘Yeah, we are all kind of freaky aren’t we?’

Between Zoro and Kaz they manage to get Luffy and cage downtown. When Zoro’s side gives out they are close enough that Luffy gets easily distracted by a cute little dog sitting in front of store… ‘Oh, I totally forgot about that…Luffy has to punch that weird Lion-guy and Simba the Jumbo Lion out.’

**Thud…SNORE. ZZZzzzZZZZzz**

But maybe first I’ll drag Zoro somewhere more comfortable than the street. He has been bleeding for a solid half hour and that just isn’t healthy. *And no Chopper in sight…*

Before Kaz can do much more than frown at the situation their crew’s bizarre luck comes through and the Mayor of this abandoned town shows back up. Kaz is almost certain he is wearing coconut-based armor and for his life cannot figure out why someone would do that. He definitely misses everything the Mayor says, trying to see if there’s any sloshing going on in the shoulder pads (?). ‘Where did he find a coconut big enough for a chest plate…’

He gives up sorting that weirdness out when the old man gestures for Kaz to help him move Zoro into a nearby house. Seeing as that might let Zoro heal through the power of napping (a Kaz approved method in the absence of actual medicine) Kaz heaves to and manages to mostly heft Zoro up on his own. *Seriously, I do not think this Mayor guy is pulling his half of the weight here.*

By the time Zoro is resting comfortably Luffy has managed to enrage the sheepdog in front of the store and lost the key to the cage to its stomach. “Honestly, Luffy. I leave you for a second and you manage to make this worse?”

“Shishishi, he started it Kaz-u. I just wanted to pet him. He was being mean~” Luffy ends by pouting a little. Kaz has seen that face to often to be fooled by it. He sits on the stairs of the store and promptly moves his ass to the top of Luffy’s cage when the tiny dog snarls at him. “Okay Luffy, I see your point.”

Kaz is just trying to recall what they did in the anime to get Luffy out of the damn cage, when there’s a distant roar and the rumble of something larger than them mucking about town.

The Mayor hears it to and recognizes it, it is a very distinctive roar. Like a B-movie dinosaur
hissing roar. “It’s the Beast Tamer, Mohji!”

“Oh yeah, good old Mochi breaks the cage for us. Good timing.”

Shortly the odd looking Tamer and his pet giant-ass lion Richie run into view and enter the town square. Nami and the Mayor run for distant.

“How unfortunate that you run into me, so soon after you escaped. I am Mohji The Lion Tamer! A member of the Buggy Pirates.”

“Mochi? Like the ice cream?” Kaz asks.

“What? No, I said Mohji!”

“Oooo. I love that stuff!” Luffy says, to no one’s (Kaz’s) surprise, before he tilts further on his back so he can get a better look at the off colored lion and its rider. “That’s a weird animal suit you got on there, Mochi.” Luffy comments, ignoring the man’s spluttering about his name. Kaz is feeling a bit smug about starting that one himself.

“This is my hair!! How rude!”

“That is not helping your case there, Mochi.” Kaz informs him. Luffy shakes his head too. ‘This is taking too long… and his face is creepy’

Ignoring whatever Mohji is doing with the little dog, Kaz gets behind Luffy’s cage and asks “

“Hey, Luffy?”

“Hmm?”

“remember when you and Zoro fed me to a bird earlier?”

“Shishishishi, yea you cussed really loud! We could hear it in the boat!” The rubbery menace laughs.

“Right…hold still.” Kaz wedges his hands underneath Luffy and takes aim with another Kaze-Ha blast. He actually has really good aim and yeets Luffy directly at the giant green cat. Who obligingly shatters the cage in reflex, swatting Luffy into a house nearby. Kaz winces, but thankfully Luffy is made of rubber. He gusts past both Buggy Pirates and helps Luffy dig his way out of the collapsed house.

Nami and the Mayor must have hidden over in this direction, because they are already there and watching Luffy pry his way out by the time Kaz gets to the house.

Nami has that What-the-actual-fuck-is-this-guy look on her face again. Kaz guesses that the new still hasn’t worn off how stupid resilient and fuck-off strong Luffy is. The Mayor is actually staring in open amassment and exclaiming that Luffy shouldn’t be able to live through that. Kaz finds that debatable, Zoro lives through all kinds of nasty shit with like 3 scars to show for it and no Devil Fruit to rely on. Anime physics are bullshit.

Luffy and Kaz return to the Pet store only to find in flames. Luffy looks to Kaz to see him already shaking his head. “I don’t know how he got it burning so quick, Captain. But if I try to blow it out now… I’ll just set the rest of the town off. I’m sorry.”

Kaz had forgotten this part and in taking his time retrieving Luffy he was too late to be able to blow
out the inferno. Luffy, clenches his fist as they watch it burn and watch that cute little dog lose his home. ‘This sucks, why do people have to be so fucking awful. What point was there to set this place on fire?’

Luffy nods and claps Kaz on the shoulder. “Not your fault Kaz-u. Keep an eye on the Mayor and Nami. Don’t let ChouChou get too close to that.”

“You got it, Captain. Kick his ass.”

Settling his hat firmer on his head, Luffy goes lion hunting.
They make land at the dock Coby set off from 2 years ago. Seeing everyone’s reactions to the mere mention of Roronoa “I wash reindeer” Zoro is hilarious. These people are legit afraid of the guy and all he’s done up to this point is hunt bounties.

It’s equally telling how they react to the name of “Ax Hand” Captain Morgan. The people duck and dodge as if Coby might summon the asshole here by mentioning his name. Kaz can’t help but wonder how long this douche has been tormenting these people. With how few marines he’s seen since they landed it’s hard to say. Coby is as cluelessly naïve as ever.

“I wonder why they’re reacting like that to Morgan Taicho? Zoro I understand but…”

Kaz can’t help but sigh out “It’s called free will, Coby. You can have evil marines and good pirates. Look at Luffy, he’s chaotic, but he ain’t evil just cause he’s a pirate.”

“Ano…I guess…”

Kaz can tell that the kid is more confused than convinced, but he doesn’t have the fucks left to give. Maybe later when knowing Coby is less of a mentally exhausting trial. ‘Never thought I’d wish Garp’s training regime on anyone, but Damn.’

At Luffy’s insistence Coby takes them to the courtyard where Zoro is being held. Luffy immediately tries to climb the wall to the Marine base courtyard. Much to Kaz’s immense relief. ‘At least I haven’t fucked up the time line, yet. 2 episodes down…mnf…like a million more to go…’

Coby is behind him spouting some nonsense about missing them and failing to notice that Kaz and Luffy are now sitting on top of and hanging off of the wall respectively.

“Now, where’s that Demon guy? Ah there he is! Let’s go Kaz-u”

They run down the wall until they are looking down into a dusty, barren courtyard. And there’s Zoro tied to a…crucifix? “Is it weird for anyone else that he’s tied to a crucifix? No? Just me, then. Carry on.”

“Shishishi, look all we gotta do is untie those ropes and he can get out.” Luffy says, ignoring Kaz’z nonsense for his own.

Neither response is how Coby feels about the situation.

“Luffy-san, you can’t!! He’d kill us all just for daring!”

Luffy laughs off Coby’s concern with a “Don’t worry so much! I’m strong!”

“And I’m a grade A distraction. We got it covered, Coby.” Kaz’s offer does not appease Coby in the slightest and Zoro joining the conversation does not help calm him down.
“Oi, You guys…you’re an eyesore…Get Lost.” Zoro’s smooth, but blunt address sends Coby into a meltdown as the kid tries to scramble to safety and get Luffy and Kaz to leave at the same time. Kaz is just wondering if anyone else heard that guitar rift just as Zoro looked at them or if he is really starting lose it here.

But his thoughts on the matter are broken when a ladder props itself in the space Kaz had left between himself and Coby on the wall. At least it shuts Coby up, the tiny girl who shushes them all as she uses the ladder to pop over the wall is what gets Luffy and Kaz.

Kaz knew that she’d be there, it was part of the plot after all. Her interactions with Zoro are what kind of cements Luffy demanding the bounty hunter be his swordsman. But he wasn’t expecting her to be this tiny. She’s like 5 years old. ‘Are we really letting this child…no this is an outloud question.’

“Sooollooo, we’re all just going to watch that five-year-old break into a Marine base?” Kaz is shushed by Coby and Luffy. “Right.”

Kaz, falls back off the wall in preparation for what is going to happen. He reasons that stopping her from hitting the ground at all isn’t going to hurt anyone. Besides, it’ll give Luffy more time to punch that Helmeppo guy in the dick. He’s pretty sure that happens next…it’ll happen eventually.

He loosens his muscles. Shakes out his arms and shuffles to his left a bit, positioning himself right in between Coby and Luffy who are watching events unfold on the wall. He hears Coby mutter “That’s Captain Morgan’s son?!” in an incredulous whisper. Knowing what’s coming, he’s prepared when he hears the girl’s frightened squeal as she’s tossed, relatively gently over the wall.

“I got her Luf.”

“Yosh.” Luffy watches Kaz gently catch the little girl, waiting until the Marines exit the field to jump into the now vacant lot. Well, vacant except for Luffy. Who is tied to a post.

Kaz stretches out his arms and grabs the girl, absorbing the shock of the catch into his chest, by pulling in his arms as he gets hold of her. “Hey, kid.”

She’s says thanks in the cutest little voice. Kaz just offer’s her big smile. It’s nice to be able to emote well enough that people know when he’s happy.

“You best stay here with Coby. I’m going to go get Luffy.” Coby takes over checking the kid over for scraps while Kaz vaults the wall in time to see Zoro eat the worlds dirtiest rice ball.

‘Aww that’s precious.’ Luffy turns around and they start to head out. Kaz waves cheerfully to Zoro, sad that Kuffy didn’t take the opportunity to deck Helmeppo then, but the knowledge that it happens before they leave is all he needs to smile again. So far, this is going all according to Oda and he hasn’t fucked anything up, yet. Luffy, had that look on his face too, Kaz could tell he’d already decided to kidnap/adopt Zoro. ‘Bit of a gray area with Luffy.’

They escort the girl, who says her name is Rika, back into the relative safety of the town. She’s the one who explains why Zoro’s going along with this farce of punishment. Zoro had indeed traded his freedom for the girl and her family’s safety. ‘He’s such a softy.’

Rika shows them the way back her mother’s restaurant. They stop mere feet from the door at the sound of glass breaking and annoyingly smug voice shouting from within.

Luffy goes on in. Staring Helmeppo down as he strides deliberately toward the asshole demanding free food and loudly bragging that’s he’s going to have Zoro executed tomorrow. ‘Little fucker, no
one should be that smug about breaking—'

Kaz’s thoughts screech to a stop as he sees a familiar head of hair sitting at one of the tables near the door. Her back is to him, but there’s no way he’d forget her. The Strawhat Navigator and Kaz’s personal favorite crew member.

Nami.

Nami is sitting quietly at a table drinking something and frowning quietly at the scene in front of her. Kaz is frozen, he had not expected to see her here. He thought she’d only show back up at Morgan’s base while she looted the place. ‘Shhhheeeeeet. WhatdoIdoWhattaIdoooooo’

Luffy essentially solves the problem by decking that little shit Helmeppo and forcefully removing him from the restaurant. Shocking the occupants as a whole. Kaz is quietly freaking out in the corner and notices none of this.

‘Just stare at the bar, acknowledge no one. Just. Stare. At. The. Bar.’

Luffy returns from dumping Helmeppo outside and sits next to Kaz. “Kaz-u--

Kaz sits ramrod straight and yelps the most terrified yes. Luffy continues “--why do you look like you have to poop?”

Kaz lets out his held breath and let’s out a hugely exaggerated breath. Luffy always ruins his cool moments. Now Nami was going to think of him as “the guy who poops.”

Kaz had wanted to meet her in the Marine base maybe help her find that fake map leading her to Buggy. She was such a cool character who had such a difficult and emotional background. ‘She’s just such a strong-minded lady. Raised by a Badass lady-Marine who believed in the good wholesome sort of Justice, while also being a bit of a shit herself. *sniffle* Damnit, I made myself cry!’

Tearing up was not going to make him look any cooler. Nami was going to think he was such a pushover. Well, she wasn’t wrong, but he’d kind of hoped to have a cooler introduction before she figured that out.

Rika, bless her heart, does not help by pointing out where the bathroom is either. ‘That’s it, my shame is complete. I’m going to go have a cry in toilet.’

“That’s…Thanks Rika.”

Kaz gives up any hope of retaining his dignity this day and goes to the toilet. By the time he gets out though, Luffy is missing. ‘Shit.’

~~~~~~~~~~~~To the Marine Base~~~~~~~~~~~~

As it was proclaimed by Oda, so it happened. Kaz arrives at the Marine base with Coby trailing behind. The statue has already been knocked over… ‘or was it broken before they got it up…I CAN’T REMEMBER. I guess he’s in there already? Yes, just going to assume Luffy is in the building.’

Luffy was, in fact, already inside the building and wreaking havoc while dragging a protesting Helmeppo along for the ride.

Kaz blasted off from the ground floor and into a third story window. “Got to catch up to Luffy. The
external biographer to the Pirate King can’t miss the action!”

Kaz blasts through the window in a shower of broken glass. He misses the landing though and continues on out the open door.

‘Shit, fuck, stop!’ Blasting out the door with gust of air, he skids to a stop in front of a shocked looking Nami. To both of their surprise.

“Weren’t you…” Kaz starts to ask, fairly certain he’d left Nami at the restaurant…fairly, like at least 60%.

Nami seemingly recognizes him then, “Oh! You’re friends with that Strawhat kid. The constipated one?”

‘That hurts. I’m-I’m not recovering from that any time soon.’

A red faced Kaz responds “Yes. I mean, No. I’m not constipated, I mean it’s all good in the hood. Everything came out fine…I hate myself. The office is through there…I gotta go-I mean leave and find Luffy…Bye!”

Kaz blasts off down a random hall, not noticing that his over-enthusiastic entrance had flattened several guards who’d been accosting Nami due to his blinding embarrassment. ‘Well that next meeting is going to be awkward as fuck…’

He finds Luffy down several hallways using Helmeppo as a meat-shield. Helmeppo is squawking at the indignity between begging for his life. ‘That butt-chinned loser.’

Kaz gets a laugh at watching Luffy use Helmeppo as a battering-ram. It’s very cathartic considering what that douche-canoe has been up to. They find Helmeppo’s door easily enough, it’s the only one with a flower wreath hanging on it. Kaz immediately takes it off its nail and remove’s the childish name plank. It’s his now. Besides the fake flowers are a lovely pink and look nice against his lavender hair.

Looking into the room itself he can only approve of the rest of the color scheme, a lovely pastel pink and white, and stare in horror at the vanity table filled to the brim with lotions and ‘Is that make-up? Oh…OOOOHHH.’

“Oooooo, wow. Helmeppo, no. Is…Is this what you like with effort??? Ah geez. And SO much money put into this room. Shame nothing was done with it.”

Thankfully Helmeppo is unconscious and the comments fail to spark any further protests.

“Oi, Kaz I found the swords. Which one do you think is his?” Luffy is musing in front of what have to be Zoro’s iconic 3 swords. ‘So we’re just going to ignore that hot take I just did? Fine.’

“Beats me, Captain. Let’s just take all three down there.” Kaz peers out the window as Luffy secures all the swords with a cord from the drapery. “Uh-oh, Luffy I think we’re running behind schedule. Coby and Zoro are about to be perforated.”

“I’m ready. Let’s GO!”

“Luffy, wait!”

Too late. Luffy Gum-Gum rockets himself through Kaz and the window behind him. ‘Geez, so impatient.’ Kaz thinks fondly. Luffy’s enthusiasm can’t be stopped, he should know this by now.
Kaz, reorders himself from where Luffy has made him lose cohesion for a sec. He’s getting better at not that accidentally, but reforming takes a hot second.

Back together, Kaz flies out following Luffy and lands with a blast of wind. As Luffy finishes his introduction to Zoro, Kaz with an (if he did say so himself) dramatic hair flip. “Annd, I’m Kaz.” He says while manipulating a thin breeze to complete his landing.

The Marines, including Morgan, seem impressed that two Devil Fruit users could be found in East Blue, let alone in their courtyard.

Zoro is equally stunned. “W-what the heck are you two anyways?”

Luffy explains the whole Pirate King and writer of the greatest adventure ever. Zoro just looks confused. Kaz offers him “It means exactly what he says, don’t waste your breath trying to convince him otherwise bro.”

Luffy shoves all three swords into Zoro’s face. “We didn’t know which ones were yours so we brought all the ones we could find.”

“They’re all mine. I use the 3 sword-style. Santoryu.” Zoro sounds tired and hoarse.

Luffy, clearly, does not understand what that means nor does he particularly care. “So, you’ll take them? If you fight with us, you’ll be a government villain!” Luffy is nearly vibrating with glee at his own statement.

Keeping an eye on the Marines Kaz flies up to the post Zoro is still tied to and starts tugging at the rope, hoping to speed this along a bit. “It doesn’t come with any benefits, but it’s going to be one hell of an adventure. I highly recommend it.”

“Would you prefer that or letting the Navy kill you tied to a post?” Luffy is definitely either blackmailing or extorting at this point. Kaz doesn’t know the difference, but he knows one of them is happening.

There’s a manic looking grin on Zoro’s face now. “What are you two?” He asks again. “The devil’s own sons?”

“Please don’t lump me in with him, I have some sense.” Kaz snarks above.

“Whatever, I’ll be in your crew if death here is the alternative.”

“Yes! So, you’re in? Yes. Zoro’s joining the crew Kaz-u! Yes! WHooHOO!” Kaz rolls his eyes and starts to pick at the knot he’s certain is holding this all together on the post.

“Would you cut that out and get me out of these ropes!!!”

Zoro is squirming and not making this easy. “Easy there, Betsy. I think I found the right knot. Luffy stop tugging you’re making it worse.” The marines are reorganizing from watching the Devil Fruit Users land and Kaz would rather stand behind Zoro than fight himself. ‘Less chance to fuck up the story that way.’

Just as the Marines finally find their courage and charge them Kaz yanks the knot loose. “Finally.”

Zoro, badass of East Blue and directionless loser, snatches his swords up as soon as he gets enough room to yank his arms free. Then in a move Kaz can’t properly follow, Zoro has not only stopped the Marine’s charge, he is effectively holding 10 guys at a stand still with his mere 3 swords.
Zoro mutters an aggressive sounding “Don’t Move.” Which has several of the marines in actual tears.

Kaz…is stunned and mildly terrified. He turns to look down at Coby. “Coby, you were right. He’s fucking terrifying. I apologize for mocking you about that.”

Zoro addresses Luffy and Co. with his ultimatum about never preventing Zoro from reaching his goal, ever. Kaz salutes “Yes, sir.” No way was he going to stand in Zoro’s way. Like ever. No one should be able to fight one guy after not-eating for a month, let alone 10.

“World’s Greatest Swordsman, huh? That sounds great!! We need no less than the best on the crew of future Pirate King.

Zoro, duck.”

Zoro’s eyes grow wide but he ducks the incoming leg sweep as it clears the field behind him.

Morgan demands that all the people, those with actual sense, who want to flee shoot themselves in the head. It pretty much guarantees that Luffy aims right for him. The rest of the Marines have Zoro to deal with. For the whole 2 minutes it takes Zoro to smack them down. There’s not a lot of blood, but none of them look interested in getting back up.

Kaz is about 90% sure that most of them are rooting for Luffy beat the shit out of Morgan anyway. The fight is well in hand and it’s so weird that Luffy and Zoro are kind of already in sync. Which of course means something weaselly, named Helmeppo, shows up to ruin the Strawhat’s fun.

Kaz didn’t even notice that Helmeppo had come up behind him and Coby. It startles him a bit, when the Butt-chinned loser starts trying to threaten Luffy into stopping. ‘Why doesn’t anyone ever notice me?’

“Don’t come any closer Strawhat! Hold it there! I have a hostage can’t you tell!” Luffy still throws a few more punches into Morgan’s chin before dropping him and advancing with his full grin towards Helmeppo.

“Luffy-san! I don’t want to be in your way! Not even if it costs my life, I won’t!” Coby shocks the whole field with his declaration. Except one person, ‘Aww there he is, there’s Garp’s future chew—I mean protégé.’

“Give it up stupid-son. Coby is really ready to die, you see?” Luffy continues his advance, but there’s little need. So long as Kaz is around, he doesn’t have to protect everyone constantly. Kaz can help out with this. Coby is destined for more than just his island.

Ghosting from his perch, Kaz breezes up behind the hostage and the pistol-pointing idiot.

“Don’t~~Move~~~I mean it!”

“He might be ready to die, but he doesn’t have to not today.” Kaz sweeps Coby’s legs out from under him, making the boy drop to the floor. It’s timed perfectly with Luffy punching the ever-living shit out of Helmeppo. And with Zoro around to watch Luffy’s back, Morgan’s sneak attack is put down just as fast.

“Nice, Zoro.”

“My pleasure, Captain”
“…is anyone going to acknowledge that I helped?”

“t-t-thank you Kaz-san.” Kaz sighs and just pats Coby on the head. “yea-yea, no problem bud. Glad to see you found your spine there.”

He gets a shaky grin for his words and strolls back over to Luffy. To his surprise Zoro gives him a nod. The nod. The respect nod. ‘Wow, I can’t even, I’ve been acknowledged?’

Zoro addresses the rest of the Marines in a laconic sounding challenge. There are zero takers. Quite the opposite in fact, they start cheering and tossing swords up in the air.

‘Which seems like a bad idea to me… yup, there they come.’ After Kaz rescues the idiot marines from their own celebration they drag a now snoring Zoro back to the restaurant which has become their temporary HQ on this island.

Rika greets them and Kaz elbows Zoro, who he is half carrying at this point, to wake him up.

“Gotta greet your biggest fan there, Zoro.” The remark gets a red flush to spread across Zoro’s face and he staggers further upright and says hi to the little girl he’d protected a month ago.

It had been another banner day for the still forming crew. Kaz reflected as they stuffed themselves with a complimentary meal from Rika’s mother. Zoro was marveling at just how much food both Luffy and Kaz could put away. Rika seemed delighted by Zoro and Kaz and her mother was definitely happy to see them.

Kaz tried to remind himself that East Blue was the easy part of the journey, it wouldn’t all be smiles and such as they moved on. But it was hard to dampen the joy he had in watching his friends’ bond over Luffy’s fighting prowess and general weirdness.

It had been a good day. ‘Hmm, wonder where Nami got to? Eh we’ll find her later. Time to eat.’

“HEY! Luffy that’s my steak damnit. Give it back you thief.” Kaz Launches himself across the table intent on retrieving what’s left of his meat. Zoro laughs from the table as they roll across the floor.

Yea, it was a good day.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~Mission Complete: You've acquired one Marimo.
“Let’s meet again sometime, COBY!” Luffy shouts as they sail into the rising sun the next morning. It’s abominably early and all Kaz wants to do is go back to sleep. Luffy AND Zoro snore like freight trains and since they’d shared a room between all three of them, Kaz hadn’t really been able to drop off.

Kaz waves lazily from his post against the mast and drops off nearly instantly. Missing the Marine’s salute and the remainder of the farewell and Luffy shouting about the Grandline.

Leaving Coby to the marines in charge of the island, the three members of the Strawhat crew sail out into the unknown.

Because none of them know one fucking thing about navigation…what had he signed up for…

2 days later:

“I’m so hungry~~~” Luffy is moaning from the front of the boat. Due to everyone onboard the dingy being completely stupid and Kaz did include himself in that, they had failed to get an accurate heading to the nearest island from Coby or even one of the marines.

“Everyone is hungry Luffy. You ate all the supplies yesterday. We don’t even have any apples to eat.” Kaz mutters.

“So~~~ hungry.” Luffy whines.

‘Why do I bother speaking…’ Kaz huffs to himself.

“When the hell are we going to hit land already?”

‘Great. Now Zoro’s going to bitch too.’ Kaz turns around in the bow of the boat and lets his legs dangle in the water. He’s so fucking done that he welcomes the numb ache the water brings. It’s something to feel besides hunger at least. His heavy sighs eventually drag Zoro’s attention over to him.

Luffy is thinking happy thoughts about something and not paying them any attention anymore.

“Doesn’t that hurt? You’re a Devil Fruit user like Luffy, right?” there’s a confused frown on Zoro’s face.

“Not really, anything below the knees and it’s just a cold achy feeling. More refreshing than idiot induced hunger. Mostly.” Kaz shrugs. “Neither of us really knows how to navigate we didn’t even plan to go in this direction originally. It’s just the way we panicked in leaving Goa.”

Luffy agrees and tells Zoro about their (thanks to Kaz, if he does take the time to toot his own horn, thank you) epic escape form Fuusha’s harbor and the Seaking Luffy had decked on the way out. Zoro looks suitably impressed by the time Kaz chips in about panicking so hard he made the boat fly.

“So you guys meant that literally…you just go where Windy over there blows you?” he asks.
“That or get escorted by nervous marine wannabes with pink hair.”

Zoro looks at them like he too is not a complete moron, it’s a little annoying. “Isn’t it kinda f***ed up that the guy who wants to be King of the Pirates can’t f***ing navigate??”

In honor of their shared head-nod moment at Morgan’s beat down, Kaz manfully choking back the nearly automatic bark of laughter that Zoro, of ALL people, is criticizing someone else’s ability to navigate.

“Not a Captain’s job to plot the course buckaroo, just picks the destination. Relax, we just need to find a Navigator is all” is his second choice and much more PC response. His nonchalance isn’t appreciated by a grumbling Zoro, but Luffy prevents them from actually fighting.

Mostly by redirecting the fire right at himself. It’s both heartening and not to know that never really changes. At least Luffy can handle the fall out.

Luffy chimes in through to point out that as a bounty hunter, Zoro ought to know something about navigation as well. Zoro being about 50% cooler than anyone else on the boat props his elbows on the side of the boat. “I don’t recall ever calling myself that. Certainly, didn’t set out to sea to do it either. I set out to look for a certain man…but then I couldn’t get back to my village. I just went after pirate ships to make enough to get by.”

“Oh…so you’re lost.” Luffy states, causing Zoro to hammer his fist into his side of the boat hard enough to shake the whole dingy.

“Don’t put it like that!”

Kaz can’t help himself at this point he laughs and turns around so he can address Zoro without choking on his own spit. “If only you could figure out which way North was. You’d have caught up to him by now. Also, how do you lose a whole f***ing island?”

Zoro growls, legit growls, at Kaz and lunges for him.

Kaz emits a falsely high scream and burrows under Luffy as the boat rocks dangerously. Luffy’s hat goes flying off his head and Luffy quickly shoots off after it. Leaving Kaz defenseless as Zoro regains his footing in the shaking boat.

Not willing to get as pummeled as a Logia can be, Kaz zips up the mast to safety. He’ll sleep up here if he has to. Maybe if Zoro stops glaring before the sun sets, they can fish for dinner…

3 days later:

“Hey! Who ate all the fish?? We just caught those fish!” shouts a disappointed Kaz. He already knows the answer he is just terminally in denial about how little food actually makes it into his mouth these days. He misses jerky so bad. Real jerky, not the smelly fish jerky they’d made yesterday afternoon.

“Sorry Kaz-u. I got hungry on watch.” Luffy, who most definitely does not know the meaning of the word repentant, doesn’t look repentant AT ALL. The ass.

“So, we still have no heading and now no food…again.” Seriously…just caught those fish last night. ‘Just let it go buddy, just let it go…”
“We didn’t bring enough booze either.” Says Zoro. Who is littering by throwing the now empty bottle of wine over the side of the small ship…boat…dinghy, he decides. ‘Everyone loves a dinghy, right?’

Zoro who is clearly a man of action or a close copy of one in this moment tries to take control of the situation. As most situations seem to turn out for him, this ends poorly for Kaz.

“Oi, Windy. Which way is North?”

Kaz floats over cautiously. While he’d love to avoid Zoro until the severe scowling turned back into neutral frowning, if Zoro had any idea on how to get unstuck from the middle of the ocean, he had more than Kaz at the moment. “Uh, it’s always uh right…” he has to stop and think for a minute. NC is on the east coast…and if he faced the east coast then… “uh no sorry it’s always left of the rising sun. Sooo that way.” He pointed mostly certain he was right.

Zoro is staring at him hard. Kaz assumes he’s thinking and he doesn’t want to profile or more importantly piss off the guy who bench-presses the barbell equivalent of a Volkswagen. With that thought he manufactures a gust and “accidentally” knocks the hat off Luffy’s head. Pushing the breeze up and away from the water. He’s not stupid, he knows what that hat means to Luffy, it’s just that by this point Luffy owes him the convenient escape. It’s just this once. Really.

“I’ll get it Luffy, you stay down here!” Kaz offers as his, intentionally for once, dissipates and soars up the mast the catch Luffy’s iconic hat. Hat in hand he hands it off to his captain who is waiting on top of the sail. Having slung himself up there after his hat.

“Thanks, Kaz-u!”

“No prob. Luffy. Keep a better hold of that thing, yea? It’s important.” They both drop, too heavily, down into the boat. Starting it rocking again, though this time everyone maintains their footing. Kaz is suitable impressed with himself for not face planting, once again, into the deck of the dinghy.

And Zoro is no longer staring menacingly at him from too-close away. Maybe it’ll be a better day than yesterday, when he spent half of it up the mast. His boney ass wasn’t meant for that sort of punishment.

So, Kaz is standing, still and casual-like, up until the point Zoro grabbed his shirt in blurring move of his hand and asked “Sooo, you can fly right? Check for land this time.”

“What?”

He has all of 3 seconds to be terrified as he is launched skyward. Higher than he usually went on his own.

“Ahhhhhhhh!”

His only thought is that, while Zoro might not have Devil Fruit, Kaz was fucking certain that Zoro just did NOT need one. He managed not to have his 7th heart attack of the week after a moment and stop screaming long enough to actually get his bearings. ‘Who just yeets people 40 ft in the air??’ Then he realizes that he’s been hanging out with Luffy for two years now and Luffy? Also that kind of asshole.

Kaz worries what that means for him, before remembering that he’s been asked to look for land. Using his abilities and the boost from Zoro to rise a little further, guessing that while he’s up here
he might actually see land or something. But he saw fuck all on the way up. Just lots of water and the cool breeze they’d been letting steer them all day. So, nothing to the North really.

Kaz checked to the east…diddly.

He looked to the West…fuck all there.

Alright what’s happening in the Sou…’Oh fuck, that’s a big birb.’

There’s about two seconds in between that thought and the bird diving to catch the brightly colored writer.

Initially, he panics and Kaz is not afraid to admit that. The giant pelican thing had him trapped in its freaky pouch mouth and even with Kaz’s frantic thrashing the bird carried on.

And then he remembered… ‘You are a fucking logia, idiot.’ And seconds later he is trying to pry the stupid pelican’s mouth open, it fights him all the way. He finally gets his head out of the stupid things mouth, only to realize that he is very far from the boat…and Luffy and Zoro.

‘I am not flying out of this…wait a minute…this was supposed to happen to Luffy.’ Too far from the boat to fly out and now realizing that he, Kaz, has accidentally displaced Luffy in a vital plot point.

His mind spirals into panic and mortification.

‘Step 1: DO NOT fuck with the plot line

Step 2: Fucking fail step 1—SHIT FUCK GODDAMN SON OF A WHORE MOTHER—’

The cursing and violent pity of fucking up his only (self-imposed) directive sees him flailing madly inside the bird. His only hope is that Luffy and Zoro panic hard enough in the right direction…which, he thinks dejectedly, is asking for a hell of a lot…

His unexpected flight carries on in self-inflicted pity but relative comfort. At least until, far as Kaz can tell during his sudden descent, the bird randomly disintegrates around him. The concussive force of a shot he didn’t hear over his own self-loathing ruins Kaz’s cohesion as he is blasted out of the air.

Singed and not wholly together Kaz lands like a limp noodle made of air. Penne specifically.

The PLAP is probably not the most traumatizing thing, in retrospect, as Kaz’s arm is definitely not where it should be. It doesn’t hurt overly much. Garp had done loads worse. But it does feel awfully awkward. He shakes off the disorientation of the sudden landing with a whimper and drags himself to his feet while fiddling with his dislocated arm.

Only to finally notice that he has replaced Luffy further by landing in between Nami and some of the Buggy Pirates. ‘Shit. Well I can’t let Nami handle this on her own.’

Nami however is a lot quicker on the uptake. Perhaps remembering that Kaz had already mowed down several marines on her behalf, accidentally but who’s counting. She’s probably hoping he’ll do it again with these weird looking assholes. Kaz likes to think of himself as a gentleman sometimes. Not all the time, he knows he can be a dick, but he’s never left a lady to distress yet. Not that he knew a lot of damsels in distress…or that Nami could even qualify as one, now that he thinks on it.

“Ah! Boss! Good timing...Again! They’re all yours. I’ll go get that thing ready…Bye!” and much
like with Luffy Nami is away before anyone can stop her, much less get a word in edgewise.

“Huh?” his confusion is plain until he remembers that she’d done the same to Luffy. He jerks upright “Right, uh…clear out…Minion?” ‘Crap, forgot…we’re not friends yet. At least I can’t be hurt by swords here. My poor clothes on the other hand…”


Kaz interrupts and wooshes forward to clap the guy on the shoulder. “Sorry boys, but that treasure(?) is ours now. We stole it fair and square. But more importantly, my friend, my bro, my compadre…can I get your help with this arm? I think I landed on it funny?”

The three pirates seem the appropriate levels of completely confused at Kaz’s reasonable tone. Secretly he’s channeling his inner fake salesman from the 40s as hard as he can. “Listen buddy, we don’t—”

“Roulette.” Kaz holds the Franken-pirate by the shoulder and let’s his body form a whirlwind and leans into it. Swirling harder and sucking up tweedledee and dumb. With inexpert timing he shoots all three out in a rapid fire back down the street…or he means to. Unfortunately, there’s a slight miscalculation with his timing and he accidentally-s the pirates into the building Nami is now perched on top of. And he does mean the pirates have entered the building ‘Bu-dum-tish’

He momentarily has to pause his self-congratulations on using his Roulette move, mostly right, for a moment out of panic but sees that Nami has it under control. Nami is too nimble to fall. She gracefully slides down the roof and lands on the balcony now shading the unconscious brutes who’d been chasing her.

“Oooohkaayyyy, that's why that kid called you windy…I guess. So, Windyguy—”

‘Whhhhhhhhy’ Kaz keeps his complaints silent, but droops a bit, he consoles himself with the fact that at least he isn’t still “that constipated guy” to Nami. He’d take Windy over that any day.

“—Thanks for saving me again. You look like a nice sturdy…person(?) who's not afraid of a little stabbing right?.”

“Ummmm yes? I mean, so far so good. Except for the all shirts I’ve lost to it.” He’s preening a bit at NAMI of all people calling him strong…okay she said 'sturdy' but still…It is so nice to be acknowledged. First Zoro and now Nami. Maybe this week isn’t so shitty after all. He’s choosing to ignore the hesitancy with which Nami names him a 'person'. They can elaborate on the whole Devil Fruit thing later…like when the plot is up and running again.

“Great! So, you want to team up? I’m an A+ navigator. We could go anywhere between me and you.” There’s like a really endearing light in her eyes as she hops down from the balcony to stand near him. She’s also like, super tiny. Like Luffy tiny, but doesn’t appear to take up as much space, fortunately he knows better than to be fooled by her appearance.

Nami is likely smarter than the rest of the crew, people-wise, excluding Robin and twice as fierce. Especially when she wants something from someone.

“I uh, would. Totally. Except I can’t. I’m very bad at stealing and stealth in general.” Kaz dissembles a bit. He'd hate to outright say no…Luffy would try to get her to join no matter what, but he doesn’t have Luffy’s level of stubborn charisma to fall back. He isn’t even that endearing…unless someone had a particular weakness for the socially awkward ‘Not likely. ‘And he does NOT
want to be responsible for losing Nami. They need her.

“You don’t have to be sneaky. That’s what I do-” Nami stops trying to beguile him on charm alone and adds in a more serious tone “My goal is to steal 100 million beri, no matter what it takes.”

The emotion in her words is enough to make him tear up. His own thoughts and memories of why she has need of 100 million beri finishes him off. He turns, hoping she assumes he is thinking it over and tries to keep the whimpering sobs to a minimum.

‘She’s such a strong person! And she shared that precious goal... with meeeeee’ He has to take a solid minute to hug himself and bite his lip to even slightly mask the level of touched he is by that. If he didn’t have to keep the plot on track? He’d be agreeing in a second, but he just couldn’t be the reason Luffy failed to even get to the Grandline.

‘Because let’s face kids, Luffy is a hopeless navigator and no one, but no one, is better than Nami at her game.’

Kaz gathers himself and chokes back a sniffly sob. And tries to sound like he hasn’t just been shoved through the emotional wringer in under two minutes. “Look, I would, really. If I weren’t already married to the idea of being with my crew till the end. I gotta be there to write the tale, you know?”

Nami is staring at him like she might just know where he’s going with this. He can’t actually lie to her; she’d hate him forever and Kaz firmly refuses to do anything to jeopardize her joining the crew. Besides, Nami has been lied to enough and she doesn’t even know the worst one yet. He has to tell her about the Strawhats at least, plant the idea...subtle-like. He knows she’ll hate the idea on principle, but Luffy would be along soon to make the official offer, save the town from Buggy, and charm his way into Nami’s heart. ‘Here goes nothing.’

“But hey, the Strawhat Pirates are totally looking for a navigator though! Why don’t you join us instead?” He admits, it is not as subtle as he wished, but it’s the best she’s getting from him. He can’t be expected to be his wittiest in front of Nami, who acknowledged him like 5 seconds ago. The plot has to be corrected even if he has to take Luffy’s place for a hot second, but there is no way he can charm his way out of this. ‘Where are they anyway? Eh, thoughts for later.’

Nami’s face drops and she props one hand on her hip so she can wave the other more emphatically under his nose. “You’re a pirate? Hell no. There’s nothing else on this planet that I hate more than Pirates.” And Kaz isn’t scared to admit the expected venom in her voice does sting a bit. He pouts visibly, hoping to look pathetic enough that she doesn’t outright deck him like she’ll later be prone to doing to Luffy. Nami continues, adding firmly that “I only like tangerines and money. Nothing more!”

Kaz feels properly cowed by all the fierce yelling she’s doing and holds his hands up to surrender the point visibly. Not daring to speak, lest she take offense and change her mind about deck ing him. While he can avoid most pain, he isn’t willing to test it too often.

Luckily for Kaz’s goal of getting the plot back on the right track, his gesture of surrender and Nami’s verbal corning of him is seen. Three more of Buggy’s goons turn the corner behind Nami, who either sees them out of the corner of her or catches the widening of Kaz’s own. Kaz, even knowing Nami, is still a little shocked at how quickly she moves from yelling at him to figuring out how to get away from these guys. It takes mere seconds for her to look at what’s coming and hear the threats they’re shouting out her.

Nami is suddenly as in his face as she can be and whispers “I need your help to get close to Buggy.
Agree to help and I’ll consider joining you.” She’s batting her eyes at him and trying to look sweet. But Kaz is wise to her shenanigans, however, moving towards Buggy is where Luffy, now substituted for Kaz, is supposed to be…so he fakes it. Pulling on all his dramatic talents.

“Oh! Cool. Yeah sure do-uh-do I need to get rid of those guy---where did you get that rope from????” Kaz realizes that Nami had finessed both his hands into tight knot of rope. He knows he could easily breeze out of this…he hopes Nami realizes that too, but this *is* where he needs to be.

“It’s a secret.” She chirps. She then puts on a show for thugs running for them. It’s, honestly, a hilarious event to watch. Nami has those guys so confused in under a minute that they might legit believe she caught Kaz all by herself and is using him to bargain for inclusion into Buggy’s crew. ‘She’s my hero, look at these shmucks, They are actually escorting us all the way to Buggy himself…’

He gets to watch in absolute amazement when she does it again right in front of Buggy himself. And the weirdo buys it. It still ends with Kaz in a tiny-ass little cage that his lanky frame does not fit comfortably into, but the sheer brass Nami has impresses him even more. He would have put money on that not being possible. And sure, Kaz technically knew Buggy would fall for it. However, this being as real as real gets…he had certainly expected more convincing dialogue between them than what he’d seen in the anime, but…‘Fuck me, I don’t think she even really tried’ is all he can think as the Buggy start gathering for a party to welcome Nami into the crew. Meanwhile he’s stuck in a five-foot square block and he can’t even risk trying to whirlwind some of the delicious smelling roasted meat they are having into his mouth…‘FML’

On the other hand, his tears of frustration are really selling his apparent misery over Nami’s “betrayal” handily. ‘God, I hope the crew shows up soon. I can’t be tortured like this much longer.’ Kaz barely keeps himself entertained by taking his cracked goggles off and clinking them slowly against the bars of his cage. He’d prefer a mug, but apparently no one taught these goofs anything about the Geneva Convention. He has rights! And he would prefer if they came with meat, especially now…while Luffy isn’t within thieving range.

But everything is going along as it should, with or without snacks, and Kaz is just starting to wonder when Buggy is going try shooting him with a cannon. Cause this? It’s really boring and borderline torture with the food just out of reach.

Buggy, for once, has exceptionally good timing though. Taking Kaz’s apparent despondency over the lack of meat in his diet as true melancholy over what Nami allegedly did, Buggy starts trying to taunt him and drags Nami into it as well.

Though now that Kaz thinks about it, maybe Buggy is keeping her close because he doesn’t quite believe her. Even with Kaz trapped in the world’s smallest cell meters away from braised beef goodness ‘Refocus, now is not the time, unfortunately’

“How pathetic” Buggy calls, using his Imma-a-scary-pirate voice. Nami hesitantly agrees with Buggy’s assessment of Kaz’s alleged leadership abilities. ‘Joke’s on them, I’m a follower.’ Kaz doesn’t really think Buggy’s piss-poor taunts deserve a verbal response, but he does blow the loudest razzberry possible at Buggy and clink his goggles harder against the bars. Kaz has never, will never, claimed to be mature.

CLINK Clink CLANK ClinkClinkClink CLANK

Hoping to annoy the shit out of Buggy and get this party rolling. Kaz is confident that he can blow out the fuse as long as it takes for Luffy and Zoro to catch up. In anime time they should be really
“Right Nami? This is your chance to *prove* your loyalty…and you are loyal right? Do it. I’m being so generous as to give you a Buggy Ball. Bring Nami the cannon!” he shouts to his minions. And the large black, still smoking, cannon is trundled forth to aim directly at Kaz.

‘Huh, that is a very large bomb…and I have never been so glad to be partially intangible.’

That thought is quickly replaced with concern over Nami, who looks like she’s scared out of her mind. ‘Poor Nami. This is a little traumatic for her. What with Bellemere and Arlong and all that.’

Kaz decides to put her at ease the only way he can. “Hey. Don’t worry so much. Pirates are pirates because they chose to be. Mostly” Silently thinking of Coby. “Do what you have to tangerine-girl. I choose to be here, ya know?” Hoping that his encouragement and subtle reminder that he is technically made of air helps. She looks a little less scared, but slightly confused now.

Nami’s indecision prompts one of the clown-ier pirates to steal the matches and light one. He gets dangerously close to lighting the fuse. Kaz is taking a deep breath in preparation to snuff out the burning fuse when Nami surprises the lot of them by cold-cocking the pirate with her staff. It was a hell of a hit and the guy is out cold. The ferocity of the action seems to stun Nami as much as everyone else. Except for Kaz, who already knows that beneath that tough-as-nails persona, Nami is a good person. And good people don’t blow up someone who’s as dorky and helpful as Kaz has been.

Sadly, the falling match still manages to catch the fuse. Nami turns as Kaz quietly sighs and utters a dejected “oh dear” and sees the lit fuse. Kaz was still certain that while being blown up may not feel great, being a Logia has its perks and he’d certainly be back to rights within minutes. Nami, does not appear to know that though, perhaps thinking his wind abilities are a paramecia derived fruit instead. ‘Hell, she may not know more about Devil Fruits than anyone else in East Blue either.’

Not wanting her to get burned for his sake, not when he isn’t really in that much danger. He waits until he sees Nami’s instinctive wince before she touches something she knows will burn her…and he snuffs the flame. ‘The important part, is that she tried to save a pirate. That’s the character development that’s important here. Right? Right.’

Nami rotates through a serious of emotions within a second just rapid-fire expectation of pain-surprise-outrage at the trick-and settles somewhere between wary and impressed. Kaz doesn’t hesitate to offer a cheesy grin and a wink. Her expression drops a bit, but there’s no time for her to yell at him. The Buggy pirates have regained what few wits they have and are egged forth to hurt Nami by Buggy. ‘That dick. And I can’t get a clear shot at them either!’

Kaz draws Nami’s attention away from the crowd praying she’ll trust at least once more. “Nami! Duck!!!”

Kaz uses his wind abilities to free his hands and as Nami ducks behind the cannon draws wind together in his open cupped palms, letting swirl violently and build “Kaze-haaaaze---”

“GUM GUM ROCKET!”

Luffy has launched himself and Zoro from a nearby building, judging from the angle. Luffy either releases Zoro to deal with the pirates or Zoro, seeing that no good could come of landing alongside Luffy, jumps ship early. Regardless the result is that Zoro is launched into the crowd like someone playing 30-pin bowling. Zoro scores a respectable 15 out of 30 pirates down in the crash. He even
checks on a shocked Nami.

Luffy, however, not reading the situation right, has aimed right for Kaz. Not given a chance to brace for impact, Luffy blitzes into the cage shoving Kaz’s airy body through the slats on the other side…and locking his own dumb ass in the cage…

Kaz is wholly unprepared for the sudden transition into air and it takes most of minute to right himself. Nami probably sensing or hoping for safety quickly dodges away from the fight brewing between Zoro and Buggy. Kaz knows what’s coming and isn’t going to stop it. Zoro and Luffy can take the hits they receive just fine. Nami is the only physically fragile one right now.

Besides, he just got the plot back to where it is supposed to be, there will be no more deviation from the planned route, dammit.

Still, watching Zoro get stabbed is not fun. He flinches just thinking about how a stabbing would feel were he not wind. ‘Yay, Logia Fruit!’ Luffy doesn’t like it either and quickly pulls Buggy’s attention back to him, where he is still trapped by the cage. ‘Zoro’s probably the only one outright strong enough to just yank Luffy out of there the same way he got in. And Zoro currently has a, sorry several, holes in him, so doesn’t look like that’s an option right now.’

Luffy shouts “OI, stabbing him from behind is unfair, red nose!” Buggy, flustered sends his disembodied hand with a single dagger hurling at Luffy. It doesn’t even seem to faze Buggy that Luffy bites through his dagger. He just withdraws his hand and leaps back at Zoro.

When Luffy tells them to run, they refuse. Kaz blasts himself over to the cannon and shouts for Zoro to keep the spastic clown-man busy. Zoro, like the tank he is, leaps in front of Kaz. Stalling Buggy long enough for Kaz to get lay under the cannon and try is ultimate technique again.

Over the clang and clash of knives and swords Kaz again cups his hands and gathers his element to them. “Kazee-Haze-HAAAA” launching a spiraling blast up and flipping the cannon over so that it is now aimed right at Buggy and his remaining goons.

Nami, ever quick to see an advantage is already striking the match to light the fuse. Kaz quickly ghosts out from under the cannon as the Buggy Pirates scramble to avoid the oncoming blast. Thanks to it already being burned down from earlier they don’t have time to get clear.

Zoro is already dragging the cage and Luffy off the roof as Kaz gusts down after him and Nami. They just get clear of the rooftop when the blast shakes the house down to its foundations.

Zoro is struggling under the weight of the cage with Luffy still in it and Kaz moves to help. He doesn’t like the way it looks like Zoro is tearing his wound wider with each step. Not that it’s slowing him down much or stopping the stoic guy from verbally berating Luffy.

“How did you even get in there?? I thought Kaz was in the fucking cage! He could have got out on his own!”

“Hey Zoro, you’re hurt ya know?” Luffy asks, as if the big guy hadn’t noticed and completely ignoring what Zoro is fussing about.

“You just stay in there. I’m going to do things my way!”

Nami still hasn’t been introduced to the crew yet and is standing in stunned silence before she gathers herself to ask in dumfounded wonder “Who are you guys??” She’s watching Zoro bleed while still adamantly refusing to lower the cage, Kaz is helping, but it is still a struggle.
Luffy finally clues into their tag-a-long as they start retreating into the city. Kaz has no intention of having a meet and greet right in front of Buggy…and what’s left of his crew. He knows they are all dead, so he shoves and Zoro pulls the cage down the line of roofs they have managed to jump to.

“Who are you??” Luffy finally thinks to ask. Staring blankly at a still stunned looking Nami. Kaz chimes in, his voice strained with effort.

“That..is Nami—she’s a great navigator Luffy. Real thrifty too—ugh—We should hire her.”

“OOOH! That’s great! You should could come with us. I’m Luffy and I’m going to be King of the Pirates!” says the young boy made of rubber, who trapped himself in a concrete cage…

Zoro must feel Kaz rolling his eyes or is just that done with today, because he snorts and mutters “King of the Idiots today” loud enough for all of them to hear. Their witty banter doesn’t seem to have cleared things up for Nami. To be fair, she has had a day. She met a guy made of wind, one made of rubber, and Zoro who is probably 90% determination.

‘Yeah, we are all kind of freaky aren’t we?’

Between Zoro and Kaz they manage to get Luffy and cage downtown. When Zoro’s side gives out they are close enough that Luffy gets easily distracted by a cute little dog sitting in front of store…

‘Oh, I totally forgot about that…Luffy has to punch that weird Lion-guy and Simba the Jumbo Lion out.’

Thud…SNORE. ZZZZZZZZZZZZ.

But maybe first, he decides, he will drag Zoro somewhere more comfortable than the street. He has been bleeding for a solid half hour and that just isn’t healthy. ‘And no Chopper in sight…’

Before Kaz can do much more than frown at the situation, their crew’s bizarre luck comes through and the Mayor of this abandoned town shows back up. Kaz is almost certain he is wearing coconut-based armor and for his life cannot figure out why someone would do that. He definitely misses everything the Mayor says, trying to see if there’s any sloshing going on in the shoulder pads (?). ‘Where did he find a coconut big enough for a chest plate…’

He gives up sorting that weirdness out when the old man gestures for Kaz to help him move Zoro into a nearby house. Seeing as that might let Zoro heal through the power of napping (a Kaz approved method in the absence of actual medicine) Kaz heaves to and manages to mostly heft Zoro up on his own. ‘Seriously, I do not think this Mayor guy is pulling his half of the weight here.’

By the time Zoro is resting comfortably Luffy has managed to enrage the sheepdog in front of the store and lost the key to the cage to its stomach. “Honestly, Luffy. I leave you for a second and you manage to make this worse?”

“Shishishi, he started it Kaz-u. I just wanted to pet him. He was being mean~” Luffy ends by pouting a little. Kaz has seen that face to often to be fooled by it. He sits on the stairs of the store and promptly moves his ass to the top of Luffy’s cage when the tiny dog snarls at him. “Okay Luffy, I see your point.”

Kaz is just trying to recall what they did in the anime to get Luffy out of the damn cage, when there’s a distant roar and the rumble of something larger than them mucking about town.

The Mayor hears it to and recognizes it, it is a very distinctive roar. Like a B-movie dinosaur hissing roar. “It’s the Beast Tamer, Mohji!”
‘Oh yeah, good old Mochi breaks the cage for us. Good timing.’

Shortly the odd looking Tamer and his pet giant-ass lion Richie run into view and enter the town square. Nami and the Mayor run for distant.

“How unfortunate that you run into me, so soon after you escaped. I am Mohji The Lion Tamer! A member of the Buggy Pirates.”

“Mochi? Like the ice cream?” Kaz asks.

“What? No, I said Mohji!”

“Oooo. I love that stuff!” Luffy says, to no one’s (Kaz’s) surprise, before he tilts further on his back so he can get a better look at the off colored lion and its rider. “That’s a weird animal suit you got on there, Mochi.” Luffy comments, ignoring the man’s spluttering about his name. Kaz is feeling a bit smug about starting that one himself.

“This is my hair!! How rude!”

“That is not helping your case there, Mochi.” Kaz informs him. Luffy shakes his head too. ‘This is taking too long…and his face is creepy’

Ignoring whatever Mohji is doing with the little dog, Kaz gets behind Luffy’s cage and asks “Hey, Luffy?”

“Hmm?”

“Remember when you and Zoro fed me to a bird earlier?”

“Shishishishi, yea you cussed really loud! We could hear it in the boat!” The rubbery menace laughs.

“Right…hold still.” Kaz wedges his hands underneath Luffy and takes aim with another Kaze-Ha blast. He actually has really good aim and yeets Luffy directly at the giant green cat. Who obligingly shatters the cage in reflex, swatting Luffy into a house nearby. Kaz winces, but thankfully Luffy is made of rubber. He gusts past both Buggy Pirates and helps Luffy dig his way out of the collapsed house.

Nami and the Mayor must have hidden over in this direction, because they are already there and watching Luffy pry his way out by the time Kaz gets to the house.

Nami has that What-the-actual-fuck-is-this-guy look on her face again. Kaz guesses that the new still hasn’t worn off how stupid resilient and fuck-off strong Luffy is. The Mayor is actually staring in open amazement and exclaiming that Luffy shouldn’t be able to live through that.

Kaz finds that debatable, Zoro lives through all kinds of nasty shit with like 3 scars to show for it and no Devil Fruit to rely on. Anime physics are bullshit.

Luffy and Kaz return to the Pet Store only to find in flames. Luffy looks to Kaz to see him already shaking his head. “I don’t know how he got it burning so quick, Captain. But if I try to blow it out now…I’ll just set the rest of the town off. I’m sorry.”

Kaz had forgotten this part and in taking his time retrieving Luffy he was too late to be able to blow out the inferno. Luffy, clenches his fist as they watch it burn and watch as that cute little dog loses
his home. ‘*This sucks, why do people have to be so fucking awful. What point was there to set this place on fire?*’

Luffy nods and claps Kaz on the shoulder. “Not your fault Kaz-u. Keep an eye on the Mayor and Nami. Don’t let ChouChou get too close to that.”

“You got it, Captain. Kick his ass.”

Settling his hat firmer on his head, Luffy goes lion hunting. It doesn’t take long to send Lionel packing and judging by the screams from the next street over, Luffy doesn’t Mohihihiji either. Good, guy was weirdo anyway and Kaz knows weird, he lives it.

The Mayor is rightly upset at the further destruction of a town he, apparently helped to build. Seriously, Kaz had no friggin clue that was part of the story. ‘*Man, I wish had something to write all this down in…we need to stop being poor.*’

His anger is catching too. As Luffy returns he must hear how the Mayor called the town ‘his treasure’ and welp…one ill-timed Buggy-ball into the Mayor’s own house…Buggy’s fate is sealed. There’s nothing capable of stopping Luffy now, the captain of the Strawhat Pirates will not stand idly by and watch someone’s treasures be burned to the ground. Not going to happen.

‘*Wait…is that the house we put Zoro in? Yep*’

“Ooookkkk, yikes.” Seems to be the overall impression and Kaz agrees. He knows Zoro will be okay enough to fight that Cabaji guy later, but “DAYum” is all he’s got right now as Zoro pops up through the shattered wood frame like a sleepy green daisy.

Kaz winces when more of the house collapses further and he leaves Nami and Luffy to wrangle the Mayor guy. He helps Zoro out of the broken house, mostly by getting all the dust out of the guys face. Zoro grunts a manly sort of thank you and remarks:

“Eh? Looks like the party is getting lively! ‘Bout time.”

Luffy agrees and starts heading back towards Buggy with determination in his eyes. “I like that old guy, Shishishi.”

Kaz hops out of the wreckage of the house that literally just blew the fuck up around Zoro’s unconscious ass and stares….

Nami must be on the same wave length as him “What is—you’re going after him too?? You have three stab wounds!!!”

Zoro, who just breathes badassery says as he ties on his bandana “The injury to my name was much worse than the ones to my gut!”

“Our destination is the Grandline. We are going to steal that map back and help the old guy get his town back! C’mon guys we’re going now.” Luffy declares. And Kaz can’t argue with that kind of righteous determination. This is why he loves this crew.

Luffy extends that aura of inevitable victory further than just Kaz this time. Calling for Nami “Join our crew, Nami!” and extends his hand to her.

Even though he knows the slap and sly suggestion that they just team up is coming, Kaz still kind
of gets his hopes up. But hey, Nami still agrees to travel alongside them if not *with* them and that’s the important part. The part where Kaz is *not* in *anyway* fucking up the plot.
They arrive back at the edge of town where Buggy is hanging out. Thankfully in time for Luffy to stop Buggy from killing the Mayor. The old guy still gets the life throttled out of him, but manages to recover enough to yell at Luffy.

Luffy’s idea to smash the old guy’s head into the nearby building to knock him and keep him out of the way…not really the most well thought out plan. He really has to agree with Nami on this one and not just because they are totally bros by this point, there were several alternatives to just giving him a concussion via wall.

“Seriously Luffy, think.” He sighs. Kaz has such a headache right now.

“Shishishi, you sound like Ace.” Luffy chuckles as he walks away. Which is nice way of saying that they are nagging him about something, that to Luffy, is silly. Nami tries to explain but Luffy is already marching up to the building holding Buggy.

Demonstrating exactly how loud one can be when your entire chest expands on command, Luffy shouts “OI BIG NOSE!”

It’s at his max volume and it rings out, leaving a stunned silence in its wake across Buggy’s men. Nami is the only one panicking and Kaz tries his best to soothe her fears.

“That is the absolute worst thing he could have said!”

“Don’t worry, Luffy came here to fight and he knows what Buggy’s powers are…sort of…that’s more than he usually has by far. That’s almost a plan.”

Nami swats his arm, covering her nerves up with anger. Which is far more productive if you ask Kaz. But she falls right back into shocked affront when she see’s Luffy’s, not technically, patented Gum Gum Balloon.

In person, it does look extremely weird and Luffy does make the same sound with his lips as a balloon when he deflates. Kaz isn’t sure if it is on purpose or not, but he honestly would be disappointed if it stopped. It always gets a chuckle out of him.

“What the HELL are you??”

“You really know how to freak people out…” are the rest of the crew’s reactions, which they did already explain that Luffy is a rubber dude. Like, everything in him, just rubber. Really stretchy rubber though, like a rubber band, not a tire.

Kaz tries to explain as they wait for the dust and rubble of the building that once held up the Buggy crew to settle. He’s mostly ignored, except by Nami who seems to look at him to be the sane one on the crew.

Personally, Kaz cannot fricking wait to pass that torch officially on to her. He misses shenanigans. Shenanigans with Luffy tend to end in massive property damage though and he always feels a little guilty about it. When Nami joins up permanently though…he’s going back to being a lot less responsible. The plot will be his only concern then, plenty of time to torment his crewmates.

Nami can be in charge of stopping the property damage, Kaz isn’t all that good at it anyway.
Example A, being the rubble pile in front of them right now. Good News: About 97% of the Buggy Pirates are a non-issue right now. Bad News: Buggy is one of the 3% so they are definitely having this fight out.

Buggy crawls out of the rubble holding two of his own men in front of him. After him Cabaji and Mohiji crawl out too. Though Mohiji is more worried about Lionel Richie than fighting them, seeing as Cabaji takes after his captain and used the lion as a shield.

Reality sinks in for Nami after Mohiji confirms that Luffy also has a Devil Fruit, leaving Kaz to wonder if everything he did earlier—Right in front of their ENTIRE crew—was just his imagination.

“Seriously? Did no one notice the awesome wind powers I used earlier? Really?” Unfortunately, everyone is currently watching Zoro get his wound reopened courtesy of Cabaji and not really listening to him.

“Is he seriously going to fight with that wound? Luffy! Why are you just standing there??”

Luffy fails to answer, but Kaz knows the crew rule and decides it’s best that Nami knows now. “He can’t. That’s Zoro’s fight. Cabaji called Zoro out and Zoro answered. We can’t interfere, they won’t let us.

Also don’t worry so much, Zoro’s a fucking tank. He ain’t going anywhere. Though he could hurry this up a bit, honestly. I could beat up Cabaji and that’s just sad.”

He tried for comforting, but Kaz is still getting used to having tangible emotions in his voice. Nami mostly heard his very real dismissal of what, to her, must be real danger. She’s biting her nails and gasping at each hit Zoro takes. Kaz is kind of hoping Zoro wrecks that guy, like soon. All this exposition is painful to watch in real time.

“Is that enough of a handicap for you? Because I’m about to show you the difference between you and me…” Zoro’s voice is rough with strain but he is standing straight and loose limbed, ready to fight. “My aim is to be the world’s Greatest Swordsman; I won’t lose to anyone who considers themselves a swordsman.”

Cabaji comes back with something inane and useless as he is. Kaz’s impression of the man wasn’t great to begin with, but hearing him talk like he’s actually got skills is taking a toll on his patience. When Nami says she refuses to watch them get maimed any further he decides he might as well go with her. Cabaji is literally throwing children’s tops at Zoro and for some reason Zoro hasn’t stabbed the guy yet… ‘Yea, definitely going to go watch Nami’s back.’

“Yo, Luffy. I’m going to go see if Nami needs help, you got this right?”

“No worries, Kaz-u.” *STOMP* Kaz cringes a bit as Luffy curb stomps Buggy’s hand. ‘Yikes, that had to hurt.’

Kaz heads off, secure in his knowledge that Buggy isn’t anything to worry about. He slips off down an alley and catches up to Nami as she’s trying to talk her way out of a confrontation with a drunken stooge. Without much warning Kaz dissipates and swoops in to launch a Fisti-puff right in the guy’s face. He gets a lot of satisfaction out of how distant the thud of the guy touching back down is.

“….Where did you even come from?” Nami asks in a confused tone.

Kaz huffs “That’s a long story, but I followed you in case Luffy missed some of those guys with
the Buggy-ball. Can’t have our new Navigator injured, can we?” He says jovially.

Her expression sours “I already told your captain that I’ll never be a pirate.”

“Ah, as a very dapper pigeon once told an adorably naïve little mouse ‘Never say Never’”

“What?”

Kaz isn’t sure why he tries anymore. No one ever gets his references here. “Just we aren’t like Buggy, Nami. Surely, you’ve noticed? We…” Kaz struggles to find the right words here, Luffy is hard to define. “We don’t hurt people because we are stronger than them, like ever. Especially Luffy. It’s a rule, a self-imposed one that we all share. To us, being a pirate just means freedom and adventure.

Just look at what Luffy’s choosing to do with his day.

He’s out there starting a fight with Buggy for no real reason other than that Mayor-guy was nice to us and told us about the town is his treasure.”

Nami stares at him sharply, looking for something in his eyes he’s sure. “We’re just a bunch of idiots who dare to dream as big as we can. And we’d be super happy to have you on board you know? World’s Best Navigator has a nice ring to it.” Kaz ends with a smile. Trying his best to make sure the seeds of friendship are there. He and Luffy have definitely made sure she knows the bridge is there for her. It’s really all he can do. Her trauma with pirates isn’t going to be healed in an afternoon of, for them, light adventure.

Nami shakes her head after a moment “I’m sure you believe that, that you are good people. And—and Luffy might be helping the town, but…I can’t. I can’t trust that you’ll always be that way.”

Kaz stills smiles at her through her nicest rejection yet. “That’s okay. Luffy—well none of us really, will forget about you. If you change your mind, just, uh, follow the property damage you’re sure to find Luffy at least. Or just look for the dinghy going in circles, we’ll probably still be in East Blue, come to think of it.”

Nami laughs, knowing that’s probably true no doubt. Kaz mentally awards himself with a pat on the back. Having successfully reached out to his favorite character and maybe, just maybe, made her feel less trapped with her awful circumstances is a moment to treasure.

Speaking of treasure Nami quickly shanghaies him and orders him to gather some dusty table cloths they can see to help Nami wrap up what treasure she can carry. Or he can carry as it turns out. Nami is very persuasive and before he really understands what’s happening, he’s hauling 4 piles of gold and gems back up to street level.

Nami seems extremely pleased not having to cherry pick what’s coming with her and what isn’t. Kaz hopes this means she’ll be a lot closer to her goal and some piece of mind. Arlong might not be planning to abide by their deal at all, but it’ll give Nami some breathing room until that happens.

Kaz helps carry what has to be his weight in treasure back to the street. And he isn’t sure if she does it on purpose or not, she’d certainly tell if she did, but Nami leads them back towards the fight. As they approach an alley that would take right into the middle of the fray, Kaz can hear Buggy’s cackling.

Nami motions him to stay with treasure, which is a kind of promotion he thinks. Nami at least trusts him enough to not run away with her gold. So, he stays put but does place some of his burden
down. From everything he knows about this fight, Luffy doesn’t even really get serious during it until Buggy pisses him off by damaging his hat.

Doesn’t seem to have happened yet and Kaz is sure that his expertise won’t be needed. He’d take a nap if he trusted his luck enough to not ruin the plot while he wasn’t looking.

He can see Nami shiver as she watches the fight go on. Objectively, watching Luffy stretch well past the normal human limits and Buggy literally dismember himself as an escape tactic must be hella weird for the uninitiated.

There’s a faint “YOU BASTARD!” from the street and Kaz reckons that Buggy just hurt The Hat and now things will be wrapping up a little quicker. ‘Thank Oda, these fights take way too long in real time.’

Nami turns and asks him about the hat, remembering that Luffy told her something vague about it being his treasure and promise to Shanks originally, he answers her truthfully.

“He got that hat from like his pirate-mentor-dad-guy. It’s super important to Luffy that he keeps all his promises and he promised to gather a crew, become a pirate, and get tough enough to go find Shanks and give him that hat back.”

“Is that so…” Nami turns back to the fight as it ramps back up. He can tell she’s got something new on her mind as she watches closely and chew her lip.

That’s when Kaz hears Buggy getting closer and remembers something ‘Shit’ “Nami! Duck!”

“DID YOU THINK I’D LET YOU GET AWAY SO EAS--!!!” before Kaz punch Buggy with his Fisti-puff the man’s face contorts and the flying torso drops to the ground. Luffy who is the loudest person anywhere shouts after him.

“Did you forget? You’re still dealing with me!”

Kaz takes a moment to appreciate a rare moment of Luffy-brand sass before “That’s it, I’m getting the BIG BOOT.” He takes a well drawn back swing with his leg and—

*Fwoosh*

—sends a vertical blast of air out to sweep Buggy from their hiding place. Nami must feel safer now because she immediately starts berating Buggy about stealing this treasure fair and square.

“As a thief who only steals from pirates, I have just done so. So, this treasure is all mine now. Mlem~~~” sticking out her tongue at the beaten clown pirate for good measure.

“Ah, that makes sense!”

“NO IT DOESN’T STRAWHAT. I’ll make you pay for that Nami! CHOP CHOP…Festival!!!”

Buggy falls apart in chunks which is so very disturbing…the inner bits just look like raw chicken. Kaz thinks it could be worse…it could be eldritch horror levels of disturbing after all. Instead just incredibly weird looking. ‘Blergh’

There’s not a terrible amount of time before Buggy starts causing havoc again and proving that he is an idiot while also being a shit-person. He goes after Nami again, cornering her at the mouth of
the alley, and Kaz’s distraction cause him to be a second late, thankfully Luffy already grabbed the man’s foot and provides a hilarious distraction.

Nami, having quite enough of this day, proceeds to beat the absolute heck out Buggy with the bag of treasure she’d had with her. It’s actually kind of funny. She doesn’t stop yelling the entire time and Kaz can’t stop giggling at it.

Nami should be really proud of herself too. Not only does she beat Buggy senseless with a bag of stolen gold, she has the forethought to not stand there and giggle at the semi-conscious clown like he and Luffy are doing.

Instead Nami is following canon to a T and goes to gather all Buggy’s parts minus his hands and feet it seems. Because Buggy is standing there after trying to gather his parts, failing to look even vaguely menacing, and is about 3ft shorter than he should be. And Kaz…well he can’t help himself.

“So that’s how they fit in the clown car!”

Buggy is spluttering and clearly the shock of being a chibi hasn’t worn off yet for him. Or that was just a really epic burn for him. But Luffy is on top of things as usual and finally ready to end this nonsense. Someone besides Kaz really needs to learn when to end a joke.

“Way to go, Nami! GUMGUM BA-ZOOKA!” Shouts a gleeful Luffy as sends Buggy blasting off so far they lose sight of him over the horizon.

“Thank fuck that’s over…” is all Kaz has to offer now that his target is out of sight. No sense making fun of someone who can’t hear the hilarity. Luffy is back to being his cheerful self and proclaims that he’s satisfied with how things went.

Nami sees the damage to Luffy’s hat and offers to fix it up for him as well as give him the bag of treasure that she beat Buggy half-unconscious with. It’s startling generous considering what he knows about her. What he knows about her village…maybe she’s warming up to them just fine after all.

Even if she brushes it off as having too much to carry anyway. She even forked over the map they “needed” to find the Grandline. Kaz is 100% sure that if he said it’s right off of LogueTown, Nami could take them right to Reverse Mountain. But…for the sake of the Plot™ he carries on with the rest of the crew.

In other words, he keeps his mouth shut and helps Luffy scrape Zoro, still sleeping, off the pavement.

He hears Luffy again ask “So you’re going to be our Navigator, right?”

He says ‘Navigator’ like it’s not just a job but a title. And it is, for them, for their crew it’s an honored position…because they are all navigationally challenged at sea and not a single one of them can read a friggen map. Chart? Whatever.

Nami, of course, still refuses, but this time “But I’ll help you guys, it seems to be very profitable. And you’re not so bad…”

“Wahoo!”

“AH, but remember I’m just helping you out as long as it benefits me. No further!”
“Got it! Hey Zoro! Wakeupwakeupwakeup. We won and we got a navigator!”

Kaz, who is holding Zoro upright at the moment can feel those ‘gentle’ taps Luffy is giving Zoro to wake him up. “Uh, Luffy? Maybe ease up…Zoro’s running low on blood.”

Snorting himself awake and making Kaz sway with a flail of his arm, Zoro comes to on the fifth tap to the face…more of a slap really for anyone but Zoro and Luffy. Kaz is starting to think that Luffy may not remember that normal people, not Kaz, are solid and therefore feel things a bit more acutely. Because, he would still think that a slap but the ache wouldn’t really register…he’s set a horrible standard for the rest of the crew.

There’s a rumble of a mob of feet heading their way as Zoro blearily turns them around. “Hey Zoro, I’m people not a crutch. Oh…that’s a lot of angry villagers.”

He feels Zoro tense over his shoulder as Luffy, the idiot, tells the villagers that he was the one who knocked the Mayor out not the pirates…well other pirates.

“Luffy, don’t tell them that!” Nami hushes their idiot captain.

“But I did. You saw it!”

“Yes, but you had a good reason…”

Kaz wishes he could explain to her why it’s just not worth it and gathers himself to propel himself down the alley to grab their spoils. He gently shifts Zoro so that he’s leaning more on Luffy. And winks at him when Zoro gives him a questioning look. Free of Zoro’s considerable weight, Kaz takes advantage of Luffy being the center of attention and slips away.

“Yea, we’re Pirates” ‘Perfect timing Luffy.’

Kaz grabs all four bags, trusting that Luffy will leave his portion behind as in canon. He takes the long back to the docks and it’s a little hard to run hauling so much loot. ‘I have never had to say that in my life nor have I ever been this ecstatic to have the opportunity.’

Giggling to himself he finally hits the dock just in time to hear the Mayor’s heartfelt thank you. It’s really sweet and probably has nothing to do with that mild concussion Luffy gave him. Nope.

“Hey mister Mayor. Glad you’re not dead, uh Luffy left you something.” He points to the dock, where a bag of loot lays. His voice must carry a bit because suddenly Nami is trying to drown Luffy in between the ships. ‘Oops’

To prevent mutiny, he takes aim and this time really concentrates on where he let’s go of the bags of treasure. “Kaze: Roulette.”

The four shots are spread between the two ships and on nearly does beam Luffy and Nami in the heads where they are still scrapping between the ships, but Nami is a quick thinker and grabs it before it sinks.

Luffy is an unfortunate casualty and winds up half drowned by the time Kaz manages to float over. He lands lightly and gets a very happy greeting from Nami. He’s very clearly her favorite pirate in the whole world right now and that pleases him immensely. Zoro is suitably impressed too when he opens one of the ones that landed in their boat.

“Nice work, Kaz” ‘Finally, recognition!’ he thinks at the praise. It’s not said with a ton of sentiment, but Zoro isn’t really know for that. And praise is praise and Kaz isn’t all that picky.
He’s lived with Luffy far too long for that.

“Yea, should keep us fed for awhile, even with this bottomless pit around” Kaz says as he uses Luffy as seat. Which is fine, because it totally serves the purpose of getting all the sea water out of his captain at the same time. ‘*Multitasking for the win.*’

Zoro is quietly thinking of how much booze he can buy.

Nami is dreaming of her home and tallying up her savings.

Kaz is still sitting on his captain and longing for a steak dinner he doesn’t have to eat in a locked windowless room to enjoy.

Luffy when he comes to dreams of the open ocean and finding more friends to explore it with. And a really cool ship…or maybe a statue of himself…that would be pretty neat too he thinks. His idea is not met with a lot of approval from the rest of the crew, but as ever, Luffy is undaunted.

And on they sail, now numbering 3 crew members and a tentative fourth. At least this time they have an actual heading.
Meet Usopp, The Honorable Liar

Chapter Summary

Syrup Village and "The Great, Captain" Usopp appears.

Kuro gets his shit wrecked and the Strawhats meet The Going Merry (Merry Go)

The new crew of four (Kaz and Luffy) stopped considering Nami temporary about five minutes after she joined) sailed on. According to Nami, it’d be another day or so before they see another island, so Kaz was trying to record the events that had happened so far.

With more people to keep Luffy from falling/springing/leaping/etc. to his doom, Kaz actually had time to live up to his official title as Chronicler for the Strawhat Pirates. Or as Luffy called him Official Storyteller, it was convenient that there wasn’t any sort of movie franchise in the OP world-as that’s pretty much where all his stories came from.

Unsurprisingly, Luffy’s favorites were all pirate stories but he seemed really fond of Treasure Planet. Probably something to do with it being an even larger haul than the actual One Piece. Also, space pirates, because who didn’t think that was cool?

Kaz was trying to handwrite some notes about how they escaped Garp and got off Foosha, when Nami -tired of arguing with Luffy about something-stomped over to him. “Kaz! Tell Luffy we can’t go to the Grandline yet!”

Ah, yea…no, Luffy. Still need like 2 more people first…think “Going to be hard to get there with nothing more to eat than gold and apples, Cap.” He mutters distractedly into his notebook. His eyesight might be better here but a rocking boat is doing dick all for his still shoddy handwriting. ‘Who the fuck decided that writing with quills should still be a thing?!’

“See, Luffy. Your first mate agrees with me!” She says smugly. ‘I really want a pen… Wait, what?’

“Wait, what? I’m not the first mate! I just write down what happens and tell cool stories…make Zoro do it!”

Zoro, who had been sawing a massive log, startles awake-sensing the danger of responsibility or perhaps just the danger of Nami on the warpath. “Huh?”

Nami turns on the swordsman fully ready to bully him into compliance. It’s much easier than she thought “We don’t have enough booze to leave yet. Let’s stop somewhere. *yawn*”

“Ooo, Zoro’s right. We can’t eat apples all day. We need Meat! Nami, let’s stop somewhere for Meat!” Nami is about to pop a blood vessel, it’s visible and right on her temple. Deciding that in the absence of Usopp, someone has to be a coward in his stead—Kaz tries wedge is only semi-corporeal form into the bow of the second ship. Luffy sitting on top of the other and Zoro behind him, Kaz figures he’s far enough out of the line of sight.

Nami has one hell of an arm and demonstrates it by ricocheting an apple off Zoro’s head, Luffy catches it and eats it, of course. That little interaction is at least soothing, since it also showed up
in the anime. ‘I bet that means Usopp shows up at the next island, ooo boy.’

Kaz has a bit of a hate boner for Usopp. It’s not that the guy isn’t unlikable, it’s not even the compulsive lying, or the cowardice (though that gets annoying). It’s the sheer wasted potential that Usopp refuses to expand upon or even acknowledge seriously in the face of victory. Never until he fights Luffy on Water 7 does Usopp bother to try and that just rubs Kaz the wrong fucking way it does.

Not till he is fighting his own Captain does Usopp drop the act and stop playing pirate and actually fight like one…against Luffy! And let’s not forget that it’s only Usopp’s pain that matters to Usopp. Not like anyone wasn’t grieving with him. Asshole.

So, yes, Kaz has every intention of fucking with him at any given or created opportunity. It’s for the best really, maybe if Kaz gently bullies Usopp about the ship thing before Water 7, they can avoid some of the blatant bullshit he pulls there. How could anyone love a ship more than their friends-more than their Nakama?? Fucking…he’s not going to dwell on that.

When he tunes back in Zoro is cackling at Luffy listing their needed crew as a one cook and one Musician. Nami just looks defeated and grabs Kaz to help turn both boats to the South. To a place called the Gecko Islands. Which doesn’t ring a bell. Maybe they’re just further away than he thought. He shrugs to himself. Doesn’t matter so long as the crew doesn’t leave East Blue without Usopp. As annoying as he is, they need him. At least until they get Franky.

People who break things (ships) as often as this crew can’t afford not to have someone who’s good at repairing things. And is no handyman.

They do arrive to a familiar looking beach hours later though. Using his greater height, he peeks over Nami’s shoulder as she unfurls a local map from her own notes. “Okay so there is a village on this island, we should be able to restock there, maybe see if the locals know about any ships for sale. We-You guys are going to need a better ship than these two skiffs to enter the Grandline, ya’ know?”

“Yes! MEAT! Let’s go!”

‘Were they all just going to ignore that little slip Nami did just there…yea, best not freak her out.

“Luffy would you take this seriously and think about something besides meat for one second!” The navigator- who definitely doesn’t like any of them, AT ALL- shouts back at their Captain.

Kaz gets what he wants from the map—this is definitely the home of Syrup Village—and dissipates trying to read the air around the beach.

He’d picked up this trick trying to hide from Garp with Luffy. Figuring that if he knew where Garp was, they could be somewhere else. He still had to really focus to do it though and taking focus off being solid meant that he tended go ghostly while doing it.

By the time Zoro went on alert on the mystery attackers had Luffy dancing—Kaz knew where the little shits were, vaguely. Like he said he was still working on it.

Though Usopp made it easy to find him, as he was shouting from the wooded ridgeline in plain sight. Kaz gave him points for sheer drama though. Usopp would have been a good additional to Kaz’s former high school thespian group.
“I am Usopp! Leader of the great league of pirates who reign over this village! Praise me—Praise~” the teenager shouts from his stage.

‘Ho, boy.’ If only Kaz could roll eyes not so corporeal eyes right now…

“And the people call me—CAPTAIN Usopp! So, if you think me or my 80 million subordinates will let you attack this village—”

He hears Luffy freaking out from below. That kid was so easily impressed and yet calls—or will—so many bad guys out on their bullshit. But no, still impressed with Usopp of all people. Okay, time to hurry this along.

Kaz quietly swirls back into being in the wood line and he casually starts picking up flags and dropping them into the dirt. Nami sees him before anyone else, having not fallen for Usopp’s brazen claims to begin with—proceeds to call Usopp out on it.

The sad part is that Usopp just caves immediately, before trying to lie again. ‘This kid…’

Kaz makes it over to Usopp’s three little minions who are now waving the flags. He holds up three fingers at Nami who laughs. “Why I bet you’ve only got 3 at most!”

A dumfounded Usopp isn’t even watching when Kaz leans over the kids hiding place and whispers a ghostly “Booooo ~~~” into their ears. Between him and Nami’s callout—they break and run for it. Kaz just dissipates again and floats over to Usopp while Zoro and Luffy pretend to get serious and scare the shit out of the liar.

“Now that you’ve drawn your pistol…you’ve put your life on the line..” Luffy intones, Zoro grins evilly and starts to pull his sword from its sheath. Usopp holds his drawn slingshot a little longer, but he doesn’t have it in him to go against Luffy, not yet at least. “Real pirates sure have more punch to their words.” he quakes.

Kaz nods behind him “Nah, they totally stole that bit” and slings an arm around his shoulders

“YEAAAHNNNN” Usopp screams at the sudden touch and falls head over heels down the incline to the beach. And call him mean, but Kaz laughs at him. #No regurts.

Luffy pats Usopp’s bruised head “Shishishi, yea we stole that from Shanks.”

“He’s like, Luffy’s mentor or something.” Kaz adds as he, much more gracefully, hops down to the beach. “Sorry, about the fall. Didn’t think you’d be so jumpy and all.” Kaz is lying out of his teeth. Big time.

Usopp accepts Kaz’s offered hand up, but turns to Luffy “You know Shanks? Red-haired Shanks?”

“Yup. You’re Yasopp’s kid yea?” Luffy asks. Wait he knew that the whole time? Kaz had forgotten that, yea Usopp’s dad was on Shanks crew. Luffy would have met him a long time ago. In his defense he’s had a lot trying-not-to-die to do.

Despite Yasopp’s, no doubt, lengthy absence Usopp still must worship the guy. He invites them back to the village for lunch. Spending the whole walk there pumping Luffy for stories and info about his pops. And then continuing the info dump as the eat. Which…okay…yea. He got it. He understood that—longing he guessed to impress your Dad.

But if Usopp calls himself, Yasopp, or anyone else a “Brave warrior of the sea” one more time,
he was going to smack him. Best time to start growing up was right before a pirate incursion…
right? Yea, it’d be best if they could speed that whole thing up a bit.

“So, talked or written your Dad recently, Usopp?” Kaz offers. He does his best to make eye contact and actually mean what he’s asking. Not for meanness sake, because though he suspects Yasopp hasn’t even talked to the kid years…he doesn’t know. And well, someone ought to commiserate with the kid on his Dad-issues. Might as well be someone who’s been there.

You can hate a guy and not want him be alone with that kind of emotional pain. It’s possible.

Usopp chokes on his drink, cause he’s smooth like a baby seal …and just as easily clubbed.

“Ah well you know…um” Kaz has his answer and makes a note. Active Denial. He’s no therapist, but sometimes it feels good just to talk to someone who’s been there and maybe blow stuff up too. Blowing stuff makes everyone feel better.

Kaz just nods and changes the subject quickly. It’s easy considering some no-good asshole named Luffy, is stealing his food again. “Give that back you son of a garbage disposal!”

Usopp is quiet for a moment before he gathers himself “I’m proud of my dad, who leapt onto these possibly endless seas…”

‘Oh don’t force it, dude.’ Nami must feel the same because she’s quick to divert his attention to their boat problem. Zoro helps too, though Kaz hasn’t quite got the hang of telling if Zoro is oblivious, uncaring, or just has a damn good poker face, yet.

“It’s just a tiny village…sorry we can’t help.” Usopp demurs.

“I saw a big mansion up on the hill.” Zoro points out.

Nami latches on to that immediately, with a wheedling tone and some batting of her eye lashes “Ne, could you ask them to help us pay for a larger ship?” She gets points for sheer ballsy-ness. Because no one else would have it in them to straight up ask that.

Usopp splutters something out about them not being allowed to go there...which poor choice of words, cause if they didn’t have to show up because of #plotreasons, Luffy will wind up there eventually no matter what now. Usopp soon shoots out of the door gabbing about meetings and influence like he was something. Honestly, he could just say he had something to do today and leave it at that.

Most likely, Kaz and/or Nami would be doing some shopping in whatever passed for a market here. They didn’t have much actual currency, but Kaz had noticed that the majority of people on Foosha bartered for what they needed. Paper money was for rich twits who lived in big cities...the common man was usually very happy to trade some gold or some chores for food.

When their meal was all but finished and Nami had settled the tab with the bartender/chef they enjoyed an after-dinner meal of tormenting Usopp’s three minions from earlier. Though the fun ended abruptly when the brats screwed up and called Nami a hag. She didn’t like that.

The kids quickly volunteer to show them the mansion, but Kaz volunteer to get supplies instead. To his surprise and quiet delight, Nami even trusted him to get the necessary supplies on his own. It makes his friggin week. Nami, who trusted so few people at this point—had chosen him as her minion. He was going to maintain that trust and be her bestie-crewmate for life. While also taking every opportunity to rub that trust in Sanji’s flirty face.
But for now, he’d just be grateful for the peace and quiet. He loved Luffy. Kid was a hoot, but he was so very energy intensive to keep up with on a day to day basis. The boy did NOT sleep nearly enough for Kaz’s liking. And without Usopp and Chopper around to mess around with—Kaz was the only entertainment Luffy had. Zoro had a very firm limit on the amount of shenanigans he could be pulled into. To no one’s surprise there was a direct correlation to the amount of booze he had on hand.

Kaz had a lot on his mind and had not a lot of time to process the bullshit that was his life in what used to be just an anime. Just because Luffy made it to the end of line, didn’t necessarily mean he would. And didn’t that just induce all sorts of mental panic.

Which brought him back to the beach and again to the idea that he should really practice using this Devil Fruit. It might literally save his life later. Once they hit the Grandline there would be more people like Garp, people who knew exactly how to hit a logia.

Yea...Definitely need to train a little. Maybe in the tree line... he remembered almost all of what happened here. Jango the Hypnotist’s stupid disk thing made this whole mini-arc take for freaking ever. The more he thought about the more he realized there wasn’t much he could tell the others. Not without everyone getting really suspicious real fast. He had the most friendship token s with Luffy or Nami right now...but Luffy would just run toward a fight if he learned about it. Strategy wasn’t Luffy’s thing at all.

Nami didn’t have any abilities with her current weapons that could help keep Jango out of the fight either. She wasn’t really that handy in an outright fight until she got her Climatact. That’d be sometime after Skypeia when the crew would have access to dials. He supposed he could act as her Climatact until then, but that wasn’t really something he felt was practical to learn in an afternoon. Nami had some crazy sixth-sense for the weather and had been studying it for years as well. Kaz wasn’t that good, he barely understood what he was doing half the time. He just sort of tried things until they worked out or didn’t.

And he didn’t think Zoro hated him or even mistrusted him, but Zoro liked and understood fighting—specifically with swords, but seemed to gravitate towards anyone who was good at any kind of fighting...or maybe it was better to say that he took to people who also took fighting seriously. Teamwork was appreciated only when the fight wasn’t worth 1v1-ing anybody. Like with Helmeppo.

No, while Kaz had gotten a nod of recognition, he didn’t have enough fighter clout to really direct Zoro to cut something without the swordsman questioning it. So, he was on his own. Kaz would have to figure out some sort of wind blade...with a paper fan...

Nah, he’s got this. It’s just like making a really flat fistipuff.

He tries wafting the fan several times just moving the air like he usually does to make a whirlwind, but this time he pulls back on the wind not letting escape just letting it build.

He flicks the fan out through the cloud of denser air, trying to- hehe -fan it out. It actually works...kinda. The denser air does do what he wanted, basically. It’s just not very sharp. It hits a tree, just hard enough to hear it. It shakes a few leaves loose too. “Well that’s fucking progress right there!”

Kaz is pretty pleased with that, but he can’t stop there. He has to get this attack sharp. Although, if he can make a bar of air fly out fast enough...he can probably just knock Jango the fuck out, then steal his stupid ring thing...Kaz mentally marks that down as plan B.
He spends all day practicing, until the light fades, and it’s probably the most individual time and effort he’s put into his powers since he got them. Before this, it was just survival. Either keeping up with Luffy (who never stopped moving) or desperately trying to learn whatever crazy ass lesson Garp was teaching that day.

This was a really good workout and, Kaz feels, productive. He won’t even pretend that he’s mastered this technique, but he managed to scar a tree today, so there. All he has to do is aim very carefully and there will be NO hypnosis bullshit this time. Kaz is not in the mood to watch Captain poop-on-my-jacket beat up on his own crew or watch Jango weaponize those weird cat rejects.

‘They’re already creepy as shit, they ain’t gotta be dangerous alongside that.’

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Kaz rolls up to the seaside looking for his crew, he heard lots of shouting earlier so he’s pretty sure that the Plot is progressing quickly here. They will hopefully be on to the Baratie in a day or two. He can’t really remember how long they hang out at Kaya’s after Kurly-doll is taken care of.

When he does find everyone, they’re up on the cliffs arguing. And he is just in time to hear some stupid pour out of Zoro’s mouth. Being as light as the wind has its advantages. Kaz’s approach is quiet and only noticed by Zoro outwardly who barely glances at him and then focuses on Usopp so he can say the dumbest thing to be said yet.

“Well regardless, the truth is the truth.” Which again, is stupid when it’s said in reference to Usopp who runs through this very town yelling about pirates every fucking day…of course no one believes him.

But in the interest of not getting another new hole in his clothes, he doesn’t it say like that, he does however say something directly into Usopp’s ear. It scares the shit out of him and keeps that warm fuzzy feeling growing in Kaz’s chest.

“Yeah, but would you recognize it if you never heard it before?” then turns to the others “Cause let’s face it folks, Usopp tells more stories than I do… and that’s literally my job.”

Kaz watches the group digest that and it’s the still suspicious Nami who fact checks with Usopp “There really are pirates coming, ne Usopp?”

Actually serious for once and hopefully aware that the villager’s mistrust is his own doing, Usopp nods. “Yea, but everyone thinks it’s a lie. They think tomorrow will be just the same as today”

‘Oh gee whiz, I wonder why?’ Kaz thinks snidely, but manfully holds back and only rolls his eyes.

Usopp continues “That’s why I’m going to stop the pirates at the beach tomorrow--and make sure this stays a lie! Even if I get shot again, even if they hit me with brooms. I love this village and I have to protect it!” He ends, tears in his eyes.

“Oh. Well, alright then.” Kaz shrugs and crosses his arm, waiting. Clearly, something had gotten through Usopp’s thick skull. And judging by the look on Luffy’s face, they were going to help now. Luffy appreciated passion and resolve like that.

Zoro too, “You’re such a nice guy. Telling your henchmen to back down and going to battle
alone.” He’s got that crazy look in his eye and a hand gripping a hilt of one of his katana.

Nami grins and lets them know “Just so we’re clear, any treasure those guys have? It belongs to me!”

Luffy grins and pumps his arms, getting ready. “Yosh! We’ll help you out!”

“You-you guys are going to help me out?? Really?” Usopp shakes out. Touched by the gesture, no doubt.

Luffy just grunts “Yeah, there’ll be lots of bad guys, right?” like—of course, you can barely fight, we aren’t just going to watch you die, duh—it’s very Luffy of him.

Zoro snorts and looks appalled that Usopp thinks he could even handle one guy let alone a crew of them when Usopp starts talking shit again.

He can’t control himself any longer “Oh, so you got this then? Cool, cool. Who wants to go shopping again?” He raises his hand like he’s taking roll and watches as Usopp panics and tries to jerk his arm down.

“I’m just saying I don’t need your pity is all, this isn’t a show! You guys can leave!” Usopp blurts out, still yanking on Kaz’s raised arm to no effect. Which is sad, cause Kaz is still kind of twiggy.

But none of them actually *do* pity so that needs to stop right now. Kaz does the only thing one can do with a pseudo little brother who’s being stupid...he puts him in headlock and noogies the crap out of his head.

Zoro approves and berates Usopp verbally “Shut up, we’re not doing this out of pity. We’re going to help because we think you’re honorable.”

“Like we’d risk our lives because of pity” Luffy states. Kaz agrees and digs one last knuckle into Usopp’s head and then drops him. “Sup Sop, you got a plan or what? They’re going to be here at dawn, right?”

They give Usopp a minute to collect himself, mostly by arguing amongst themselves. Kaz just joins for appearances sake. Usopp will get them where they need to go or Kaz will be the first in line to smack him.

It turns out that he will need to do that several times during the night, because Usopp flip flops between being outwardly brave and knee-shaking terror. Lucky for...one of them—a good noogie easily gets the liar back on track.

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They wind up sticking with the anime original plan of slicking up the wrong fucking gully into the village and every last bit of Chaotic energy in him, loves it. This Island arc is a cluster and doing it this way is really the only right way to leave it.

Kaz still wasn’t going to let that heart-eyes-mother-fucker hypnotize anyone today. Besides being fucking annoying he was creepy as all get out too. Like a moonwalking Amber Alert just waiting to happen. A shudder ripples through Kaz at that.

The dawn approaches quick after they get the hill set up and Usopp actually puts in some nifty looking booby traps on the cliffsides, just in case. It’s far more than he does in the anime—even if
all this is for nothing—and it actually raises Kaz’s opinion of pre-Water7 Usopp. A bit. He’s not going to get carried away and hug the kid yet.

And then they all watch the sun rise over the ocean...and wait.

When Luffy starts fidgeting and Zoro’s scowling intensifies to an unhealthy—for other people—level, Kaz breaks the bad news.

“Uh, not to be *that* guy...but where are the other pirates?”

Luffy hmms a bit and then smacks his fist into his hand decisively. “Yosh. Kaz needs to go look for them.”

Kaz who really had just been trying to point his crew towards the beach they landed on answers without thought and hums along with Luffy. “Hm, yea I guess he—wait what?”

“Zoro!” Luffy shouts and nods to his—unofficial—first mate. Kaz in his confusion does not dodge fast enough and is once again launched into the air. “Son of taint!” Kaz acknowledges that he is made of wind and therefore it is really easy for him to be flung about—but he doesn’t fucking *like* being flung with no warning—his crew are *a bunch* of JACKASSES!

But it gives him an excuse to point out the other beach AND land on Usopp’s head...so he won’t complain.

Usopp’s panic gives him enough strength to scramble out from under Kaz’s, admittedly not substantial weight, so that he can panic in a more mobile fashion. There’s a few facepalms about spending so much time trapping one hill when there are TWO ways into the village. Honestly, if they’d thought about it...they all knew they’d come in on the other side of the island. But no one ever accused a single Strawhat pirate present or future of having a lot of foresight. Well maybe Robin, he thinks, but she’d probably let it ride cause it’s funny. Hard to tell with her.

While lost in thought Luffy runs off in the wrong fucking direction and Usopp takes off in the right one. Kaz has to stop and think about if it’s worth trying to redirect Luffy when Nami yanks Zoro down the hill in a fit of what can only be called: karmic justice.

So, he does what any younger child would do, he laughs.

To be accurate he cackles merrily. “Not so fun when you can’t control your own altitude, *is it ?*!” and continues to do so as Zoro flails about on the oily hill side. Cause it’s fucking karma.

However, they *do* have things to do today, people to kill—towns to save—Usopps to smack.

“Damnit Kaz! Fucking help or fuck off!” Zoro is clearly ready to move too. Hmm well there’s only one-way Kaz can help. It’s really the only possibility. Just the one. No alternatives could possibly work.

Kaz fades from sight and breezes to just behind Zoro’s ass, activates his inner ninja and “Secret Wind Technique: ONE thousand years of DEATH” and then claps his hands together, index fingers out...and shoves.

Kaz can barely contain the sheer manic glee as Zoro yelps and blasts up and over the top of the hill. It’s all incredibly funny until he hears the solid thud of Zoro’s face plant.

“oof, better go check on that.” He wishes he had stayed on the hill as soon as he gets within stabbing range. He has three new slash marks in his coat and Zoro is fuming. It’s terrifying and
hilarious. Zoro can’t really hurt Kaz yet and Garp was way scarier but probably not angrier. In the interest of staying clothed...he bolts for the other beach. At least this is a reliable way to keep Zoro on the right path.

“KAAAAAAZZZ!!”

“WHAHAAHAHAHAHA”

At the speed they’re going they manage to catch Luffy, who’s finally going the right direction. Kaz phase’s into ghost mode as Zoro catches up leading both his Captain and the First Mate into a wall of people coming up from the beach.

The collision of a highly annoyed Luffy and Zoro, combined with a helpful blast of wind from Kaz easily sends all the cat-eared pirates back to square one. Sometimes, it feels really good to be this bad, Kaz gloats.

Only for Zoro to swing one of his sheaths directly into Kaz’s face. The pain is fleeting...and worth it. “Asshole, do not ever touch my ass again, Kaz. And NAMI HOW DARE YOU PUSH ME DOWN THAT HILL!”

“Yes sir.” Kaz messily salutes while rubbing his face with the other hand. Someone’s been eating their booze-soaked Wheaties.

“Usopp! You liar! You told me it was NORTH!!!” Luffy howls out his own grievance. Kaz would wonder how these people even function, except he’s lived with Luffy for years now, so...

He focuses more on the guys they just blasted back down the hill and Jango. Jango who is talking up a storm and pulling that damn ring from his pocket...No, no, nope.

Kaz fazes into a strong blast of wind and uses it to carry himself down the hill. There is no fucking reason that these jobbers need a strength boost. It did nothing but turn Luffy into a rage monkey for several minutes and made this fight take even more time. He had to do something about this...with his new technique!

His initial arrival nearly blows Jango over and scatters the conscious members of the Black Cat Crew. “Wind...Scar?” his first strike buffers the ring, but fails to cut the string.

He dissapears and moves to Jango’s left in a blast of Wind and sand. “Boy that’s... plagerism...Kaz-Cutter!”

Nope, that wasn’t going to work either and the chain was still intact. He tries from another angle with a strong rush of wind. Hesitation was not helping here.

“Fuck it. 1LB Cannon!” *slice* Ding!* Kaz watches as the ring bounces to the ground. “AHA! Suck it you MJ knock off!” Victory is sweet but cut short by a grumpy swordsman grabbing Kaz by the cheek.

“Oi” Zoro is glaring fairly menacing even if he is shorter than Kaz.

“What? Give me a break, I'm still working on the name thing!”

“Yea that’s lame, Kaz-u” Luffy agrees. Is there some unwritten rule of piracy that you have to have #cool name for your attacks...oh shounen anime...right. “I’m working on it, I said.” Kaz huffs.

Okay so the name needs work but fuck it, he’s got jobbers to take care of. Luffy’s laughter flows down the hillside as Kaz becomes a Distraction. He still very much doesn’t want to really hurt anyone, that’s Zoro’s shtick.

So, Kaz does what he is best at, he inconveniences as many people as possible. He dodges around the beach and begins to spin. “Kaze : Roulette Split” Kaz figured this attack out when Luffy and he had run into a herd of really angry giant deer one day. Well, they weren’t angry until Luffy started chewing on them...but still.

Kaz uses his Roulette to create a whirlwind big enough to hold itself up for a second while he dashes out to the side and starts another in the opposite direction. He swirls between the two in a figure-8 pulling in and feeding the random jobbers laying around the beach in the tempest. It bounces them around and effectively takes them out of the fight.

Time to step it up “Roulette: Basket” Kaz repeats his performance until he has a ring of whirlwinds going...it works, it’s going great in fact. Luffy is hooting in glee, he assumes that his natural awesome is even convincing Zoro to forgive him...when he maybe, possibly, sort of loses control of it...

Having never tried to do six of these in a row it now seems like maybe he should have tried this elsewhere first. Because his Roulette Basket is more of an out of control dust devil. It starts ejecting bodies without Kaz’s approval, slamming several back into and onto the deck of the Cat ship.

“Ohhh, that’s not good.” Totally worth it to watch Jango trying to fight his way out of it though. The man even tries flinging one of his chakrams out towards Kaz but the wind is still strong enough to pull it off course and into one of his own crew. “OOooo, geez man what did he do to you?” Because Kaz can’t help but to heckle.

What little control he was exerting stops as Nami slams into his back. “Kaz! What are you—how are you doing this??”

“Uh well you see...I—am not in control of that at the moment...” He admits. Nami looks appropriately horrified by that confession because the Dust Devil in front of them is huge. Not terribly strong, but definitely huge. “Shove it out in the ocean, you idiot!”

“Oh right. I’ve never...uh done more than two—I should...you know what? Later. KA-ZE-HA-ZE HAAAAAAA!”

Kaz’s strongest attack does shove the sand infused whirlwind out to sea, right over the Black Cat ship. “Phew” Nami breathes out. “What the heck were you thinking?!” and smacks Kaz in the back of the head.

“Oi, Siam- Butchie! Get down here.” Any further rebuke is cut off when Jango regains his feet, no longer held static by the furious air, and summons the Meowban brothers. Which thankfully means that this fight is progressing as it should, but unfortunately means Kaz has to listen to Siam scream and flail his way up to Zorro and Luffy.

That’s a trial in and of itself. Siam hits some interesting notes. Butchie stays by Jango and Kaz refuses to take his eyes off the two.
He can hear Nami’s sharp inhale that probably indicates Zoro lost swords 1&2. He can hear Siam laughing and Zoro’s furious roar as Kuina’s sword hits the ground along with his other blade.

Jango sends Butchie in to tag-team, but Luffy stops him cold. Without the whole getting hypnotized portion of the fight there’s little to stop Luffy from escalating things, as he tends to do. Luffy sends the overweight cat-themed asshole flying and follows him down the hill.

Nami elbows Kaz before he can watch them really get into it, whispering “Kaz, Zoro needs his swords, Go!”

“Right. I can do that. Stay out of their way, yea?” Kaz soars up the hill and scoops up the blades. It’s not technically what happened in the anime but Kaz can’t be hurt by these losers, so it’s much better if he gets close to the crazy Cat-eared weirdo.

Zoro is holding off the one cat-man easily but he’s also trying to keep Siam from going after Usopp who is Not helping by drawing attention to himself with all the screeching. “Zoro!” Kaz tosses the swords towards their owner and dexterous as ever Zoro manages to knock Siam away from him long enough to get both unsheathed and Wado Ichimonji set between his teeth.

“Thanks, Kaz .... Kaz! Behind—fuck off!” Zoro’s voice turns to warning but he’s cut off by Siam rebounding from the cliff wall and has to defend himself. Kaz doesn’t bother to check on, he just knows that that taking his eyes off that Hypno-douche was a bad idea, no matter what Nami said.

He feels time slow as Jango creeps up on Nami. She isn’t looking down the beach—to o concerned with getting Zoro his swords back. She’s not watching her back!

Kaz moves faster than he ever has before, it’s desperation and panic to protect his friend. Whatever he manages to pull off he moves as fast as Zoro for a second. To Nami he appears in a gust of wind and draws her attention to the danger. Thankfully, she flails out of the way and Kaz uses his momentum to strike.

He rotates into Jango and those stupid chakrams, they can’t hurt him and there’s no reason Nami should take a hit from this guy. Kaz embeds Jango into the cliff side. Neutralizing the creepy bastard with a thin column of wind from his elbow.

It’s way more power than he usually manages...or maybe just more concentrated. Your elbow is smaller than your fist...he guesses. Not the time to think about it.

“You okay, Nami?” Kaz asks. She’s looking a little shell-shocked and all the other bad guys are being handled right now, there’s time to check on her. “Heh? Ahh!” She darts behind him. “What took you so long!?”

‘Well, at least she’s back to normal and unhurt.’ Kaz thinks. He doesn’t like seeing his friends scared like that. He swipes his hair out of face and watches as the Meowban brothers take a final hit each. Cool. Oh shit.

If those idiots were down it meant that...a long shadow looms from the top of the hill, above where Zoro ended his fight.

And this time there are no distractions for Kuro to hit first...this is probably what he gets for messing with the plot. Fuck.

He has to dooooom something!
Could he throw someone up there to distract Kuro...no. Kaz couldn’t sacrifice these guys like that. He didn’t want anyone to get hurt, he didn’t want to actually hurt anyone.

Kuro already has his cat claws on but instead of attacking, he laconically addresses his crew or what’s left of it.

“You had but one job and you’ve let five children halt you on the beach. There is no restitution for this, you will all die with them for this failure.”

Kaz had forgotten how much of an asshole Kuro was. Most of his crew was still unconscious from being firstly, knocked back down the cliff by Zoro and Luffy and then spat out of Kaz’s accidental tornado. The bastard really intended to kill those guys too?

“Klahadore!” Oh no. No. Nononono. Kaya had apparently followed the former butler down to the beach. What time to start believing in Usopp’s stories. “Klahadore, Stop this!”

“Young miss...” responds the butler. And for a second Kaz almost believes that the man cares enough about Kaya to not try and kill her. But that second ends.

Kaz twitches when Luffy walks up leans into him to ask what the butler-guy said. He has to cringe first, knowing that won’t go over well. Nope, not at all. It’s not well received in the slightest and Kaz gently redirects Luffy to more pressing matters, like how they are going to get Kaya away from here.

“Oh no, she brought the gun.” He sighs. Kuro’s mad speech about killing everyone and taking Kaya’s fortune brings the same response as the anime. Kaya has pulled out a standard pistol and Kuro’s general levels of crazy seem to rise.

His words come out in a comforting drawl, but then he ends with the murder talk again. This dude has to be chock full of the crazy. But it must work on Kaya, confuses her, and in short order Kuro has her gun on the ground.

Thank whatever god might be listening here, because Usopp —for the first time—makes Kaz proud. There’s barely a second between when the gun hits the ground and when Usopp picks it up.

Then he is there, brandishing the thing at Kuro’s chest and firing off the bullet. It misses, because Kuro is a shifty bastard. A fast and shifty bastard. Kaz can’t even see the guy move, it’s a little insane. He might even have returned Zoro’s alarmed look if one of jobbers behind him hadn’t said the name of the move out loud.

“Oh no~it’s Captain Kuro’s Pussyfoot Maneuver!”

*snort*gasp*

“I’m sorry the what?!” Kaz chokes out. He had definitely not remembered that. Quite possibly it was lost when he blacked-out from laughing at it the first time, because he seems to be trying for a repeat performance right now. “Heeeheeeehahahahahaha. The PUSSYFOOT MA-neuver!” Kaz shouts. It has a lot different effect on the Strawhats in real time than in an anime trying to build tension. First Nami starts giggling with him, hand over her mouth. Trying not to draw attention to herself likely.

Then Zoro shouts from his spot about halfway up the hill “That is not what it’s called” in an incredulous roar. Zoro takes attack naming, very seriously.
“No, seriously! That’s what this jobber down here called it! The PUSSYFOOT maneuver...” He’s running out of air as he watches Zoro take Wado from his mouth and hold the sword in front his face, like his shaking shoulders aren’t a dead giveaway for his laughter.

Luffy is literally rolling on the ground with Kaz and laughing his off.

Kuro...finds it less funny. Where he wasn’t actively menacing Usopp or Kaya at first he immediately does so on hearing their choked laughter. They actually have to stop laughing when Kuro has Usopp’s head surrounded in his glove of knives. Yikes.

Kuro leans into Usopp’s space and growls “I do believe I owe you one...” while pulling the bandage off his face. “I think you said this was with everything you had? As hard as you could, yes?”

*BAP*

The entire beach seems to jerk in response to a rubber fist shoving its way into Kuro’s face. Kaz for one, hadn’t even seen Luffy quiet down or stand up, let alone move over to the middle of the path. But in his defense, he had been busy laughing his ass off.

“Shishishi, if you hate being punched so badly, I’ve got a hundred more where that came from.” Luffy seems delighted by Kuro’s anger and the shock from the leftover jobbers on the beach. Kuro, incensed, launches himself past Zoro and right at Luffy, but Luffy has the guy’s number already.

With his arms already stretching for one of the boulders scattered about the rocky shore line, all it takes is a snap of rubber limbs and Luffy has a shield. One which Kuro runs right into. It stops him clean and Luffy breaks the right glove of doom with a sharp twist of his rock shield.

“Oh, snap.” says Kaz in reaction. He’d seen Luffy stretching, but hadn’t realized what his Captain had been planning. That was brilliant. Now Crazy Cat Man only had one handful of weapons to use. “Good work Luffy! Protect my treasure!”

‘Geez Nami, priorities. ’ Luffy is having a ball though.

“You’re not fit to be a pirate! ‘specially if what you want is to abandon your name and hide, scaredy-cat!” Luffy hefts his shield and slams it right into the stunned Kuro’s face. “My ambition is much greater than yours!”

Seeing that Kuro is distracted and that Usopp is directing the newly arrived trio of kids to quietly pull Kaya into the woods, Kaz decides it would be better if Nami were at least behind the line Zoro is defending. Technically she should be unconscious and totally out of this fight, but again, Kaz hates to see people hurt.

‘Damn this marshmallow interior.’ “Nami, let’s get you up there behind Zoro alright? Some one needs to go help Kaya and those brats. I don’t want to leave you down here wi— wait...where’d fucking Jango?”

“Huh? He’s right—Oh no. Kaz he must have slipped by when Luffy and Kuro started fighting!” Nami must be thinking along the same lines as Kaz. “Right, c’mere.” He hefts her up into his arms and blasts up to the top of the cliff. Out of Luffy and Kuro’s way.

Setting Nami down near the end of the pathway he nods to Zoro who does the same in return. Zoro will stand guard over the village entrance and Nami. Kaz knows that no matter what, nothing will get by the swordsman. He scoops up a limping Usopp who isn’t going to make any useful
headway without assistance. This probably should have been Zoro’s job, but Kaz would readily admit that if something went haywire on the beach, Zoro was much more able to put a firm and final stop to it than Kaz.

They are lost in the press of trees for minutes of wasted of time. Usopp’s not so helpful shouting of “East! I said turn East!” is wasted air right now. Kaz can’t orient himself without the sun and the canopy above them is thick and shady. He has no idea which way East fucking is right now and yells at Usopp to try narrowing that down for him.

They really only manage to find the trail when they run into a corridor of downed trees and sheared off shrubbery. Usopp points further out, further into the forest “That way!”

Kaz tosses Usopp in the air and catches him, letting him sit on his shoulders so Kaz doesn’t have to guess where he is pointing. “You want to try that where I can see it bud?”

“Uh right, that way!”

Kaz lets his legs blur into wind and takes off, Usopp screaming and flailing about.

“Usopp there they are!” Kaz finally spots them through the trees and the kids provide a distraction by shoving—teehee—a shovel right up Jango’s crack. They take a brutal hit for it, but Kaz’s speed increases as they get closer and unlike someone running, Kaz doesn’t bounce about. It’s the perfect platform to give Usopp a clear shot at Jango as the man tries to off Kaya once more.

“Hissatsu: Gunpowder Star!”

It hits Jango right between the eyes and goes off like a firecracker. Kaz continues into the clearing, not sure if they’ll have to punch out Jango in close quarters or not. But Jango is definitely out of the fight. “Good job saving the girl, Usopp.” He’s able to say sincerely and somewhat in apology for being extra salty earlier.

“Thank you. No shot is too difficult for the Great! Capt —Whoa” Usopp is forced to shut his mouth as Kaz drops him. Kaz has his limits and Usopp tends to push them all. He still respects Usopp for asking the other’s in the clearing to keep everything quiet from the village. For once Usopp is not showboating or trying claim any glory that doesn’t really belong to him.

It’s actually pretty thoughtful of him, Kaz guesses. And it’s awfully thoughtful of the unconscious Jango to give Kaz his coat. So, so thoughtful. Kaz might just tear up a bit.

He adjusts the shoulders and starts tossing the dozens of chakrams strapped and hidden in the pockets of his new jacket. Kaz would not be needing them. He intends to stop, interfering in the plot. The thought that it might mean his friends get hurt is shoved to the back of his mind. He knows if he dwells on it they’ll be in the same place next week.

He just can’t keep fucking the plot TM.

They help Kaya and the kids find their way back to the road and then go see what happened on the beach.

Luffy is soaking up the sun in the middle of the path back down the cliffs and Zoro looks to be close to sleeping sitting with his back against the cliffside on Luffy’s left. They each have a few shallow cuts to show for their fights, but it’s nothing serious. Here, it’ll be gone in a day.

Nami, to no one’s surprise, is cuddling one of the bags of loot liberated from the Black Cat
Usopp greets the others “Thanks, for helping me save the village. I, uh, wouldn’t have been able to do it without you guys.”

“thppppt” Luffy blows a razzberry at him and Zoro clarifies “If you hadn’t helped? I wouldn’t have done shit.”

Luffy chirps a happy “Me Too!”

“Who cares about all that. I still have my treasure!” Nami squeels into the canvas bag of gold.

Kaz offers a shrug, slaps Usopp on the back “Same.” and goes to loot the beach for the best looking CatHat to add to his BuggyHat and the flower crown he stole off Helmeppo’s door.

Usopp seems to understand what they mean though. That they admired his determination to help even if all he was going to accomplish was getting hurt or maybe even killed. All for something he held precious. Kaz hopes he really understands that. Especially since he goes on to declare his intent to leave the island.

Kaz finds what he’s looking for half buried in the sand. It’s a light blue and has intact cat ears, it’s perfect though a bit sandy. He’ll wash it first. Sand is nature’s glitter and he has zero desire to get any more of it in his long hair.

By the time he makes up the path again, the rest of the crew minus Usopp is waiting for him. Luffy cackles in delight when Kaz shows him his loot for the day. Nami raises an eyebrow but doesn’t say anything. If Zoro cares beyond telling them all to hurry up so they can get breakfast, a move that leads to Luffy charging back to the village, Kaz can’t really tell.

But he worked hard today. He really hadn’t ever tried to do more than like 3 or 4 whirlwinds before and he’d managed to do 6 today. Semi-successfully even. So, he’s hungry and not willing to let Luffy get there first and eat all the good stuff. He demands more than rice today!

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The crew settles in and eats a good meal at the local inn. Kaz even manages to eat more than a few bites of actual protein before Luffy steals the plate of fried fish. Asshole.

Before they can get kicked out for fighting, Nami just orders another plate and shoves it in front of Kaz. Maybe in unspoken thanks for saving her from Jango. Whatever it actually is, it reasserts why Nami is his favorite person here.

Towards the afternoon they are contemplating their course after they leave. Luffy not caring so long as it eventually led to the Grandline. Kaz shrugs, not really in the habit of directing things and not wanting to lead them astray of the plot again.

Before Nami can make someone else to choose or outright makes Luffy be Captain outside a fistfight, their table is approached by Kaya. Who really is the sweetest person Kaz has ever met. She thanks them for saving the island in a hushed tone. Then begs them to come to the beach with her.

“I’ve prepared a surprise for all of you, please accept it!” There’s no need to ask them twice. Knowing what the surprise is Kaz is doubly excited and helps herd the other Strawhats down to the beach.
The whole crew is stunned at their first sight of the *Merry Go* in her real physical beauty. Kaz is having trouble reconciling the actual wooden ship in front him with the little boat he once watched sail across a screen. Or the even tinier replica he’d put together once.

“Wahoo! We can really have this?” asks Luffy. Kaya, ever quiet and polite “Yes. Please use this!” She is such a nice lady. Kaz would hug her but he is far too quickly shanghaied by Nami, who orders him to go get the treasure loaded from the other boat. Namely so she can talk to Merry himself about the boat stats. Which is probably a good idea, he wants his hats anyway.

“aaHHhaaaHHHaaaaahhhhh” *And* there’s Usopp.

“What’s he doing? Oi, Kaz-u look at this.” Luffy points to the rolling green boulder that can only be Usopp being stupid. Kaz just sighs.

Zoro does as well “Let’s just stop the fool for now, he’s on a collision course with the ship.” Luffy and Zoro brace themselves and stop Usopp with their feet. Using his face.

Yikes. Kaz goes over to their skiffs and starts unloading and quickly has all their remaining things-and Nami’s treasure-on the *Merry*.

He walks up in time to hear Luffy ask “We’re nakama now, right?”

Kaz can tell Usopp’s a little stunned by the question ‘*Don’t say a dumb thing, Usopp. Do not.*’

“I..I get to be Captain, right?” Step one failed, Usopp.

“Don’t be stupid! I’m already the Captain!” Luffy shouts back. Kaz agrees and adds “You only get that position by fighting Luffy for it, you *really* want to go there, sniper-boy?”

“Hehe. I~you need a sniper, right Luffy?”

He gets a firm pat on the shoulder “Welcome to the crew, little buddy. Heads up!” and then ghosts underneath Usopp and his massive pack. “ROULETTE” sends both swirling up and over the back guardrails, with Kaz solidifying neatly on top of them—Jango coat flapping dramatically as he poses. Luffy laughs the loudest but everyone joins in and Kaz stops goofing off shortly to pull Usopp to his feet and briskly brush him...only to toss him at Luffy.

“First Dibs On a BUNK!” he shouts as he makes a break for one of the doors.

“No fair Kaz-u!”

“That’s cheating! You windy bastard!”

The boys take off, Zoro and Kaz shoving and pushing each other as they search out the crew quarters.

“You all better stay out of that Cabin! I’m claiming that as Navigator Only Territory!!” Shouts Nami after them.

Kaz was so happy to be here he even dragged Zoro back on track so they could all go claim a bunk together. This would be their home for a long time. For as long as *Merry* could last, could protect them, stay with them.

It didn’t really hit until later, after picking bunks and setting up his hat shine, after celebratory drinks with his friends—his nakama—that he was finally home. He had a *home*, after two years
of sleeping on a mat or in a pile of leaves, even out on the deck of a skiff with no shelter. There was even a perfect corner in the bunkhouse for his hat shrine.

He couldn’t stop the tears from flowing. He was safe, he was home.
Nami absolutely loved the sea and just about everything to do with sailing. A fresh wind, bright sun, the roar of—BoooM!—some *idiots* trying to blow their brand new *free* ship.

It’s not until she’s yelling at Zoro for not keeping an eye on these *children* that she realizes that she thought of the *Merry* as *theirs*. As in, belonging to all of them. A distinct impossibility and one she needs to go off right fucking now. No matter how…good or maybe decent is a better word, these guys are…they are pirates.

She swears to the sea though that these idiots are nowhere near Arlong level though. That’s why it’s okay to stay…just for now. Just until they get to the next island. Then she can take her percent of the treasure (no more than 80% though, Kaz did save her from Jango after all) and be off. A nice clean break.

But first she really felt that, like really down in her bones felt, that if she left right now…these stupid, stupid boys would immediately get themselves killed. Probably take this lovely *free* caravel right to the bottom of the sea with too. Nami, as a trained navigator and lover of all things ocean (Fishmen excluded) couldn’t bear to see that happen.

The only way to make sure of that, was to train someone in her place. At least superficially, so that when she told herself it was okay—she’d believe it.

Luffy was the Captain, he was in charge of what the destination was—not the actual getting there—and of course protecting the crew. The first was how he introduced himself, so he was very good at letting members of the crew know exactly where they were going. The second was usually achieved at the same volume and surprisingly little bloodshed on his part. Nami hadn’t seen Luffy 1) hurt anyone badly that wasn’t asking to be punched in the face anyway or 2) hurt anyone else intentionally. There had been a few Gummy Rockets with shoddy landings, but no one came out of those with more than a bruise really.

He was a goofy kid, but deadly serious about who he called nakama. Nami could admire a kid who had chosen his family and would fight the world for them, as she was sure Luffy would do.

Zoro was allegedly the first mate or had at least been nominated as such by Kaz and Luffy hadn’t argued. Zoro also had the world’s shittiest sense of direction. He’d gotten lost on the *Merry* 3 times already. They’d only been on the ship for a few days and it was *not* that big. He was also the one she had thought she would need to be the most careful around, but she had already revised that opinion.

Zoro could be intense, scarly sometimes, but he wasn’t mean. He’d yell back at her, just to show he wasn’t scared of her, but then he’d do what she told him to anyway. He also seemingly had unshakable faith in Luffy. Both in the fight with Buggy and Kuro he’d turned his back on
enemies that could have killed him, but he had trusted Luffy to take care of things. And Kaz had trusted both of them to keep not only her, but all of Syrup safe when he’d gone to help Usopp and Kaya.

Faith like that was something Nami had in herself alone now.

Kaz, was a weirdo like the rest of them, but one she liked just a little better than the others. He had more common sense than the others, who didn’t have the common sense kami gave a rock. In her opinion that was his biggest selling point. Common fucking sense. Though she also appreciated the way he and Zoro looked out for everyone, including herself.

Zoro might be on Luffy duty—being the one who could swim—but Kaz would look out for everyone else. Even if he seemed rather annoyed by Usopp—he still stopped that shark they fished up from eating him. Luffy, the maniac, had just laughed. Zoro hadn’t even stopped snoring long enough to notice there even *was* a shark. Kaz was the one who thought to blow the stupid fish back into the water.

Kaz both did and did not remind of her Nojiko. This was a good thing as much as it was hurtful.

Usopp was borderline useless, he was scared of his own shadow or bragging about how his shadow was scared of him. But he was brave enough to stand up to Kuro, though dumb enough to try to do it alone, so she forgave him for it and let Kaz give him noogies when he got stupid. He was also rather smart when he put his mind to it and stopped boasting long enough to actually *do* something. So far, he fashioned them a spy glass, fishing rods, line and hooks, and brought enough random junk with him to problem build a couple of robots. Nami would never fault his ingenuity…but she’d fault all the fucking bragging in a heartbeat.

So, due to Zoro being a directionless barbarian and Usopp being fucking useless/terrified of her, she had nominated Kaz to be her protege. Whether he wanted to or not.

Besides, he had that Devil Fruit going for him and seemed to be one of the few with common sense kami gave a rock. Well, most of the time. She did remember their introduction to each other after all, but awkward or not he was going to learn something today.

“Kaz! Get over here.” Might as well start today.

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Nami is both impressed and terrified at Kaz’s ignorance. In his defense he was literally raised in a jungle…by bandits. It’s probably a minor miracle that he can read and write as well as he can and she acknowledges that.

But the sheer level of ignorance was staggering. Kaz had absolutely no clue *how* he was doing his attacks. Nor did he really understand the cause and effects of introducing new weather patterns to existing ones. That kind of ignorance wasn’t just annoying with someone who could create a dust devil the size of a large ship…it was outright dangerous.

It was so much worse than she feared when she decided to teach one of these pirates navigation. Kaz didn’t just need to learn navigation, he needed to learn weather manipulation. Period. End of. The kind of havoc he could wreak without her knowledge of weather was too great to allow to wander East Blue alone.

“Right, time to do this. It’s for my own safety after all.”

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“So, windward is the opposite of leeward and you’d want to aim the sails to best catch…” Nami asks. She waited as Kaz thinks his way through the question. She’s started with direction based questions and hopes that Kaz is smart enough to figure out how to apply it on his own. She has medium hopes that this is possible.

It can’t go any worse than shouting directions at Luffy and Zoro and having them as which one meant left. The urge to shove them both overboard was strong…maybe she could bribe Kaz into doing it for her…thoughts for later.

“Uh, well we’re a sailboat so we need the wind to move…so we need to face windward and sail with the wind.” Oh, thank kami, he gets it.

“Yes! Now think what are the possible consequences of blasting cold air into a leeward air current?”

“It depends on what temperature and speed the leeward current is?”

“Why?”

“Because…I might make a squall and kill us all.” Close enough. She’s definitely going to buy him something nice…like a new wardrobe that doesn’t offend her eyes. It’s really for everyone’s benefit if she does.

It still counts as a gift if she makes him pay for half…right? Probably.

Kaz

Kaz was watching Usopp make a fool of himself playing pirate by the bow and trying to remember all the sailing terms Nami had taught him this morning. He liked Nami, she was a really good teacher if a little sarcastic about it. She was also the only person who had any idea of what his Devil Fruit was even capable of, she’d seemed a little appalled about how the whole dust devil thing had gotten out of hand at Syrup Village.

In his defense, literally no one, ever, had tried to teach him how to use his Devil Fruit. Even his introduction to the Kaze no Mi had been super vague. Like talking to a creepy cryptic of a scarecrow.

Kaz still wasn’t sure how ‘to be the wind’ or even if he really wanted to, not after he’d listened to Nami go off about extreme weather patterns. Though ‘Micro Burst’ sounded cool, accidentally setting one off probably wouldn’t be a good idea when he couldn’t really control a dust devil. So, here he was talking himself through baby steps.

First, he intended to learn how to use basic navigation, because Nami was right about one thing—the crew wouldn’t always be travelling together. Not in the way she obviously thought, but later on the Grandline the crew did tend to get a bit scattered on the larger islands. Then there was the entirety of the Drum Island arc where Nami was sick and definitely Not navigating. If she got sick again, they needed at least one person capable of keeping an eye on the weather on their way to Drum.

A delay could mean losing Nami and Kaz had promised himself that he wasn’t going to let that happen. His presence would not be the factor that lost him Nakama. He might be a depressive mess of a pirate, but he was a loyal one. Luffy and Nami were his Nakama, he’d do anything for them.

Luffy, because well Luffy would do the same for him—no questions asked. And Nami because, well
one she’d always been his favorite, but also because she seemed to actually believe in his abilities and actually thought enough him to teach him what she knew. That was a pretty big deal, that she would care about what happened to them and the *Merry*.

Zoro he could trust to protect himself, so Kaz just didn’t worry about the other teen. Usopp was an irritation that no amount of Neosporin could soothe. Kaz might be sad if the guy died…maybe, but he certainly wouldn’t die for him. Usopp had a shit-ton of growing up to do before that.

“OIII, Kaz-u! Look, I fixed our flag!” Kaz leans over the rails of the crow’s nest so he can see Luffy. Oh boy. “Now that Usopp’s here we have enough people and we need a Mark.” Yea…but not that one, Luffy.

Zoro is the first to comment, dryly saying “A pirate flag is supposed to be a symbol of death…”

“Cap’n we’re trying to instill fear…not pity” Kaz assists and Zoro nods along.

Nami takes her turn appraising it “I do feel fear…but it’s mostly at the sheer lack of talent.” Luffy is pouting already, so Nami’s sick burn may have been unnecessary—but it was awesome.

Usopp starts…chortling? Seriously, the urge to dunk him in the ocean becomes stronger every time this loon opens his mouth.

“You should have told me that’s what you were doing. I would have offered my talents as a Master Artist. I’ve been painting graffiti for 50 years.” Kaz cannot physically, at this time, roll his eyes any harder.

Even with skepticism heavy in the air and dead faces on 3 of four listening faces, Usopp continues to extoll his virtues as a “master artist” for another 2 minutes too long. “Dude, you seriously need to get to the point and cut the shit. Or we’re going to figure out if I can nebulize fabric paint.”

Zoro snorts “Does Usopp get to be the canvas?”

“If God is listening…yes.” Kaz feels like Zoro understands his frustrations with Usopp, but it’s probably too soon for the swordsman to feel attached enough to them all to help. Especially not when he and Nami spend a good chunk of breakfast every morning yelling at each other. And there’s Usopp…being himself.

“heheheh. Well you guys just stand back and watch then!”

“So cool! Go grandpa Usopp!” Kaz loves Luffy. No one has that kid’s comedic timing.

Usopp gathers the paints around him and starts going for the green paint. Well this seems like a good time to instill in Usopp the importance of the crew, specifically Usopp’s place in it.

“Usopp.”

“Yea, Kaz?”

*Smack* “OW! What was that for??”

“Usopp, this is the Strawhat Pirate flag. The *Straw*hat, not the Usopp pirates, those pirates don’t exist.”

“Ah, heh. Right. I’ll just, fix Luffy’s design.”

“That’s a good call, bud.” Kaz deliberately stands too close to Usopp’s back and watches the
squirrelly mess of a sniper. One of these days, the boy was going to learn to be apart of the existing team and to stop trying to take shit over. Without someone looming over him preferably.

In short order though, Usopp really does work some sort of magic to fix the wonky lines and misshapen skull that Luffy had drawn. It looks like, now, just like it did in the anime. Bold color carefully shaped into the happy cartoon-like skull that’s wearing a strawhat. It’s familiar and reassuring.

He has not fucked up. Things are on working out, if not in perfect order then in a close enough copy to it that everyone is basically where they should be.

They each take a turn to compliment their new flag and yes, Kaz does too. He won’t withhold something Usopp earned. “Hey, that’s really good Usopp.”

“Yea? Yea. I guess that’s more in line.”

“Damn right. We might all be individuals, but we wouldn’t be here without Luffy. He’s our Captain, the world will know us because of Luffy. Try to remember that.” And be grateful, dammit.

Luffy is done prancing about with their new flag and Kaz makes room for him to get to Usopp.

“Alright! Usopp, draw one on the sail too!”

“Ooo, yea that’d be awesome!” Usopp rushes off to do as Luffy ordered and Kaz has to wonder if the idiot retained anything he just said. Probably not. But there’s time, plenty of time to make his point. If Kaz happens to take a little pleasure than normal when Usopp nearly falls off the mast… well he is a pirate.
There’s a brand-new pirate flag flapping in the breeze above him, a sound that’s quickly become something reassuring to Kaz. Along with the sounds of his Nakama chilling along the deck, it’s the perfect way to be lulled into a nap.

Like right now he can hear the sounds of old paper rustling because Nami is reading some local maps and checking their course. Zoro is taking his turn in the crow’s nest…though Kaz is fairly certain he’s using it as an opportunity to nap, Zoro snore is becoming as distinctive as the sound of the flag. But Kaz can’t fault him for trying to grab a nap that doesn’t end in Luffy pouncing on him or Usopp blowing something up next to him. The sound of clinking metal and rustling canvas lets him know that Usopp himself, is actually quietly messing with his slingshot ammo for once and Luffy…

Huh, Kaz cannot hear Luffy right now…that’s probably not a gooood thing…the creak of hatch comes in time to stop him from really panicking. Luffy must have been exploring the forward storage. Though Kaz can’t remember there being anything important there, so his curiosity is piqued.

Luffy drags a large crate out of the forward hold and Kaz changes his mind, he is no longer curious; he’s worried. The crate has DANGER stamped all over it in red paint and is nothing he wants to see on the deck of his newly acquired home.

It’s not until they open that he realizes that this might mean Plot™ is happening. But upon seeing the crate full to the brim with cannonballs, he clues in. Luffy of course wants to play with the cannon at that point. It being far from the most dangerous thing Luffy has ever picked up to play with, Kaz doesn’t stop the madness from happening. Nami even finds them a reef with a couple large rocks that are going to make great targets.

“Eh, you say something Usopp?”

Usopp screeches about listening to him and Kaz ignores that too as Nami gets him to trim the sails so they can move downwind from their current position. They arrive to the reef and there’s plenty of targets for Luffy and Usopp to fire at. Zoro jerks awake at Luffy’s first attempt. It goes wide, missing the rock jutting out from the reef by a good margin.

Kaz then remembers that Luffy isn’t really that good at aiming, not even his own fists. His current accuracy is due to literal years of high stakes practice with and without Garp’s dubious assistance.

Zoro, now awake and aware, “What the fuck are they doing?”

“The pirate equivalent of playing in the street, I think.” Zoro grunts questioningly, which is a feat. Kaz realizes that the comparison probably doesn’t really make sense here, seeing as there are few if any vehicles in East Blue. “Luffy found some cannonballs in the hold. He and Usopp decided to renovate one of the local reefs.” Zoro nods and watches along with Kaz as Usopp has a go.
Usopp makes his adjustments to the way the cannon is tilting, muttering to himself and then manages to hit the target rock on his first try. To Luffy’s utter joy and Usopp’s own amazement. That dork.

“Sugeiiii! That’s so cool Usopp! That’s it, you are our official sniper. Wahoo!” Kaz claps very loudly and deliberately over Usopp as he starts to ask why he can’t be the captain.

“Hehe, Sniper! Right, huh? Being a sniper is pretty awesome!”

“Congrats Usopp. Just like your old man, huh?” Kaz makes what he hopes is a positive comparison to Yasopp. Because while the guy had pretty much abandoned his family to go sailing with Shanks. He was THE sniper to one of the most powerful warlords and damn good at his job. Yasopp also bragged enough about Usopp that Luffy knew who he was, so good bet that while absent...he cared.

Usopp needed some good grounding occasionally, but he also needed to understand what being a pirate was. It wasn’t always going to be fun days cruising on the Merry. There were some tough days coming up.

“Y-yea, Yeah! I’m going to be the greatest sniper who ever lived. Luffy! Did I tell you about the time I shot a bullet into a giant’s mouth? I was 1000 no 100,000 paces away....”

~~~~~

Leaving the Merry anchored near the reef, they break for lunch fished up from the sea yesterday. Kaz takes a turn at the small but serviceable grill. He’s not too bad at it at all. So long as no one expects more than kabobs for vegetables...or marinades. He’s from the South, marinade is just a fancy way of saying beer you poured on a steak.

The sizzle of the first mystery sea meat steak hitting the grill sparks a conversation about getting a cook. Well, Nami and the others hint repeatedly at Luffy that they should get a cook and that goes right over Luffy’s head.

“Right, cause every pirate crew needs one special kind of person.” Luffy states. Nami and Usopp nod along, clearly not understanding where this is going. Zoro looks to have fallen back asleep. “A Musician!”

“What?” “Luffy, no.” “How did you get musician out of that?” Oh, look Zoro is awake. “What do you think voyages are, Luffy??”

Kaz has to shout to get their attention over the ridiculous amounts of incredulity his crew is shouting. “Luffy...we need a cook. They were hinting, poorly, that we need an actual cook. That’s why it would be a waste to have this nice kitchen...and no one to really use it.”

Luffy frowns, working through the problem before turning back to Nami, like she can be reasoned with “But we have Kaz-u. He can cook.”

This boy. Thankfully, Nami has his back. “Luffy, Kaz can only grill food at best. And you guys can’t afford my rates to get me to cook for you, you bottomless pit.” Luffy giggles at her accusation, having heard as much from Kaz before. Nami would totally cook for him if he asked though.

Kaz tries again, since Nami is backing him up “Luffy, do you even know what to do with a head of lettuce?? Cause I don’t, you can’t grill it so no lettuce for us.” He takes one out of the cabinet, mentally toying with the idea of bouncing it off his captain’s head.
“Let us what, Kaz-u?” That’s it. The vegetable goes flying and in an odd response Zoro catches it in one hand and cradles it against him…seemingly without waking, when did he fall back to sleep?? He always was good with kids, Kaz guesses.

Before the tussle can go further than thrown veggies, there’s a crash from outside. Someone is on the deck “COME OUT YOU MANGY PIRATES!”

Luffy charges out the door to create further chaos. Kaz is not emotionally invested in meeting whoever it is, but he does want to know who exactly is out there. Leaving his temporary station at the grill should be safe enough with Luffy out of the picture.

Shoving Usopp’s head down and leaning to the side to see…yep that’s Johnny. “Hey there’s some guy breaking our ship.” He’s technically speaking into the porthole, into a glass window…but he’s talking to Zoro.

“Just the one guy? Luffy’s got it.” There’s another crash and the railing to the upper deck goes down.

“He’s breaking the ship.” Nami hints. Kaz kind of hopes Zoro ignores her once more.

“YOU NAMELESS PIRATES THINK YOU CAN HURT MY PARTNER??”

That however, does the trick. “That voice sounds really familiar. Johnny?” Zoro shoves everyone aside and heads off the ass kicking about to occur if Johnny manages to stand back up. “Johnny, that you?”

Yes, Zoro. It is. Having Zoro outside means that Kaz isn’t needed. The limes are though…Kaz rummages around and decides that those are probably packed in the lower pantry. He takes the easy route, avoiding the nonsense on deck, and phases through that loose floorboard in the back he found the other day.

The limes are successfully moved out in front of the more useful fruits. So, that Luffy and Usopp will take those instead anything else.

Kaz breezes back into the kitchen just in time to pull off his sea meat kabobs before they burn. Laying on some new ones, he treats himself to a Luffy free meal that’s more protein than veggie for once. He also takes the time to think what lays ahead. First stop, Baratie.

They need Sanji…Kaz needs Sanji, in a bad way. Kaze no mi can be a skeleton all he wants…Kaz has no desire to keep to his mostly vegetarian diet. Also, Kaz can only grill various things or make classic southern (heart attack inducing) food, mostly. He knows the theory of it at least. He can make the easy southern cooking…like college kid stuff. Taco in a bag technically involved cooking…he was counting it.

“God, I miss Grandpa. I miss ribs…and pork tenderloin…and pork…and bi-weekly steak night” Kaz realizes that he just misses well marinated meat he doesn’t have to grill himself. He is not by any measure a grill master; marinade is whatever alcohol Zoro hasn’t drunk yet.

There should be spices or something in it he’s sure, but hell if he knows what they should be. If this trip takes too much longer…his will to not just kidnap Sanji outright and skip the Krieg nonsense is not going to hold out. He’s already planning an elaborate entrance and to almost literally throw money at the blond upon his entry to the restaurant. No one better test him on this or he absolutely will grovel at Sanji’s feet and not let go. There will be crying and everyone will feel very awkward.
Sanji the Nobel(?) Cook

Chapter Summary

Hey gang, ready to meet Sanji?

The actual Plot™ jumps back on track fairly fast after they resuscitate Yosaku. Again, the healing rates in this crazy place are ridiculous, but Kaz is made of wind so he can’t really complain.

Soon enough they are in sight of the Baratie and Lt. Fullbody is trying to kill them, assumedly because he is a callous, narcissistic asshole—but Kaz is just guessing. Luffy still catches the cannonball before it can do any real damage, though the figurehead on the Merry will forever more be scarred by Luffy’s nails. The Baratie was doomed to always lose part of its roof to that particular cannonball it seems.

Kaz figures if they save the Baratie overall, maybe keep Pearl from setting it on fire, they’ll ultimately break even on that. He thinks…whatever, he is far more focused on what being near Sanji means. Also, he really wants to watch Fullbody get his teeth kicked in. Karmic Justice coming down on an unmitigated douche canoe is something you just don’t get the privilege of seeing every day.

He waits until no one is really watching and Luffy has landed “safely” inside the restaurant to zip over and claim the crew a table. It’ll take the rest of the crew a minute to load up the dingy and get over here, so he probably has time to watch the beginning of Fullbody’s No Good Very Bad Day start.

He’s in luck because the sack of money he brought over with him is easily recognizable and Patty…or Carne(?) hones in on it within in seconds. Kaz is swept to a table and seated forcibly to cries of “A PAYING CUSTOMER!” and “How many in your party?”

Actually, that last had been Sanji…in all his blond, chain smoking glory asking him that. Kaz has to take a moment to hold back the tears, he is mostly successful, as he blearily counts out his party members—gives up after 5—and says 10. Sanji is giving him a very concerned look that grows worse the longer he stares.

It takes longer than it should before Kaz realizes that Sanji, good-hearted noble Sanji, is probably rightly concerned about all that mass Kaz is missing. The cook shakes himself visibly and still doesn’t let a drop of wine fall from the full open bottle in his hand nor the serving tray with full bowls of soup falter…he is beauty, he is grace, he just kicked Patty in the face.

Still didn’t drop a damn thing either, so Kaz is standing by that grace statement.

“Idiot! His party is ten people. Move him over here.” He shouts, then turns and speaks to Kaz like he might need help walking to the table indicating. Kaz, manfully, resists hugging the ever-living shit out of the cook, because the new table is in perfect sight of the eminent Fullbody smack-down.

Bless him.

Seated at a table that can fit the whole crew plus extras, Kaz takes a seat with a view of the future
scene of the assault that changes lives. Aimed at Fullbody, but distracted by all the heavenly, divine…one might even say rapturous smells wafting from the kitchen—Kaz nearly misses the verbal part of Fullbody’s embarrassment. The smack of a spoon and the muffled laughter of his fellow diners’ snaps back in time to see the most important part…Fullbody’s face minus the smug.

Were that food, it’d be fit for a king…god he’s hungry. He’s so hungry that he’s making food metaphors in a restaurant.

The clack of a platter hitting his table again makes him look up to see Sanji has returned. With Food. “Marry me.” It is by far more of a statement than a question, but Kaz is running on the fumes from what kabobs he could sneak and beyond that a mostly meatless diet. Being a logia burned a lot of calories.

Even if he didn’t really fight, he used his abilities constantly. To move around the ship, to steer the ship, to fuck with Usopp… and he was putting enough veggies in his system to really counter act the drain on his energy. He had access to plenty of veggies since syrup, sure. But Kaz almost always had to cook them and he only knew how to grill things really. You can only grill so many zucchinis before you’d rather starve to death than eat one more or swap it for an eggplant.

He seriously might puke if eats either in the next year.

So, he might be vaguely, possible, serious but only jokingly might actually marry Sanji if it meant access to platters of food being delivered to himself without prompting. Possibly, if comes down to it…he’d definitely at least kidnap him…because of the plot…yeah.

Sanji gives a low chuckle, sweeps his hair off to the side and—yes, Kaz believes Sanji is attempting smolder at him…what the fuck? “Ah, sorry. But this? Is only for Beautiful ladies.” And saunters, again sashays, away to another table.

‘Wow-ow’ Kaz thinks, he had really been suppressing what a THOT Sanji was. It must have been the hunger. He shakes it off, Sanji will inevitably bow to Luffy’s whims and Kaz will still get fed delicious meats he doesn’t have to cook himself. Still a win-win, even if the pretty boy turned into a douche upon opening his mouth.

Head cleared of his sudden dive into Sanji-worship and the even more abrupt resurfacing, Kaz got down to figuring out was really important. Eating…and possibly figuring out how one person could possibly make the best pig in a blanket he’d ever had without straight up dipping the pastry in butter.

He can’t control himself; he decimates all three on the sampler platter of appetizers that Sanji left him. That glorious bastard, whom Kaz definitely isn’t in love with and refuses to worship further.

Whatever the half a cow bone left on his plate is, it is divine. It’s like if someone made meat Jell-O but good. It comes with the crispest buttery-est crackers that Kaz is sure are made in-house. He has no idea what it is, but there are two of them one second and then his mouth is full. He might be crying, but he’s really too busy scoping out what else will fit in his mouth.

The chicken wins. It’s not barbeque by any means, but the gravy is delicious. Telling Sanji the gravy chicken is his favorite gets him a pained smile and a cringe. Kaz may have just found his new favorite hobby, making Sanji uncomfortable with his peasant taste buds.

“Waiter! What the hell is this?? There is a bug in my soup!” Oh boy, it’s time. It’s finally here!

Sanji lays down the platter he’s carrying on Kaz’s table to saunter over to Fullbody’s while lighting
a cigarette. Presumably, because he needs a hit of nicotine to deal with both Kaz and Fullbody at the same time.

“Hmm? A bug, well I can’t say. I’m not an expert in pests.” He snarks. The restaurant laughs along at Fullbody’s distress. Kaz takes a different approach…

“OOOOOOoooo, get fucked ya purple-haired bitch!” says the other purple-haired bitch from the safety of a table out of arms reach.

Predictably, Fullbody loses his shit and breaks a table in rage. “Don’t mess with me!”

Kaz enjoys watching the buildup almost as much as he did the first time he saw this. And the ass-kicking itself is pretty great too. He’s eating whatever the fancy spaghetti Sanji left on his table is and watching as Sanji physically hauls Fullbody up by his throat.

Right in full view of the Strawhats.

“Hey guys! Got us a table!” Kaz shouts over the din created by the entire restaurant trying to talk Sanji out of throwing a Marine out of the Baratie. Which makes perfect sense in an awful way. Yes, throwing out a shitty customer (who happens to be a marine) should in fact result in the restaurant being destroyed. Kaz is rooting for Sanji to hit him at least twice more.

Unfortunately, the other cooks show up and physically restrain Sanji from following through with his plan to finish Fullbody off after the dumbass threatens to close the Baratie.

It’s almost a shame when Luffy and Zeff come through the ceiling and bring an end to the circus. Kaz has only been here a few hours and this is already the most fun he’s had since being tossed out of a hurricane. But seriously, seeing Fullbody, bruised by his own ego (and Sanji’s shoe) scrambling for the door on all fours…that’s priceless. That is a memory to keep…he should write this down…

‘Ooooo, what’s that green stuff?’ The green stuff is mysterious as it is tasty… ‘OOoooo that looks like a taco!’

Even if all he accomplishes for the rest of the day is laughing at Luffy fail to be a waiter and occasionally threatening Usopp’s hand with a fork—best day ever and he hasn’t even had dessert yet!

**Red Sky at Morning**

There’s no way to tell what really wakes him up, but Kaz is blaming Usopp. There’s no way it could be the weak morning light, the hard deck beneath him, or the awful way it feels to be himself this morning…

“ugh. What. Happened…”

“Uh, well…far as we can tell you ate yourself into a food coma. You didn’t even stop eating when that Gin guy showed up, the morning after he left, or the next two days after that. I didn’t know that anyone besides Luffy could eat that much…We thought you’d explode yesterday, but you just kinda passed out.” Usopp, curious, gets close enough to poke Kaz’s distended stomach is some sort of horrified fascination.

“Seriously, even Luffy was impressed. Though it doesn’t beat the time I once won a pie eating competition. Boy, was it hard…giants eat lot—” When Usopp finally comes close enough that Kaz
can reach out and grab him, Kaz catches him by the face. Mostly for the shock value, but also because that’s not really what he was asking.

“Nooooo, why am I back on the ship? Usopp, there’s no food on the ship. Why did you take me from the food?? I haven’t eaten a meal in peace in…two years! It’s been two years, Usopp!! Four days is not enough time to make up for that” He sounds manic and desperate. He is definitely scaring Usopp who is flailing wildly and calling for help. Wait.

“What time is it???”

“It’s like 8! Please don’t eat me!” Kaz shoves Usopp away. Rolling over he manages a sluggish crawl over to the door and pushes through it. He is not going to miss breakfast!!!

What follows might have been embarrassing beyond belief seeing as how, with Nami’s help, he had been approaching something akin to grace with his power mere days before. But not here and not today. He will blimp himself over to this floating smorgasbord and ignore what is likely Zoro and Usopp laughing at him back on the ship.

The Baratie will probably, maybe, most definitely be a complete wreck by the end of the day and Kaz is not going to miss out on this…also if he’s in the restaurant at the start of it then there’s a good chance he won’t have to watch Nami’s reality check when she sees Arlong’s bounty poster.

He doesn’t think he’s capable of holding back his tears, his manly, manly, tears as her happiness is crushed. He just doesn’t want to see it or run the risk that his added friendship will be the thing that makes her stay. He really is trying to keep the plot on point here.

So, he leaves and putters over through the fog to the Baratie. There are plenty of tables open this early so Kaz floats over to the one nearest Sanji. He’s easy to find, Kaz just follows the smell of cigarettes and male desperation.

“What in the shitting hell are you?”

“Hungry, Gaston. I like anything edible, but I’ll be honest I’m still a little protein deprived and would appreciate what we southerner’s call…a farmer’s breakfast. Thanks man.” Kaz gets comfy in his chair and waits excitedly for Sanji to stop staring and produce, at minimum, some eggs. Scrambled, not poached. He’s a heathen and he’s proud of it.

“No, seriously. You were not half as toned when you got here…”

Kaz has to take a second to realize that…yea he does have more muscle mass. Huh, so that’s why vegetarians are so skinny. “Huh, learn something new every day! But seriously Gaston. I need more food like breathing. I’ve only got today before Luffy starts stealing my meats again.”

“Garçon”

“Yeah, sure. Bring me more moo-cle fuel, por favor.”

Sanji’s face does some interesting gymnastics for a minute before he visibly cannot resist his natural impulse to feed the hungry. Score.

Sadly, Kaz is only half through his third plate of French toast and has only partially eaten his egg toast when the day just goes to shit. Fucking Krieg and his stupid, broke-ass armada.

He will say that Gin’s dedication to the man is astounding in the face of what a colossal douche his captain is. What does Gin see in this guy?? Sure, he’s big and has lots of gadgets tucked in his
gaudy armor, but what an asshole.

Really what Kaz takes out of the first bit of the day is that someone really needs to bring him a plate of that fancy fried rice Krieg is eating. Why hasn’t Sanji made that for him yet? He’s starving too…well he used to look more starved…okay he might have problem. But it’s only a real problem if Sanji doesn’t come with them, so he will ignore it. Like a man.

Where do these guys get giant utensils??? Is there a place making giant utensils that double as weapons? Kaz watches in fascination at the spectacle of the other chef’s trying to stop Sanji from feeding anyone. You would think they’d all be used to it…or could find something more threatening than a giant butter knife. Well, he supposes you could use it to beat someone to death with, but that thing does not have an edge on it. Usopp wouldn’t be afraid of that.

Ah shit. There’s a vein twitching on Krieg’s forehead and Kaz suddenly has a bad feeling, like he’s probably going to have to put down his French toast sandwich and help Sanji out. He definitely remembers Krieg opening fire on the chefs at one point. Now that the man has his energy back… it’s—yep there we go.

Kaz ducks beneath legs and pulls out his fan. He’s barely in time to blow most of the chefs down to the floor. Sanji back handsprings out of danger. There’s some bruises and one guy may have taken a bullet to his arm but it looks like everyone else is just a little dinged up. Kaz can live with that.

All thanks and rightful hero worship towards Kaz are interrupted by Zeff though, lugging a truly impressive sized bag of food down from the kitchen. Really, the strange part is all the chefs, except Sanji, are just floored (Ha!) by the action. Kaz wonders where exactly they thought Sanji learned his Must Feed Every Stray Available thing…like he’s been here since he was 10. Who else would have had an opportunity to teach him that?

Ah old man…Zeff accidentally revealing who he used to be really sets off the party. And now Kaz is out of food…and there are no chefs in the kitchen. Today is settling in to be kind of a pain.

NOOOOOoo. Don’t tell Krieg you have the logbook. “Why would he admit that??”

Sanji, nearby, takes a drag of his fourth cig of the morning “Because he likes to make my life difficult. Why else?” Spoken like a true son, Sanji.

“Man, dads can be such a pain.”

“You said it…” Kaz gets the joy of watching that little slip up register live and in person. It’s the best. Literally, the only thing that could make this moment better is if he had some that fancy rice.

“You didn’t hear shit!”

“You can purchase my silence forever, by forking over some of that fancy fried rice you fed Krieg” Sue him, at least his silence is much cheaper than Nami’s.

Patty firing a fucking bazooka in the restaurant derails Kaz from getting any food though. Well someone is not getting a xmas card this year. Annnnd Sanji’s gone. It does mean that Kaz tunes back in to see Zoro and Usopp head up the stairs. Might as well show a united front.

When the death threats start flying, they make their own. Zoro, leaking menace all over the place, probably sends the best message. Usopp and his clacking knees send the least but Kaz will give him credit. When Zoro offers to help and all too eager Luffy with the fight…Usopp actually backs him up.

“Yy-y-yeah! T-t-the Strawhat Crew is r-r-ready to rumble, Captain!” Kaz might actually be
making legit progress with Usopp. He’s halfway to saying how warm and fuzzy that makes him feel when Usopp utterly ruins it. “B-b-but if you d-don’t need the help, that’s cool too.”

“There’s the Usopp we know and tolerate. Good job, bud. You tried.” Kaz slaps him on the back, gently. There was an effort in that statement. Not a big one, but baby steps.

“Hey! You guys stopped by!” Luffy shouts. “Nah, you can just watch from there.” He is far too happy about all this Kaz decides, but that’s Luffy in a nutshell. Kaz prefers comedic violence, not the earth-shaking brawls Luffy gets into.

“Oh, that’s too bad, ‘cause we’d totally help you— whoa!” This time Zoro elbows Usopp to the ground and growls at him to shut up. Kaz folds himself down now that Luffy is taking care of things to talk to Usopp.

“Dude, you always go too far. Just don’t do all that bragging shit, right?”

Zoro grunts in agreement “It’s fucking annoying, there’s a real fight going on. Respect it and be silent if you can’t find your own.” Not really what Kaz was going for, but very in character for Zoro he guesses.

Krieg does one decent thing today, when retreating with the offered food to feed his men he does hold to his word not to go after any of the people who take that opportunity to flee. He’s still a ginormous gold-plated ass though.

Gin makes a lot of noises about being sorry, but seeing as he still looks half dead Kaz chooses to just ignore him. Apologies and all. And while the chefs are all yelling at Sanji or getting yelled at by Zeff…Kaz opts to steal whatever food is currently unguarded. He’s not going to get to eat like this for a while, best to stock up on carbs while he can.

Also, he is desperately avoiding going outside until Nami is very much gone and on her way. Again, it is entirely plot related. He is not desperately trying to avoid crying today. He swears. Besides, he already knows what a horror show the Grandline is. He doesn’t need to hear Zeff bring everyone else up to speed.

Luffy’s determination to go is only increased by Zeff’s warning anyway. Zoro’s too. Though he will definitely get his wish to find Mihawk sooner than he thinks, that’s for sure. ‘Ugh, that’s going to be so, so awful.’ He thinks as he shoves half of the best waffle he’s ever eaten in his mouth.

“Stupid. Guys like you will die first there” Sanji mutters. Zoro hears him though and Kaz can see the irritation flicker across his face. He has time to think ‘So, that’s where that fight started’ before Zoro lays into Sanji.

“It’s our choice. You don’t have to like it, but you can fuck off with calling us stupid. I have dedicated my life to becoming the world’s greatest swordsman. I knew the risks when I made that decision, but I devoted my life to it anyway. The only one who gets to call me stupid? Is me.” Damn.

“Yeah! You tell him Zoro, Imma write book!” It’s a bit garbled with the forkful of pasta he just shoved in his mouth, but still understandable.

Zoro turns to lean over the railing and shout “Shut up, Kaz! I’m trying to make a point.”

“AND I’M GOING TO BE KING OF THE PIRATES!” bursts out of Luffy who was clearly feeling ignored by Zoro and Kaz’s exchange.
“Sa-s-same here!” “Don’t fucking lie…” It is so nice of Zoro to take Usopp duty for today. Kaz lets Zoro know he appreciates him by making Heart Hands at him. Stoic as ever, Zoro doesn’t hesitate to roll his eyes instead of responding to Kaz’s heartfelt thank you.

There’s a sullen mutter from Sanji, that Kaz graciously dismisses as more teenage angst that he doesn’t need to respond to and continues to eat whatever this delicious pasta is. It’s not spaghetti…it has skinny lasagna noodles and meat though so he’s pretty stoked about it.

The pasta sadly only last through Patty’s second rant about Krieg and the remnants of his armada outside. The good news is that Kaz is in fact paying attention when the Krieg Pirates marshals their remaining forces for a charge.

They can hear the roar of the charge gaining volume and presumably momentum outside. The roar continues gaining strength until the sound of splintering wood cuts it off. Turning the roar of a charging army into screams of surprise and fear.

Right. Mihawk was coming. Unlike Zoro, Kaz had no desire to come face to face with Dracule Mihawk today. Considering the man’s strength and skill, that was for the best. Kaz was certain that out of every last person currently in East Blue…Mihawk was one of a bare handful who posed an actual threat to his safety. And by ‘poses a threat’ Kaz means ‘is fully capable of murdering him, probably without looking’

So, no. He will stay inside for now, thanks. Delay that particular brush with his own mortality as long as possible.

Clapping for everyone’s attention gets him nowhere so he just kind of projects. Amazingly enough it totally works, his voice is louder than everyone else’s and becomes easily heard across the restaurant floor.

“All right gang, we are about to enter ass-kicking territory. I’m going to need all non-combatants and injured parties to move to the back of the restaurant. Please make sure that a table is in the upright and shielding position near you. We are expecting turbulence so it is very important that you remain out of sight for the duration of the fight.” Kaz hops on a table to better direct traffic during his speech. The rest of the Strawhats rush out—thinking to protect Nami and Zoro’s friends. Kaz lets them go, giving Luffy a thumbs up as he rushes out. Just to let him know that Kaz can take care of this part.

“In case you are intending to take the fight to the Krieg Pirates, please be aware it is in your best interest to be armed and actively dangerous. Should you find yourself unarmed…consider raiding the kitchen, you are all chefs. Figure it out.” Kaz still has to physically stop one of the idiot chefs from leaving without a single weapon in his hands. “Uh-uh buddy, turn this ship around and go get a knife for fucks sake.”

Once he organizes what can be organized, he exits to an approving nod from Zeff. Acknowledging that at least in this instance someone was able to get everyone to pull all these idiots together. For once.

Kaz is just glad to help in a way that isn’t going to fuck up the plot any more so than he had with Buggy. Also, after losing control on Syrup he isn’t really looking to test that on the water. Although, he has to admit he isn’t really capable of standing by and letting people get poisoned…or letting the Baratie get set on fire by Pearl…he also really wants to add Pearl’s hat to his collection. And if he stops Pearl, well then Sanji won’t get his shit wrecked twice in a row.

Letting Sanji focus solely on Gin and instilling a sense of comradery with Sanji is a good thing.
Even if it isn’t quite plot compliant…he is so shit at this. He wanders outside and finds that the crew has discovered that Nami has taking the *Merry* and headed off on her own.

“-and that’s what happened, Aniki.”

“Damn that women! She’s making everything more difficult.” “Kaya gave us that ship! How could she just take it??”

Oh, that is uncomfortable. “Uh, guys. I’m sure she had a reason…we should uh-focus on this fight first maybe?”

“WAIT. I see it! I can still see the Merry. Kaz! Go get a better look.” Luffy is standing on the railing and peering out to sea. Kaz sidesteps as he hears Luffy’s order to get a better look, he can just feel Zoro getting ready to yeet him into the stratosphere again. Kaz can get up there himself just fine.

He confirms it is the Merry that Luffy sees. “She’s too far out for me to fly to though.” (probably, Kaz isn’t going to try to fly over that much empty ocean for any reason)

“Yosh! Zoro, Usopp! Go after Nami.”

Zoro, ever the asshole, “Do we really need to? Can’t we just let her have that ship?”

“Zoro!” “Dude! That’s literally my house!” Usopp and Kaz berate Zoro loudly and only stop when Luffy makes his own opinion known.

“No. I won’t accept anyone but Nami as my Navigator. Captain’s order.” There is an uncomfortably long pause as Luffy and Zoro size each other up. The tension builds and Kaz is very much not into this power struggle.

Thankfully, Zoro bends as Luffy’s frown slowly turns into more of a pout. Kaz isn’t going to complain, he isn’t in to that kind of thing and is just grateful that this sort of thing firmly sorts itself out before too long.

“Alright, Alright. What a high maintenance captain…Usopp, let’s go.” Johnny and Yosaku have brought their own skiff alongside and anchored at the railing. Usopp hops onboard and makes room for Zoro who looks to Luffy before he goes. “What about you and Kaz?”

Luffy’s quick to shake his head “Nah, I haven’t really settled anything with the restaurant yet. I gotta stay and Kaz can stay too, we sailed away from Grandpa together in a raft…we can catch up later.”

“We, huh?” Kaz distinctly remembers being the literal wind in those particular sails and screaming. He remembers screaming a lot. Like a lot, a lot.

Pouting Luffy reminds Kaz that he was the one who punched out the Seaking, which is fair, Kaz supposes…

“Ah, shit.” Over Luffy and Zoro’s shoulder he spots a small boat and a very large sword. An uncomfortably Big Sword….and a killer hat. Kaz glances at Zoro and cannot tell if Zoro’s gone tense in anticipation, surprise, or maybe even fear. Mihawk and his ominous presence is definitely worth being scared over. Kaz really is not digging this, he isn’t even close to Mihawk and the dude is terrifying.

“Is that…?” Zoro whispers, somewhere between shock and reverence. Making Kaz really curious
as to exactly where Zoro’s headspace is right now. “It..” the closer Mihawk gets the tenser Zoro is.

As baffled as Kaz is, Luffy is even more lost. Not knowing who exactly it is that’s showed up, Luffy almost whispers in an aside to Kaz “What’s with Zoro? Who is that?” Thankfully, Zoro hears and answers because Kaz is for once with Usopp on this. They should just be quiet as possible and hope Mihawk goes away.

Nope “That is ‘Hawkeye’ Mihawk. The greatest swordsman alive.” Zoro says it with a deep reverence and Kaz is definitely sensing a little fear here. Which is good, everyone should have a healthy fear of a man who doesn’t need to be in sight of a target to slash it to pieces. ‘Oh god, Zoro…’

Kaz keeps his mouth shut though. This is Zoro’s moment the one where he decides to not just follow along with Luffy but legit follow Luffy. There will be no fucking with this, no matter how shit the situation turns out. Kaz will just have to watch as his grumpy friend gets his shit wrecked. It is all going to be okay…totally. Not a problem.

“Uh…guys? Where did Zoro-aniki go?” Shit. Zoro had slunk off while Kaz had been quietly panicking. Kaz turns, Luffy is already staring at where Zoro is confronting Mihawk from the wreckage of Kreig’s ship. Johnny and Yosaku psych themselves up and talk a big game about Zoro already being the strongest, but they really have no fucking clue.

“G-guys, I can hardly see the Merry anymore! Luffy, what are we going do!?” Luffy remains silent, refusing to take his attention off of Zoro to answer Usopp. Kaz knows exactly where Nami is going, so he’s not really concerned about catching up to her, he just has to figure out a way to tell Usopp that without sounding completely mental.

“Hey, Johnny. Don’t know how long this whole sword thing is going to take. Do you know of any ports in that direction Nami could get to?” Kaz asks subtly, hoping that Johnny or even Yosaku will put 1 and 1 together and get Cocoyashi. Johnny actually comes through for them though, proving that he’s at least better at navigating than Zoro is…well.

“The closest islands are just about uninhabited. The only actual port she could use is Cocoyashi…and well, humans aren’t really welcome there anymore.” He hints heavily at what Kaz already knows, but the real star is Yosaku who solves the puzzle for them.

“Hey, bro. Sis was staring awfully hard at that bounty poster earlier, ya know? You don’t think…you don’t think she went after Arlong on her own?” Mostly. He mostly solves the puzzle, Kaz gives him half credit at least.

Usopp shivers, but manages to express some doubt about Nami bounty hunting. “Nami doesn’t seem the type? She’s sneaky, like Kaz.” Kaz dutifully agrees, but brings them back to the point.

“Look, she can’t go far. We haven’t restocked in days or fished up anything ourselves here. Maybe…”Thinkthinkthink “Maybe she knows someone there and was worried?” he suggests. ‘Please take me up on this guys’

Yosaku brings it home for him “Sis did kind of look upset when we warned her away from Arlong, Kaz-bro might be right. Maybe she’s got family on Cocoyashi? I’d be worried about anyone left on an island with Arlong’s crew, they hate humans.” Johnny is quick to second it.

As the bounty hunters turn to watch Zoro’s opening move against Mihawk, Kaz winces at the clang of steel on steel and whispers to Usopp. “Let’s assume she’s heading to Cocoyashi. I can see Nami being pretty protective over what’s hers, even people.”
Usopp seems fairly convinced, but still offers “She might just have buried treasure there? Maybe she won’t even be going to the port?” He asks hopefully. There’s no viable reason Kaz can give that says she isn’t.

“That’s possible too. You wouldn’t bury treasure in town, right?” Usopp nods enthusiastically, eager to avoid Human-Hating mer-folk. “Stay in the ship with the bro-dudes and keep them on track, yea? But-but don’t leave yet. I don’t have a good feeling about what Zoro’s doing.” And the fight is not going well for their crewmate. Usopp shivers in understanding and nods.

Mihawk is so fucking fast. His arm alone blurs between Zoro’s blades, he doesn’t even bother making it look hard either. He’s just magically wherever Zoro’s swords aren’t, parrying without effort with the world’s smallest dagger.

Soon, Zoro’s down and Johnny and Yosaku are trying to intervene. “Stop it! No interfering!” Luffy has it in hand, Kaz knows that Luffy does not tolerate fight interference. And this is clearly an important fight for Zoro, even if he’s losing.

“Be Patient!” Normally, Kaz would laugh at Luffy saying that, but honestly, he doesn’t have the stomach for it right now. It takes a lot less time than Kaz would have preferred for Zoro to take the first stab wound of the fight.

The shattering of Zoro’s two unnamed blades comes next. The shriek of breaking steel cuts across the water and is audible even over Luffy’s shouting. “Ah, Damn it Luffy—no—Sword beats rubber idiot!” Kaz had perhaps forgotten that Luffy attempts to clothesline Dracule—fucking—Mihawk after Zoro goes down. Panic overrides sense and he causes even more of a stir among the peanut gallery as he propels himself after Luffy.

Using his greater speed to outrun Luffy’s idiocy, Kaz blurs across the water and just manages to get underneath Zoro. Between a dense teenaged swordsman and the water which any Devil Fruit user fears is not the best place to be. Using Zoro’s momentum Kaz reverts direction and just manages to clear the sides of Johnny and Yosaku’s ship.

Zoro wasn’t the lightest member of the crew for sure, but Kaz might have overestimated how difficult it was to carry someone in his full logia form. Because that had not been easy. Bonus, he is no longer close enough to make eye contact with Dracule Fucking Mihawk.

Not that being across the piddly bay made by the surrounding wreckage makes them safe or stops the World’s most Terrifying Man from talking to them. “Do not worry. I did kill the young man.” He definitely didn’t, the dude-bro patrol is already trying to apply all the first aid, but Kaz would like to note that he didn’t take easy on Zoro either. He can see the blood staining the deck and the strain in Zoro’s frame.

That is a nasty and deep cut. If he wasn’t so pants-shitting terrified right now, he’d be screaming externally, but he seriously cannot make his mouth open. So, he just keeps an eye firmly on Mihawk while doing his level best to NOT be noticed.

“It is too soon for you to die! My name is Dracule Mihawk!” Kaz jumps when Mihawk starts shouting to Zoro across the water. “Learn about yourself, the world! And become strong!” the man orders. Not instructs, it’s definitely scarier than that. “No matter how long it takes, I will hold the title of World’s Strongest until then, I will wait for you.”

Kaz would just like for Mihawk to stop shouting, it’s intimidating as fuck. It’s also mesmerizing
Luffy and for a horrible moment he really fears he’ll be yanking knives and cutlery out of Luffy’s hands for the next decade as the idiot insists on hero-worshipping Mihawk out of some weird level of respect…or in Luffy terms “COOooooOOOI”

It’s a painful thought that carries him through to Mihawk’s last assertion for Zoro to get stronger and come back for round 2. Which will not be happening anytime soon, thank fuck. The fact that he won’t have to see Mihawk again for at least a year or more does not make it any better when the most intense human alive turn to start asking Luffy about his goals.

Kaz doesn’t have it in him to figure out if a properly challenged and excited Mihawk is more or less terrifying than his normal face. At this point all Kaz can do is throw whatever he can find in Usopp’s pockets at Luffy, for sticking his tongue out at the man who could kill them both in a second.

There’s a heart stopping moment when Dudebros-R-Us start yelling that Kaz fears the worst has happened, but then Zoro is raises his sword and calls out to Luffy. He makes a shaky but solemn and sincere vow to be the greatest swordsman in the world, because Luffy will be the Pirate King. And the King deserves no less than the best.

Which is just touching as fuck. Zoro’s crying, Kaz is crying, and Mihawk has the most disturbing grin on his face. “Dude, are you okay? Zoro’s going to make it, bro.” Johnny says, putting a comforting hand on Kaz’s shoulder, like he’s not weeping uncontrollably as well.

“Shut up.” Kaz nudges Usopp “Get going, I’ll stick with Luffy. You—” he points to Yosaku “Keep Zoro breathing and you” he directs Johnny “Take Usopp to Cocoyashi, Usopp is, and I can’t believe I’m saying this, in charge. Do not fuck up.”

“Got it! I will definitely bring Nami back. You and Luffy go get our cook!” And for once, Kaz and Usopp manage to part ways without Kaz having the urge to punch the sniper. “LUFFY!” Usopp calls out as Kaz flies back to the Baratie for the final show down. “LUFFY! I’m going now. Me and Zoro will go get Nami back, when we get back…let’s go to the Grandline!!”

“YEAH!! Let’s do it! Kaz-u keep everyone here from interfering. I’m going to get that shiny guy’s ass!”

“You got it, Cap.” Kaz herds the chefs into a more manageable group, again shoving the injured ones inside towards relative safety. Since absolutely no one around here seems to value their own well-being. All the while he keeps an eye for naughty ungrateful pirates named Gin. He’s not going to watch Sanji get the shit kicked out of him for no reason.

It doesn’t serve the plot and totally would put the crew in good standing with the irritable chef… yea, that’s totally it. This isn’t fucking with the Plot at all.

End Notes

This is the flip side to Heroes and Dumb-asses.
The third part of this series will be whenever I get around to writing the Saobody Arc.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!