We Are

by echaryn

Summary

Monkey D. Luffy is a normal 20-year-old student at the University of Water Seven. He loves his friends, he loves his life - but he doesn't DO love, no way, never in hell.

One night, he's at a house party downtown, he rescues two girls from the rooftop of the mansion. He's about to fall, dying a disgusting death, when a hand comes in view and he is rescued by the most handsome man he has ever seen.

Sabo is 24-year-old journalist, working for the Daily Grand Line. He's a former pickpocket and his favourite game is breaking people's hearts.

Notes

Hello everyone,
so this is the first fic I've published in about four years - before, I only published work on ff.net, for different fandoms.
However, I'm back.

This story takes place in a world that is basically similar to the one we know from One Piece,
for example they have yagara bulls, but the technology is more advanced and the protagonists have normal jobs, they are university students and everything. This story WILL have a sequel, I promise, I'm already working on it.

If you'd like to chat with me about fics or anything else really, feel free to talk to me through tumblr: http://echaryn.tumblr.com/

I don't own One Piece nor any of the characters.
Chapter 1

Luffy

“Luffy! Stop dreaming, we want to close soon!” he hears one of his oldest friends, Sanji, laugh and a damp wash cloth lands on Luffy's head, dripping into his hair, but he just stands there, the broom beneath his chin, and stares outside at the cloudless night sky. It’s a fabulous warm August night and his thoughts float around like butterflies.

Fufu, yeah, he likes that image…

“Luffy, did you hear me?” Sanji yells from the kitchen and with a heavy heart, Luffy starts sweeping the floor again.

They are the last ones in the café WindMill, enjoying the silence after hours and hours of a noisy business day. The last costumers left about half an hour ago and they are about to close the shop and call it a day.

Luffy likes staying last. He likes seeing their city, Water Seven, calm down at night; he likes the quietness that settles on the town which is normally buzzing with tourists, traffic, yagara bulls and the sort.

Sanji, who works as both waiter and cook, comes from the kitchen, another broom in his hand.

“Hey, you falling asleep already?” he asks with a grin and Luffy shakes his head.

“Nah, just thinking…”

“Anyways, got any plans tonight? Zoro says there’s a party downtown; he and Nami are already there.”

Zoro is Sanji’s long-term boyfriend. They’ve been together for ages, despite their constant fighting. Luffy once asked Sanji why he keeps on dating a guy he fights with on an almost daily basis. Sanji just laughed and said: “It’s a weird dynamic, right? I don’t really get it, either – he gets on my nerves like no one else, but I can’t be without him, right? And most of the stuff isn’t taken to heart, anyways”.

Luffy had been surprised at that, but he lets his friends be. What does he know? He's never been in a relationship, he is fully content with his amazing friendships. And he’s ok with that. He’s pretty damn satisfied with the way his life is right now.

“Yeah, sure. Who else is coming?” Luffy asks.
“I texted Usopp and Chopper the address. Robin and Franky are on their way.”

“Alright, then”

“So let’s clean up quickly, hm?”

“Aww, you wanna see Zoro so badly?” Luffy teases.

Sanji just grimaces and resumes sweeping the floor.

There is a wide age range in their group of friends. Luffy and Usopp are twenty, Sanji and Zoro are twenty-two and twenty-three, Robin and Franky are the oldest with twenty-eight and twenty-nine, and Nami is twenty-one; Chopper with his nineteen years is the youngest.

Luffy can’t really remember how they all became friends. Before, it’s only been him, Usopp, Chopper and Sanji. Then Sanji got together with Zoro. Zoro brought Nami, Nami brought Robin, Robin brought Franky. And now they are a group and Luffy calls them his Nakama and they hang around almost every weekend. He likes that. He doesn’t need love – he has the best friends in the world and that is by far enough for him.

There is no room for love in his life. He still has dreams to pursue and places to be and people to meet. Like he has time or room for love.

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When they are finished cleaning the café, it’s half past 11 in the evening. The night is still young and after Sanji locks the door behind him, Luffy promises to meet him in twenty minutes by the Gold Roger bridge. From there, it’s just a fifteen minute walk downtown to the location of the party. Luffy throws his red apron over his shoulder and hurries home to change. He runs along one of the countless waterways of their city and he sees his mirror image in the clear water, and he runs faster, as if to surpass himself. A happy, carefree laugh escapes his mouth and he looks up at the brand new stars that slowly start to appear across the endless blue.

He feels that it's going to be a good night.

When he gets home, he throws the apron across the back of the sofa. He still got his waiter’s outfit on; black trousers, black shirt and his hair combed back. He takes a shower and then thinks of what he should put on. He decides on a pair of black skinny jeans, a white button-down and a playful red and white tie he just ties loosely around his neck. Then he artfully messes up his hair and uses hair spray to fasten the whole look. Haha, yeah, looks alright.

It’s not like he needs to look handsome for anyone, anyways.
His phone buzzes. It’s Sanji. Luffy frowns and glances at the clock. Oh crap.

“Luffy, where the heck are you?” Sanji asks exasperated.

“I’m on my way, be there in 5!” Luffy replies. He quickly grabs keys and wallet and then jumps out of his flat and down the stairs…

Sabo

“Would you stop sulking? Please?” Ace asks him with a crooked eyebrow.

Sabo snorts and runs a hand through his hair. “Tell me again why I decided to take the job offer?”

“Well, the salary was part of the decision process,” Ace replies and rolls his eyes.

“I must’ve been insane… I’m not a goddamn teacher… I’m a reporter, for God’s sake…,” Sabo groans and slams his head onto the table.

It’s true. He did his two degrees in journalism and actually has been successfully working for the Daily Grand Line for the last couple months. And then there was the job offer, to teach Politics at Water Seven University, the very university both Sabo and Ace got their degrees from.

And because he is stupid he listened to his friend Koala, who kept on saying: “It’s going to be fun, for sure! Teaching people helps character growth and you’ll inspire all these students! I promise you, you won’t regret it! You’ll have the best time of your life”.

So he signed the nine-month contract and now, a few hours after his meeting with the head of department, he regrets it. He regrets it so much he wants to cry. So Sabo called up his best friend and flatmate Ace, so together they can drown Sabo’s regrets in alcohol.

“You’re an idiot. I tell you all the time, but seriously, you’re a moron,” Ace says and downs his beer.

“Remind me again why we are friends?” Sabo murmurs.

“I honestly don’t know. Look, there’s nothing you can do anymore, so stop sulking and enjoy tonight, alright?”

“How?”

“Look, my friend texted me this address. There’s a party downtown, free entry, we only have to pay
the drinks. Sound good?"

“I’m not in the mood for partying.”

“Too bad, cuz I am. Let’s go.”

Now it’s Sabo’s turn to roll his eyes. But maybe Ace is right. A party would certainly take his mind off things… and indeed, he’s in the mood to drink until he forgets his latest stupid life decision. So he downs the rest of his beer and grabs his coat.

It’s a mild night in mid-August. In about three weeks, the university starts again and he will have to stand in front of snotty brats and teach them about Politics.

Yeah, he can’t wait to make a gigantic fool out of himself.

He sighs.

“Alright, if you sigh one more time, I’ll punch your stupid face,” Ace says and smirks at him.

“Try, asshole.”

Sabo and Ace have been friends since primary school and Sabo feels that they both went through all kinds of difficult life crisis together. Like Ace and his problematic childhood and relationship to his father, Sabo’s years as a petty pickpocket, their troublesome teenage years and wild college time. Ace got his degree in psychology and now works in a hospital uptown. They live together and ever since, have been more than just friends. They’ve seen each other at their best and worst.

“Ok, who is it again who texted you the party?” Sabo asks as they walk through downtown Water Seven. Sabo likes Water Seven. It’s a cultivated, tourist-filled city, the architecture is beautiful and people are genuinely nice and polite. He can hear the ocean close-by. They’re near the port now.

“Marco, from the cardiology department.”

“That blond dude with the weird haircut?"

“Yeah, that one”

Sabo snorts in amusement and breathes in the warm air. Walking takes his mind off things.

“And Sabo?”

“Hm?”

“Don’t think too much about that teaching thing, alright? Maybe after all, it won’t be so bad.”

Sabo smiles quietly. This is so like Ace. Showing faith in his own twisted, best friend way.

“Haha, ok. We’ll see.”

Luffy
“Urgh, I’m puking rainbows….” Usopp says and imitates vomiting noises, as Luffy and Sanji walk in and Zoro immediately pulls Sanji toward him and kisses him on the lips.

“Let them be, they haven’t seen each other since noon,” Nami laughs.

“Y’all just jealous,” Sanji says when Zoro and he are done kissing each other hello.

 “…Not really, but yeah, whatever you say,” Usopp says and Luffy can see how Usopp stares at the background of his phone. It’s a picture of his girlfriend, Kaya, who currently is away for a semester abroad. Usopp misses her.

“Anyways, who wants a drink? First round’s on me,” Franky says behind Luffy and Luffy turns around with a smile to greet the engineer (and Usopp’s personal tutor) and Robin, an archaeologist with two PhDs and Franky’s wife. She’s also his politics tutor.

No offense, but Luffy seriously doesn’t know how Franky, of all people, got to be married to Robin. People say she’s waaaay out of his league. But whatever, who is he to judge?

“Hello Luffy,” she says with a smile.

“Hi Robin! How’re you?”

“Really good, how are you?”

“Me and Sanji just finished work. Today was busy, so many costumers!” Luffy tells the woman.

“Luffy, here’s your beer!” Franky says and hands him a pint.

“Ah, thanks Franky!”

“Usopp, where is Chopper?” Nami asks as they stand in a circle close to the bar.

The party is at somebody’s house. The girl who hosts the party is Nefertari Vivi, a girl who goes to the same university as them and is also part of their group. Oh, and she’s part of the royal family of Alabasta, which is why her parents are so ridiculously rich. Luffy remembers how she once told him that after she graduates, she would go back to Alabasta and one day, she would be queen. That is so cool!

The party is on the ground floor of the mansion, but it’s so big, Luffy can’t even tell how many guests there are. At least like 150 to 200 people are here.

“I think he’s still looking for a restroom.”

“The mansion is like a maze, I bet he won’t find one,” Franky laughs. "Even though usually Zoro is the one to get lost!"

Zoro rolls his eyes, but lets the remark slide. He stands with one arm loosely around Sanji’s waist. It’s nothing new, but sometimes it’s funny how much Zoro wants to demonstrate his relationship with Sanji. Sanji is more subtle about it. However, they’re both jealous idiots. Luffy think that it’s actually quite funny.

“Oh, and Luffy, did you hear that you’ll have a new lecturer coming semester?” Robin asks Luffy.
Luffy blinks. He majors in Game Design and minors in Politics.

“Really? What module?” he asks her.

“It’s Global Politics.”

“Oh, yeah! But I thought Professor Shanks is doing that module!” Luffy says with wide eyes.

“He actually does, but he was asked to change to Government and History, because Professor Rayleigh is temporarily ill. So they got a new lecturer.”

“Oh, really, I didn’t know that… Did you meet the new one already?”

“No, but apparently, he’s a reporter.”

“A reporter, seriously?”

Luffy is surprised and a tiny bit disappointed. He likes Professor Shanks – he’s a good teacher and actually makes things interesting. Luffy is sad that he won’t have him as his lecturer next year. He’s about to ask Robin what the name of the new lecturer is, when Chopper finally returns.

“Oh hell, that restroom is difficult to find,” he says, panting slightly, and Usopp hands the youngest of their group a beer. “Thanks”

“Where is it by the way?” Sanji says innocently.

Chopper frowns. “I’m not gonna tell you.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Sanji asks with a blush colouring his cheeks.

“Like you don’t know,” Usopp smirks.

“Shut up, Usopp. You’re just jealous because you haven’t gotten any since Kaya left,” Zoro chimes in to support his boyfriend.

“Fuck you, Zoro.”

“Nah, I’m fucking someone else tonight.”

Sanji’s blush gets darker and he bores his elbow into Zoro’s side. “Would you shut up, idiot?!”

“Alright, how about we change the topic, boys? I’m not drunk enough for all your frustrated banter” Nami asks amused. They laugh and Zoro gives Sanji an apologetic peck behind the ear.

Sabo

“Hello, now this is a big mansion,” Sabo says with raised eyebrows as they stand in front of the cream white mansion of Nerfertari Vivi. Wait, somehow, the name rings a few bells…Yes, isn’t that - !

“Her parents are stinking rich, Marco says,” Ace says with an ignorant shrug.

There are a few people standing around the entrance, smoking and chatting.
“Alright, Marco’s coming out.”

Sabo runs a hand through his hair and smiles at a group of young women, who stand near the door. They giggle and whisper. He wonders if he should go over and introduce himself…

“Ah, there he is.”

Marco, working colleague of Ace, comes jumping down the stairs.

“Yo, Ace! Nice to see that you could make it!” the guy greets Ace with a hand shake, before he turns to Sabo.

“Sabo, right? We met couple weeks ago, huh?”

“Yeah, I believe so.”

They shake hands and Marco nods to the entrance. “Alright, inside’s mad. Let’s go and grab a few drinks.”

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There’s music coming from what Sabo can see is a gigantic living room. It’s noisy and hot in here, everywhere are people and more naked skin than he has been prepared for. He blinks and looks at Ace. Ace winks at him, and from his smug grin Sabo can tell that he’s already doing the maths, how many guys and chicks he can woo tonight…

They find their way to the bar and order drinks. Marco and Ace start talking about work, so Sabo has a bit of time to take in the whole thing. The living room, painted in cream colours, is ridiculously big; the expensive furniture has been pushed to the sides and covered with sheets, so no one would accidentally spill their drinks on the white leather and expensive mahogany wood. There is even a chandelier hanging from the roof and it looks like it costs more than the flat Sabo and Ace currently live in.

There are already a few people on the dance floor, mainly women that look like college students, and a whole lot of people stand around in circles, laughing and talking and adding their very own soundtrack to the DJs work.

“Ah, hi everyone! I’m so sorry I couldn’t say hi earlier!” he hears a female voice saying close to him. He watches a pretty girl with long, blue hair come up to a group of people that stands at the far end of the bar. The girl must be Nefertari Vivi.

He watches the group from the corner of his eye. They look so happy, young and carefree. He quietly smiles to himself. Sabo wants to make this night a good night.

So he needs more alcohol.

“Hey handsome,” someone later says close to his ear. Sabo turns away from his chat with Ace and Marco and Sabo and sees a beautiful woman lean against the counter next to him. She shows a lot of cleavage, as he notices with amusement teasing at the corners of his mouth.

Not that he’s complaining.
“Hey gorgeous,” he replies with a wink.

“My name is Hancock.”

“Sabo.”

He shakes her hand and her fingers are cool and slender. Sabo hears Ace clearing his throat behind him and he hides his grin as he turns around. “And this is Ace.”

Hancock’s dark eyes gleam in mischief and she swirls a strand of her long dark hair around her finger. “Nice to meet you, Ace.”

“Pleasure’s all mine,” Ace says smoothly and Sabo can even see a small blush creeping into his pale cheeks. Wow. That’s rare. Sabo knows instantly that the woman is after his best friend, not him. So time for him to give the two a bit of privacy.

“I… just saw someone I know…” Sabo excuses himself with a smile and Ace’s nods, eyes still locked with Hancock.

Marco, too, escapes the embarrassment of being the third wheel and goes back outside.

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Sabo wanders around the mansion and at some point, walks up the stairs to the first floor to sit down and drink a couple of minutes in the peace of his own company. He watches the people move around. He sees couples holding hands, he sees people kissing and dancing and hugging and being happy. He smiles. It’s a good atmosphere. He can’t smell weed and he doesn’t see people sniff coke in a dark corner. He’s content; there’s no drama in sight. Sabo texts Ace if he’s supposed to look out for a naked woman the next morning, but Ace doesn’t text back. Which is enough of an answer.

His phone buzzes. It’s Law, also a colleague of Ace’s; he works at the same hospital.

“Yo, where are you?” Law asks him and Sabo can hear the sound of traffic almost drowning out the familiar voice.

“At a house party, downtown. Where are you?”

“Just finished work. Text me the address, I need a drink.”

“Alright. See you in a bit.”

Sabo ends the call and texts Law the location. Will be nice to have another friend here. He leans back on the stairs, quietly listening to the heavy music coming from the living room.

Law arrives around twenty minutes later. The surgeon has dark circles beneath his eyes and he looks as tired as always. He just came from a 10-hour-shift at the hospital – the usual for him. He doesn’t hide how impressed he is with the mansion. They settle at the other end of the bar, however even when Sabo cranes his neck, he can’t see Ace anymore in the crowd.

“Crap, I hope someday I earn so much that I can afford a house like this…where’s Ace?” Law asks.
“Probably still talking to this girl somewhere. Or maybe screwing her already.”

“And what about you?” Law asks him with a smirk. Yeah, Ace is nowhere to be seen in the living room. He is probably getting lucky right this moment.

“What about me?” Sabo asks back and waves at the bartender.

“You got your eye on someone?”

“Here? No way, most here are college kids.”

“Says the 24-year-old brat. Seriously, how long has it been that you had proper sex?” Law sneers.

“Law, you start to sound like Ace. And that’s not a compliment,” Sabo replies.

“You know, I don’t mean the lazy stuff you do when you drag a poor person to the bathroom. I mean the sex you actually do at home, in a bed, in case you still remember how that works”.

“How about we change the topic? You still fighting with Kidd?”

That erases the smirk from Law’s face. The surgeon rolls his eyes. “I told him he can move back in when he apologises.”

“That means never.”

“Nah, he’ll come around, sooner or later. He does love the sex.”

Sabo eyes the slightly older man. Law is 26, Kidd, his boyfriend, 27. They live together... or, well, usually they do. They fight a lot and have even more make-up sex. The two are a weird couple, to say the least, weird and slightly frightening.

“You do know that isn’t what you call a healthy relationship.”

“Depends on how you look at it. And what do you know? How long has your longest relationship been? Twenty minutes in a bathroom stall?”

“Funny.”

Law’s chuckles into his drink.

They start talking about work and Sabo is in a generally good mood, despite his signed contract, the alcohol makes him feel lightheaded and he starts smiling and laughing for no apparent reason. Law is no better. They joke around and Sabo tells him from his stupid decision to become a lecturer. Law snorts into his beer.

“You’re such an idi-”

CRAAASH

They flinch as something deafeningly crashes on the top floor. They look at each other and then suddenly there is a lot of movement and yelling and people run upstairs and then girls start to shriek and they jump down from their bar stools.

Law is ready to call an ambulance, whilst Sabo is ready to film everything he’ll see upstairs. He is a journalist after all.

Luffy
“Luffy, get back down here!” he can hear Nami scream and her voice cracks with fear. He doesn’t blink and moves further and further away from the window he climbed through.

“Help me!” the two girls cry, their voices trembling and so high its piercing. They had been sitting on the roof top of the mansion – where one has a fantastic view over the port and bay – and Luffy is sure they’ve been doing drugs. Yeah, he can smell the weed.

The girls have been sitting on the roof tiles but some tiles came off so the girls went slithering down the steep rooftop. One girl is clinging onto the chimney, but the other is holding onto the rain gutter. Luffy can see her arms shake.

“Don’t move, I’ll be right there,” he says calmly and approaches the girl that hangs from the rain gutter, high above the ground. When she falls, she’ll break her neck and die a disgusting death.

“Please,” she sobs and the mascara colours her tears pitch black. Luffy gulps, his heart is thundering against his chest, his legs shake and he doesn’t dare look down. He stumbles as one tile loosens beneath his foot. He halts and tries to regain his balance. Then he kicks his shoes off. Barefoot is easier.

“Please, hurry!” the girl cries. Only two meters from…
Luffy can hear his friends yelling, he hears the noise of all the party guests, but he blocks it out, he has to save that girl, he’s so close, he almost reached her…!

“Don’t worry, it’s going to be ok…” he mumbles, more to himself than to her.

And then the rain gutter cracks and her fingers lose their grip and girls scream and Luffy leaps forward and grabs her other arm and he slithers down to the rain gutter and she hangs in the air and the weight on his arm is so much he yells and his finger nails bite into the rain gutter and he thinks he’s bleeding.
The girl has a death grip on his left hand and she yells so much he can’t hear himself think anymore. He looks up and sees that someone is helping the other girl back to the window.

“Luffy, hang on!” he can hear someone yell, probably Nami.

His heart beats so fast he believes his ribcage might crack or maybe the cracking just comes from his left hand that’s squeezed so tightly it went numb.

“AAARGH!”, Luffy screams and lifts the girl so that she can grip the rain gutter again.

And then Zoro is there, he lifts the girl and tiles fly loose underneath his shoes and they hit Luffy in the face and it’s like getting punches from an invisible man that holds a big grudge against him.

“Luffy!”

“Get her away!” Luffy yells at his friend and he tries to climb up himself. His nose is bleeding, he grabs the tiles but they all come loose and gravity pulls him down and Luffy, you fool, if you fall down, that was it…

And then there is a hand in his view and he grabs it and someone lifts him up onto the roof and he pants and clings to the stranger like his life depended on it.

And then, it’s like someone suddenly turned up the volume of the situation, he hears the cheering of at least 200 people and Luffy wipes away the blood from his nose and he looks over to the window, where Nami wipes away her tears and nods at him with a grin and he sees all these people, standing
far underneath him outside in the garden, he sees them in every stupid window of the mansion and they are all cheering and yelling.

“You ok?” an unfamiliar voice asks and Luffy turns his head to see onto whose shoulders he is still clinging.

It’s probably the most handsome man he has ever seen.

Blond, wavy hair that frames his handsome face. Striking blue eyes and a large scar over his left eye give him a sense of wilderness and adventure. But he smiles gently and his eyes are glowing with such kindness Luffy’s chest squeezes with a feeling he can't quite understand.

But one thing is sure. Luffy’s heart speeds up like lightning.

“Ye-yeah, thanks for saving me,” Luffy replies, still mesmerized by the stranger’s gorgeous features.

“I’m glad,” the man says with a beautiful smile and then nods toward the window. “Don’t you think we should return to the party?”

That makes Luffy laugh and he shyly realises that he is still very much sitting in the man’s lap.

“Yeah, you’re right.”

“You go first, I’m right behind you.”

And Luffy carefully balances back to the window, where his friends give him the most bone-crashing hug of his life.

“You fool, don’t you dare do that again!” Chopper and Nami squeal in unison. Usopp pats his shoulder so much it hurts. Robin is delighted and ruffles his hair. Franky is on the verge of tears. Luffy laughs and turns to Zoro, who grins sheepishly at him.

“Thanks for the help,” Luffy smiles.

“No problem”

“Fucking idiots, both of you,” Sanji still fumes and he glares at his boyfriend, who just laughs and pulls him into a hug. “I hate you, damn marimo. I fucking hate you.”

“Yeah, I love you, too.”

“Scare me like that again and it’s over, I swear!”

“Yeah, yeah.”

Luffy turns back to his friends who still grin proudly at him.
The crowd starts backing away and Vivi jumps toward him and pulls Luffy into a tight hug.

“Thank you so much! Thank you, thank you, this was so brave!” she says with tears in her eyes and Luffy blushes and rubs his nose.

“No problem, Vivi.”
Then she turns to Zoro to hug him and Luffy can finally see the blond stranger again, who currently seems to get a lecture from his two friends.

Luffy moves closer.

“...you must be fucking kidding me, I leave for ten stupid minutes and you hurl yourself into a life-and-death situation? Like, do you even have a brain?!” the man with the broad shoulders, freckles and wavy dark hair yells.

“Seriously, you could’ve broken your neck,” the other guy sighs. “Next time, give me a warning.”

“If you weren’t my best friend, I’d beat the shit out of you, do you know that?!”. Luffy can hear the blond man laugh light-heartedly.

“Well thanks for the heart-warming words, guys.”

“Luffy, let’s go back downstairs!” Usopp yells and throws one arm around Luffy’s shoulder. The three friends turn to them. Luffy blinks and looks at the blond man.

“Uhm, thank you...”

“Don’t sweat it. You were the hero tonight,” the blond replies and winks at him.

Luffy changes a glance with Usopp. Usopp nods encouragingly.

“Alright, but how about I buy you and your friends a drink?” Luffy asks with a grin.

“Nah, we’ll be the ones to buy the drink. What you did was really brave. And stupid,” the tanned one with the short dark hair says and smiles at him. Luffy can see dark circles beneath his eyes, like he didn’t have decent sleep for weeks.

Luffy scratches the back of his neck: “Haha, I agree, I guess.”

“By the way, this is Law and this is Ace. And I’m Sabo,” the man finally introduces himself.

Luffy bites his lower lip in excitement and he shakes the offered hand.

“I’m Luffy. Nice to meet you. And thanks again for saving me, Sabo.”
Sabo

Sabo feels the adrenaline slowly fading from his blood, but he is still very much excited, or rather he’s still brimming with the rush of the adventure.

Actually, it’s not his thing to get involved. He’s a journalist; he observes and then writes it up and publishes his stories in the paper and gets paid. Normally, he keeps his distance, he doesn’t care much about the people he writes about and more than once he has ruined someone’s life because he found something out and published it. Some say he is ruthless in his way of digging out a big story, ruthless and cold-blooded.

However, he thinks that he is just this certain type of person; he doesn’t regret and he doesn’t look back and he never, ever, gets emotionally involved. And that’s why he is so good at his job.

So this was his first time actually…well…becoming part of the story.

He was just fascinated by the raw courage and bravery from this boy, Luffy, so he climbed after him, however idiotic that was from an objective point of view. But, in the end, it was a good decision otherwise, Luffy might be dead now.

He feels Ace’s stares in his back, but he doesn’t care. He much rather likes to talk to Luffy some more and his friends he just got introduced to.

Law is talking to the green-haired guy who helped save the girls. Apparently, the green-head, Zoro, knows Kidd. So they already got something or rather someone to talk about.

“By the way, is your hand ok?” Sabo asks Luffy. There aren’t many guests left anymore; he thinks he will leave soon, too. But he still has a bit of time, and an idea blossoms in his mind.

“Nah, I’m good,” Luffy waves aside and grins. Sabo smiles and then lifts Luffy’s right hand.

There is still blood underneath his broken nails. His hand is warm and calloused. He examines Luffy’s hand, before he looks him in the eyes again. There is still a hint of a smile on his handsome face, but aside from that, he has his mimic under control. Sabo likes that. There are so many facets to this young man… He’d love to explore them further.

“Thanks for the concern,” Luffy says softly and pulls his hand away.

They look at each other and Sabo wonders about the smoothest way to ask for his number.

Suddenly the orange-haired girl comes up to Luffy: “Luffy, the cab is here.”

“Ok. Be there in 2.”

She nods and waves at Sabo. He nods gracefully.

“…Is it ok if I see you again?” Sabo finally asks and he studies the handsome face.

“I’m a journalist. So would it be ok to interview you?”. The old excuse.

Luffy blushes faintly and scratches the back of his neck.

“Yeah, maybe.”

“Ok, how’s this, I’ll give you my number. And if you want to, you can text me?” Sabo offers.

Luffy shrugs and gives Sabo his phone and Sabo types in his number.

“Ok. Well then, hopefully see you soon,” Sabo says and he hopes that Luffy gets the hint. But no, he doesn’t think he does.

Luffy just grins and nods: “Yeah, maybe! See ya, Sabo!”. And then he runs outside to join his friends.

Sabo and his friends are the last ones left. Vivi has already said goodbye and disappeared upstairs.

“…Aren’t you one sly fox, huh?” Ace whispers into Sabo’s ear.

“Why?” Sabo asks back and turns to his friends as they slowly walk outside, into the brillinat warm night air that softly carries the faint smell of the ocean within. It feels good to be outside again, Sabo has the feeling that his mind slowly clears up.

“He your new plaything?” Ace asks challengingly.

“No. I don’t know. We’ll see.”

“Just don’t make him cry,” Law yawns and pats his shoulder.

“Not planning to…,” Sabo mumbles.

This was a weird night, for sure. He needs to sleep and think and write tomorrow. But he certainly won’t forget that he met a really interesting guy tonight… Oh yeah, and that he saved said guy’s life.

---

Luffy wakes up because there is a sneeze itching in his nose. He grimaces and slowly sits up. He and his friends took a cab back from the party last night.

Oh yeah. And he saved a girl’s life.

Luffy rubs his eyes and looks around sleepily. It’s dim in his room; the only light source is the small window above the book shelf. He yawns and sneezes. Then he sees that his phone is dead, he forgot to charge it when he got home. He plugs it in.

He lives alone since Sanji moved in with Zoro. He works as a waiter and together with the monthly allowance from both his grandfather and father, Luffy can afford living by himself. Which is nice, haha. All the space to himself, right? And-and when he wants to talk to someone, he can always call his friends…

The flat is small, but it was enough for two people. He has his bedroom, the living room, kitchen and a bathroom and there’s still Sanji’s old room, not that he thinks Sanji would consider moving back in with him, but... somewhat the thought that his friend could is weirdly reassuring. Luffy is alright with this arrangement. Having a flatmate again would be nice, but well…finding one whose food is as good as Sanji’s is difficult.
Luffy stands up from his double-sized bed and walks to the kitchen to put on the coffee machine. His right arm hurts. He’s hungry, but he has no appetite. A weird combination. Like, his stomach is growling, but Luffy isn’t in the mood for food. This doesn’t happen often, but it usually happens when he’s having a bad day. Which doesn’t happen often, either.

But today already feels like it’s not going to be a good day. And usually, Luffy is right with his assumptions.

His breakfast is coffee and he sits down in front of his laptop, still feeling sluggish and kind of not in the mood for anything. He picks up his phone. Maybe he should call his father and tell him what happened.

Luffy lets it ring at least fifteen times before he gives up. He shrugs. It’s not really surprising; his dad hardly has time for ah… his only child. Luffy tries calling his grandfather. It goes straight to voicemail. How great.

He goes through his contact list and blinks when he sees an unfamiliar name. “Blue Gentleman Sabo,” he reads and a silly grin appears on his face. Oh yes, the handsome guy from last night, who saved him from falling off the roof. Blue Gentleman, huh… well, the blue shirt did suit him well…

Luffy thinks for a second, before he googles the name. And doesn’t expect to find anything – but Jesus Christ, the guy has written a lot of articles! So he didn’t lie.

He actually is a journalist.

The most recent one is from two days ago; it’s a feature story about Water Seven mayor Iceberg. Luffy leans back and scrolls through the endless list of journalistic pieces he has published. And the by-line always says “Blue Gentleman Sabo”.

Luffy can’t actually believe that newspapers and websites let him have that kind of by-line. But apparently, they do. He can’t find a single article with his real name. What an interesting guy…

Sabo

Sabo sits in front of his laptop. It’s 3pm and he’s working on an article about last night plus he still needs to transcribe his interview from yesterday morning, with soul singer Brook. He sips his coffee, as Ace’s bedroom door swings open and he stumbles out, yawning and only clad in boxers and really low shorts. Nothing new. And yet Sabo's eyes rest a moment too long on him and when he meets his best friend's gaze, Ace smirks knowingly, but doesn't comment.

“Morning!” Ace says instead and helps himself with coffee.

“It’s afternoon, sunshine.”

“Whatever. Just remembered what happened yesterday.”

Sabo raises his brow.

“Still talking about that? Looking back, it wasn’t that exciting…,” he replies with a shrug.

“No, I’m talking about the girl I planned to go home with, but no, my best fucking friend decides to play hero on the rooftop, nearly gives me a damn heart attack and then she was gone”.
That makes Sabo genuinely laugh. “I’m sorry for the loss, man.”

“Yeah, you should be sorry. Hell, she was perfect… did you see her body? Like a goddess…”

“I gotta admit you’re not half as embarrassing when you’re into a guy. You sound like a college frat boy.”

Ace, just like Sabo, swings both ways. More people to play with, right?

“Shut up. What about you, going after the kid from the rooftop? Seriously?” Ace fires back.

“I’m not going after him.”

“Oh, c’mon, we both know you will. You gave him your number.”

“Yeah, so I can interview him.”

“Bullshit. You wanna screw him.”

Sabo rolls his eyes. “Would you just shut up about that?”

Ace crashes down on the sofa next to him and slings his arm around Sabo’s shoulder. He’s upper body is still naked and Sabo can feel the heat radiating from the skin, he can see his muscles flex and Ace’s grin is intoxicating. His best friend has broken a lot of hearts already.

To be honest, they did fool around in the past. Yeah, he knows that body pretty well, however the last time they did it was already a few months ago.

Sabo eyes his best friend. Ace grins wickedly and then breathes into his ear: “He was cute, I give you that much. If you won’t go after him, I will.”

“Back off, Ace,” Sabo sighs.

It takes more to rile him up. And he knows Ace far too well to get confused by him. And suddenly Ace bites his neck. Not playfully – well yes, playful, but with the playfulness of a young male lion. Ace’s teeth dig into his neck and Sabo winces, but he doesn’t move, although his skin is starting to heat up and his heart starts beating faster, embracing the fact of having that familiar body once again so close…

God, Ace’s jaw is strong and then he can feel the hot tongue lick forcefully over his skin and Sabo’s had enough – a bit longer and he won’t care anymore. He lifts his hand and digs his fingers into Ace’s soft mane and pulls as hard as he can.

Ace lets out a surprised yelp and lets go off his neck.

“Playtime over.” Sabo says with a closed-lipped smile. He glares at Ace. Ace growls and doesn’t move. Sabo lets go off his hair.

“You should really stop doing that. People will think that I am actually seeing someone,” Sabo says and resumes typing.

“You mean hero-boy will think that you’re seeing someone? And he won’t kiss your feet anymore?”

“Oh screw you, asshole!”

Sabo jumps over the back of the sofa and chases Ace through their flat.
A couple hours later, Sabo gets out of the shower. His hair is still dripping wet and he sporadically wipes his skin dry and wraps a towel around his lower body. He looks into the mirror and the hickey Ace gave him earlier is so obvious against his pale skin, it’s annoying. He sighs. That idiot. He walks out of the bathroom and sees Ace lounging on the sofa, talking on his phone. Sabo approaches him and is about to jump at him and dig his teeth into his neck in revenge, when he notices his phone blinking.

He bends forward over the back of the sofa to grab it and he can see Ace shudder and glaring at him from the corner of his eye. Sabo grins and makes extra sure to brush his damp arm against Ace’s shoulder.

Sabo turns and reads the messages he got. Two from the office, one from Law, another one from his friend Koala and the last one…is from an unknown number.

He ignores the rest and opens the text. It’s crispy short, but makes him smile triumphantly nevertheless. He knew it. He knew the boy would contact him.

- Hi, you still wanna interview me? L

Sabo’s thumb hovers over the screen. He’s about to type an answer, when he feels two hot arms come from behind him and wrap around his torso, tightly, and he feels Ace’s hot, damp breath against his neck and his hot fingers tenderly wandering over his abs.

“…You in the mood?” Ace asks quietly and he nuzzles his nose into Sabo’s hair. His voice has gone darker, a little raspy. A voice that makes people practically jump into his bed. Sabo breathes deeply as he feels the familiar lips pressing light kisses to his neck.

“Are you?” Sabo innocently asks back.

“Obviously, after what you just did. And after seeing you like this. Reminds me of good times.”

Sabo grins. Ace’s fingers move lower, but just a bit, he is still waiting for permission. Which Sabo won’t give him. He would be in the mood…if it wasn’t for the boy from yesterday.

He gently captures Ace’s fingers.

“Sorry. But not today.”

And he hears Ace sigh, before the arms fall from around him and Ace steps away.

“I knew you would say that, asshole,” Ace scoffs, in his normal voice again.

Sabo turns to look at him.

“That’s why we’re friends, right?” Sabo says amused.

Ace runs a hand through his hair and walks back to the sofa.

“You mad now?” Sabo asks with a raised eyebrow.
“No, dickhead. Just go fuck yourself”

Sabo chuckles and leaves his best friend sulking in the living room. He looks at his watch. It’s half past six. Should he ask Luffy to meet him later? There’s still plenty of time, the evening has just begun… Sabo throws himself onto his bed, still clad in the towel and he leans back in his pillows, satisfied with this turn of events. He has expected Luffy to text him, but still, being right gives him a feeling of superiority.

He thinks for a minute, before lifting the phone to his ear.

He’ll just call him.

**Luffy**

He only left his flat to buy groceries. Aside from that, Luffy has been hiding away in his room, comfortably doing work in his bed, drinking coffee and eating cookies. He hasn’t felt like seeing anyone today. He’s a Game Design major, so he has just continued working on a project that’s due in a month. He has listened to music, he has downloaded the latest episode of the TV series ‘Romance Dawn’, and yes, it sounds like a sappy rom-com, and it is, basically, but it’s the funnies thing he has ever seen, and Luffy has cuddled his plush lion Sunny, which is as old as he is, and he has, well, waited for his father or grandfather to call him. He has tried calling them the entire afternoon, but he has been quite unsuccessful.

It’s half past six in the evening. Maybe they… have been busy, as they always are. Luffy scratches his forehead and pulls Sunny into his lap. He’s about to check his mail when his phone buzzes with an incoming phone call. His heart jumps. It must be either his dad or grandfather! His friends usually prefer texting over calling, so it has to be either of them!

Delighted, he grabs it and answers immediately: “Hi dad! I can’t believe you actually called!”, only to be greeted back by an entirely different, and much more friendly voice saying: “Hey, ah, Luffy, this is Sabo. I’m sorry I’m calling so suddenly…”

Luffy’s heartbeat almost runs away with embarrassment.

“Ah-oh, hi Sabo, sorry, I expected someone else,” Luffy replies with burning cheeks and he punches his thigh. He should definitely learn to look at the screen before answering calls…

“Oh, if so, shall I just call later?” Sabo asks.

“No! I mean, no, it’s fine. How’re you doing?”, Luffy asks, still feeling like a complete idiot.

However, he can hear Sabo laugh warmly. “I’m doing great, thanks, how about you?”

“Me too, I guess.”

“See, I know that accident only happened last night, but do you think you would be up for an interview? Like, this evening?”

Luffy gaps and leans forward in disbelief, like he would in an actual conversation. Thank god Sabo didn’t facetime him or something.

“Ah, this evening?”
“Yes, if you have time? I promise I won’t take too long. So what do you say?”

Luffy shrugs and helplessly looks over at his plush lion Sunny, which he has thrown to the end of the bed when the call came in. What the hell is he supposed to do? He has never done an interview before! Plus, Sabo is a real professional…

“Luffy? You still there?”

“Yes! I mean yes, I am, and yes, I’m free tonight. So-so where do you want to meet?” Luffy replies hastily.

“How about at 7.30? In this café, it’s called Zou. Do you know where that is?”

“Nah, but I’ll google it.”

“Ok, great! See you at 7.30, Luffy.”

“Yes, see ya!”.

Luffy hides his face in his hands. Why, seriously, why does he keep on getting himself in these kinds of situations? He has never given an interview before! Will Sabo use, like, a voice recorder or something? Oh god, what if Luffy accidentally starts swearing? Or uses the f-word? What if Sabo puts that into his article? What if Luffy stutters…? Luffy pulls at his hair in utter despair. He’ll make a complete fool out of himself!

He reluctantly saves his work on his laptop, before shutting it down. He should get ready, brush his teeth and put on some decent clothes and think about what he might say to Sabo. He’s sure the guy will think that he’s the biggest idiot that runs around in Water Seven and that says a lot.

Luffy slowly stands up and walks to the bathroom. He wishes his dad would at least text him. But that happens roughly once a year. Because his father has always wanted Luffy to be independent. And Luffy isn’t lonely, right?

- Sanji, what do I put on for an interview?, he texts Sanji whilst he’s standing in the bathroom, his toothbrush hanging in the side of his mouth.

- is it a job interview?

- no, a real interview. the blond guy from yesterday asked me

- seriously? anyways, go smart-casual, and clean your shoes

- I never clean my shoes

- you’re an idiot. tell me how it went

Luffy smiles and tries to tame his messy hair. Smart-casual, huh? Well… He’s standing in front of his wardrobe. It’s not like he has a massive amount of clothes. It’s a decent amount. So he only has to do laundry once a week.

He decides to put on light blue jeans and a red sweatshirt with a Galley-La Company logo. It’s more casual than smart, but at least he feels comfortable.

Then he googles that café, Zou. He has heard of it, but never actually been there. Luffy rests his chin
in his palm as he sits on the sofa and scrolls down his phone. It’s a good 15 minute walk from here. He stands up. So he should get going now.

He strolls down the road and then turns right. There is music coming from a restaurant, there are many people outside, it’s Saturday after all, he can hear laughter filling the warm August air, he can faintly hear the ocean far away or maybe it’s just a feeling, he can hear birds chirping against the golden evening sky, thin clouds are dusted with the bright glorious red of the sun dipping it’s bottom into the sea, he can see the big clock tower of the church two blocks away. When he turns his head and looks to the left, he can see the gigantic fountain, the trademark of Water Seven, pouring the crystal clear water into the largest basin people have ever seen. Luffy can’t help but smile, despite his nervousness. It feels good to walk and it feels especially good to be here, in this town he knows so well.

Maybe, after all, this will turn out to be a good day.

As he approaches Zou, first thing he notices is the huge artificial elephant head hanging on the side of the building, above the entrance and terrace of the café. Luffy’s eyes grow wide. Wow, this looks impressive! Then his eyes lower and he sees the familiar blond man standing in front of the entrance, a bag over his shoulder and looking at his phone.

Luffy swallows dryly and tries to stay calm. *It's not like this is a job interview… Calm down, Luffy, keep it together…*

He approaches Sabo and maybe Sabo has heard his footsteps, because he turns his gaze and Luffy can’t help but grin a little sheepishly when he sees the beautiful smile again.

He clears his throat.

Showtime.

Sabo

Sabo slides his phone into his pocket and pleasantly lets his eyes wander down Luffy’s body. The boy looks handsome, even though he’s clad rather casually. When Luffy is close enough, Sabo stretches out his hand.

“Hey Luffy. Good to see you. And thanks again for coming,” he says and he likes the small blush that appears on Luffy’s face, but other than that, Luffy stays surprisingly cool, although Sabo is sure he is nervous. Because everyone is nervous on their first interview.


“Very good, thanks. How about you? Have you recovered from last night’s events?”

“I guess so.”

“That’s great. How about we sit down inside?”

“Oh, uh, wait a sec, please…”

Sabo nods and waits. Luffy scratches the back of his head.

“You—you know, I’m new to this stuff… so I apologise in advance if I say something stupid or so, ok?”
Sabo tries to hide his amusement and smiles brightly instead: “Don’t worry about that, I won’t ask you anything weird, I promise. Just be yourself, it’s going to be ok. Don’t think about it too much.”

Luffy smiles wearily, but before he can say anything else, Sabo steps ahead. “Let’s go find a table!”

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A waiter shows them to an empty table on the backyard terrace. It’s quieter out here, lanterns hang above the tables and they have a fabulous view over downtown Water Seven and the port. Sabo can see the wonder in Luffy’s eyes and he’s glad he brought him here, even though it’s not a date. Yet.

Sabo usually doesn’t invite interviewees to this location, because it’s far too nice to show it to everyone. But Luffy has saved a girl’s life yesterday, so he’s definitely shown that he’s worthy of knowing Zou.

They sit down and Sabo takes out his notepad and pen out of his bag. Then he puts his phone next to them.

He can tell that Luffy is getting nervous. Man, everyone is so afraid of journalists nowadays. But c’mon, if you haven’t done anything bad, there’s no need to be nervous. He smiles at Luffy. He’ll distract him a bit, make him feel comfortable and order something. Then he’ll start his interview.

“Do you like it here?”

“Yes! It looks amazing!”

“Haha, I’m glad you like it. I discovered this gem a few years ago, totally by chance, and I love it. Best cappuccino and hot chocolate you can find in Water Seven.”

“Really? To be honest the gigantic elephant head looks super weird at first, but totally cool!” Luffy replies with big eyes and an even wider grin.

“It’s part of the unique charm, isn’t it?” Sabo say with a wink.

“By the way, I googled you.”

Sabo leans forward and rests his fore arms on the table. “Did you find my articles?”


“More or less. I just get lucky a lot, I suppose.”

“I liked the one about the Rocket Man and the Puffing Tom. Oh, and the one about the Sea Bulls,” Luffy says and Sabo genuinely smiles now. He’s impressed that Luffy has read some of his pieces.

“The sea trains were super interesting! I wrote it a few months ago, they even let me into the one they’re building right now, the Puffing Ice!” Sabo says and he can feel the thrill again he already felt back then. That was indeed one of his favourite bits of his job so far. Reminds him again why he is a reporter.
Luffy laughs. “To be honest, at first I was really nervous about meeting you, Sabo, but you’re super chill to hang out with!” he says with a wide grin.

“Thanks, likewise. And I mean it. People can be real nasty, too,” Sabo says.

A waiter comes to their table and they order. Luffy goes for hot chocolate, Sabo orders cappuccino.

“What’s nasty?” Luffy asks and looks at him. There’s still a smile on his face.

“Well, because they think I’m the bad guy when I write about them. They’re afraid I might make them appear in a bad light.”

“What?”

Sabo meets Luffy’s intrigued gaze and smiles with closed-lips. “If there is reason to, then yes.”

Luffy turns his head a little but he lets the topic slide. “If you say so. Oh, by the way, do you only work for the Daily Grand Line?”

“No, I’ve already published articles at the Alabasta Tribune, the Dressrosa Gazette, the Jaya Mail, the Daily Fishman, the San Faldo Prophet...”

“Oh, wow, ok, that’s a lot!”

Sabo grins. “You think you’ll be famous after I write the story?”

He laughs at the blush that appears on Luffy’s face yet again.

“No! That’s not why I asked and I don’t want to be famous anyways!” Luffy says loudly.

“Haha, sorry, I just wanted to take the piss – but honestly, if you don’t want to do this, I won’t force you to.”

Luffy scratches his nose and he’s about to reply as the waiter reappears and serves them their orders.

Luffy sniffs at the hot chocolate. “I hope it’s going to be as good as you say,” he says with a wink.

“If not, you have to buy me ice cream.”

Sabo grins from behind his cappuccino. “Alright, deal.”

“Well then, tell me how this works? You’re gonna ask me questions and I answer, right? Will you record it?” Luffy asks.

“Yes, that’s basically what’s going to happen. You don’t mind the voice recording, do you?”

“No necessarily... But please don’t put in any-any quotes where I swear, ok?” Luffy asks.

“No, I won’t,” Sabo replies with a nod and Luffy sighs.

“Ok, then let’s start...”

Luffy

The first questions are easy. Sabo casually asks him how old he is (20), what his occupation is (student at University of Water Seven) and where he works (waiter at WindMill café).
Then Sabo kind of asks him questions that reconstruct last night. For example, what time he got to the party and with whom and why he was at the top floor and how he noticed the two girls on the roof and why he decided to climb after them.

“Ah, well, I was actually opening a window to look outside and because Sanji wanted to smoke and he was too lazy to walk downstairs, so I opened the window, yeah, just that, and then I could hear them and I turned my head and I could see them sitting next to the chimney, right? And I could smell the weed, and no, I don’t usually do weed, ok? And then they noticed me and I think they were already high as kites and then the tiles came loose and yeah, that’s basically what happened,” Luffy babbles.

Sabo nods and scribbles a few notes on his note pad.

“So you decided to climb after them – weren’t you scared? Did you think about what kind of danger you put yourself in?” Sabo asks earnestly.

“Uhm… to be honest, I didn’t really think about anything, I guess… I just wanted to help them and yes, I was scared, but it got kind of pushed to the back of my head, my only thought was that I wanted to help them,” Luffy says with a shrug.

Sabo nods again and he reads something on his note pad and writes some more and Luffy has time to breathe and collect his thoughts. Because good Lord, it’s hard to concentrate on what he’s saying when Sabo stares at him this intently and Luffy has to say that the guy looks exceptionally handsome. He’s wearing dark jeans, a white shirt and his grey jacket is hanging over the back of his chair.

He looks so good; it even distracts Luffy from the voice recorder. He has also noticed the massive hickey the guy has on his neck. He wonders if it has been there last night already.

“Did you talk to your parents? What did they say? Do they think you’re a hero?”

Luffy blinks and his smile is about to cave in, but he pulls himself together. “I ah, I haven’t talked to them. I mean I haven’t talked to my dad.”

He sees that something shifts in Sabo’s intense gaze; however the reporter doesn’t dwell on his response.

“Have you talked to the girls today? Have you heard that they got released from the hospital this morning?”

“Well, my friends texted me that they got released, but I haven’t talked to them. And to be honest, Zoro, my friend, is the actual hero. I just grabbed her, but he was the one who brought them both back to the window,” Luffy says.

“That’s very humble of you.”

“Is it? It’s just how it happened, right? I don’t want to take credit when I haven’t really done anything. Zoro is the hero, not me. Well, Zoro and you, since you saved me” Luffy says and he has the feeling he has said everything necessary.

He breathes out and he’s slightly exhausted and he feels weirdly exposed to this man he only met last night but who already seems to known so much about him. Luffy doesn’t know if he’s all that thrilled about this. Not only because Sabo got to know so much about him, but rather because he hasn’t learned anything at all about Sabo.
“…Ok,” Sabo mutters. He lifts his phone and saves the audio recording, before he turns his gaze back to Luffy. He flashes him a smile.

“Was it that bad? Are you ok?” Sabo asks him friendly.

Luffy nods. “Yes, I think that was alright. Did you get everything you need? I’m sorry if I, uh, haven’t said anything useful…”

“No! Don’t worry about that, you were great, I promise,” says Sabo and again, the wink.

“Well… when are you going to publish it?”

“I’ll send it in tomorrow afternoon, so I think it’s going to appear either Monday or Tuesday.”

“Ok…”

Luffy is unsure of how this…meeting will proceed. Should he get up now, pay and leave?

He looks at Sabo, who puts his note pad, pen and phone away. Then the man leans forward again and grins at him.

“So, as the business part is over… mind if I buy you a drink?”

Luffy blinks. “Eh…? A drink?”

“Yes. A drink in date-wise. If that’s ok with you?”

And Luffy actually gasps. So uncool but he can’t help it. How the hell did he manœuvre himself in this situation now?!

“I… I don’t know what to say…”

“You can decline, of course. But if it’s ok with you… let’s talk like this was a date and not an interview. Luffy, I’m genuinely interested. I mean: in you”

And Luffy’s heart is beating so fast he believes it’s going to break is ribcage. Goodness, how, just how did this happen? Why?

This handsome man asking him... Why?

Luffy bites his lower lip, before he slowly shakes his head.

“Sorry, but… I don’t think that would be a good idea, Sabo. Not tonight”

Sabo is still smiling, but now his smile does look a tiny bit forced. “I won’t say I’m not disappointed, but I accept your answer. But let me at least walk you out? Please?”

Luffy shrugs and they wave the waiter and pay separately.

Then they stand in front of the Zou again. It’s almost 9pm. It’s a lovely night, there are couples everywhere and Luffy feels the sudden urge to wince and vomit.


And it hurts.

Sabo scratches the back of his neck.
“Well, I certainly hoped for a different answer but it was fun anyways, Luffy. And I hope the hickey wasn’t what put you off. Ace, you met him yesterday, right? We’re flatmates and he gave me it.”

Luffy blushes, but he does laugh a little at that. Ace kinda seemed like the hot-blooded type. “Ace sure is fierce… but yes, it was fun. And I hope you can actually use my quotes,” Luffy replies. “May I ask another question?”

“Eh, yeah, spill”

“I hope I’m not being invasive but you said “Not tonight”. Does that mean I can ask you out on a real date another time?”

Luffy sighs. “I’m flattered, Sabo, I really am. But… you know, I don’t do that…thing.”

Sabo looks at him. “Do you mean dating?”

“No, yeah, I mean I don’t do love or relationships or dating or fucking. That’s not me.”

And Luffy is sure he has scared Sabo away for good, when a wide smile appears on the man’s handsome features again.

“Alright. Then how about we meet – as friends? How’s that? Let’s be friends?”

And Luffy stares at him. Is he serious? He hasn’t heard that question since elementary school.

“Are you... making fun of me?”

“No, I’m serious. Look, I am interested in you, ok? And I think we would be great friends! So what do you say?”

Sabo

He waits for Luffy’s reply and Sabo’s heart beats fast, way too fast. This is not how he does things usually. This is new. And it’s thrilling!

Then, after the longest time, Luffy grins. “Alright, let’s be friends. I hope you like video games and laser tag.”

“I’ll kick your butt at Mario Kart,” Sabo grins. This isn’t what he planned, but he likes the course where this is going. “Pff, just watch out!” Luffy laughs. “Anyways, I need to get going now. It was fun, Sabo, really.”

“Yeah. You got my number?”

“Yes!”

“Ok, then get home safely. I’ll see you around.”

“See ya!”. And with that, Luffy turns around, hands in his pockets and walks down the road and soon disappears around a corner.

Sabo sighs. He’s about to get going, as well, when a woman walks up to him. She has long legs and dirty blond hair and glasses. She’s hot and most likely the type that would let you do anything in bed. So basically, the type Sabo avoids under all circumstances.
“You lonely, handsome?” she asks him with a sultry smile.

“Ah, no, not really, sorry, gotta go…,” Sabo replies and hurries to get away from her. Ah man, he has indeed hoped for a different outcome of the meeting with Luffy… but there is definitely still hope…

When he gets home, he can hear that Ace hasn’t left for the night yet. His best friend is sitting in front of his laptop, but turns around when he hears the front door closing.

“Ah, pretty boy got rejected?” Ace sneers.

“No,” Sabo replies and puts his bag in his room.

“Then why you looking so gloom? And why are you back already? Alone?”

“We agreed to be…friends…”

“What, you mean fuck buddies?”

“No, Ace, I mean genuine friends,” Sabo sighs and sits down at the other end of the sofa.

“The hell? How old are you, ten?”

“There’s more to this world than just sex.”

“Yeah, when you’re old and wrinkly. What the hell, Sabo?”

“Just leave it, alright? I got a plan.”

“What? To properly woo him? So old-fashioned!” Ace grins.

“Not really. We’ll start as friends and he’ll get used to me and he’ll start to like me and boom – I got him. Easy,” Sabo explains smugly.

“I’ll believe that when I see it. Anyways, you going anywhere tonight?” Ace asks.

“Nah, staying home. How about you?”

“Law and me are going out for a drink. Wanna come?”

“To listen to his bitching about Kidd? No way,” Sabo says with a yawn.

“Fine, stay here, old fart.”

“Jerk.”

“But seriously? Why don’t you go out and have fun? No need to stay faithful to a guy you’re friends with, right?” Ace asks with raised eyebrows.

“It’s not that. I got work to do and I’m not in the mood. Just go and have fun, alright?”

Ace stares at him, but he shrugs. Sabo runs a hand through his messy hair. What a day…

Hours later, Sabo can’t sleep. His thoughts keep on drifting back to the meeting with Luffy. The boy looked handsome. The skinny jeans had let him have a splendid view on that tight little ass. The slender thighs were simply a work of art and that handsome face he could’ve looked at for hours
and the dark eyes that would stand his intense gaze…

Most people look away.

But not Luffy.

Sabo bites his lower lip and his right hand wanders further down his abs, toward the waistband of his shorts. When he thinks back to those delicate, tanned hands. Calloused, yes, but not ugly, his hands were actually quite soft, to be honest. Clean. The perfect lips that pull into that radiant smile. Those lips… he wonders what it’s like to kiss them, to feel them press against his, he imagines Luffy being a shy kisser, kind of reluctant, but Sabo would kiss him with all the skill he has, and Luffy’s lips would open and let him in and a hot, wet tongue would welcome him…

Sabo’s hand is on his cock now, he slowly runs his hand over his stiffening member, his eyes slide close in his pitch black room and he imagines it’s Luffy’s hand that rubs gently, it’s Luffy’s body heat embracing him, and Sabo’s mouth falls open with a silent, longing sigh.

Oh god, and Luffy would smile and he would lean down and those glorious, soft lips, the lips Sabo just kissed, would kiss the tip of his cock and Sabo feels himself pulsing with the image and his hand goes faster, and faster, and Luffy’s lips are merciless, they open and his tongue would come out, shy and reluctant, he would lick the tip and the already leaking slit and Sabo imagines the boy licking his lips because yeah, he likes the taste, and Luffy would lick the base of his shaft, his hands would wander over his abs and then Luffy would look up at him and he would open his mouth and take in the head and Sabo would have his fingers in the soft dark hair, he would try to guide him, teach him gently how to do it.

Luffy would hum in the back of his throat and it would vibrate in his cock and Luffy would give him another tentative suck, he would hollow his cheeks and Sabo’s feet wander over the duvet, his toes curl up, and he would imagine Luffy trying to catch his breath, the boy would be so so careful not to scratch him with his teeth, and the saliva would be dripping down his chin and Luffy would try and take him deeper and Sabo would let him have it the way he wanted, he would have Luffy suck his cock the way the boy wanted, he would be patient although the want would burn in his veins, he’s two seconds from slamming his stiff cock into Luffy’s mouth and make him cry, he’s so so close and Luffy sucks so good…

“C’mon babe, make me cum,” Sabo breathes into the silent heat of his room.

Luffy would grin against his cock and then suck on the swollen head, he would draw it out because he’s a little tease, he would play and lick it so slowly Sabo is about to cum and then he would take it in again, deeper down, and tears would start in his eyes and he’ll breathe heavily through his nose and Sabo’s fingers would grab his hair a little tighter and yes, oh god yes, and he would hold Luffy’s head and he feels Luffy trying to pull away, but he wouldn’t let him, because Luffy liked his cum so much, he’ll drink it all, he feels Luffy’s throat contracting and then he’s empty…

Sabo sighs, he blindly grabs the box of tissues on his night stand and wipes away the liquid from his fingers, but his vivid fantasy continues, he would let go of Luffy’s hair and Luffy would pull away and Sabo would rest his thumb against Luffy’s lips and Luffy would swallow and then Sabo would pull him up onto his lap and stroke the hard cock that’s still hiding in those tight blue jeans and Sabo would kiss his swollen lips and this time Luffy wouldn’t hesitate to let him in, Luffy would smile and he would welcome his tongue with a little moan and move even closer to him…
Sabo sighs again and runs a hand through his hair. Alright, he should stop right there, otherwise he’ll never be able to sleep. Well, this has been a very nice fantasy, but Sabo is smart enough to know that it’s not likely to happen in the near future. At some point, possibly, but not soon… He closes his eyes.

Time to get some sleep before the next images jump at him again…

Luffy

About a week later, Luffy has the late shift at the WindMill again. Sanji left already. It’s a Friday, so he’s the one closing tonight. He has locked the front door already and he’s done counting the cash. He just needs to swipe the floor and kitchen and then he can leave. He’s tired. He hasn’t been sleeping well the past night and today a lot of families haven been at the café. He doesn’t mind babies and toddlers, but it’s exhausting when there are twenty of them in the same room, screaming and pooping and throwing their food at costumers and waiters. Luffy rubs his eyes and yawns. He needs to sleep.

He’s almost done sweeping when his phone in his back pocket starts buzzing. He smiles sleepily when he sees that it’s Sabo. They’ve been texting back and forth the past couple days and Luffy has to say that he’s already used to getting his random texts or links.

Sabo is funny and he has the exact same humour as Luffy. Oh, and his article was amazing. Luffy actually cut it out and put it in a folder in his desk. Sabo really is a good journalist.

Luffy takes the call and traps his phone between shoulder and ear.

“Hey Sabo,” he greets the elder happily.

“Hey, you on your way home yet?” Luffy told him earlier that he has to work this evening.

“No, I’ll leave in a bit, why?” Luffy asks with a yawn.

“My editor wants me to write about the illegal yagara bull races at the port. I’m going tonight, wanna come, too?”

Luffy’s eyes widen and he halts the broom. “Really? You going? Isn’t that dangerous?”

“Sure it is. So what do you say? A bit of company could be fun,” Sabo replies and Luffy can practically see the mischievous grin on the handsome face.

“Hell yeah! Gimme 15 minutes to finish.”

“Gotchya. I’ll pick you up from the café.”

“Alright! See ya in a bit.”

15 minutes later, Luffy is waiting outside the café. He doesn’t bother going home to change. This is going to be exciting. He looks to his left and sees Sabo approaching. The guy already looks like he’s up to something thrillingly bad. He’s wearing dark jeans with holes at the knees, dirty converse, and a dark blue, worn sweater and black fingerless gloves and the smug grin and the scar make him look like – well, either a criminal or a street fighter. Probably both.
“Hey,” Luffy greets him.

“Good evening,” Sabo replies with a wink and his wonderfully eloquent way of speaking doesn’t fit his appearance at all.

“You know where we need to go?”

Sabo lifts his phone. “A contact person gave me the location. I gotta say, I’m excited. You sure you wanna come with me?”

“Hell yeah, it sounds like fun!”

“You able to handle yourself in a fight?”

Luffy’s grin widens and darkens at the same time. “Definitely. You?”

“Obviously, otherwise I would be dead by now. Then let’s get going,” Sabo says.

Apparently, the yagara bull races take place in an underground water tunnel at Dock 6. It’s an area of Water Seven which civilized people try to avoid under all circumstances. A lot of drug deals are going down there, there are prostitutes waiting for prey at every corner, it’s filthy, and people are being injured or even shot here on an almost daily basis.

Luffy has been here only a couple of times; only with a group of friends and in broad daylight. His heart is beating quickly and he can’t help but feel the delicious rush of an adventure, he can’t stop grinning like an idiot, his skin prickles with excitement at doing something forbidden and dangerous. He bites his lower lip and catches Sabo’s gaze. The guy seems to be as excited as him.

“We gotta go down this way…Watch out.” Sabo’s voice has become darker, a little raspy, and he’s talking quietly now. They climb down a rusty metal ladder and they find themselves on a narrow path next to the pier and it’s close to the water. The path ends almost at the meter-high city walls. From here, they have to jump over a couple of rocks in the water. Luffy can see a hole in the city wall. It’s pitch black. Sabo in front of him suddenly stops moving and Luffy crashes into his back and would’ve fallen into the water if the taller guy didn’t catch his arm.

“Shhht… Alright, just follow me,” Sabo whispers and Luffy’s heart does a leap.

“It’s completely dark,” Luffy replies and regains his balance.

“I’m sure there’s gonna be a crowd further down the tunnel. Ok, you really sure you wanna do this?”

“Definitely.”

Even in the darkness, he can see Sabo smile.

“Well then…”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading.
Please leave a comment.
Chapter 3

Sabo

Sabo’s heart is beating loudly in his ears. He hears Luffy’s quiet breathing behind him; it’s a comforting feeling to have someone with him. He’s been in bad situations already – so having someone with him, especially when investigating such a dodgy matter and place, is a good thing. And the best is that it’s Luffy, of all people.

His contact person is a guy named Pauly he met a few months back when he did a piece about the Dock workers from the Galley-La company and accidentally discovered the huge consumption of weed and worse on the working site. The dude begged him not to mention his name in the article, so Sabo negotiated that he’ll become his informant if he kept his name out of the article.

Alas, here he is.

They stand in front of the tunnel now. Sabo looks at his phone, Pauly should be here any second. Luffy next to him doesn’t say a word, but he doesn’t look scared, just...excited, really. The air down here is heavy with salt, the strong smell of fish and rotten wood and sea weed.

Finally, he can hear steps approaching. Sabo looks up and he sees Pauly stepping out of the pitch black tunnel.

“Who this? The fuck is the brat doing here?” Pauly snarls behind his cigar. Luffy is about to reply, but Sabo is faster.

“Pipe down. He’s with me,” Sabo says darkly. They glare at each other.

Pauly looks away.

“Fine. But don’t come crying when the stupid brat loses an eye.”

“No gonna happen, old man,” Luffy replies grinning and not the least bit offended. Sabo glances at the younger man.

“I work in a café. I’ve heard worse,” he laughs and Sabo smiles to himself.

God, the boy is just the best…

"Alright, lead the way," Sabo says to Pauly and with a last measuring glance at them, Pauly turns around, gesturing vaguely for them to come follow him into the darkness.

****

Once inside the tunnel, it’s strangely brighter than expected. The path is narrow and Sabo can hear rats swimming in the water, but he can actually see his feet, much to his surprise.
Interesting.

They follow Pauly down the tunnel. At some point, they turn to the left, then right, and then right again (remember the damn path, Sabo) and the tunnel suddenly widens and there are cheap chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. Sabo secretly makes pictures with his phone.

“Who put them up here?” he asks the ship’s carpenter.

“People. Snotty teens. There’s a whole society in the tunnels beneath the city, you fool,” Pauly says.

“Fascinating…”

“You hear the noise?”

Sabo stops walking – again, Luffy crashes into him – and they listen. Yeah, there’s music coming from further down the tunnel. A heavy beat, to be honest. And laughter, mixed with high-pitched voices. Yelling. The sound of water splashing. Footsteps on naked stones.

Sabo looks at Pauly.

“Will they notice us?”

“Probably”

“…You’re not going to come with us, right?” Sabo sighs.

“Nope. Good luck, asshole.”

“Thanks. Have a good night.”

Pauly curses in a low voice and then pushes past him and disappears in the darkness. Sabo looks at Luffy.

“Exciting, huh?” he asks with a grin and Luffy smiles and nods wildly.

“I haven’t had this much fun in a while.”

“Me neither. But listen, if something goes wrong, run, alright? And don’t wait for me”

“No worries, I can handle myself.”

“I believe you, but it’s gonna be a crowd of people that basically live outside the law and it’s just us two against them. So don’t risk too much. You still got a college education to finish.”

“Don’t mention college, you’re taking the fun out of this,” Luffy pouts.

Sabo laughs: “Haha, I’m serious though. But did you hear what I said? Don’t change the topic.”

Luffy sighs.

“Alright, alright, if shit goes down I leave.”

Sabo pats his shoulder and then points at Luffy’s phone. “Please record whatever catches your eye? Can you do that?”

“Sure, no problem!”
Sabo smiles and turns around. He rubs his hands, he feels the adrenaline starting to flood his veins, his pulse rate picks up with every step he takes closer to the desired destination. His blood is roaring eagerly in his ears and he bites his lower lip, tasting the salty, thick air sticking to his skin. This is absolutely splendid, he hasn't had a scoop in a while so this is not only a job for him, it's finally giving his heart the adventure its been longing for since months. He looks over his shoulder and passes the boy a smile.

Let the fun begin.

****

The tunnel widens and it’s like stepping into a crowded bar or club. There are more crappy chandeliers enlightening the room in an unhealthy orange flickering light, there are at least a hundred people on the right-hand side of the water way that is connected to the tunnel they just came through with a narrow bridge across the dirty water.

Sabo can see a wooden bar with a heavily build man as bartender, he can see a group of men standing in one corner, shouting at each other and money notes are handed across a small table, with surprise he notices three of four yagara bulls lazily bob up and down in the water, there are men and women standing together, dancing, chatting, laughing, he can see two women making out in a corner, he can smell the cheap alcohol in the air and he discovers the stereo behind the bartender, from where the music is coming from. Sabo can practically feel the tension in the air, the forced longing for amusement, the frustration and anger that probably boils beneath the skin of so many people here.

He turns to Luffy. The boy is staring with wide eyes, his lips parted in quiet surprise and fascination. “Luffy,” he says quietly and Luffy reluctantly tears his gaze away from the scenery to look him in the eyes.

“Look, we’ll go to the bar and then talk to the gambling guys, ok? I bet they’re making bets on the yagara bull races. Keep an eye on your wallet.”

At his words, Luffy’s hand flies to the back pocket of his jeans and Sabo’s hide his laughter as he sees how the dark eyes widen in horror.

“Shit! It’s gone-.”

“No, I got it,” Sabo grins and hands him back his wallet.

Luffy looks at him suspiciously: “How did you do that?”

“Long story. So you ready?” Ha, like Sabo would tell him here and now that he used to be a pickpocket.

“Hell yeah!”

Luffy

Luffy follows Sabo to the bar; the bartender is even larger up front. He has massive shoulders and a
tired, disinterested look on his face.

“Bruno, shots for me and my girl!” a dude yells and slams his fist on the table.

“Coming,” the bartender, Bruno, replies with a shrug. Luffy watches, from the corner of his eye, how the dude who just ordered slings his bulky arm around a slender girl’s waist and plants his mouth on hers, before they both down their shots and resume obscenely making out.

Luffy grimaces in disgust and he shudders internally. He turns to Sabo.

“What you wanna drink?” Luffy asks him to distract himself from the nasty images he just saw.


“Same.”

Sabo nods at the bartender and leans forward to order. Luffy leave shim to it and looks around, before he fixes his eyes on the yagara bulls that are still swimming around in the water. He’d love to walk over and pat them, but he can’t blow up their fragile cover. So he just sits and watches the people around them. Nami would say they are just the worst. They look filthy, disgusting and like criminals. Which is probably why Sabo is here to investigate.

Sabo hands him the shot and they down them in a heartbeat. Luffy feels the burn in his stomach and he feels more awake almost immediately.

Sabo grins at him: “What do you think? Ready to gamble?”

“I guess. But I don’t have much cash on me.”

“But I do.”

They slowly approach the guys around the table. Now, Luffy can see that there is a small guy with pink hair sitting at the table, a couple of lists and papers in front of him, and the guys are practically yelling into his ears, screaming obscenities mixed with odds and bets. Luffy can see a wooden chest on the table, with loads of bills inside. He tries to indentify some of the scribbled signatures, but he can’t read them from this angle.

“…300 on Red10!”

“That’s bullshit, he was the last one last week…”

“Corby, there’s 500 on Tidalwave!”

“I’m with you, 600 on the speedster”

“Guys, hang on, now who’s betting on Red10? The odds are…” the small guy sighs and makes notes. He writes them down per hand, instead into a laptop. Luffy is surprised at first, but then he realises: No one can hack paper, right?

Luffy eyes the yagara bulls. They peacefully rest in the stinky water, occasionally purring at humans that stand close-by. Luffy narrows his eyes.

*Hang on…*

“Sabo, you gonna bet, too?” Luffy whispers.
“Yeah,” Sabo mutters back.

“Bet on the yellow one with the green stripes. What’s the name…It’s Lemonfish, bet on Lemonfish!” Sabo looks at Luffy. “You sure?”

“Yeah,” Luffy nods with a confident smile. Sabo looks at him for a long moment, before he nods.

“Alright, Lemonfish it is, then…” Sabo agrees and he walks up to the table. Luffy follows him. He hopes he’s right… He's fairly sure he is, but in this case, if he is wrong - then Sabo would be pretty pissed off at him, and he doesn't want that at all.

“Corby, for fuck’s sake, would you hurry up?” one guy barks.

“Pipe down, Croc,” Corby replies with a roll of his eyes.

“I got others business to attend to tonight, alright?”

“Well you can just fuck off then, Croc, how’s that?” a different guy with a weird facial make-up chimes in.

“Go fuck yourself, Buggie.…”

*Man, these guys obviously can’t even form a single sentence without using the f-word…* Luffy has to hide an amused grin.

“Alright, who else? Tidalwave, who bets on Tidalwave? Race starts in 30 minutes, so come on, guys!” Corby says loudly and a newly arrived bunch of people, women now, too, hold the Berry notes under his nose and all talk and chatter over each other. It’s a whole bunch of noise and so many people; Luffy loses sight of Sabo in the crowd. He turns around, craning his neck to see Sabo's blong head stick up from the crowd, but Luffy is by far not the tallest person in the room, so he finds himself being trapped by dozens of larger bodies yelling for Corby's attention and Sabo is nowhere to be seen.

It’s not that Luffy starts to panic, he’s not one to freak out so easily, but he feels a weird churning low in his stomach and a sickly feeling spreading from there as the minutes drag on and he fails to find the only person he knows in this shithole.

****

“You looking for someone?” a voice suddenly says next to Luffy and Luffy can feel a hand that doesn’t belong to him rest on his lower back. Luffy turns his head and sees an exceptionally ugly guy grin down at him. The sickening feeling in his stomach only worsens.

“Yes, I am,” Luffy replies, simply grabs the guy’s arm and detaches it from his back.

The guy’s grin widens: “You’re cute. And stronger than you look.”

“Thanks.”

The guy has a terrible haircut and even worse pair of glasses on his nose.

“Name’s Ki Zaru. How about I help you looking?”
“No thanks.”

And before the guy can bother him even more, Luffy turns and moves away to look for Sabo, he should be somewhere near the gambling table, after all. There, there he is, talking to Corby! He can recognize the blond hair instantly and he comes up from behind and pats his shoulders.

“Oh good, there you are. You alright?” Sabo mutters, his blue eyes fixing on him. Luffy nods and watches Corby taking notes, before the pink-haired guy nods at Sabo.

“Yeah, alright. Good luck, newbie,” Corby says with a smug face.

“You bet already?” Luffy asks Sabo.

“Just did”

“Who we got here? The cutie your boy?” the smoky voice from before asks.

Both Sabo and Luffy look up and see a pale-faced man stand on the other side of the table, a thick cigar hanging from his dead-white lips. He has a huge horizontal scar across his face. Luffy frowns. Such a freaking rude way to start a fucking conversation, whenever people try that with him in the café he usually gives them a piece of his mind -

“We’re friends,” Luffy replies and looks the man straight in the eyes, unafraid.

“Croc, stop hitting on minors!” the other guy from before, Buggie, says and practically laughs his guts out.

“Do your wives know you’re here?” Sabo asks the two smugly. That wipes the grins off their faces instantly and instead they start glaring at Sabo.

“Who the hell are you anyways, kiddo?” Croc asks with a frown and dark look in his eyes.

“Just a dude who needs cash. How about you? Need the money for the 25th anniversary? You gonna take her out for a nice romantic dinner?” Sabo continues and Luffy can only stand there and listen, because wow, Sabo, his way of speaking… he makes people talk, Luffy can tell, he simply knows how to get to them, get under their skin in his weirdly arrogant-but-captivating way of speaking and he makes them say stuff…

He looks at Sabo from the corner of his eyes and Sabo is grinning, grinning in this sinister way that makes a shudder creep down Luffy’s back. Alright, now he starts to understand why Sabo is such a good journalist. He just drills his questions into people.

And they talk, perhaps even without noticing it.

“No, kiddo, and all money is this goddamn shithole ain’t half the worth of her freaking ring,” Croc snarls.

“You got any idea how much money you can actually win here, then?” Buggie asks Croc with a frown. “Couple weeks ago, I won against Moria. Earned myself so much I could buy myself a new flat and still had enough to buy me company for the following week.”

“Bullshit, like you can afford your lunch sandwich,” Croc sneers.

“Pfff, you got an idea what I earn on a weekend down here? You got not idea!” Buggie barks.

“No matter how much you earn, I assure you I earn more on every goddamn week day!”
“So who you guys bet on?” Sabo asks innocently.

“Blue speedster,” both men say in unison. They look at each other like they want to scratch each other’s eyes out and start arguing again.

“How about you?” Buggie asks Sabo with a sneer.

“The yellow one.”

“How about we bet? Whoever wins gets to have your little friend for a round or so?” Buggie asks.

“How about whoever wins gets another 1000 Berry? To make it a little more interesting?” Sabo asks and Luffy believes to see a shadow darkening his friend’s features, a shadow that makes him look demon-like, evil and frightening and Luffy wants to back away from him but wait, it’s gone…? It-it could’ve been just the light, right?

Luffy follows this whole absurd conversation with wide eyes, whilst Sabo seems highly satisfied with his negotiations. When they are finally left alone again, Luffy can’t believe Sabo actually got the two of them to engage in another bet, with 2000 Berry more on the line. He wonders just how much cash Sabo has with him right now, but then again… he doesn’t really want to know.

“Why are you smiling?” Luffy asks his friend in a low voice as they walk toward the yagara bulls, where people start to gather for the race. The noise shifts from the bar to the yagaras and Luffy soothingly coos at them, the loud voices and music must make them uncomfortable. “And did they even say anything interesting? Sounded like a lot of bullshit to me,” Luffy adds.

“They told me more than they think… No worries, I’ll explain later,” Sabo replies.

Luffy shrugs and crouches down next to the yellow yagara bull called Lemonfish. He can see the name on a sign that hangs around the animal’s neck.

The blue one next to him is called Tidalwave.

Red10 is red.

Minati is pinkish-purple.

He pats the head and the skin is cool and moist and strangely hard, like a shark’s. The yagara bull purrs and looks at him with its big, gentle eyes.

“So, you gonna win the race, huh? My friend bet his money on you, so please don’t disappoint us, yes, buddy?” Luffy says in a low voice.

“Yo, hands of my yagara bull, brat!” a loud voice chides and Luffy looks up and sees a guy stomping toward him. He has greasy black hair and a bottle of rum is stuck in his belt.

“Sorry.” Luffy mutters. The guy grabs his arm and yanks him back up. His breath reeks of cheap alcohol.

“Those are my fucking yagara bulls, so don’t you dare touch them!” the guy yells into his face.

“Alright, I got it, sorry!” Luffy says and the guy releases his arm – damn, his grip was hard – and Luffy stumbles back to Sabo, who has been watching the short interaction with a stern look on his face. Now he smiles again, although thinly.

“It starts in a bit… ,“ the elder says quietly and Luffy sees how he looks around and continues
making photos with his phone. Luffy wonders if the information they got until now is enough for his article. Luffy personally doesn’t think they have found out all that much yet, but Sabo seems to be in a good mood. Luffy is about to ask him how much money he actually bet, when Luffy sees the guy from before again, eyeing him from the bar. Oh shit...

“Fuck…” Luffy says under his breath.

“Hm?”

“Oh, isn’t this pretty newbie” that guy Ki Zaru says with a dirty smile and Luffy feels the urge to vomit.

“Huh?” Sabo asks and finally turns around.

“Piss off, blondie,” Ki Zaru snarls and he eyes Luffy like a piece of meat, like he imagines him naked, and his eyes wander up and down his body. Luffy feels disgusted and at the same time he feels anger rising inside his chest.

“Back off, he’s with me,” Sabo replies calmly.

“Nah, he isn’t, look at him, he’s looking for someone to fuck him in his cute little ass,…”

Luffy is about to blow up and sink his fist into the guy’s stomach when he suddenly feels Sabo’s arm around his shoulder, a warm hand in his neck and Sabo’s lips on his own.

Luffy’s eyes widen in surprise, he feels the instant burn that starts from where their lips are connected spread though his whole body and his skin starts to tingle and his heart skips a beat or two or maybe ten. His eyes slide close and he kisses back, only a little, in the heat of the moment, and obviously he keeps his tongue to himself, but he can feel Sabo smile and kiss him one last time, before he breaks the connection.

“I think he’s found someone to fuck already,” Sabo says with a grin, his hand still in Luffy’s neck and Ki Zaru snorts, spits – actually spits – to the ground in front of them and stomps away.

Sabo immediately backs away and looks at Luffy apologetically.

“I’m sorry, but this usually works against those guys… I’m sorry I kissed you so suddenly, Luffy.”

And Luffy, still confused but weirdly in a splendid mood, shakes his head.

“Oh, it’s starting!”.

Sabo’s cheeks are burning and he hopes that Luffy can’t see it. Jesus Christ, did he – did he just kiss Luffy?

He was pissed at the guy who was so rude to the boy, but c’mon Sabo, there’re better, more adult ways to get out of that kind of situation. Like… he shouldn’t have done that. He’s glad Luffy didn’t punch him, because he would’ve had every right to do so, but now that Sabo has been able to get a
taste of his soft, warm, perfect lips, he wants more…

Sabo clenches his fists. Alright, he has to focus again. This is still work and he needs to concentrate. But man, he wants to kiss Luffy again… wrap his arm around that slender waist and lick his lips until he would open his mouth and slide his tongue against Sabo’s…

“Sabo! It’s starting, now c’mon!” he hears Luffy’s voice and he pulls himself together and they push through the crowd to stand next to the wide water way.

The yagara bulls are waiting in one line now, and at the end of the water way, which is about a hundred fifty meters, Luffy can see the owner holding up a pistol.

“Alright, this race will be Red10, Tidalwave, Lemonfish and Minati, they all belong to Blackbeard! Let’s hear it for the four speedsters!” Corby yells into a megaphone and the crowd starts cheering and clapping and whistling and both Sabo and Luffy join them.

“So guys, Blackbeard is the referee, so if you got a problem, please beat him up and not me!” Corby continues, which earns him a lot of laughter. “You reeeaaandy!?! Let’s give it up again one more time for the yagaras!”.

The tunnel almost explodes with the noise of the crowd.

“Go Lemonfish!” Luffy yells next to Sabo.

The yagara bulls lower their heads, Sabo can actually see the muscles in the long neck flex and the eyes become dark and determined, the way they eye their master standing at the far end of the water way.

Then a box at the end opens and a bundle of water meat falls into the water with a big splash and at the same time, Blackbeard shoots in the air – and the yagaras dash across the water, like blurred lightnings in a storm.

Luffy almost loses his shit as he cheers at the top of his lungs (Sabo thinks his left ear is deaf already) and yes, c’mon, Lemonfish, you can do it – yes, oh my god-

“YEAAAAHHHH!!!”, Luffy yells and his voice cracks and is drowned out by the cheering and booing as the yellow yagara bull reaches the water meat first and the four animals fight to get the largest bit of it.

He can see Blackbeard holding up a yellow card and Corby lifts the megaphone again.

“Looks like Lemonfish won the first race of the evening! Give it up for Lemonfish!”.

Luffy’s voice has gone hoarse as he beams at Sabo and the crowd moves back to the bar, chatting, laughing, whistling and booing even louder than before.

“Let’s go collect your price money!” Luffy says happily.

“Wait, how did you know he would win?” Sabo asks the boy, who just laughs.

“He was the hungriest, that’s why!”

“Hang on, you can tell when a yagara bull is hungry?”

But before Luffy can answer, Sabo receives a blow to the side of his head that leaves him crashing into the wall. He sees stars blinking in front of his eyes and an excruciating pain spreads through his
head and for a moment he thinks his skull has broken in halves. Shit, he didn’t see that one coming..

“You little fucker, the fuck did you do? How did you know the yellow one would win?” Buggie snarls at them, raising his fists again.

Sabo jumps back to his feet. “I was lucky, I guess,” he replies calmly and spits out blood.

Luffy stands next to him, his fists clenched and his face unmoving.

“Shitty little bastard, I’ll teach you a fucking lesson you’ll never forget!” Buggie yells and there are many heads turning and gaping at them and Sabo dodges the next blow and Luffy is even faster than him, the boy leaps forward and kicks the man in the balls so hard Sabo believes he hears something crack and Buggie yells, tears streaming down his face and he falls to his knees.

Luffy punches the side of his face and then two guys come and one has a wooden stick and Sabo sends the next dude flying into the water when he sees the guy with the stick strike out and Luffy doesn’t see –

Luffy legs give way, his head flies to the side with the force of the brutal impact and Sabo sees blood splashing everywhere, colouring the ground crimson red and the horror grips his heart.

“Luffy!” Sabo screams and he punches the next attacker so hard his knuckles burst and blood makes his fingers slippery and he sees blood everywhere on the floor, but good Lord, Luffy stands up again, shaking, and he grabs the guy with the wooden stick and sinks his teeth into the guy’s shoulder whilst he punches his guts again and again until the guy howls with pain.

“Luffy, run!” Sabo yells and ducks and kicks the next dude in the stomach.

“Fuck off!” Sabo snarls and receives an angry hook into his stomach. He gasps, hunching forward, before he grabs the guy's head, pushes him head-first down into his kneestrike and he feels more than hears the dude's nose breaking as it crashes against his knee.

“Fuck off!”

And he practically throws the guy into the water and he sees Luffy running and Sabo jerks himself free from the dozen hands grabbing him and runs after him, as fast as he can, down the tunnel and there are people behind them, loud voices and his blood is rushing in his ears, he can’t think, he can’t focus and then there’s a splash and a curse and he turns around the next corner, it’s pitch black.

Luffy fell into the water - ?

“Luffy!”

“Help me up, I can’t…” He blindly stretches out his hand, still slippery with his blood, and he feels a wet, cold hand grabbing his and he pulls the boy up and they run, and Sabo doesn’t let go of the hand and yes, he can see the end of the tunnel, he can see the night sky and they are outside…

Luffy

His head hurts like a motherfucker and he can’t see because there’s blood in his eyes and blurring his world and he stumbles over his feet and Sabo who is still holding his hand tightly is pulling him forward.
“We gotta keep moving… it’s gonna be ok, I promise, just a bit further…” the man says assuring and Luffy blindly trusts him.

Because even though he got hit in the head so badly he believes he can hear the angels sing in the sky, he can’t help grinning like an idiot. He just had the time of his life. Goodness, what a story! He can’t believe this shit just happened, it’s like in a movie! He can’t wait to tell his friends…

However, they seem to be running for a decade, before Sabo finally slows down.

“Alright, we’re close to where I live. Can you still walk? I’m so, so sorry this happened, look I’m calling my friend, who’s a doctor, can you see me? I never should’ve taken you with me, but he'll stitch you up…” Sabo babbles and he helps Luffy sit down in what Luffy believes is a narrow alley. Probably somewhere midtown Water Seven. He has no idea where he is.

“Stop talking, Sabo, it’s fine,” Luffy grins and he feels light-headed, despite the pain, and the crazy euphoria still bubbles through his veins.

“Oh god, you lost your mind…"

Sabo keeps his hand on Luffy’s shoulder. Luffy tries to wipe away the sticky blood from his eyes. He can now faintly, through a thick red mist, see buildings and Sabo sitting next to him.

“Law? Listen, you need to come to my place right now, it’s urgent…. Yes, now! I think Luffy might have a concussion and he’s bleeding really badly… yes… yes… ok, see you in 5.”

“I don’t have a concussion,” Luffy mumbles happily and Sabo helps him stand up again.

“Alright, let’s get you to my place. Law will patch you up.”

“I’m fine!” Luffy laughs, but Sabo drags him forward anyways and once again Luffy feels they're walking for years until they halt again. Seems like they now stand in front of a high building and he hears keys jingle and a door being unlocked. Then Sabo drags him up the stairs to the third floor, but it might've also been a damn mountain, are staircases always this long...?"

“Jesus Christ, what happened!?” Luffy hears a man’s voice yell in surprise and terror. He believes it’s Ace’s voice. And didn’t Sabo say they were flatmates?

“Hi Ace” Luffy grins although he can hardly see him.

“What the fuck, Sabo, what happened?” Ace asks again, this time more horrified and Luffy feels another pair of arms grabbing his shoulders surprisingly gently and he’s led to a sofa where he sits down. He's about to comment how fluffy the sofa is when he hears a hard know against a door. Then the front door flies open and Sabo says: “Thank god, you’re here!” and a pair of hurried steps approach Luffy. He hears soft cursing and then someone touches his knee, probably that guy, Law. Wasn't he at Vivi’s party, too...?

“Luffy, it’s Law. You remember me? Can you see me?”

“A bit,” Luffy says and his tongue isn’t working properly anymore. And now, as the adrenaline is slowly wearing off, he realises he’s still dripping wet and he starts to shake. “I’m cold…”

“Get blankets! Ok, Luffy, listen, I’ll give you an injection that is a pain reliever and another one that is a sedative. Then I’ll disinfect the wound at the side of your head. I will have to stitch that cut up.”

“Ok…” Luffy says and he doesn’t even feel much anymore except the horrible pain in his skull, a
Luffy wakes up and his whole body aches so bad it actually stuns him. Wow, fuck, what happened? He groans in a low voice as he forces his eyes to open and he lifts a hand to his head which is tightly wrapped with a turban-like bandage.

“Ouch…” he mumbles and looks around, slowly sitting up with aching limbs.

He’s in a room he doesn’t recognise. It’s dark in here, he can’t see much, but he can tell it’s not his. It’s much bigger and a lot tidier.
And then Luffy remembers and he gasps. Yes, he and Sabo went to the yagara bull race last night! And then – and then they got into a fight with this guy… ah, Buggie and his friends! And Luffy got hit in the head badly and then…?

He tiredly swings his legs out of the king-sized bed and stands up. Immediately the room starts spinning and he closes his eyes, waiting for the carousel to slow down. Alright, keep the balance old boy…

He feels his way toward the door and slowly opens it. Sunlight floods the room and he winces. So bright…

“Luffy! How do you feel?” someone asks him concerned and Luffy blinks and sees Ace approaching him.

“I’m good, thanks… just my head is hurting…,” Luffy replies with a shy smile.

“Allright, damn, you scared the hell out of us last night… Anyways, Law left painkillers for you here. And Sabo will be back any minute.”

“Ok…”

“You hungry? It’s afternoon after all.”

“What? Afternoon? How long have I been sleeping?” Luffy asks with wide eyes as he sits down at the kitchen table and thankfully takes the glass of water the man hands him and swallows the painkillers.

“About sixteen hours. You got a bad blow to the head. But Sabo said you handled yourself like a pro,” Ace says admiringly and Luffy grins and looks at his feet.

“Anyways, we, uh, put your clothes into the laundry. You were soaked with blood and yucky water,” Ace continues and now Luffy actually looks down at himself and sees that he’s wearing a pair of shorts and a shirt that definitely don’t belong to him.

“Those are Sabo’s. Your clothes will be dry in not time.”

“Ah- thank you so much for everything!” Luffy says hastily.
“No problem. We tried calling your dad – sorry, we looked at your phone, but you know, emergency – but he hasn’t replied yet. Anyways, you can stay here as long as you want to,” Ace explains.

Luffy is speechless. He can’t believe these guys were so… thoughtful and helpful and nice.

“Thank you – thank you so much!” Luffy says and he really hopes his voice isn’t shaking.

“Don’t sweat it. I can see you’re a good guy. You tried to protect my best friend, I won’t forget that,” Ace says with a wink and he cracks eggs into a pan and starts frying them.

The delicious smell almost makes Luffy drool.

Ace prepares a large meal with fried eggs, bacon, rice, vegetables and what not… And Luffy eats like he’ll never get another meal again. He and Ace talk about last night’s events when the front door opens and Luffy’s heart does a leap when he sees Sabo coming in.

Sabo notices him instantly and he practically runs over and crouches down next to him.

Luffy can see dark shadows beneath his eyes.

“Luffy, tell me, how are you feeling?” his friend asks with so much worry and fear in his eyes Luffy’s heart clenches into a tiny ball.

“I’m feeling alright, thanks, Ace gave me painkillers… How about you?” he asks.

There is big dark bruise on Sabo’s cheekbone and his lip and eyebrow are cut.

“I’m fine, yeah, never mind me, seriously I am so, so, so sorry this happened, I’m sorry I didn’t look out for you, I never should’ve asked you to come with me,” Sabo says with a deep frown.

“No, don’t apologise! Sabo, I’m not a kid anymore, I knew what I was getting into, right? And it was great fun. Don’t look like at me like that; I’ll be fine in no time!” Luffy tries to cheer Sabo up.

Sabo sighs and hides his face in his hands. “Man, I was so worried… don’t do that again…” he finally says.

“Can’t promise anything,” Luffy laughs and he catches Ace's raises brows and unbelieving gaze. He grins at the dark-haired man, before turning to Sabo again.

Sabo stands up and gently pats his shoulder: "Anyways, I’m glad you’re alright.”

“I gotta thank you guys for taking care of me!” Luffy grins.

He can see Ace and Sabo change a glance.

“Anyways, is there still bacon left, Ace?”

“Yeah, sure, help yourself,” Ace grins.

“Ace, a word, please?”, Sabo asks.

Ace nods, stands up and follows Sabo into Sabo’s room. They close the door and Luffy guesses that the two need to talk in private now. Luffy shrugs. Well, the food is good… But not as good as Sanji’s….

Oh god, Sanji! He needs to tell him what happened!
Luffy looks around. His phone was in his pocket last night… it must be somewhere…

Sabo

“Did you tell him I went to the police?” he asks Ace sharply.

His best friend rolls his eyes. “Obviously I didn’t. I didn’t want to scare him. So what did the cops say?”

“Apparently, his father isn’t even registered as a Water Seven resident. Neither is his grandfather. They couldn’t get an address or a phone number, either.”

“Christ… who the hell doesn’t even call back when the freaking hospital calls?” Ace says annoyed. After they couldn’t reach Luffy’s father with Luffy’s phone, Law tried it with the hospital phone. No reply.

“Well, his father, apparently… Ok, but I called his friend, Sanji. Luffy told me they used to be flatmates. Sanji will come and pick him up as soon as he’s ready,” Sabo says.

“Alright…”

They walk back into the combined living room and kitchen and they can see Luffy still sitting there and eating happily. The gigantic white turban-bandage and Sabo’s too-big clothes make him look even tinier than he is.

“Want more?” Ace asks Luffy with a grin.

“Haha, no thanks, I’m full! This was great!” Luffy laughs.

“Alright. So how about you go lie down a bit more and then we’ll call Sanji to pick you up?” Sabo says friendly.

“Sanji, yes! By the way, do you know where my phone is?” Luffy asks Sabo with big eyes.

“Ah yes, I got it, here it is…” Sabo says and hand the phone that he took to the police station back to the boy.

Luffy happily unlocks the screen and stands up from the chair – only to almost fall over.

Sabo catches him. “Woah, easy there. Your head needs a rest, huh?” he asks with a wink and Luffy shrugs and stifles a yawn.

“Alright, let’s go back to bed…”

Sabo can feel Ace’s reproachful gaze practically boring a hole into the back of his head. His best friend already gave him an earful about taking Luffy with him to a job. Although Ace usually is the more hot-headed one of them, in this case the psychologist is right. He shouldn’t have done that, and he still feels absolutely horrible for putting the boy into that much danger. He completely miscalculated the situation and got Luffy seriously injured - Sabo still hates himself for it. He’ll make it up to the boy, no matter what.

He helps Luffy lie down on his bed again. Then he sits down on the mattress next to him.
Luffy smiles quietly up at him.

“Sabo, it wasn’t your fault, ok? It was my decision to come with you. So don’t blame yourself. And I got that dude pretty well, huh?”

Sabo grins. “Yeah, you did, you little punk.”

Luffy laughs quietly and his eyes become heavier.

“And it’s a great way to bond, huh?” he says with a tired grin.

Well, funny enough that was Sabo’s initial idea… but Sabo actually expected a completely different outcome. “No better way to bond than getting into a fight with a couple thugs,” Sabo smirks nevertheless.

“Haha, right… By the way, did you get enough stuff for your article?”

“Yeah, more than enough. But Luffy, you need to rest now, alright?”

“… Hmm… Stay a bit longer, please?” Luffy suddenly mumbles and Sabo blinks, his heart aching a little.

“Yes, sure,” he whispers and tentatively strokes Luffy’s bruised hand.

Luffy smiles and soon after, he has fallen asleep again. Sabo sighs. Damn, this isn’t what he planned at all… This… is this taking it all too far…? He watches Luffy a little longer, before he quietly stands up. So much happened in the past few hours… he needs time to think and rest… and write his goddamn article…

****

When Luffy wakes up an hour later, they call Sanji to pick him up. It doesn’t take long until someone softly knocks on the door.

“Luffy! You alright?” Sanji asks loudly his friend as soon as Ace has opened the door to let him in.

“Haha, yeah, I’m fine,” Luffy grins and they hug each other. Then Sanji looks up and meets Sabo’s quiet gaze.

“I’m sorry what happened. And thanks for picking him up,” Sabo says diplomatically.

Sanji sighs and turns back to Luffy. “You got everything?”

“Eh, I guess…”

“Hang on, you still need your clothes,” Ace says and Luffy happily follows him onto the balcony where they hung up the clothes to dry in the warm afternoon wind.

“… I’m glad he’s ok,” Sanji suddenly says, his calm eyes locking with Sabo’s. Sabo nods.

“This shouldn’t have happened. Again, I’m really sorry,” he replies.
The younger man rubs the back of his head. “Nah, it’s ok, I don’t blame you. Luffy’s been like this since I know him. A reckless, unapologetic, happy-go-lucky idiot. Was just a matter of time before he’d get into trouble again.”

Sabo laughs in a low voice, before he leans against the back of the sofa. “We tried contacting his dad, but we didn’t get a reply. Do you know where he is? Or how to contact him?”

Sanji shakes his head and grimaces. “I haven’t seen Luffy’s dad in ages. It’s nice that you guys tried, but Dragon – Luffy’s dad – he is like a ghost. He’s never around.”

“I see… But you’ve met him?”

“Yeah, but that’s a loooong time ago. I know Luffy since elementary school. Anyways, thanks for having taken care of him,” he smiles and Ace and Luffy come back from the balcony.

“Alright, got everything,” Luffy says to Sanji.

“Ok. Zoro’s waiting in the car.”

“So, thank you again so much,” Luffy says and smiles beautifully at Sabo and Ace. “And also say thank you to Law, ok?”

Sabo’s heart skips a beat and he smiles back: “Will do. Oh, and I know about this place where they do illegal boxing matches. Wanna go?”

Ace punches his shoulder, whilst Luffy laughs: “Haha, sounds great! Any time!”

“Alright, get home safely.”

“Oh, but your clothes…”

“It’s ok, keep them.”

Luffy grins and then he and Sanji leave.

Luffy

“Do we need to stop by the pharmacy?” Sanji asks him as they walk down the street to where Zoro has parked the car.

“No, I think I’m good.”

“Are you sure?”

That’s so typically Sanji, he’s all in mother-hen mode now.

“Alright, fine, we can stop by the pharmacy,” Luffy gives in and he can see Zoro leaning against the car that he and Sanji share.

Luffy waves and Sanji’s boyfriend nods at him: “Luffy, how’s the head?”

“I’m good, haha, no need to worry,” Luffy replies happily.

“Nothing can break that stubborn head of yours, huh?” Zoro snorts and sits down behind the wheel.
Luffy gets comfortable on the back seat. His head still feels funny, but at least it doesn't hurt for the moment.

“We’ll stop at the pharmacy,” Sanji says to Zoro.

“Alright.”

“Luffy, I called work and told them that you’re ill.”

“Ah, thanks! I totally forgot that I had the late shift again today…” Luffy mumbles. He watches the familiar cityscape pass by and for a moment he is sad that he's injured. It's a lovely day, he would've loved to go outside and play...

“Do we need to buy groceries?” Sanji asks.

“Nah, I still have food at the flat.”

Sanji hums and then turns around in the passenger seat to smile at Luffy. “You really ok?”

Luffy smiles back: “Yeah, I'm alright. Thanks, Sanji, Zoro.”

****

When they finally get to Luffy’s flat, then sun is setting and Luffy feels tired again. His hand is still tightly wrapped and he just wants to rest and close his eyes. Sanji and Zoro help him up the stairs and tug him into bed.

“You sure that you don’t need anything?” Zoro asks him in his usual grumpy way. Really just his way of showing concern, Luffy knows that.

“Yeah, I just need to sleep,” Luffy yawns.

Sanji places a glass of water and his painkillers on his night stand.

“I can stay here, if you want to,” Sanji says and sits down on the mattress.

“No, it’s ok, but thanks,” Luffy replies tiredly.

Sanji and Zoro change a glance. Then Sanji stands up. “Ok, then we’ll get going now. Call us if you need anything.”

“Will do. Thanks again, guys.”

Zoro and Sanji nod at him, switch off the light and Luff can hear them quietly move around and shortly after, the front door is being closed. He sighs and closes his eyes in the soothing darkness. It feels like a million years ago that he has agreed to come with Sabo to the race, but it was only last night. Luffy carefully turns to his side and snuggles deeper into the sheets.

He really needs to rest... and tomorrow he’ll be as good as new…

****
“Luffy, we brought food!” Usopp yells as he and Chopper come jumping into the flat. He has two large shopping bags in his hands.

“Hey guys!” Luffy grins.

Chopper, the reindeer, looks up at him and hands him a basket full of medication. The medical school student looks as adorable as ever. “Here, I got this for you!” he says happily.

“Ah – thanks, Chopper, but yesterday Sanji and Zoro went to the pharmacy with me…”

“That’s ok, just keep them, you get in trouble all the time, right?” Chopper says and then triples over to the kitchen where Usopp puts the stuff in the fridge and freezer.

“You guys are too nice, you didn’t need to do all that,” Luffy says quietly and follows them. He’s bare foot and still has Sabo’s comfortable clothes on.

“Don’t mention it, it’s fine. We guessed you could need a bit of company, huh?”

Luffy looks around. He hasn’t done much since he woke up. Took loads of painkillers and listened to music and played with his Nintendo 3DS.

“How about we play that new car racing game you got the other day? Have you tried it yet?” Usopp asks and makes himself comfortable on the sofa in the living room.

“Yes, sounds like a plan!” Chopper agrees.

“Alright, if you guys want to,” Luffy smiles.

Usopp gets up and starts the game console (“You just sit down, Luffy, I can handle this”).

They talk and joke around when they play Super Mario Universe with the Duoplayer-system. One of them always has to miss a turn, but that’s ok, it’s fun and Luffy, who’s basically a pro at every video game you can imagine (hence the Game Design major) kicks their butts.

“How’s Franky’s summer tutoring going by the way? I didn’t ask you.”

“Like your head is smashed in and you still manage to win every damn round,” Usopp laughs and grabs a handful of M&Ms he and Chopper brought.

Luffy smiles: “How’s Franky’s summer tutoring going by the way? I didn’t ask you.”

“It’s alright. You know Franky, he’s a crazy dude, but I’ve definitely learned more in the past couple weeks than in the two semesters before,” Usopp says.

Luffy hands the controller over to Chopper.

“I can’t believe we have to go back to uni in like two weeks,” Chopper sighs.

Usopp groans: “Urgh, don’t remind me!”

“Usopp, it’s not like you go to every lecture, anyways,” Chopper chuckles.

The conversation about uni goes on for about another twenty minutes. It’s already dark outside and Luffy feels himself grow more and more tired. At some point he winces as the throbbing starts in his head again and he hides his face behind his hand.

“Luffy, you ok?”, Chopper asks immediately.
“Hm… just headaches…”

“Alright, do you need to rest?”

“Yeah… maybe a bit… Sorry, guys.”

“Don’t apologise! We came here uninvited, anyways… Hang on, we’ll just help clean up…,” Usopp says and together, they bring the bowls and plates back into the kitchen and tidy up the sofa.

“Alright, guys, thanks for visiting. It was fun,” Luffy grins a little pained.

“No worries. Get better soon, ok? We’ll text you!”

“Ok, get home safely!”

His friends both hug him carefully, before they jump down the stairs and leave the building. Luffy closes the front door. And leans against it in relief. This was exhausting.

He doesn’t care taking a shower – not with that turban still on his head – and he sits down on his bed and takes more painkillers. Ah shit, when he’s distracted, like when Chopper and Usopp were here just now, he can ignore the pain. And now, with the silence of an empty flat crashing down on him, his throbbing headache comes back full force.

_Crap._

He leans back in his pillows and tugs Sunny, the lion, close to him. Then he lifts his phone, ignores the messages and dials his dad’s number.

It goes straight to voice mail.

Luffy tries not to be hurt and instead says happily to the machine: “Hi dad, it’s me, uh, Luffy… see, I know you’re busy, but you know, there’s a lot of stuff been going on lately and you know, maybe you might want to know what happened? So please just call me back, dad, ok? If you got time?”

He throws his phone on the night stand. How weird, he just took painkillers. Why does it start hurting inside his chest now…?

He closes his eyes. What is he going to do tomorrow?

“Play video games. Eat food. Maybe shower. Watch TV…” he mumbles to himself. “And then, tomorrow is Monday, right? And shit, yes, I need to see the doctor…”

It’s then when Luffy realises that he’s talking to himself again. That’s always silly because when he starts, he can hardly stop himself anymore.

“Ha, like I’m in love with my own voice… so stupid… whatcha say, Sunny?”

Of course, Sunny doesn’t say anything.

“Hm, and I’ll… I’ll text Robin and ask her about the pirate books and if she has found them already… yeah, sounds like a plan…”

Luffy turns his head and stares at the ceiling. His mind is foggy now, his thoughts have slowed down and it’s one of these moments, when you start to think dumb things and you work yourself up over them… it usually happens when you’re tired or hungry or both… or on painkillers, apparently…

“I wonder if dad and gramps have forgotten that I’m… that I’m still here. What is so important that they went away and never came back? I wasn’t a bad son, I guess… I mean, Usopp has been in as
much trouble as I have been, and his dad is still around… Like, why don’t they want to see me? Did I do something wrong? Are they mad at me? I didn’t give them a reason, right? Or maybe I shouldn’t have told them about the rooftop thing…Haha, maybe they just really don’t like me?”

And something hot and wet burns in the corners of his closed eyes.

“Maybe they really don’t like me and that’s why they are staying away… yeah, that might be it, right? Because I can’t see any other reason… haha, sorry dad… for being… useless and…and your son… must be annoying…”

Luffy sniffs and soon after, he sleeps, with his pillow damp and aching eyes.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading.
Please leave a comment.
Sabo

“Sabo!”.

Sabo looks up from his office desk and turns to the editor of the Daily Grand Line, his boss. Her name is Kokoro and she’s a drunkard, but the best reporter Sabo can imagine.

Many say the alcohol actually makes her level up, which is a weird way to describe her journalistic practice, because Sabo is certain she would still be brilliant even if she’d be entirely sober on the job. However, it is true that she oftentimes invites the interviewees out for a drink and then she practically gets everything out of them, their dirtiest secrets, their deepest thoughts and opinions – she digs them all out, with the help of just a few glasses of wine or vodka or whatever the people prefer to numb their caution with.

Sabo is alright as a journalist – but Kokoro’s one of a kind, a reporter he aspires to be. Maybe not a reporter who’s also an alcohol-addict, but certainly a reporter who can dig out all these dirty, dirty secrets that make the headlines and the front pages of their paper. Yeah, that’s what he wants to be, one day.

“I made some minor changes, but aside from that it’s good, as always. I’m really impressed with you, Sabo,” she says and winks at him. She hands him back the printed version of the article about the illegal yagara bull races. It’ll be in the paper tomorrow, Wednesday.

Sabo winces when he realises that next week he will have to start his job as lecturer…

“Thank you,” he smiles at his boss.

She laughs and pats his shoulder. “But shame that the whole thing messed with your handsome face, honey.”

That actually makes Sabo blush a little. Well yeah, he still has the massive bruise on his cheekbone, but it’s fading, thankfully.

“Thanks for the concern… I’ll be fine in no time,” he replies.

“Well then. If you’re finished for the day, you can go.”

“Ok!”

He’s quite thankful that he can go home so early, because he wants to go see Luffy today. He texted him and the boy texted back (after hours), but they haven’t spoken and Sabo didn’t want to push. He just wants to go and take a look how his injured head is doing. Sabo believes that Luffy also had a doctor’s appointment yesterday, arranged by Law, but in any case, Sabo wants, no, more like needs to see for himself, face-to-face, that the boy is healing.

****
Ace is at work when he gets back to their shared flat. Sabo sighs and yawns into the silence. Maybe he should take a nap before he calls Luffy, yeah, actually that sounds like a good idea. He pulls down the shutters and enjoys the calming darkness of his room. He moves to the bed and lays down, and he lets out the most sexual groan in a while. He grins at his own silliness and pulls the duvet up to his nose, closing his eyes.

When he wakes up, it’s almost six in the evening. He’s in the kitchen, pouring boiling water over the cooled down coffee from this morning and sends a message to Luffy.

-Hi, how’re you?

He doesn’t have to wait long for the boy to reply.

-I’m good, thanks, how’re you?

-I’m alright. You got time? How about I come over?

This time, he has to wait longer and his heart sinks a little. Does Luffy blame him after all? Sabo is about to type in a lengthy apology as the boy’s reply comes in.

-Yeah sure :)  

-Send me your address pls?

Luffy texts him the address and Sabo smiles quietly as he sips the lukewarm coffee. Luffy lives about 30 minutes from him. He’ll walk there. And maybe stop at a shop on the way there…

Although he chides himself internally that he's making a fool out of himself, he can't help but take a long look into the mirror as he gets out of the shower. He tries to look like he cares that he’s visiting Luffy, but that he doesn’t care too much, if that makes any sense. In other words, Sabo wants to look handsome, but not be too obvious in his attempt. Because there is something they need to discuss. Not only the fight at the end of the race. But what happened before the race… The kiss…

Sabo has forbid himself to think about the kiss, because if he starts, he can’t stop. It’s been the best kiss in a while. Not because the boy has extraordinary skill, but because it was Luffy and the innocent way in which he responded to the kiss, so unlike…most. It made Sabo crave more…more contact, more movement, more of that gentle pressure of these soft lips against his own...

Sabo violently shakes his head and runs a hand through his still damp hair.

No, stop thinking about it! Jesus Christ, you behave like a teen...

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He makes his way to hipster-uptown, where Luffy lives. Luffy lives in a nice building, Sabo admits. Red bricks and trees line the rather quiet road, it’s a place where people like grad students, young academics, young entrepreneurs and artists live.

Luffy lives on the top floor. Sabo rings the doorbell. After a long moment, it buzzes and he can push the door open.

“Oh great…no lift…”
He jumps up the stairs into the fourth floor and tries not to look like he cared at all about the stairs. He clears his throat and straightens his back, and then he softly knocks on the wooden door that says No 8. He can hear footsteps inside and then the door is opened and he can’t actually believe that his heart does a leap somewhere into the region of his Adam’s apple. Sabo smiles and he likes what he sees, Luffy looks adorable in his black pyjama bottoms and oversized white jersey.

“Hey”
And Luffy smiles back: “Hey. Come in.”
The boy steps aside and Sabo walks past him into the small hallway.

“This place isn’t as big as yours, but yeah… I tried to tidy it up, I hope you don’t mind, ah… a bit messy.”

Sabo doesn’t mind messy at all as Luffy leads him into the small living room. Sabo takes in the place, and from the first second he likes it in here, it's a place that just radiates innocence and pureness in a way he's seldomly witnessed in his life before.

The walls are yellow. There are a red sofa and chair standing in front of a massive TV. The carpet is green. The walls are covered with posters of movies, some just show famous places or things like the Knock'Up-stream in front of Jaya or the icy glaciers of Drum Island. It’s so colourful in here, so unlike his own flat he shares with Ace.

Sabo steps closer to the sofas and now he can see that the carpet in front of the TV is covered with video game cases and that the cupboard on which the TV is standing is packed with game consoles. He can see PlayStations, Wii-consoles and Xbox and appropriate equipment. Sabo believes he has never seen that many video games in one place before – other than in a video game store.

“Wow…” he says and Luffy looks at him with a little worry in his face.

“Ah, well… I told you I major in Game Design, right?” he grins and scratches his neck.
The doctor has apparently allowed him to take the turban off. His black hair is messy and tousled and if Sabo looks closer, he can see the stitches between the strands. But he doesn’t mention it.

“This is impressive,” he replies and turns to Luffy.
The boy stands in the door to the kitchen.

“Hehe, thanks… Do you want something to drink?”

“Uhm…”

“The doctor said no alcohol – sorry. But…”

“A cup of tea would be great, thanks,” Sabo smiles.

“I got camomile, vanilla apple, peppermint, green…”

“Green tea, please”

Luffy nods and disappears in the kitchen and Sabo has more time to look around. There are three more doors. One, with the picture of a laughing dolphin on it, is probably the bathroom. Another one is closed. The third one is half open and he believes it is Luffy’s bedroom. Sabo doesn’t know why, but he’d love to take a look in there.
Mostly because he believes that bedrooms say a lot about the people’s personality.

He grabs inside his bag and takes the massive golden-wrapped chocolate egg with nougat inside out of it. Then he softly knocks on the kitchen door and peeks into the small but cozy kitchen. Luffy is standing in front of the counter, two mugs in front of him. The kettle is whistling and he probably hasn’t heard him, so he approaches him and puts a hand to his shoulder.

Luffy startles and looks up.

“Hm?”

“Ah, I got you something… you might think this is really cheesy, but, you know… I don’t care about cheesy…”

And he lifts the egg in front of Luffy’s eyes and the boy stares at it for a second, before he laughs – and his laugh is the most beautiful laughter Sabo has ever heard and the radiant smile is back on the handsome face.

“That’s massive! Where did you get that? Man, I love these, thank you!” Luffy says with a big grin and he takes the egg, which is almost as big as his head and shakes it and puts it against his ear, as if to see if it rattles inside.

Sabo finds that so endearing he actually has to refrain from ruffling his hair.

“I’m glad you like it. And it’s a store close to where I live, I can show you that place at some point,” Sabo says with a wink.

Luffy still has the happy smile on his face when the kettle is done and he pours the hot water into the mugs. One mug is green and has a dog on it; the other one is plain yellow.

“Hang on, let me get the tea,” Sabo says before Luffy can protest and he carefully carries the mugs back into the living room, whilst Luffy stores the egg somewhere in a cupboard.

Sabo sits down on the sofa and Luffy comes and sits next to him, but there’s still distance between them.

“Thanks again for coming,” Luffy says and he leans against the end of the sofa, hugging his knees.

“No problem. How’s the head?”

“Better. I still have to take pain killers, but they’re not as strong anymore. Robin visited me this morning, too.”

“Hmmh. And what else did you do today?”

“Not much, I guess. I played Super Mario Kart. You any good at it?”

“Of course, I always kick Ace’s ass at Super Mario Kart,” Sabo replies.

“Nah, I don’t believe it!”

“Pff, shall I show you? But wait, I don’t want to play against an invalid,” he smirks, and Luffy sticks out his tongue good-naturedly, before he leans forward to the living room table to grab the two controllers.

“So you wanna play?”
“Sure, but I don’t want to make you cry.”

“Like that will happen!”

So he and Luffy start to play Super Mario Kart. Sabo hasn’t lied when he said he kicks Ace’s ass at the game – but alright, he’s nothing against Luffy. Luffy wins all eight rounds and leaves him head-shaking and slightly confused sipping his tea. Well, yeah, he didn’t expect Luffy to be this good. He smiles quietly. It’s, in a way, actually quite funny to have his ass handed to him so easily.

“Haha, don’t pout, it’s just a game!” Luffy laughs and winks.

Sabo chuckles: “Yeah, yeah, I know… is there any video game you aren’t good at, anyways?”

And Luffy actually thinks about his answer, before he finally shrugs and says: “I don’t think so.”

“Pff, talk about arrogant.”

“Hey, you asked me!” Luffy says and lightly throws a pillow at him with a grin.

Sabo would have thrown it back, if Luffy didn’t have a head injury, so he just stuffs the pillow in his back.

“That was fun, though. You’re better than my friends.”

“Thanks,” Sabo smirks.

“Haha, I mean it. Anyways, what did you do today?”

“I was in the office and handed in my article.”

“Oh, the one about the race?” Luffy asks excited and scoots closer to him.

“Yeah. My boss was alright with it. It’s gonna be in the papers tomorrow.”

“Wow… That’s actually really exciting…”

“Hm… But it’s good that we’re talking about it now, because I still wanted to talk to you about… well, the race.”

“Sabo, I already told you that it wasn’t your fault,” Luffy says gently.

“I know, but that’s not what I meant. Listen, Luffy, I want you to be careful in the next few weeks, ok? This article will most likely cause a few of police raids in several Water Seven residences tomorrow – because I was able to identify the guys we talked to. You know, the guy Croc, Buggie, Corby, Blackbeard, even the dude Ki Zaru. I know their true identities. And they will know that it was me who put their names in the paper. I can deal with the danger, but I’m concerned for you. Which is why I want to apologise again. I should’ve been aware of the consequences.”

“Jesus Christ, Sabo, haven’t I proofed that I can handle myself? I’m gonna be alright, ok? So stop worrying about me!” Luffy laughs.

Sabo can’t actually believe that the boy said that. So stupid…and brave. Gullible, but confident. A golden heart. He stares at him, not entirely sure how he should reply to such confident, nearly naive bravery.

“Stop staring at me, Sabo!”
“…You’re… one of a kind, do you know that?” Sabo asks and Luffy laughs.

“No, but thanks.”

“But you promise me to be careful?”

“Yeees. Now stop worrying”

Sabo sighs and leans back heavily.

“Anyways, wanna watch a movie? Robin brought me one, it’s called Star Wars: A New Hope!”

“What’s it about?”

“Dunno, but something about space and everything.”

“Hm, ok, why not?” Sabo agrees.

“Alright, you put the film in and I get some snacks.”

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It’s dark outside by now, it’s almost 9.30 pm. The film is good and the atmosphere is even better. In the past Sabo has had a couple of really awkward movie dates where he’s made up some weird excuses to leave the other person, but right now, he feels comfortable. And he hopes that Luffy does, too.

The boy’s eyes are glued to the TV. He’s wrapped himself in a blanket (he offered Sabo to come share it, but Sabo knows, if they would, he’d most likely be unable to keep his hands still) and he absent-mindedly reaches for the bowl with the chocolate beans.

They still sit on opposite ends of the sofa. Enough is enough.

“Luffy.”

“Hmmm…?”

“I’m getting kinda cold over here.”

And Luffy looks over at him and grins: “Oh, poor you”

“Oh c’mon, you look like a living heater. C’mere”

And Sabo opens his left arm and Luffy rolls his eyes, before he scoots closer and finally rest against Sabo’s upper body, wrapping the blanket around both of them.


“Hm.”

The film has Luffy’s complete attention and Sabo gives up. Alright then, he doesn’t want to spoil it for him, so he just keeps his arm casually around Luffy’s shoulders and enjoys the body heat and the feeling of his beating heart so close to his own.
When the film is over, Luffy yawns, but he remains slumped against Sabo.

“Did you like it?” Sabo asks.

“Yeah! I thought it was awesome!” Luffy says with his radiant smile, but his eyes give away how tired he is.

“I liked it, too. Kinda makes me want to rethink my career choices,” Sabo says amused.

“Oh my god, being a Jedi must be sooo cool… Or be a pilot like Han Solo…”

“I’d prefer being a rebel. Like, a professional one. Fight for the good, you know, free the republic… that sounds awesome…”

“I want to be a Jedi knight. Must be fun to have these super special abilities and everything,” Luffy says dreamily and snuggles closer to Sabo.

Sabo heart starts beating faster again. Then he looks down at Luffy.

“You comfortable?”

“Hmm.”

“You wanna sleep?”

“Yeah…but I’m too tired to go to bed…”

Sabo smiles to himself and then, in one fleeting moment, he lifts the boy up bridal style, which makes Luffy yell in surprise.

“Waah, Sabo, what the hell! Put me down!”

“You said you were too tired to go to bed.”

“That doesn’t translate to “carry me”!” Luffy replies, awake again and he struggles in his arms.

“Jesus, you’re like a cat. Now calm down, here’s your bed.”

And he gently puts Luffy down onto his king-sized bed. Then he walks to the door to switch the light on.

His room is smaller than Sabo’s. There is a desk in front of the window, with a laptop on it. He can see a wardrobe and a bookshelf filled with DVD cases, video game cases (just how many video games does the boy own?) and books.

“Meh, I need to go to the bathroom,” Luffy mumbles and throws another pillow at Sabo. Sabo dodges it and moves closer to the book shelf.

It’s mostly adventure novels, some Sci-Fi novels and fantasy stories. He can see the art books of movies and video games he probably really likes. Sabo reads some of the titles and he has to admit that most are innocent, innocent in a way that the book shelf – or rather the whole room, might as well belong to a 12-year-old.

He looks around. He can see pictures of Luffy and his friends hanging on the green walls. The carpet in here is red and fluffy, inviting one to walk around bare-footed. The bed has colourful sheets and he can even see a few plush toys sitting next to the pillows. Yeah, there’s so much…innocence in here, it’s so pure and untainted… He likes it.
He actually really does. The bright colours, the plush toys, the pictures and posters, the books and
video games… They reflect what he imagines are Luffy’s thoughts, what he likes and keeps close to
his heart. Sabo feels like he’s getting a glimpse of the boy’s mind, just by looking at how he
decorates his room. And he feels honoured, he truly does, to get such an insight.

“Yeah, it’s not as tidy as yours,” Luffy says behind him and he turns around. The boy has thrown the
blanket on the bed.

“I like it.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. It suits you.”

“Haha, thanks.”

They stand in front of each other, silent now and look at each other. Then Sabo runs a hand through
his hair.

“Thanks for visiting me. It was fun today,” Luffy says softly.

“Yeah, it was….and…”

Luffy wonders what the guy is going to say next. He enjoyed the evening. Sabo is so chill and easy
to hang out with, he’s funny and friendly and nice and he let Luffy snuggle against him, which Luffy
was too afraid to ask if he could, he likes Super Mario Kart, he liked Star Wars, which Luffy thought
was absolutely fantastic, and Sabo also really looked handsome today. He really rocks simple dark
blue denim and a grey sweatshirt. Plus, he bought him a gigantic chocolate egg!

“And, well…there’s still something I… wanted to say,” Sabo starts.

“Allright, go ahead,” Luffy smiles, and he really hopes that Sabo doesn’t notice that his heart is
beating like crazy. And he doesn’t even know why.

“Uhm… you remember the kiss right?” Sabo comes straight to the point and Luffy doesn’t know
what to say. Yes, of course he remembers. But he didn’t think Sabo would care about that.

“Oh, yeah, I remember.”

“Did you – did you like it?”

Luffy’s heart does a leap. “I didn’t hate it,” he says after a moment.

“So… can we… kiss again?”

And he can even see a faint blush on Sabo’s cheeks, well, on his left cheek, because the right cheek
is still bruised.

And Luffy shrugs with a thundering heart. “I…I don’t know…”

His head is starting to throb in confusion and because his last painkillers are already a couple hours
ago.
“I don’t want to push you! But, you know…”

And Luffy shrugs again and this time, Sabo comes closer, so close Luffy can feel his body heat, his heart is beating so loud in his ears and Luffy blushes and he hopes the elder man doesn’t see it.

Sabo lifts his hand and gently cups his face and his other hand comes to rest on his waist, only lightly, as if not to scare him.

“Do you really…?” Sabo asks and his voice is so much lower now, raspy, and Luffy swallows dryly and he lifts his hand and lightly grips Sabo’s hand, he can feel the muscles flex beneath his touch and Luffy nods, dizzy with confusion and the weird, unknown, scorching heat he doesn’t know. Sabo angles his face upwards and then he leans down to him and Luffy closes his eyes and god, he hopes Sabo can’t feel his racing heart and then he can feel warm, kind lips on his.

Luffy’s right hand claws into Sabo’s other sleeve, with more force than needed, but he’s so confused, so nervous for reasons he doesn’t understand, it’s like fear, but a different kind of fear, a fear he hasn’t known until now and that frightens him, too.

Just what is Sabo doing to him? Why… is he so much different from Luffy’s other friends? Is it the looks? Is it…is it that he’s a journalist? Is it his voice…?

Luffy’s thoughts slow down as Sabo carefully moves his lips against his and Luffy kisses back, he actually does, and he wants to, he wants to feel more of these soft lips on his, please…

Luffy is almost disappointed when Sabo breaks the contact to look him in the eyes.

“Are you alright? Is this ok?” the man whispers and his raspy whisper sends a warm, prickling feeling down Luffy’s spine. Luffy doesn’t even realise he is shaking, he doesn’t realise how quiet it is in his room, because his heartbeat is like thunder in his ears, his boiling blood is a storm inside him and he can’t calm down.

“Yeah… and…for you?” he asks quietly because suddenly another fear overcomes him, the fear that Sabo didn’t like it at all, or that he has messed up or –

“Perfect...,” Sabo mumbles with a smile.

And Sabo’s hand wanders from Luffy’s waist to his back and pulls him gently closer to him, until Luffy is pressed against his chest and now his legs are wobbly, like they have lost all the strength they normally possess.

Luffy doesn’t know how to say this, how to say that he wants more and that he wants…that he wants to feel more and at the same time, he doesn’t understand, he’s confused and concerned and worried, because what the hell is wrong with him… but then Sabo leans down again and Luffy forgets, he closes his eyes and he so welcomes Sabo’s lips back and he can feel his smile against his mouth.

Luffy is becoming more daring, he responds more eagerly, but he’s still taken aback when he suddenly feels something warm and wet probe his lips. He hesitates, but then he gives up and opens his mouth and Sabo’s hand wanders into his neck and Luffy thinks that feels so good and then he feels Sabo’s hand suddenly fall from his back and grab his and lift Luffy’s hand to Sabo’s own neck.

Luffy understands and he loves the feeling of Sabo’s soft mane, he slides his fingers into the blond hair and he’s so, so satisfied when he can feel the hair on the man’s neck stand on end.

Sabo’s tongue slides against his, only a little, as if to ask for permission, and Luffy likes it, he likes
the wet heat, the heat that spreads through his body, the heat that clouds his thoughts and dizzies his head, because it feels so good, so wonderfully good and perfect and Luffy wants more of that, but he doesn’t know how.

Sabo, of course, Sabo understands and Luffy’s tongue meets his, in an endless dance of touching and sliding and drawing back and doing it again and again. At some point, they have to breathe and break away and Luffy is about to fall to his knees. All energy has left his body and the last of his rationality has been swept away by the sheer, unknown passion he has just witnessed for the first time in his life.

Sabo is, just like him, trying to catch his breath, but he’s still holding onto him, gently.

“You ok?” Sabo whispers into his ear.

And Luffy nods and he doesn’t know what to say because his heart is beating so fast it hurts and his head is about to split apart because the headaches have returned and he is confused and dizzy and he doesn’t understand himself or what is happening.

“Was that…ok?” Sabo mutters.

“I…don’t know…I guess…” Luffy replies and looks away. It’s bright in his room and he wishes it was dark, because he doesn’t want Sabo to see how confused he is and the blush on his cheeks and that he’s shaking so badly.

But of course, Sabo notices.

“Are you cold?” the man asks, his voice has returned to normal and he sounds worried now.

“Hm…”

“Do you have headaches again?”

And this time, Luffy nods and Sabo gently turns him around pushes him toward the bathroom. “Go and brush your teeth and I’ll get some water.”

But Luffy doesn’t want to. He wants to keep Sabo’s hands around him, he wants Sabo to keep hugging him and kissing him. He shakes his head and turns around wraps his arms around Sabo again and buries his face in his chest.

Sabo hugs him back and gently rubs his shoulders, before he releases him.

“Now go, I’ll be here.”

And with a heavy heart and still shivering, Luffy complies and disappears in the bathroom. His lips still burn and ache to have Sabo’s lips back against them again.

****

He later is in his bed, beneath the duvet, and he swallows the painkillers. Sabo sits on the edge of the mattress, his hand patting the quilt.

“Ok?” Sabo asks and looks at him like… yeah, how? Luffy thinks he has never seen that look in
someone’s face before when looking at him. And it confuses him.

“Yeah, thanks… And sorry, because I’m, you know…”

“Shhh, don’t apologise. I’m sorry I upset you so much,” Sabo hushes him gently.

“…I liked the way you upset me,” Luffy smiles sheepishly.

Sabo’s smile widens. “Haha, I liked it to.”

“Do it again?”

And Sabo leans forward and gently kisses him on the lips, so softly, it almost hurts, and he pulls back way too quickly.

“…Stay a bit longer?” Luffy mumbles.

Sabo scratches his neck, looking unhappy. “I’m sorry, I wish I could, but I gotta be at work early… you know, the police raids…”

And Luffy must look really disheartened, because Sabo frowns and grips his hand tightly. His fingers are so hot; it burns where he touches him.

“Hey, don’t be sad, alright? Do you want me to come back tomorrow?”

And Luffy nods, because he thinks if he opens his mouth, he will say something really embarrassing or cheesy or sappy and that would frustrate and confuse him even more. Because this is not like he usually is…this is not like him, right…?

“Ok, have a good night, Luffy. Call me if you need anything.”

He gives Luffy another peck on the lips and is about to stand up, but Luffy doesn’t want to let go of his hand. He looks up at the man and Sabo sits back down and gently strokes his cheek. And now Luffy remembers the word that fits his expression.

He thinks it’s called being fond of something... Or someone...?

“Babe, I’ll be back tomorrow, ok?” Sabo whispers and leans his forehead against Luffy’s.

“Yeah?”

“Promise. Now go to sleep, yes?”

And Luffy feels his eyes becoming heavier and he sinks back down into his pillows and he can see Sabo smile at him, before he slowly walks backwards through the room, switches off the light and closes the door behind him.

Sabo

“..bo! Sabo!”

He flinches and looks up to see Koala waving a piece of paper in front of his eyes. The pretty woman is one of his closest friends and also his working colleague.
“Here is the latest police report. They were able to arrest Buggie Clownstar and fellow umh, co-thugs. They’re raiding Sir Crocodile’s mansion right now and they’re about to enter the Navy base, where Admiral Borsalino, aka Ki Zaru, works.”

“Ok, thanks, Koala,” Sabo replies and stifles a yawn. He could hardly sleep last night, for embarassingly obvious reasons. No, don’t, do not dare thinking about Luffy now… you have work to do…

“Sabo, are you ok?”, Koala asks him with a frown.

“Yeah sure,” he says with a tired smile.

“Really? Because you look like you didn’t sleep at all last night.”

“Thanks for the concern, Koala, but I’m fine.”

She rolls her eyes. “Since when can’t you tell me what’s on your mind? Sabo? Did you murder someone or something?!?”

“Alright, alright, I’ll tell you later, ok?”

She nods happily and then walks back to her own desk, leaving him feeling even more exhausted than before.

It’s right, he hasn’t been able to sleep at all, he’d been laying awake like an idiot, turning the events of the evening over and over in his head, like he was sixteen again. He couldn’t stop thinking about Luffy. And work. But mostly Luffy. He didn’t expect that kiss to happen, he hadn’t even hoped for it… He couldn’t actually believe that the boy had kissed him back. He still can't believe it, to be honest.

Oh, when he thinks about those perfect lips again…soft, warm, innocent, even when kissing him so hotly, when sliding his tongue against Sabo’s, it was still so pure and perfect. Sabo feels his lips burning at the memory, he could’ve spent hours like that, kissing the boy, holding him close…

Stop it!

He was on meds…

And maybe he just kissed him back because Sabo had been asking for it so directly in the first place.

Because, didn’t Luffy say that he wasn’t into love and relationships? Sabo frowns. Did he…did he misinterpret the situation completely…? Oh god, what if he has taken advantage of him –and he hasn’t even been aware of it! He tears at his hair. Oh shit, Luffy must be furious with him now and Sabo feels absolutely disgusted with himself.

He shouldn’t have done that. That was totally unprofessional and a dick-move on his side. He’s the older one of the two of them, he should know so much better. He should’ve… he should’ve stayed away from the boy…

Today, when he goes back to Luffy’s place, he will apologise to him once again… And from then on, stay away from him, for Luffy’s own sake.

Damn, Sabo’s mood couldn’t get worse.
The whole day at the editorial office of the Daily Grand Line is practically hell. They get dozens and dozens of calls from worried and enraged citizens, mayor Iceberg even comes to have a confidential conversation with Kokoro, police captain Smoker gives Sabo a call and yells at him for a good 15 minutes and lectures him about the lengths of his stupidity, they are all grumpy and stressed, because they have to have the paper ready for print by midnight that day and they have to create at least six additional pages about the illegal underground yagara races, the police raids, the first information concerning the arrested guys and their lawyers, all these things.

He can hear Kokoro yelling in her office – she’s still negotiating with the printers and the finance department. Sabo knows she's not mad at him, since he was the one to break the scoop, and such a scoop normally means they sell twice as many issues than they do on a normal day, such a scoop means profits, everyone knows that. However, Kokoro is pissed off because the printers and the finance department are being massive dicks at the moment, for reasons that reach from staff shortage to ethical dilemma.

Sabo has tried helping as good as possible, since he's essentially the one responsible for the tumult, but...well, at the end of the day he just did his job and did what he deemed right in the public interest. Kokoro is on his side, so are his colleagues and the Daily Grand Line's media lawyer. So the printers and finance department can honestly screw themselves.

At some point, Sabo is about to stand up and throw his computer out of the window. He doesn’t although it itches in his fingertips. Instead he just quietly stands up and walks into the staff kitchen, where he slams his empty mug a bit too hard onto the worktop and blindly reaches for the coffee machine.

He’ll get a pretty decent pay rise out of this, and he’s glad all this is happening, but holy crap, he needs nap.

He rubs his eyes and flinches when his phone starts buzzing in his pocket. He blinks rapidly. All the stress has actually made him forget about everything – and everyone – else...

He looks at the display and sees Luffy’s name. It’s when he realises it’s already half six in the evening.

He clears his throat and looks around. He’s alone in the staff kitchen. Then he lifts his phone to his ear.

“Hello?”

“Hey!” Luffy says and his voice is as always, boyish and happy.

“Hey, how’re you?” Sabo asks and leans casually against the counter. He hopes no one comes in now, because he is grinning like a complete idiot, despite his fatigue and inner turmoil.

“I’m alright. I just wanted to ask if you’re still coming over today. Because my friends want to come visit and yeah…”

“Ah doubtful, I wish I could, but this will take longer than expected, I’m sorry, Luffy…” he says and he is actually sorry because he has wanted to see him so bad.

“No, it’s ok, don’t worry! It’s work, I understand,” Luffy replies and Sabo doesn’t like that his voice... doesn’t change at all...
Is Sabo the only one who got all worked up about yesterday?

“Yeah, well… I gotta go now, have fun with your friends,” he says.

“Sabo!”

“Hm?”

“But you know, tomorrow, I got no plans…”

This makes his smile return. “Yeah, me neither. Wanna meet?”

“Yeah!”

“Ok. I finish work at 4. So...if your head is alright tomorrow, we could go to the store where I got the chocolate egg?” Sabo offers.

“Yeah, sounds good! Ok, see ya tomorrow, Sabo!”

“Bye, babe. Take care.”

This has improved his mood so much; he is actually humming a small melody when he walks back to his desk. Koala, who is already waiting for him, her arms full with papers, formulas and other notes, looks at him with a deep frown.

“Oh my god. You lost your mind, I knew it!” she says.

“No I didn’t. What’s up?”

“Smoker called again, he wants you to change the last part of the report about Sir Crocodile and the raid.”

“What? I wrote exactly what he told me.”

“Yeah, well, you have to call him back. Your turn getting yelled at.”

“Great…”

He sighs, sits back down and dials Smoker’s number, which he knows by heart at this point. This is gonna be a long night… but not even the stress can lessen the wonderful warm feeling in his chest that magically puts a silly smile on his face. that silly smile doesn't even fade when Smoker is practically making him deaf on the other side of the line.

Luffy has asked to meet again. So this means he probably isn’t mad about the kiss, or that Sabo can’t come to his place today.

It’s all good, right? Not as he has planned – but this is by far better.

****

When Sabo gets home, it’s past midnight. He can hardly walk straight anymore, he almost falls asleep brushing his teeth and he fall into his bed like a corpse.
But he smiles.

The next day is not as busy as yesterday, people are still calling them to voice their concerns, but not as many and everyone is rather pleased with the excellent work they did.

Kokoro is proud of all of them and first thing in the morning, she hands everyone a massive chocolate bar; the most expensive chocolate you can find in Water Seven. It’s imported from the far away Amazon Lily.

“Good work everyone!” she says loudly and everyone lifts their coffee mugs and cheers, still sluggish from too little sleep though and everyone has dark circles beneath their eyes, but everyone also feels the same sense of pride and achievement, which Sabo feels, too. They did really well and proofed once again what a good team they are.

“Alright, guys, let’s relax a little today and tomorrow is the weekend. No trouble today, please, I’m still deaf from yesterday,” Kokoro jokes, earning a few relieved laughters.

Sabo grins and turns back to his computer. Yes, weekend. His grin vanishes instantly, completely wiped off his face. After the weekend there’s Monday. First day of the new academic year at Water Seven University.

“Hey, you wanna go for a drink or so after work?”, Koala asks him later.

“Would love to, but I’m seeing someone.”

“Uuuh…,” she makes and her eyes get that annoying fairy sparkle he knows so well. She gets that look every time he mentions a date or so.

“Who is it? Is she cute? Or is it a guy? Hang on, it’s why you looked so tired yesterday! Where you two doing-the-do all night long?” she laughs and hops on his desk.

Sabo sighs. “It’s a guy. And no, we didn’t have sex yet.”

“What, really? Since when are you a saint?” Koala grins wickedly.

“Shut up. I do have morals.”

“Pff, stop lying. Your favourite game is breaking people’s hearts, right?”

He remains silent at that. It’s not, well… entirely false… Although he dislikes her crass way of phrasing it.

“Anyways, when are you gonna introduce me to him? Is he cute?”

“How about never? And yeah, he is.”

“Don’t be so mean! I am a better friend to introduce than Ace.”

“He’s already met Ace.”

“What, but you don’t want him to meet me? Rude!” she pouts.

“Koala, seriously, this isn’t even a thing yet. It’s complicated.”

“Complicated how? He doesn’t know you like him?”
“He knows that I like him but… I’m not sure to what extent…”

She frowns. “Hang on, how did you two even meet?”

“Long story. Listen, how about coffee on Saturday? Then I’ll tell you the whole story?”

His friend continues to pout, but he gently pushes her off his desk so he can continue working.

“Alright, but you’ll pay,” she agrees after a moment.

“We’ll see.”

“Pick me up at 5 pm and don’t be late.”

“I’m never late,” he mumbles, but she doesn’t listen anymore.

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He has told Luffy to meet him at the sunny corner café down the street from the Daily Grand Line building, right after work. Sabo feels like he’s walking on clouds. Or maybe rather quicksand, because he has the feeling he could be swallowed by a deep hole of embarrassment and confusion at any time. He has more and more questions, every time he sees the younger guy. Alright, most of that is his fault – but the more questions arise, the more he craves a conversation with him. It’s like an addiction.

Luffy is handsome as usual. His dark hair is messy, but more artful messy, like he has styled it that way. He wears dark red jeans and a dark blue sweatshirt, again with the Galley-La company logo on it. Sabo wonders why it's always a sweater from that same company... He will have to ask him at some point.

Luffy notices him and smiles as Sabo approaches. Sabo’s heart does a leap as he stops in front of the shorter man. The air is warm, birds are chirping on the roof of the café, there are seagulls high above them in the sky, white fluffy clouds lazily move toward the open sea. It’s peaceful and despite his nervousness, Sabo feels himself calming a little.

“Hey,” Luffy greets him.

“Hey. How’re you?” Sabo asks.

“I’m good. How about you? Was work as busy as yesterday?”

“No, it was fine, much more relaxed. Did you see the newspaper?”

“Yeah! I didn’t read everything, but woah, all the stories you guys found out!”

Sabo smiles and scratches his nose. “Well, it’s all been a group effort, but thanks.”

“And this is how you normally look like when you’re at work?” Luffy asks him amused, eyeing him up and down.

Sabo looks down at himself. “Are you disappointed?” he asks back. He’s wearing blue jeans, a plain
white button-down with his sleeves rolled up and a black tie, which is now, at the end of the day, loosened.

“No! I mean... You look... like a reporter.”

That makes Sabo laugh: “Well, I guess that’s the idea. You hungry? Shall we grab something to eat here?”

“Nah, we can walk a bit more? Or are you hungry...?”

“No, I’m good. Alright, then let’s walk. And it really is ok with your head?”

“Yes! I talked to Chopper, he’s my friend and he’s at med school. He told me if I feel dizzy, I should just sit down and drink water. So I’m fine, right?” Luffy says and folds his arms behind his head.

“Ok, if you say so. Then let’s go.”

They walk side by side, like two friends would, but for now Sabo is content with that. Yes, he wants to talk to Luffy about what happened – but right now, the boy seems happy and comfortable in his company, and Sabo doesn’t want to ruin it.

“So, your friends were at your place yesterday?” he asks Luffy as they walk down a rather busy, tourist-filled street with loads of shops and cafés.

“Yeah, well, it wasn’t everyone, only Sanji and Zoro and Nami and Robin and Franky. It was fun, they brought me food – why is everyone bringing me food, it’s great – and Sanji, he’s the best chef in the world, he cooked dinner for us and then we played a card game, it’s called Wizard, maybe you know that one? It was fun!”

Sabo smiles: “Your friends sound like really nice people. They take good care of you, right?”

“Hehe, yeah, they always do. They’re my nakama, it’s like family! Oh, and Robin brought me a reading list for my politics module this semester.”

Sabo blinks.

“Hang on –,” he starts, but suddenly a blue-haired woman suddenly jumps up from a table in a café they are walking past and blocks their way, a big smile on her face.

Sabo recognises her.

“Luffy! I haven’t seen you in ages, how’re you? Nami told me that you got into a fight, I hope you’re ok?” Vivi asks Luffy excitedly.

“Woah, Vivi! Sorry, I didn’t notice you at all!” Luffy yells startled, but delighted, and he gives her a hug.

“What the – Sabo?!”

Sabo frowns and looks around and the man Vivi sat with at the table suddenly stands up and walks up to him. Sabo’s eyes widen with disbelief and joy alike and he actually has to do a double take to be sure that he isn’t hallucinating.

“What, Khoza? You’re back in town?!” Sabo says with wide eyes and shakes Kohza’s hand, before pulling him into a brotherly hug. They’ve been friends since college, Kohza is a professional photographer and he’s also produced a few TV documentations already.
“I thought you’re somewhere in the East Blue? Since when are you back?” Sabo asks him, completely delighted at the coincidence. He hasn’t seen him for a while, it’s good to know he’s alright and healthy and… well, alive.

“Ah man, I only got back a few days ago, I meant to give you a call – but I saw your work in the Daily Grand Line, good job on the underground races!” Kohza replies approvingly.

“Thanks, man…”

“Wait, Kohza, how do you know – do you know each other?” Vivi asks oblivious. She and Luffy look at them with surprised faces.

Sabo and Kohza change a gaze.

“Ah, yes, we went to uni together. Vivi, you know Sabo?” Kohza asks the girl.

“Yeah, I met him like two weeks ago. Long story.”

“Luffy, this is Kohza. As he said, we’re friends from university,” Sabo says to Luffy.

“Nice to meet you, Kohza!” Luffy smiles.

“Alright, and how do you know Vivi?” Sabo asks his old friend with a raised eyebrow and he fights back a smirk as he sees a blush on Kohza’s tanned face. As usual, he wears red coloured sunglasses. Sabo believes the guy is the only one who can actually pull off coloured sunglasses without looking like an idiot hipster.

“We, uh… met yesterday at the fountain.”

“He bumped into me while he was walking backwards,” Vivi explains with a chuckle.

“Haha, seriously?” Luffy asks.

“I was making photos,” Kohza says embarrassed.

“Well, it was a happy accident, right? Otherwise we wouldn’t be here right now, now would we?” Vivi says and she smiles brilliantly at Kohza and Sabo admits that he hopes his friend won’t mess this up. He doesn’t know Vivi, but he can tell that she is an extraordinarily kind and nice person. And she’s friends with Luffy, and Sabo doubts Luffy would be friends with mean people.

So, Kohza: Don’t fuck this up.

“Alright, we don’t want to disturb you guys any longer, right, Luffy?” Sabo says and looks at the boy.

Luffy blinks and it takes him a moment to understand.

“Oh! Yes, ah, Sabo is right! You guy’s coffees are getting cold!”

“Alright, it was nice to see you again, Luffy!” Vivi chirps.

“It was really nice! And nice meeting you, Kohza!”

“Pleasure,” Kohza says with a nod and a small smile, before he throws Sabo a glance that is both thankful and questioning. Sabo shakes his head.
Later.

“Ok, bye guys, have fun!” Luffy grins and hugs Vivi, pats Kohza’s shoulder and Sabo nods at the two, before he hurries to catch up with Luffy. He still feels Kohza’s stare in his back. He makes a mental note to text him later to explain a few things.

“Boy, this was one hell of a coincidence! Like, Vivi meets a guy who you went to college with – Water Seven sure is small!” Luffy says good-humoured.

“Yeah. I haven’t seen Kohza since at least four or five months,” Sabo replies thoughtfully.

“Has he always had the scar on his face?”

“I guess – he’s had the scar already when I met him.”

“Sabo? Where do we have to go?”

Sabo finally pays attention to where they are again and he is confused for a split second, before he points right.

“Down this road.”

“What were we talking about? Never mind, you know what, I told Robin that I really liked Star Wars and Franky heard me and he said he could lend me the next two parts! I’m really excited, I can’t wait to see how it continues,” Luffy says happily.

“That’s great. And he didn’t give you any spoilers, did he?” Sabo asks with a wink.

“Nah, he didn’t. So you wanna watch it with me?”

That makes Sabo’s heart skip a beat.

“Ah – sure, yeah, why not.”

“Alright, cool!”

And they walk a bit more, they talk about work and movies and Sabo feels good. He gets to know the boy better, little by little, and he’s so happy Luffy has asked him to watch it with him that he could actually jump in the air in joy.

He’s still frightened that Luffy might tell him that they should forget about the kisses and everything and just be normal friends – but still, Sabo is quite sure, he has at least managed to become a tiny part of Luffy’s world.

And that is a pretty amazing feeling.

“I’m hungry…,” Luffy complains after a while.

“Don’t worry, it’s not far anymore.”

“I hope so…”

“Do you know what?”

“Hm?”

“Today, we met exactly two weeks ago. You know, on the rooftop of Vivi’s mansion,” Sabo says
with a sense of nostalgia. So much has happened since then.

“It feels much longer,” Luffy mutters.

“Yes, it does. But I’m glad it was me who climbed after you.”

“Yeah, me too,” Luffy smiles shyly and that smile makes Sabo’s heart melt. Oh my god, people shouldn’t be allowed to smile that adorably…

“Alright, here we are…”

He lets Luffy enter into the shop before him – of course, Sabo holds the door open for him – and they enter the small chocolate egg store which has a tiny café inside. The inside is completely coloured in purple, but the furniture and decorations are yellow. Purple walls, yellow tables, yellow chairs and even yellow paper flowers! Luffy looks around.

“Wow, this is…purple,” he says and then grins at Sabo.

“Welcome in the “Purple Point”? How may I serve you?” a waitress asks them cheerfully. She wears a yellow dress and apron, like the furniture a nice, even a bit intense contrast to the purple background.

“A table for two, please,” Luffy grins.

“Alright, here you go. Is window alright?”

“Yes, thank, it’s perfect,” Sabo says as he sees Luffy already walking towards the small table the waitress has pointed at. From there, they can watch the busy street.

“You ok?” Sabo asks the boy as he places his bag beneath his chair.

“Yeah, just a bit tired,” Luffy replies.

“Ok. If you want to go home, you tell me, ok?”

Luffy nods.

“Alright, they serve hot drinks and cookie dough here, together with small chocolate eggs,” Sabo explains.

“Aw, I love it, so much chocolate here!” and Luffy’s eyes actually start to shine like a child’s on Christmas day. Sabo likes that it doesn’t take much to make the boy happy. So simple and innocent. He doesn’t need a fancy restaurant, luxurious food and drink. To be able to be excited over small, seemingly average things is a trait Sabo values very much.

As the waitress comes to their table and asks to take their order, Sabo nods at Luffy to go first. “Ah, I’d like the mountain road cookie dough and hot chocolate, please,” Luffy says and bites his lower lip in excitement.

“For me a flat white and the caramel cookie dough, please,” he says politely and she nods and walks away.

“Thanks for showing me this place. I like it here,” Luffy says dreamily.

“I’m glad you like it.”
“Oh, and there’s something else.”

“Hm?”

“Because I thought about when you were at my place.”

Sabo’s cheeks heat up and he feels a frightened heat warming up his blood. Ok, he doesn’t like the ring to this… is Luffy mad after all…? Is this a goodbye…?

Luffy sure knows how not to beat around the bush. Also a trait Sabo values. He prepares for whatever he’ll hear next.

“Yeah, let me hear your thoughts,” Sabo says.

“And you know… I told you I don’t do love, right? But I liked it. Weird, right?” Luffy continues, completely oblivious of the inner turmoil Sabo is dealing with at the moment.

He has trouble listening to him. And even more trouble no showing said inner turmoil. He clasps his hands tightly together. So tightly, it hurts and his knuckles are going white.

“Not necessarily weird, but keep going,” Sabo says and smiles reassuringly at him.

“Ah, yeah, so I asked Robin and Nami what’s wrong with me. And they asked me if I like you.”

“And what did you say?” Sabo says and he hopes his voice isn’t shaking. And really, Luffy told his friends?

“I told them that I do. And they said it’s ok, then. And then I asked if that is love. You know the sort of love I don’t like at all. And they said, no, it’s something different. So that’s ok, right? Because I like kissing you,” Luffy concludes with a wide smile.

Sabo is honestly speechless. And dear god that doesn’t happen often. He stares at the boy.

“Sabo? Say something?” Luffy asks him full of happy expectation.

Wow, this boy actually manages to catch him completely off guard.

“Ahm…” Sabo clears his throat. “I want you to know that I’m happy you told me, but I don’t want you to push yourself or force yourself, ok? I don’t want you do to something that doesn’t feel right with you.”

“I’m not forcing myself, it’s what I’m saying! I really liked it and I don’t want that to stop. And I like you, so it’s fine, right?” Luffy says with a big grin and his grin becomes even bigger when their food arrives.

“Oh my god, this looks amazing!” Luffy says and his eyes almost fall out of his head as he sees the massive plate full of cookie dough.

“Dig in,” Sabo smiles and takes a confused sip from his flat white. This boy… has no one ever taught him not to confront people like that? Talk about being subtle…

But to be honest, this is everything Sabo could’ve wished for. He’s here, with Luffy, and Luffy straight up told him that he likes kissing him and that he likes him?! Like, is he dreaming?

His aversion toward the concept of love has him confused, however. Sabo wonders what has caused that strong negative feeling to this thing that most people actually crave. Has someone broken his heart in the past…? And now Sabo wonders, whether Luffy has had a boyfriend – or girlfriend,
Luffy could be bi or whatever, for all he knows – because when they had been kissing, it seemed like, hm… it has been like Luffy hadn’t kissed someone for a long time, but it wasn’t as if he didn’t know what he was doing.

Sabo forces his attention back to Luffy, who looks in absolute bliss after the first fork full of cookie dough.

“Oh my god… I never want to leave this place ever again,” he gushes.

“We could ask the manager if you can move in,” Sabo replies amused and he takes a bite himself. It is definitely worth the money. It’s tender and just the right amount of sweet.

“Good idea! How’s yours, by the way?” Luffy asks him.

“Here, try it,” Sabo says and pushes his plate to Luffy. The boy nods happily and takes a bite.

“Aw, it’s good, too! But mine is better,” Luffy says and returns to his own plate and digs his fork back into the cookie dough.

“Really? Lemme try, too.”

And before Luffy can say something, he grabs Luffy’s hand which holds the fork and brings it to his own mouth. He can feel Luffy’s dark eyes following his movements, but he doesn’t resist. Sabo takes his time, eyeing Luffy, before he releases the slim wrist and Luffy bites his lower lip. Sabo sees a blush on his cheeks.

“Yeah, yours is better,” Sabo smiles seductively, and suddenly Luffy pats his own cheeks and violently shakes his head.

“Stop doing that.”

“What?”

“What you just did! Like – like, that’s not…”

“Not what?” Sabo smirks.

“It’s not fair!”

And that response makes him crack up.


Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading.
Please leave a comment.
Chapter 5

Luffy

This time, Sabo is the one who pays. Luffy protests, but Sabo silences him with a wink.

“Next time it’s your turn,” the elder smiles and Luffy rolls his eyes, but he likes that Sabo implies that there will be a next time.

The sky is bathing in its crimson red evening dress and slowly, gradually darkens. Luffy feels relaxed, tired and comfortable as they step outside and make their way to Sabo's place. He is excited to be able to actually see the whole interior now, without being drugged up or having his eyes full of blood.

“Since when have you and Ace been living together?” he asks him intrigued.

“We’ve already been flatmates when we were in university. And that has worked quite well, so we just decided to continue living together after graduation,” Sabo explains. “Do you recognise which building it is?” he asks Luffy playfully as he suddenly stops walking.

Luffy looks up the road. They’re back in rich-people-midtown and he feels that every building looks exactly the same. They have at least three or four storeys, grey tiles, black rooftops and most are covered with emerald green ivy. The street is covered with cobblestone and it looks dreamy and peaceful; Luffy likes it here.

“Hm… is it the one with the red door?” Luffy asks and Sabo smiles joyfully and nods.

“Yeah, it’s the one!”

“It looks so nice here! How can you afford to live here, anyways?” Luffy asks as they approach their destination with languid steps.

“Well, Ace is a psychologist and works in the hospital – yeah, I know, he doesn’t seem like it. So he already gets a decent paycheck every month. And I do get a pretty generous salary from the Daily Grand Line. Oh, and I’m starting at a new job coming Monday, which means another + on my bank statement.”

“Wow, I’m so jealous… I hope I’m gonna be able to afford such a nice place later…,” Luffy says in awe as they walk up the tidy and fairly expensive oaken staircase.

“Well, it’s not like you’re living in a shithole, either,” Sabo chuckles.

“Yeah, ok, right, but this is something else. Plus, you pay it by yourself. I wouldn’t be able to afford my place if it wasn’t for my dad and gramps still paying into my account every month,” Luffy babbles.

He slides his hand over the smooth railing of the staircase and when they are in the third floor, Sabo stops in front of a door and nestles with the keys. There's no decoration on the door, but the doormat is crimson red and says "Welcome" in white letters.
“Here you go. Welcome to my home,” the man says as he pushes the door open and lets Luffy enter first.

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Luffy steps into the hallway, from where you can see into the kitchen, which is also connected to the large living room.
The furniture is out of bright, friendly wood. The walls are painted ocean blue and they have large poster canvases, showing deserts and savannas. Luffy believes it could be from Alabasta, a country very far from Water Seven. There are bookshelves, too. Oh, and also a super large TV. And Luffy recognises the balcony from his last “visit”.
The carpet is crème-coloured and fluffy. The sofas match the walls. He can't believe he didn't actually notice the last time he was here, but goodness...this place is amazing, it's one of the flats where you feel immediately at home as soon as you step inside.

He turns to Sabo, who has been watching him silently, leaning against the door to the kitchen. Luffy’s heart skips a beat as he meets the gentle eyes and handsome smile.

“I love it.”

“Really? Didn’t you say you wanted to move into the Purple Point?” Sabo jokes and walks up to him.

“Shishi, I guess I’m reconsidering.”

Luffy’s cheeks heat up as Sabo grabs his hand.

“He turns to Sabo, who has been watching him silently, leaning against the door to the kitchen. Luffy’s heart skips a beat as he meets the gentle eyes and handsome smile.

“I love it.”

“Really? Didn’t you say you wanted to move into the Purple Point?” Sabo jokes and walks up to him.

“Shishi, I guess I’m reconsidering.”

Luffy’s cheeks heat up as Sabo grabs his hand.

“Come to the balcony. You have the best view from there,” the man says and Luffy follows him and god, he hopes Sabo doesn’t notice that his hand is shaking and that his skin is so hot and Sabo’s hand is so much bigger than his. Luffy likes how warm his hand is and how good it feels, so good…

Luffy forgets about it though, when he steps onto the gorgeous balcony and sees how the sky is a mix of deep nightsky blue and the crimson red from the sun that has halfway sunk beneath the horizon. Luffy can even see the first faint stars and he stares, with his mouth wide open. It looks absolutely fantastic, just amazing. The ocean looks like liquid gold; the port and the people there look black against the sun, like in a painting, and far away, Luffy believes he can see a ship, following the sun behind the line where sky and ocean touch.

He breathes.

A sense of longing settles in his heart.

He hasn’t even noticed Sabo standing right behind him, but Luffy turns and smiles at him, feeling a warm heat rising to his cheeks as he recognises the suddenly so close, but not at all unwelcome proximity to the other man.

“I love it. This is the best.”

Sabo smiles back. And then, Luffy holds his breath, Sabo carefully wraps his arms around Luffy from behind. For a split-second, Luffy stiffens, but then he remembers who it is, whose arms are
gently holding him in a way no one...has held him before. The embrace isn’t forceful or tight, it’s just very comfortable and Luffy relaxes against Sabo’s chest and Luffy wonders how his heart is beating like crazy right now, albeit a warm, nice feeling has settled in his belly, despite his nervousness.

Sabo's arms around him feel so good, so secure and Luffy lets out a sigh. His heart is beating embarassingly fast now, and he bets Sabo can feel it because they’re standing so close, but if he does notice Sabo doesn’t mention it. Luffy lifts a slightly trembling hand to tentatively stroke over Sabo’s forearm.

“Do you watch the sunset every day?” he asks.

“No, unfortunately not. But whenever I have free time, I do. It’s brilliant, and every sunset is different. And it kinda makes me want to go away; do you know what I mean?” Sabo says close to his ear.

“.Yeah, I know what you mean,” Luffy replies and he bites his lower lip because there are probably a million bees inside his belly and his chest is so tight right now and his heart is running away and it’s beating so hard his ribcage has three cracks already.

His skin is so hot and there’s Sabo right there, behind him, with his arms around him, and Luffy feels like this is too much, too much happiness and nervousness and fear and hope and confusion for his body. So many feelings at once – he has never had to deal with all this and now he feels so much, all at once, and it’s just because of one single man. Just what is Sabo doing to him…?

When Sabo eventually loosens the embrace, Luffy has a hard time not demanding the wonderful arms right back around him, where they have felt so good and secure and nice that now, without them, Luffy feels a biting loneliness in his chest. He's never had it that strong before and that, too, is another new found fear he doesn't dare thinking more about.

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At some point, they go back inside, because Luffy feels tired and in need of painkillers. Sabo walks to the kitchen to make some tea whilst Luffy settles on the carpet in the living room. It's weird how clean it is inside this flat. Like, not sterile or uncomfortably so, but it's definitely tidier than in any of Luffy's friends' flats. Especially since two guys live here, Luffy would've thought it would be messier. But maybe Luffy and his friends are just exceptionally messy and he's just used to that being the standard. He smiles at his own silliness. In any case, he absolutely loves Sabo's and Ace's flat.

“Are you hungry? Shall I make dinner?” Sabo calls from the kitchen.

“Nah, I’m good, how about you?” Luffy replies and swallows two pills at once.

“I’m still full with the cookie dough. Here you go, camomile tea.”

Luffy thankfully takes the offered mug with the steaming tea and places it in front of him on the living room table. Then Sabo sits down on the sofa. Luffy is still kneeling in front of the living room table. There are mountains of books – mostly travel magazines and photo books – stored underneath the table top and he examines them intrigued. Most of the photo books are filled with photographs from one guy – Kohza. Wow, the man really must be something with a camera.
“So, here’s the thing,” Sabo starts and looks at him and Luffy turns to him.

Sabo taps on the cushions next to him and Luffy climbs back onto the sofa.

“I’m happy about what you told me in the café. Because I like you, too, Luffy,” Sabo says gently and Luffy smiles like an idiot at that. He can’t actually believe it, though. Sabo is probably the most handsome man that walks around in Water Seven – and he’s interested in a guy like Luffy. That fact alone makes Luffy want to walk on a rainbow.

“But…”

That makes Luffy’s smile disappear and he stares at Sabo. Sabo quickly puts up his hands in the air: “Hang on, don’t look at me like that, listen, I like you, ok, and that won’t change so fast. So listen…”

The younger boy audibly lets out the breath he just held.

“Ok, what I’m trying to ask is: What are we? We don’t have to label it, if you don’t want to. But tell me what I’m allowed to do and what I’m not allowed to do,” Sabo says and he looks so serious and that makes Luffy nervous.

“What do you mean?” Luffy asks. He doesn’t really understand what Sabo is trying to say. What should Luffy allow him? Huh?

“You said that you like kissing me, right?” Sabo says calmly and Luffy nods.

“Yeah, I liked it a lot.”

Sabo smiles. “I did, too. But do you… do you know what people do after kissing?”

“Yeah, fucking.”

That answer probably came a lot faster than Sabo expected. Sabo raises his brows, before he nods: “Basically, yeah. So… what do you say?”

“Well, what if we can have sex?” Luffy asks with a nervous laugh, but actually, his whole body freezes and he feels the need to back away from the man right now. His heart speeds up once again, but now for an entirely different reason and Luffy starts clenching his hands to fists.

“Please, Luffy, I don’t want to have sex right now or even in the near future, so relax, ok? I’m asking because I want to know what I can do without upsetting you. The last thing I want is you being afraid of me,” Sabo explains in a very gentle voice.

Luffy looks at him for a long moment, but the ocean blue eyes are nothing but sincere, so Luffy wills his raging heart to calm. That statement does actually calm him a little and Sabo opens his arms, silently offering a hug and after a moment Luffy scoots closer and wraps his arms around Sabo’s neck. Sabo’s hands soothingly rub his back.

“Do you understand why I’m asking, Luffy?” Sabo asks him and looks at him, so much concern in his eyes and Luffy’s heart clenches.

“Yeah, I understand.”

“So?”

Luffy turns around, so he can lean his back against Sabo’s chest and so that the man can’t see his face. He fumbles with the hem of his shirt.
“I, uhm… I like kissing.”

He feels Sabo gently kissing the top of his head. “Ok.”

“And hugging. And holding hands”

“Ok, sounds good.”

“And…” And Luffy’s face burns, but this time with embarrassment.

He stops talking and looks at his feet. Will Sabo laugh at him? Will he change his mind? Luffy hesitates.

“Babe, keep talking, it’s ok,” Sabo says quietly and squeezes his shoulder.

“I uh… I haven’t done any other stuff yet…” Luffy mumbles and he wants to be swallowed by a black hole and never return. His cheeks are on fire and he feels so silly and immature and embarrassed and angry with himself. The second these words leave his mouth he wishes he hadn’t said a damn word, dam it, this was a horrible idea, why did Sabo even bring the whole deal up -?

“This is so stupid…” he mumbles with a deep frown and starts tearing at the fabric of his shirt again.

“Shhht, it’s ok, don’t worry about that, why would it be stupid?” Sabo says even gentler. His hand carefully stroke Luffy's arms, as if trying to easing the tension from within them. Well, quite unsuccessfully so.

“You think I’m so immature, right!?”

“No, I don’t. Luffy, look at me, please.”

Luffy reluctantly turns his upper body so he can see Sabo’s face and even the kind smile he meets isn't able to erase the angered frown from Luffy's forehead.

“I don’t judge you and I don’t think it’s immature at all. I’m glad you told me. Please don’t work yourself up over that. It’s going to be ok.”

“But you want to have sex with me, right?” Luffy says challengingly and he tries really hard not to sound annoyed. He is so damn annoyed with himself now. And at Sabo, for starting this whole topic.

Sabo blinks, before he lifts his hand to gently stroke Luffy’s face. “I want to be with you. And I want you to be happy and comfortable when I’m with you.”

“That’s not an answer.”

“I believe you know the answer.”

Luffy looks away. Yeah, he knows the answer. But he’s…he’s not ready. At all. The thought alone makes him freeze in fear and a feeling settles in his stomach that comes very close to disgust.

Sabo gently pulls him closer again. “We don’t need to talk about it and you don’t need to think about it for now, ok? Holding hands, hugging and kissing are alright, it’s what you said?”

Luffy nods, still not content.

“Ok, those are things I like to do very much,” Sabo says and Luffy can hear the playfulness return to his voice. Then he feels a peck behind his ear.
“Relax, Luffy, please. I will never do anything that you don’t like or want,” Sabo says in a low, but clear voice.

They sit like that in silence for a while, until Luffy finally relaxes and he pushes the nasty thoughts to the back of his head. He looks up at Sabo, and this time he can smile again into that handsome face.

“Alright, I’m hungry now.”

Sabo grins. “We still have pizza in the freezer. Sound good?”

“Yeah!”

“Ok.”

But as Sabo is about to stand up, Luffy doesn’t let him.

“But I want to do something else first,” Luffy says and he knows that his hands are trembling, but he really wants to kiss Sabo right now, he has been waiting for it for hours now, and not even the nasty topic from before changes that weirdly carnal wish inside of him he's been carrying around with him the entire day. Sabo smiles and sits back down and then he pulls Luffy closer, right back into his welcoming arms.

“How about you kiss me this time?” Sabo asks mischievously and also a little challengingly.

They look at each other, silently waiting for the other to give in, their face are so close, Luffy’s hands are on Sabo’s firm chest, he can feel the quick heartbeat underneath and then Luffy gives up and leans forward to give Sabo a soft peck to his still smiling lips. They kiss, still without tongue, they move their lips against each other, and Luffy feels like this is different than the last time. Maybe because he knows that Sabo likes him…? Or because his painkillers aren’t as strong as before or maybe because, because…

Sabo’s hand comes up to his neck, caressing his soft skin there and Luffy likes that so much, he feels goosebumps creeping down his body, and Sabo now takes the lead – gently, like always – and his other hand grabs the back of Luffy’s knee and he is being half lifted onto the man’s lap, now straddling his thighs.

Luffy lets out a surprised yelp and breaks away from the kiss.

Sabo grins up at him.

“Sorry, I didn’t want to surprise you. This is just a much better position,” the elder says.

“…this is weird,” Luffy says. He has never… sat on anyone like this before? It’s so close and…and slightly exposing, he thinks.

“Don’t you like it?”

“I don’t know…”

“How about I’ll kiss you until you like it?” Sabo says and there’s this look on his face again, the same look that made Luffy’s heart almost go up in flames back in the café. The way Sabo looks at him, so sultry and…seductive…? A look like right from the movies…

Luffy’s heart speeds up again and before he can protest, Sabo leans in and captures his lips again.

His lips are so soft and warm and his hand is in his neck like he knows perfectly well how much
Luffy likes that and his other hand is wandering over Luffy’s back, and Luffy feels like the fingers are leaving a trail of fire on his shirt, where he touches heats up and he wants him to keep doing that, *touch me…*

*Touch me more…*

Luffy’s hands are lost, he doesn’t know what to do, he’s so distracted and he’s so lost in all these new feelings he feels, he’s lost in all the heat that Sabo inflicts on him, at some point he simply slings his arms around Sabo’s neck and buries his fingers back in the soft mane and Sabo suddenly licks across his lips.

Luffy opens his lips after a moment, and this time he isn’t as reluctant, and Sabo’s tongue is there, sliding against his and suddenly he starts thinking, is he the only one who likes this, is he the only one whose heart is beating like crazy and who’s trembling and shaking and lost in the heat?

Luffy is the one who breaks the contact, he needs air; he needs a moment to collect himself, all the pieces.

Sabo studies his face. He’s out of breath, just like him, and his face is flushed.

“You ok?” Sabo asks and with a thumb, he rubs across Luffy’s swollen lips. Luffy nods and closes his eyes for a moment, to calm the storm inside him, and to fight the dizziness.

“Yeah, I just… kissing you is…” He doesn’t even know how to describe it.

He can feel Sabo move as he laughs a little at that.

“Thanks for the compliment.”

“You look so calm, it’s not fair,” Luffy says and frowns at him, but he can’t keep frowning when Sabo smiles at him like that, no that’s not fair, stop it, Sabo…

“I’m everything but calm, babe. Here…” And he lifts Luffy’s hand to his chest and Luffy can feel the heat, the soft tremors in his body, and his frantic heartbeat, very much like his own. Luffy looks at Sabo.

These reactions from him… just because of…Luffy…? No…

“I’m not calm. It’s not possible when you’re around,” Sabo whispers.

“…It’s the same with you…” Luffy mumbles.

They’re so close, they hardly have to move and Luffy closes his eyes again. They kiss slower now, but deeper and Luffy’s thighs tremble and if they would be standing, his legs would’ve given way by now.

This is the most intimate thing he has ever done with anyone, Luffy’s fuzzy mind as well as his overheated body know that all too well. And it frightens him. And arouses him. No, actually the arousal outweighs the fear. He’s aroused, his blood is boiling, his skin is on fire, he is out of breath, his heart is racing, his chest is tight, but god, he likes it, and he likes that it’s Sabo who does all this to him.

He half expects the man to start trying to take Luffy’s clothes off, because it’s what they do in movies, but Sabo doesn’t. And that makes Luffy’s chest swell with happiness and the fear lessens.

Sabo’s tongue meets his in their own slow dance, they slide around each other, draw back and touch
again, and Luffy’s hands wander from Sabo’s neck to his chest and back, and Sabo’s hands slide
over Luffy’s waist and sides, but he remains at the upper body, and Luffy almost wishes he’d touch
his thighs or something, he doesn’t understand why he craves it, but he wants Sabo to touch him
more, set his whole body on fire, the way only he can…

Luffy feels like he could do this for hours, but at some point, Sabo breaks the contact and they’re
both shaking, but something in Sabo’s eyes has changed. Or is it just the light in here…?

“Babe, I’m sorry… Ah, sorry, I need… to go to the bathroom.”

And he practically runs out of the living room, leaving Luffy with flushed cheeks sitting on the sofa,
completely confused.

What was that? Luffy frowns. Oh well, maybe he just needs to pee…

He shrugs and takes their empty mugs into the kitchen. And then looks for the pizza in the freezer,
which Sabo mentioned earlier. The pizza is halfway done in the oven when Sabo reappears. He
looks like he has calmed down, now.

Luffy smiles at him: “Sorry, I couldn’t wait for you, so I helped myself.”

“No, it’s fine, I’m hungry, too,” Sabo says and leans against the worktop next to him. “You ok?”
Sabo then asks Luffy.

Luffy nods. He has calmed down, although his body still feels warmer than usual. But his brain is
normal again, he can think normally again and his skin isn’t burning anymore.

“I’m alright, thanks. And you?” he asks back.

“Really good. That was one hell of a make-out session,” Sabo chuckles.

Luffy blushes happily. “Ah… thanks..?”

Sabo smiles and ruffles his hair. “By the way, have you noticed what time it is?”

“Eh…”

“It’s almost midnight.”

“What? When did that happen?” Luffy asks with wide eyes and Sabo points at the microwave clock,
which he didn’t even notice. Yeah, it says 11:36.

“Well… I’d say most time passed while we were talking and kissing, but yeah…”

“Wow… time flew by…”

Luffy sighs when he thinks about walking the whole damn way back to his flat. He literally lives
across the city.

“How about you stay at my place tonight?” Sabo offers.

Luffy blinks. And becomes cautious again, although he tells himself that he is being ridiculous.

“I… I don’t know…”

“You can have my bed and I can sleep on the sofa, if you’re not comfortable with sleeping with
someone in the same bed,” Sabo says with a shrug and takes the pizza out of the oven.

“Nah, if anyone, I should sleep on the sofa, it’s your flat…” Luffy says.

“Yes, and you’re my guest. Wait, let’s eat first and then talk about sleeping arrangements, I’m so hungry…,” Sabo says and they sit down and eat at the kitchen table.

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They talk about every topic that just comes to their minds. Luffy tells him that Usopp’s girlfriend Kaya is doing a semester abroad and he also tells him that Sanji and Zoro and the weirdest couple he’s ever seen. When Luffy tells Sabo that the two fight all the time, Sabo snorts with amusement.

“How, I know a couple that’s just like them. You remember Law? He and his boyfriend fight all the time, as well. Kidd, his boyfriend, only recently was allowed to move back in. Law kicked him out after their last fight.”

“Wow, really? And they’re still together?” Luffy asks surprised.

“Yeah, it’s been like this for years. They fight over stupid things, too, and they’re both cocky, sarcastic idiots,” Sabo says and lightly shakes his head.

Luffy thinks about Sanji and Zoro. They fight all the time, but until now, no one has gotten kicked out of the flat.

“Yeah, well… Oh, did I tell you already that I’m starting at a new job this Monday?” Sabo says.

“No, really? You’re not working for the Daily Grand Line anymore?” Luffy asks. But doesn’t Sabo have a really good job? Looking at his apartment, he sure does.

“Yes, I’m still working for them, too, but I will be a college lecturer, at your university to be honest. I’ll be giving lectures twice a week, and on the other days, I’ll be back at my normal job,” Sabo explains.

“That’s cool! What subject are you teaching?” Luffy asks intrigued. That’ll be fun, seeing Sabo on campus.

“It’s called Global Politics.”

That makes Luffy go still. Hang on. This is… He frowns and grabs his phone from his front pocket. He opens his timetable.

“Luffy?”

“Wait… but I have Global Politics this year…,” he mutters and his frown deepens. Yes, it’s on his timetable, Monday, 10am, in the lecture room MCMB0412, which means “main campus, main building, fourth floor and lecture room 12”.

“Is it this one?” Luffy asks and holds his phone under Sabo’s nose. Sabo eyes quickly read the timetable, before he raises one brow and now grabs his own phone.

“I believe it is… Yes, it is.”
They compare their phones. Yes, it definitely is the same module they have on their schedules.

They stare at each other.

“Didn’t you say you were a Game Design major?” Sabo asks.

“I am! But I minor in Politics, because my dad wants me to!” Luffy says and he doesn’t know if he should be upset or amused. Nah, he feels more upset by the second, and no matter how funny it looked at first, now he is just positively frustrated.

Sabo rubs his forehead.

“Now this is… not necessarily a fortunate coincidence…,” he says.

Luffy swallows dryly. Lecturers are not allowed to have a relationship with students.

“…Does that mean we can’t meet anymore?” Luffy says sadly.

“No! No, wait, first of all, we didn’t know that, I would be your lecturer, right? And I’m not gonna mark any of your assignments, that’s gonna be Professor Shanks. So it should be ok, right?” Sabo says hastily, but Luffy isn’t convinced. He stands up with a pout and carries their plates to the sink.

This isn’t fair. Why…why does this have to happen?

“Luffy. It’s going to work out, ok?” Sabo says behind him.

“But what if they find out?” Luffy complains. He’d get kicked out of uni. And Sabo would lose his job.

Sabo shakes his head and pulls him closer. “They won’t find out, I promise. It’s going to be ok, yes?”

Luffy doesn’t say anything. He’s tired and upset and this news just messed up the whole evening. Sabo gently rubs his back, but not even the soothing gesture is able to make Luffy forget about the new worry.

“It’s going to be ok, Luffy.”

He sighs. “This sucks.”

“It’s gonna work out.”

“…And you say you’re not marking my assignments?”

“Hell no. I’ve never done teaching before, like hell they’ll let me mark anything,” Sabo tries to cheer him up.

Luffy thinks about that. Well, if Sabo doesn’t mark his exams and papers, it should be alright…?

“…Yeah, maybe you’re right…,” he says thoughtfully, although still not convinced.

“And we don’t have to, like, kiss in front of the staff cafeteria. Although it does sound tempting. So let’s just wait and see how it goes on Monday, yes?”

“…Ok, you’re right,” Luffy finally agrees and he tentatively smiles up at the man.
And then he yawns.

“Do you maybe have clothes I could borrow?” he asks in between yawns.

“Yes, I’ll show you.”

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They walk back to Sabo’s room and Sabo takes out a couple of pyjama bottoms and a plain shirt out of his dresser.

“Here you go. Wanna use the bathroom first? There’s a spare tooth brush in the bathroom cabinet”

“Ok, thanks!”

Luffy takes the clothes and enters the pretty nice bathroom.

Blue tiles and two white sinks kind of make it look like he’s under water. There’s a green plant standing in the corner. The shower is definitely bigger than the one at his place and as he peeks inside, he can see it’s one of those showers where the water simply comes from everywhere. Luffy likes the bathroom. Also the bathtub is bigger than an average bathtub. Just how much do Sabo and Ace actually earn..?

He brushes his teeth with the spare tooth brush and then he changes into Sabo’s clothes which are, again, too big for him.

As he comes back to the bedroom, Sabo is already changed. How can someone still look so handsome when wearing joggers and a t-shirt? And then Luffy remembers that this very guy will stand in front of him as his lecturer in two days. Ah man.

It’s Sabo’s turn to visit the bathroom and Luffy sits down on the bed. It’s the same size as his. But it looks much bigger. Maybe because the bedroom is bigger? Or maybe because there are no stuffed animals here.

The sheets are soft and blue. He guesses that blue is Sabo’s favourite colour. Hm, well, he does call himself Blue Gentleman.

When Sabo returns, Luffy is already snuggled beneath the duvet. Sabo smiles down at him.

“Oh, you’ve made yourself comfortable already, hm? Then I’ll go sleep on the sofa.”

“Is that really ok with you?” Luffy asks sleepily.

“Sure it is.”

And Sabo leans down and gives him a kiss on the lips. “Sleep tight,” he whispers into his ear.

“Night…”

But Luffy can’t sleep, he just rolls around in the foreign bed for hours. It smells so much like Sabo it’s overwhelming. But…he feels lost. No plush toys to cuddle with and share the massive space. And the bedroom is so big…and suddenly, Luffy feels really small.
His thoughts circle around the day. It was fun, he cherishes every single moment – especially the kissing part – up until the point where they found out that Sabo is gonna be Luffy’s lecturer. Like, how much of a coincidence is that?

Luffy is angry and anxious and the minutes tick by. He’s tired, but his body and mind won’t rest. To hell with this. He stands up. And then he carefully opens the door and peeks into the living room.

Sabo is lying on the sofa, a blanket on top of him, and from the steady rise and fall of his chest, Luffy can tell that he’s sleeping. Luffy bites his lower lip. And then he tip-toes to the sofa and kneels down next to him.

“Sabo, wake up,” he whispers and gently shakes the man’s shoulder. Sabo frowns and then opens his eyes.

“Luffy..,” he groans in a sleepy voice. “You ok?”

“Please ah…please sleep in the bed with me?” Luffy asks hesitantly.

Sabo looks at him and his face is unreadable in the darkness. Then he sits up.

“Sure…”

They both lie down in Sabo’s bed and Luffy’s heart is beating way too fast for rest and then suddenly, Sabo throws one arm around Luffy and pulls him closer.

“Thanks…” Luffy says into the silence of the bedroom. And he feels warm lips ghosting over his neck.

“Always,” Sabo mumbles.

And Luffy is really glad that his back is to Sabo, so Sabo can’t see the happy tears quietly falling into the pillow.

Sabo

When Sabo wakes up, he’s alone in his bed and it’s almost 9am. He needs a second to remember what happened, but then it all comes crashing down at once. He saw Kohza again. Luffy’s statement in the café. The uh, making out together. Him getting so aroused he actually had to flee to the bathroom to jerk himself off. The pizza and the revelation that Luffy will be his student. Ah shit, yeah that one ruined the evening.

But then…Luffy asking him to come and sleep with him in the bed. Sabo thoughtfully touches the empty mattress next to him. Still warm.

His door is opened and Luffy comes back. “Ah, good morning,” Luffy says and hops back on the bed. “Morning babe,” Sabo sighs content and pulls the warm body closer to him.

“How did you sleep?” he asks the shorter man and presses a kiss to his forehead.

“Good, thanks. And you?”
“Really well. But you know, I was surprised last night,” Sabo admits and studies Luffy’s face.

The boy blinks and hides his face in Sabo’s shirt. “The bed is so big without…anything else,” Luffy says.

“What do you mean?”

“You don’t have stuffed animals or anything.”

Sabo smiles at that. So innocent… “Hm, I hope I was a good replacement,” he chuckles.

“Yeah, you were alright.”

Sabo starts tickling Luffy’s sides at that. Luffy’s laughter is infectious as he wriggles like an eel, almost dying from laughing and he desperately tries to catch Sabo’s fingers, but Sabo is too fast and he only stops when Luffy is begging him already.

“You still think I was only alright?” he smirks and Luffy wipes away the tears of laughter from his eyes.

“Ok, you were almost as good as my plush lion,” the boy admits and looks up at him.

They are in slightly changed positions; Sabo is now hovering above Luffy’s body, his knees on either side of the boy’s waist. Completely at his mercy, it seems.

But Sabo knows that it does take trust to let someone have the upper hand and the fact that Luffy is still smiling and seeming relaxed is a huge win on his part. His heart flutters in excitement.

“By the way, I like how you look in my clothes,” Sabo says and he likes even more the blush that appears on the handsome face.

“Thanks,” Luffy says.

They are silent for a moment and Sabo sees how Luffy looks at his lips. He answers the silent question and leans down to kiss the boy. He can feel Luffy smile and then kiss him back with traces of the heat from last night. Oh god, Sabo needs to be careful, because the boy works him up like no one else. Luffy doesn’t even know how well he actually kisses, how unbelievably sexy he looks with lips red from heavy kissing, a blush on his cheeks, eyes half-lidded and hunger shining in them.

Sabo now knows. And it’s addictive.

Last night has actually had him test his limits of self-control. Oh god, the want to just throw Luffy on the sofa and rip his clothes away from his body had been so strong; he’d almost lost his mind. But he hadn’t fallen slave to his instincts and he’s been rewarded with the boy trusting him enough to sleep in the same bed as him.

Luffy’s lips open beneath him and Sabo lets his tongue carefully slide against Luffy’s. Kissing him feels so good…so natural… Sabo’s hands slide gently over Luffy’s torso, testing waters. Luffy seems to like it, his grip on his upper arms is getting firmer and Sabo decides to be a little bold. He breaks away from Luffy’s lips to kiss his neck and he licks over the warm, salty skin.

He hears how Luffy gasps in surprise, but he doesn’t make a movement that suggests that he doesn’t like it. So Sabo continues, down the neck and up again and he is so, so tempted to leave a mark, but Luffy will start uni in two days again. So he restrains himself and eventually leans back on his heels. Luffy’s face is flushed, but he breaks a brilliant smile.
“That feels really nice,” he says, his voice a little shaky.

Sabo smiles back and then backs away. If they continue this, he will... have another problem very soon. Luffy reaches for his hand and laces their fingers together and Sabo takes the opportunity to lift their intertwined hands and press a kiss to the back of Luffy’s. The boy smiles beautifully at that and Sabo makes a mental note to do that more often.

“Anyways, wanna take a shower and I’ll get get breakfast?” Sabo asks.

“Yes, sounds good!”

They both stand up from the bed and Sabo lazily throws the duvet to the end of the mattress. He’ll tidy up later. He quickly pulls a pair of jeans up his legs and then grabs his keys from the living room. “If you want coffee or so, please help yourself.”

“Ok,” Luffy smiles at Sabo’s heart flutters again and he leans down to give the boy a quick peck to the lips.

“See you in a bit.”

As he steps outside on the street that is filled with morning sunlight, he sighs contently. He feels so good. This whole... thing makes him feel so good, he can’t believe. This boy... Sabo can’t tell what it is, but something around Luffy makes his brain go all irrational. This has never happened before. But Sabo knows that he wants to keep him around. Even though he’ll be his lecturer...

He whistles a melody in a low voice and walks the street up to the bakery. He can’t wait to get back to Luffy.

When he thinks about it, how much trust the boy has shown yesterday. Actually revealing to him that he’s a virgin. That takes courage. Personally, Sabo thought it was really, really endearing, he doesn’t judge him and to be honest, he rather would’ve been surprised if Luffy had told him that he’s already been with someone.

Sabo waves at his neighbours and continues his way. He has a lot to think about. Most of these things revolve around Luffy, definitely.

Sabo doesn’t want to admit it. But he likes him.

He actually really does.

Luffy

Oh my god, the shower is so good... Luffy feels so good, his skin is fresh and smelling nice, his hair is still damp and he has his own clothes on again. He walks into the kitchen. There isn't much coffee left, so he just makes new one. He’s absorbed in his work and jumps when suddenly the door to Ace’s room flies open and Sabo’s flatmate walks out, his upper body bare, he yawns and walks into the bathroom, oblivious of his surroundings. Luffy blinks. Did Ace actually notice him? Probably not... But damn, he has muscles...

Which makes Luffy remember that he hasn’t actually seen Sabo’s upper body yet. When Luffy touches him, he can feel soft skin underneath the fabric of his clothes, and hard muscles, too. Does
he look like Ace with his shirt off?

Luffy dreamily looks out the window…

“Woah, Luffy, what are you doing here?” Ace suddenly says behind him and Luffy jumps and turns around to him.

“I ah, I’m making coffee,” he replies.

“Ah yes, I can see that – can I have some, too? No, but what I mean is what are you doing here? Are you ok?” Ace asks. He doesn’t sound mad or anything, only surprised.

“Yeah, I’m alright! It’s because I met Sabo yesterday and we hung out and then I stayed overnight.” Luffy notices Ace’s eyes looking up and down at him. Then the elder asks: “Are you really ok? Where’s Sabo?”

“Getting breakfast. And yeah, I’m good,” Luffy repeats with a grin. "I hardly need any painkillers anymore."

“Ah, that's good to hear. Did you...sleep in Sabo’s bed?”

Luffy nods and pours the steaming dark liquid into the three mugs in front of him. He notices how Ace looks over his shoulder to examine the living room. Luffy is actually quite proud that him and Sabo left it pretty tidy last night. He still remembers, when Sanji and him still used to live together, and Sanji would have Zoro over, they'd always leave a complete mess in the flat...

“Did Sabo sleep on the sofa?” Ace casually wants to know.

“No, he didn’t.”

Luffy wonders why Ace is asking. He hands Ace his mug and the man looks confused.

“Oh by the way, I’m super jealous of the bathroom! The shower is amazing!” Luffy says happily.

“Ah, thanks…” Ace says thoughtfully and he walks to the kitchen radio and switches it on.

Luffy is pouring milk into is coffee, still chatting with Ace, when Sabo returns, two large paper bags full of fresh bread and buns in his arms.

Sabo smiles at Luffy, before he nods at Ace.

“Morning”

“Sabo, balcony,” Ace says simply and Luffy can see the two guys looking at each other, their faces completely neutral. Then Sabo rolls his eyes and places the bags on the worktop.

“A moment,” Sabo mutters to Luffy and Luffy shrugs, far too occupied with examining the food to listen.

Sabo

He follows his best friend onto the balcony, where Ace turns around and frowns at him. Before Sabo
can say a word, Ace already starts, his dark eyes giving him a stern glare so unlike the way he normally looks at Sabo.

“Are you kidding me? Didn’t you say you guys want to be friends?” Ace starts.

“It’s complicated,” Sabo replies after a moment.

“Did you fuck him?”

“No.”

“Bullshit, he said you slept in the bed with him.”

“Yeah, just sleeping, Ace, learn to listen,” Sabo sighs.

“Ok, now tell me: You plan to break his heart?”

And Sabo shakes his head. Because his genuine answer is, indeed, no. Contrary to Ace's expectation, and they both know that. Ace knows him almost better than he knows himself, and the guy has his psychology degrees for a reason, after all. But in this case, Sabo doesn't plan to pull the same bullshit he's done so many times in the past.

“No, I’m not planning to.”

“So you like him?”

Sabo nods and leans his back against the railing. Through the windows, he can see Luffy sitting in the kitchen, typing on his phone, and he rocks his head from one side to the other in sync to the music coming from the radio. Sabo doesn’t even notice the fond smile that appears on his face as he watches him. Ace certainly does.

“Oh man, you’re really into him, right?” Ace smirks.

“Does it show?”

“Yeah. You look like an idiot.”

They grin at each other and Ace's expression has softened again.

“But tell me, Sabo: You’re honest, right? Because normally, it is just a game for you.”

“It was in the beginning. But not anymore,” Sabo says slowly.

Ace scratches his neck. “Alright, let’s leave it at that. Just don’t mess this up, ok? He’s a good guy.”

“I won’t.”

“Ok. And so you know: I’m fucking jealous.”

“Of who?”

“Of both of you, obviously.”

With that, Ace pats his shoulder and returns to the kitchen.
“Can we eat now, pleeease? I’m hungry!” he cries as the two finally reappear in the kitchen.

“Yeah, sure. What you wanna have with the buns? We got everything,” Sabo says to him and opens the fridge.

The three of them sit like this for at least two hours. Also when all three of them are full, they stay and chat and Luffy likes the comfortable atmosphere. Ace is a funny guy and he and Sabo have this super cool dynamic that Luffy admires in people that have known each other for a long time. They can actually finish each other’s sentences, and Luffy notices that they have a quite similar way with gestures and mimic. It’s fascinating. It’s like watching twins interact.

At some point, Luffy looks at his phone. It’s almost noon. He should get going now.

He lets the two know and they simultaneously stand up.

“How about I walk you home?” Sabo offers and Luffy bites his lower lip as his belly starts to fill with bees again.

Such a simple question can make him so happy. That is something…

“Yeah sure, if you want to,” he replies.

Ace clears his throat. “Alright, I’m in my room. Was fun, Luffy, get home safely.” The dark-haired man ruffles Luffy’s hair and Luffy smiles at him, and reaches up to ruffle him back. Ace returns to his room and closes the door quietly behind him.

Now he’s alone again with Sabo and Sabo winks at him, while putting the dishes in the dish washer.

“You got everything?” the man asks him.

“Yeah, I guess so.”

“Ok.”

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When they arrive in front of Luffy’s building, Luffy doesn’t want to leave Sabo. They have had so much fun. And now he has to return to his own empty flat and do work for uni. He grimaces at the thought of having to go to class again the day after tomorrow.

He looks up at the handsome man and the bees inside his belly start to swarm again. Why does simply looking at him makes Luffy so, so happy?

“Ok… So I guess I’ll see you Monday in class, huh?” Sabo says playfully and pulls him into the shadow of the entrance.

“Yeah, I guess…,” Luffy says shyly looks at the hand Sabo is still holding. He doesn’t know what to say. And he certainly doesn’t want to say goodbye.

 “…It was fun, Luffy,” Sabo mutters. “Being with you is…perfect.”

Luffy smiles happily at that and again, a blush heats up his cheeks. “Thanks and ah, same…”
Sabo’s arms circle his waist and he is gently pulled closer to the man’s chest.

“I’ll see you next week. Just us, ok?” Sabo whispers into Luffy’s hair and Luffy nods. Yeah, he really much wants that.

Luffy feels a warm hand cupping his cheek and then his face is angled upwards and Sabo kisses him softly and there’s something else in the way he moves his lips against Luffy’s… something like… urgency…? Or hurry?

“…I don’t want you to leave,” Luffy mumbles, before realising he has actually said that out loud and his eyes widen and he looks up at Sabo, whose face is deep red now and again, there’s something shifting in his eyes, and Luffy can’t tell what it is, and if he should be afraid of that or not.

And suddenly, Sabo’s lips are on his again, and this time less gently, much more passionate and Sabo’s tongue slips inside his mouth and it’s so hot, so much hotter than before, and Luffy needs to breathe, needs to pause, but Sabo won’t let go off him, he feels like his mouth is raided, is owned and god it makes Luffy’s insides burn up, his skin is prickling and he wants more of that, he needs more, I want more…

Kiss me more…

Luffy’s head starts to swim, he’s so dizzy he might fall over and Sabo releases his swollen lips, they pant, and Sabo leans his forehead against Luffy’s.

“Babe…I’m sorry…you’re just making me…lose my calm…,” Sabo says in between quickened breathing and Luffy blinks, his mind is still hazed with the burning heat and he can only look at Sabo, surprised and…and turned on…

“Are you ok?” Sabo asks him, the elder can collect himself so much faster than him and Luffy shrugs and hides his face in the man’s shirt.

“Yeah, I’m alright,” he mumbles. But no, he isn’t. His heart is beating so fast it hurts, his chest is so tight, and he really, really doesn’t want Sabo to leave.

Sabo’s hands rub over his back and then, after a few minutes of quietly listening to each other’s heart beats, they let go.

“Are you really ok?” Sabo asks him and Luffy nods and this time, he can look into his face again.

“Yeah, I’m good.”

“Alright… so I’ll see you on Monday. Don’t be late,” Sabo jokes and gives him one last peck to the lips.

“Yeah, see ya,” Luffy replies and he hopes Sabo doesn’t notice the shake of his voice at the end. The man smiles at him and Luffy turns to open the door of his building.

When he turns around again, Sabo is gone.

****
-Luffy, did you read the texts I recommended? asks Robin later that night as he’s already sitting in bed, his laptop on his lap.

-yes, I did! he replies and look at the stack of books that sit on his night stand. Well, ok, he still has to finish two, because the time he spent with Sabo distracted him. But aside from that, he’s actually up to date with the things he has to do.

-That’s great. I found some additional reading, just in case you’re interested.

-thanks, Robin! and did you know that sabo is going to be my lecturer in global politics? Luffy asks his politics tutor – yes, Robin is his politics tutor, because although she’s an archaeologist, she also did a degree in politics – and he eagerly waits for the reply. Then…

-I got told this morning. We need to talk about that, Luffy

And Luffy blinks and his smile wavers. That doesn’t sound good. Another message comes in.

-Please come to my office on Monday, at 2?

-ok

-Alright, have a good night. See you on Monday.

Luffy bites his lower lip. Robin is like an older sister to him. Hopefully she won’t tell him off…? Because Luffy has told her and Nami about him liking Sabo. And Robin is probably the smartest person Luffy knows. She might assume that there’s something, like, something real going on. He grabs Sunny, the lion, and cuddles him to his chest. He hopes Robin won’t be against that….

Luffy looks around and then grabs the rest of his stuffed animals. He has a few on his bed. Sunny is the only one that has a name, but he also has a monkey, a bear, a dog and another bear that’s almost as big as his upper body.

He likes having stuffed animals because then he feels less alone. And Sunny was given to him by his dad, so… yeah, the most important reason to cherish the plush lion. He leans back in his pillows and pulls Sunny to his chest and also the monkey. He smiles to himself. That feels good. And without letting his thoughts wander much further, he falls asleep.

****

On Monday, Luffy peels himself out of his comfortable bed to shower and have a quick breakfast before walking to uni.

There are much more people than usually on the streets this morning and it’s because the summer holidays are over and the students have to go back to class again. Luffy is actually quite excited.

He jumps up the stairs of the main building, which is a really tall building across the plaza from the town hall. The building is built of very old, bold rocks, Robin told him were brought from far away to Water Seven just to build the town hall and university. The walls are covered with ivy and the main entrance is lined with two mighty pillars on each side of the stairs. There’s also a large golden clock hanging above the entrance.
Luffy thinks that his university is actually really pretty.

He’s meeting with Usopp and Nami for lunch. Sanji has graduated last spring and Zoro graduated the year before, and Chopper’s med school is next to the hospital, which is why he won’t be in their cafeteria. But Luffy is looking forward to seeing Usopp and Nami.

It’s five to ten and Luffy reaches the lecture room. His politics class is actually quite large; there are a lot of people who do it as minor or half-field. There are at least fifty or sixty people already sitting and waiting more or less impatiently for the lecture to start.

Luffy looks down to the bottom of the lecture hall and sees Sabo standing there, behind the lectern, lazily swiping his finger across the touchscreen of the computer. So he’ll accompany his lecture with a presentation. That’s good.

Luffy’s heartbeat speeds up as he watches him. Sabo isn’t looking at his students yet – he’s still looking at the screen, probably going over his presentation again.

He looks handsome in dark jeans, a blue button-down and black tie. Luffy forces his gaze away.

“Luffy, over here!” he hears a familiar female voice and he looks to his left and sees Rebecca pointing at the empty seat next to her. Luffy smiles and follows her offer. He puts his bag beneath his chair and sits down.

“Hey, how’s your summer been?” the pretty girl with the popular pink hair asks cheerfully.

“It was great, how about yours? Since when are you back?” Luffy asks her intrigued.

Rebecca’s family lives in Dressrosa, so she went back for the summer.

“Oh, it was amazing, I feel like I’ve done nothing but chill beneath the sun all day,” she laughs. “Oh by the way, did you see the new lecturer? He’s so handsome?”

Luffy blinks and follows her gaze. Sabo seems to wait for the clock to say 10am.

“Oh…”

“He’s too handsome to be a lecturer…,” Rebecca says dreamily.

Well, he is handsome, Luffy agrees.

The clock on the wall says 10am. And suddenly Sabo looks up and the projector throws his presentation on the white wall behind him.

It says *Global Politics – Wars, democracies and dictators across the world*, in big white letters on blue background.

Luffy smiles at that. Always blue.

Sabo calmly looks up at the semi-full lecture hall and he smiles that self-confident smile that Luffy, by now, knows so well. The anticipation is so real, Luffy feels the positive tension in the air, it’s unusually quiet and especially the girls in the class stare at Sabo intently.

****
“Well, good morning everyone and welcome to Global Politics. My name is Sabo and I will teach this course this semester and next. I’m a reporter at the Daily Grand Line and I’ve covered a lot of the conflicts and politics we will talk about in this class.

“I know a lot of you guys are disappointed that Professor Shanks won’t be the one to give the lectures. He has to replace Professor Rayleigh, who’s currently still in a medical spa on Sabaody Archipelago and having the time of his life.”

That earns him the first relieved laughter.

“But don’t be too sad about this arrangement, because Professor Shanks will still be the one to mark your assignments, not me.”

Luffy grins. Sabo is a good speaker. He opens his mouth and everyone just listens.

“As I said, I’m a reporter. I’m 24 years old and I’ve been at the University of Water Seven myself. I’ve published my work in different publications around the globe and online already. I chose two books that you might want to read, you can find the titles in the module information on your timetables. I’m not going to test whether or not you’ve read the texts, but they will add understanding to the topics we will discuss, so I assume it’s in your own interest to take a look.

“So, Professor Shanks told me that from time to time, he will visit the seminars to take note of your presence and progress. I know you’re university students and it’s tempting to just stay in bed if you don’t feel like going, but do know that there will be an attendance list in class and seminars are the times where you actually analyse the stuff I talk about in the lectures, so I recommend you come in. Seminars are Mondays from 12-1pm and Tuesdays from 1-2pm.”

Sabo clears his throat and then his smile widens.

“Alright, the serious part is over. I’ve never taught anything in my life, so please bear with me if I’m boring you guy’s to tears, I’ll try my best not to.”

More laughter and Luffy sees admiring and amused smiles in the faces of many of his classmates. By now, Sabo has conquered the hearts of every single person in the room. Also Luffy, who knows him, is swept away by his charm, his charismatic way of talking, by his smile and honesty.

“Oh my god, he’s sooo good-looking,” Rebecca next to Luffy says under her breath.

“Anyways, does anyone have any more questions?”

A girl in the third row raises her hand.

“Please,” Sabo nods.

“What assignments are there gonna be?”

“Professor Shanks told me there will be two essays, a one-hour oral presentation and a timed-exam for the full-field people. Two essays and timed-exam for the half-field students. And people who minor only have to do the essay and the timed-exam,” Sabo explains.

Someone else, a guy this time, raises his hand.

“Yes?”
“Deadlines?”

“Haven’t been released yet. I will inform you as soon as I get the dates.”

Sabo looks around. Luffy wonders if Sabo has noticed him already. If he has, he doesn’t show it.

“Anyways, if there’re no more immediate questions, let’s get this lecture rolling. So, today’s topic will be the Alabastian monarchy and what impact it has on the country’s politics today and Alabasta’s importance in the world government…”

At the end of the lecture, Luffy actually has the feeling that he has learned something. He looks down at the notes he’s taken. Three pages of additional information. Wow, it didn’t actually feel like an entire hour. It flew by like nothing.

“How did you find it?” Rebecca asks him excited, packing her bag.

“I liked it,” Luffy replies.

“Me, too! He’s such a good speaker! And his looks are just…” she swoons again.

Luffy sees how a bunch of girls hurry down the stairs of the lecture hall and walk up to Sabo, undoubtedly to grab his attention.

Luffy watches how the man smiles politely and talks to them. The group giggles and it takes a few minutes, until they leave him alone. The lecture hall is almost empty now.

“Luffy?”

“Just go ahead without me, Robin gave me a reading list, I want to ask if I still need to read the core texts, if the topics are already in the other books,” Luffy lies without blushing.

“Aw, your tutor is so nice, I’m jealous!”

“Hehe, but she also kicks my ass if I don’t do anything,” Luffy says and that’s not even lie. Like, Robin makes you study.

“Alright, see ya in the seminar tomorrow!”

“See ya!”

Rebecca leaves without him and now, Luffy is the last one left, except from Sabo.

Sabo is still standing at the lectern, packing his stuff. Luffy walks up to him. He must’ve heard him, because he looks up and smiles fondly when he sees him.

Luffy can’t help but smile back.

“Hey,” Sabo greets him and Luffy wishes he could touch him, but he knows it’s not the right place, so he keeps his hands in his pockets.

“Hey. You were great!”

“You think? Did people see that I was nervous?” Sabo asks.

“No! You were nervous? You looked so confident!” Luffy says surprised.

“Haha, thanks. You don’t know how long I’ve practiced this entire lecture in front of the bathroom mirror,” Sabo admits with a chuckle and he turns off the projector. “Ace was about to throw me off
“I liked it. You’re a really good lecturer,” Luffy says and he means it. The elder smiles a little sheepishly.

“That’s really nice of you. You in today’s seminar? Or tomorrow?”

“Tomorrow. Oh and you should’ve heard my friend Rebecca, I think she has a crush on you,” Luffy laughs.

“I’m flattered,” Sabo replies and finally throws the bag over his shoulder.

“What else do you have today?”

“Ah, another two-hour lecture for Game Design in the afternoon. And I’m meeting Robin. How about you?”

“Got the seminar at twelve. Man, another hour of me trying to entertain you guys…”

“They all liked you, it’s gonna be fine,” Luffy tries to cheer him up.

He can see how Sabo raises his hand, as if to ruffle his hair, but he restrains himself at the last moment – and Luffy tries hard not to pout.

“Thanks for saying that,” Sabo says softly instead of touching him.

“Ah…and we’re still meeting on Friday, right?” Luffy says shyly.

“Yeah, 7pm, right?”

Luffy nods.

Sabo looks around before he quickly leans down to his ear and whispers: “I can’t wait.”

And before Luffy can reply, Sabo already jumps up the stairs and disappears.

****

Later, after lunch, he waits in front of Robin’s office. He is her only tutor student. He doesn’t know why that is, but Robin is the best tutor he could wish for.

He knocks on the door and then hears the calm voice saying he could enter.

She’s sitting behind her massive desk. You can’t see the walls because they are hidden behind book shelves that are cracking beneath the weight of dozens and dozens and dozens of books, maps, atlases, dictionaries, encyclopaedias and what not. The open window behind her lets in the bright sun light and the sound of birds chirping and students laughing in the yard.

“Hi Robin,” Luffy greets her cheerfully. She smiles and offers him the empty chair in front of her desk.

“Hello Luffy. Please, sit.”
He sits down and she leans forward, her elbows resting on the desk and her chin resting on her overlapping hands.

“So, how’s your first day of uni been?” she asks him.

“It was good! Sabo’s lecture was really interesting and I’ve seen Usopp and Nami at lunch,” Luffy tells her.

“Hmm, good to hear that you’ve enjoyed yourself. But, Luffy, you know why you’re here?”

“Because of eh, Sabo?”

“Correct.”

She intently looks at him.

“You know that students and lecturers mustn’t be in a relationship, right?”

“Yeah, I know that,” he sighs. “But I didn’t know that Sabo is my lecturer, right? And he said he doesn’t mark my assignments.”

“That’s not the point. Luffy, you know you’re going to get in trouble if people find out,” she says gently.

“Are you saying that I can’t see him anymore?” Luffy says with wide eyes and he frowns. That seems… harsh and he doesn’t like that, at all.

“…No, I mean you can’t talk to him in class anymore, except when it’s the seminar and you’re saying something that refers to the topics you are talking about. Luffy, you understand that this is necessary, right? I’m not opposed to you and Sabo. But you have to promise me to pull yourself together, ok?”

Luffy chews on his bottom lip.

“Luffy, promise me.”

And Robin’s voice already tells him that she won’t let him leave before he promises her.

“Ok, I promise…,” he mumbles unhappily.

“Luffy, that also means that you won’t walk up to him after class, do you understand?”

He nods.

“Do you understand?”

“Yeees….”

“…Well…”

She leans back in her chair. “I will also tell Sabo, so the two of you are on the same page.”

“Hmm”

“Anything else we need to talk about?”

Luffy shakes his head and pouts.
“Ok, have a good day”

“Yeah, you too,” he mumbles and leaves her office.

Well great. Now he’s in a bad mood. Luffy knows that Robin is right. But he doesn’t like that he has to treat Sabo like, well, a lecturer. Luffy frowns and digs his hands into his pockets and walks down the hallway to where he has the Game Design lecture. He wants to be able to smile at Sabo and talk to him…

He frowns and digs his clenched fists deep in his pockets.

This sucks.

Chapter End Notes

   Thanks for reading.
   Please leave a comment.
Chapter 6

Sabo

The next day in seminars, he is by far not as nervous anymore. The students are actually quite nice, not all of them talk, but at least it seems like they’re listening and taking notes and that’s already more than he’s hoped for.

The classroom is thankfully much smaller than the intimidating lecture hall he had to stand in yesterday. This room feels much more comfortable.

Sabo leans against the lectern. “Ok, who can tell me again why 3rd King of the Nefertari Dynasty introduced a democracy with an elected government?” Sabo asks.

Two people raise their hands. Others look at their notes with a frown, one guy looks out the window, another girl types on her phone.

“Ok, ah… Rebecca.”

The pretty girl with the pink hair smiles. “He introduced an elected government because of…”

Sabo nods. The girl is quite smart. But that’s only natural; she belongs to the Royal family of Dressrosa. Sabo nods at her approvingly after she has finished and then he briefly looks at Luffy, who sits next to her. He is taking notes, but other than that he doesn’t say anything and he keeps doodling in his note pad and avoids his eyes.

Sabo has been surprised when he got his text yesterday, saying Robin told him not to interact with him anymore. Sabo thought that was a little exaggerated, but he didn’t want to make Luffy choose between his suggestions and Robin’s, so he just went with it and agreed.

But still, it bothers him. He’s going to meet Robin after his seminar.

After the seminar is over, he watches the students pack their stuff and leave. Most say goodbye to him. Sabo rubs his neck and internally he sighs loudly with relief. This went better than expected.

He is about to take his phone out of his bag when he sees Rebecca and Luffy still standing at their desks. Sabo looks at Luffy, who still evidently tries to avoid looking at him. That actually makes Sabo feels quite rejected.

“Bye, Sabo!” Rebecca suddenly chirps and walks past him, smiling brightly at him. “Bye, have a good day,” Sabo replies. Luffy hurries after Rebecca and without looking at him, leaves the classroom.

****
As Sabo stands in front of Robin’s office, he subconsciously straightens his shirt, tie and jacket. He has met the woman only twice – the first time, at Vivi’s party. And the second time was yesterday, at an early briefing of the vice president of the university, to welcome (back) all lecturers and wishing them good luck for the new academic year.

So, to be honest, he hasn’t really talked to her yet. But he did a bit of research.

Nico Robin is an archaeologist, she has two PhDs, she has a degree in politics and she’s professor for history and archaeology here at the university. A lot of people admire her for her impressive career. And she’s not even thirty yet.

Sabo clears his throat and then knocks on the door. After a moment, a female, calm voice says: “It’s open.”

Robin is standing in front of her massive book shelf, a dictionary in her hand. As he closes the door, she turns her head and looks at him, a quiet, rather mysterious smile playing around her lips. Her eyes, however, remain unmoved. Sabo blinks.

“Sabo, thank you for coming,” she says and offers him the empty chair in front of her desk as she walks around it and sits down in her heavy black office chair.

“Anytime,” he replies with a closed-lip smile and sits down.

“I assume Luffy told you?”

“Yeah, he did.”

“And you agree that it’s the best to protect both him and you?” she asks calmly.

“…Perhaps.”

“You don’t sound convinced.”

“I’m not, but I know that you are a very smart woman, Robin. So I’ll go along with it,” Sabo says and looks her straight in the dark blue eyes.

Robin’s eyes don’t even move and she holds his gaze without effort, until she blinks and then smiles at him. “I’m glad you agree.”

“Yeah, I don’t want us to fight. Anyways, anything else? Because I need to head over to the Daily Grand Line,” Sabo sighs.

“No, it’s ok, I just wanted to hear it from you.”

“Alright”

“But Sabo,” she says, her voice becoming stern at once.

He halts and looks at her, his hand is on the door handle.

“Yes?”

“Do not hurt him.”

And it doesn’t sound like a request. More like a threat. He looks at her.
“What makes you think I’d want to hurt him?”

“You’re not the only one who knows how to research.”

That makes him cautious, but he decides not to dwell. So he smiles with closed lips: “I’m not planning on hurting him.”

“Good. But if you do, willingly or not, I promise that you’ll regret it.”

Sabo remains silent. And after a heartbeat, he leaves the office without looking back.

****

Thursday evening, as he’s at home, sitting in the living room, with the TV on and his laptop on the living room table, he’s absorbed in the interview he’s transcribing. He interviewed a firefighter today who just donated one of his kidneys to a kid that he saved from a burning building only a few months ago. It’s a good human interest story and fairly straight-forward. It’s nice not writing about something tragic or outrageous once in a while.

And he’s looking forward to finally seeing Luffy again tomorrow. He can’t wait – his heart already flutters only thinking about it. They have texted every day and Sabo has called the boy twice – but still, he can’t wait to finally see him again and see that beautiful face light up when seeing him…

“Yo, Sabo, any idea where my portable speaker is?” Ace asks and walks in.

“No, shouldn’t it be in your room?” Sabo asks back, a little distracted.

“No, it’s usually on my desk… Let me check your room.”

“It’s not there,” Sabo replies, but obviously, Ace doesn’t listen and walks directly into his room. Sabo focuses on his laptop again, when suddenly, he feels a hand in his hair, yanking his head back and Ace looks at him from behind the sofa, hovering like a demon, his eyes narrow and dark. His speaker is clenched in his hand.

“Oh,” Sabo only says and winces when Ace pulls a little harder. The back of his head is already touching the back of the sofa. His neck starts to hurt and he feels painfully exposed.

“I told you to just ask me, man. And it’s gotten worse again,” Ace says, a worried frown digging into his forehead.

“No it hasn’t,” Sabo replies and Ace’s hand remains unmoving.

“Bullshit. Like I don’t notice. My speaker, my shoes, my comics, my clothes, even my fucking wallet last week – the fuck, Sabo!?! What’s gotten into you again? You were doing so well!” Ace scolds him angrily.

“Listen, I just do that subconsciously… And it’s not like you don’t get your stuff back…” Sabo tries to talk his way out of it, but this time, Ace won’t let him.

His grip becomes so strong Sabo grits his teeth and he raises his hands and claws his nails into Ace’s wrist but the man doesn’t budge and his scalp starts to throb and Sabo feels anger rising in his chest.
“Alright, close that damn laptop and we will talk. What’s going on, Sabo?”

“Nothing’s going on, Ace… I’m fine…”

“Bullshit. Since that thing at the yagara bull races, you’ve been getting worse,” Ace grumbles.

“Would you please let go? It’s starting to hurt,” Sabo mumbles furiously and looks up at Ace.

“Close your laptop.”

Sabo doesn’t move. He doesn’t want to have this goddamn talk now. He has enough things to worry about.

“I said close your laptop, Sabo,” Ace says and his voice has gotten deeper and his other hand suddenly drops the speaker and grabs his wrist and Ace digs his thumb painfully into the sensitive inside and Sabo winces.

“God, sometimes I hate you so fucking much…” Sabo growls and finally gives in, closing the laptop and switching the TV off with his remaining free hand.

“Good boy. And when I let go off you, you won’t punch me.”

Sabo doesn’t reply.

“Did you hear what I just said?”

Still, he stubbornly remains silent.

“Sabo. Seriously, I’m only trying to help you,” Ace says and now he sounds more forgiving and his voice warms up a little.

After a long moment, Sabo relaxes and Ace slowly lets go off both his wrist and hair. Sabo leans forward and runs a hand through his dishevelled hair, before he turns and glares at Ace.

“We’ll talk. Now.”

“I don’t need help, Ace,” Sabo mutters, but stands up nevertheless.

“You need help since you were twelve, goddamnit,” Ace replies.

“I’m fine.”

“You’re stealing again.”

Sabo looks away. His skin is crawling with self-loathing. Oh god, how he disgusts himself…

“Sabo, look at me.”

He doesn’t. He hears his best friend sigh.

“Want something to drink?”

“We still got vodka,” Sabo says quietly.

“Like I’ll give you alcohol now. You’re gonna stay freaking sober. I’ll make tea and we’ll talk. You haven’t been like this in ages.”
And before Sabo can protest, Ace walks back to the kitchen and reluctantly, Sabo follows him.

“Ok. I’ll just take an educated guess and say it’s because of Luffy,” Ace says later as they sit at the kitchen table, each a steaming mug in front of him.

“…Maybe, I don’t know…” Sabo says. He doesn’t feel like talking about this…bad habit of his.

“I can’t find any other explanation. Ok, aside maybe from your new job, but that actually went very well, from what you’ve told me? And your work at the Daily Grand Line has been going great lately,” Ace explains patiently, which is rare for him. Now there one can see the psychologist again.

“But why would the thing with Luffy make me steal again?”

“Hm, let me think… maybe because he’s actually making your icy heart warm up for the first time in your life?” Ace sneers.

“Ace, you’re not helping. If you’re gonna take the piss, I’m leaving…”

“Ok, sorry. But I’m saying: you haven’t had decent, satisfying sex in months – stop, I’m not finished yet – and you haven’t broken or stolen anyone’s heart recently. So obviously, you’ll show withdrawal symptoms. Normally, a girl or guy confesses to you at least every week.”

Sabo doesn’t reply. So far, Ace is…correct. Although he hates to admit that.

“In conclusion: You’ll be better again if Luffy tells you he loves you. Or if you two finally fuck. Or something like that. And then you’ll dump him like you dump everyone and enjoy his pain to your heart’s content and you’ll be perfectly fine again.”

“I’m not planning on dumping him,” Sabo says between gritted. He’s not exactly proud of what he’s done in the past. Yes, to him it’s been an awesome game, conquering people and then breaking their stupid little hearts.

But with Luffy, he wants it to be different.

“So you plan to finally go get therapy?” Ace sighs.

“I’m not gonna see a fucking psychologist.”

“You’re seeing one right fucking now, Sabo.”

“You’re my best friend.”

“And I only want to help you, idiot. So what we gonna do? I give you till next Monday, tops, and you’ll start stealing again. Like, outside of our flat. In malls and your office and all these places where you used to do that…”

Sabo grimaces and then hides his face in his hand.

“Sabo? Talk to me. We need to fix this.”

“I don’t know what to do.”

“When are you seeing Luffy again?”

“Tomorrow.”
“Ok, you *know* what to do.”
“I can’t do it with him yet.”

“Why not? What’s going on with you?”
And Sabo sighs. “He’s still a virgin.”

That information actually makes Ace shut up. The dark-haired male sips his tea.

“Oh.”

Sabo snorts: “Yeah. And I’ll wait till he trusts me.”

“Oh Jesus…”

Suddenly, Ace stands up and grabs his arm.

“Wh- Ace?”

“We’ll have sex. Now”

“What?!”

Ace is already pulling him toward his own bedroom.

“Ace, let go!” Sabo protests, but the man’s grip is like iron.

“Pipe down, it’s the only way to – ”

“No its not!”

“I mean it’s the only way to protect Luffy from you!” Ace almost yells and he pushes him down on his messy king-sized bed.

Sabo stares up at him. “What do you mean? You think I’m gonna hurt him?”

“Honestly? Yes. You can’t even control your damn stealing habit anymore – what do you think will happen when you’re at his flat tomorrow, alone, just the two of you?” Ace says angrily.

Sabo wants to protest, but Ace jumps on top of him, he isn’t trying to be nice, they’re equally agitated and furious.

Ace attacks Sabo’s lips with so much vigour it actually knocks the breath out of him and he tries to push him away, but Ace is as unmoving as a damn tree and then his hand is back in Sabo’s hair, forcing him to accept the violent kiss and after a short wrestle over dominance, Sabo gives in and lets Ace’s tongue come inside his mouth, rough, demanding, just the way he remembers it. His eyes slide close as the familiar hunger arises in his chest and he claws his hands into Ace’s shirt.

Maybe Ace is right. Maybe… maybe Luffy *isn’t* safe with him anymore…

*He never was.*

Sabo’s stomach turns around and he kicks Ace off the bed and then runs into the bathroom to throw up.
Luffy

Luffy has Friday’s off, so he has the entire day working himself up over the fact that he will see Sabo again. He feels so bad for being so cold to him in class… but, but Robin told him to be…

Luffy runs a hand through his hair, before he realises that he has just brushed it and now he looks like a dishevelled dog again. He rolls his eyes. Sabo will come visit him here in his flat. They haven’t really made plans, aside from watching movies – but Luffy thought about showing him his idea for his own video game, and maybe they could walk by one of the countless canals…

Oh, and Luffy has yet to tell him that starting next week, he can go to his Martial Arts training again! He’s really looking forward to it. The doctor has taken the stitches out and he feels completely alright again. He doesn’t need painkillers anymore and you can’t even see the scar through his hair!

So, sounds like it’s time for a new adventure!

Luffy throws one last glance into the mirror. He’s wearing light blue skinny jeans and a plain white sweatshirt. He looks alright, he thinks. The doorbell rings. He looks up. It’s exactly 7pm by the second. Sabo sure is always on time.

“Good evening,” Sabo says as polite as usual as he steps through the door.

“Hi,” Luffy says and he hopes that his voice isn’t so high, giving away how nervous he is. They look at each other and after a moment, Sabo gestures him closer with a smile and they kiss.

Luffy feels his insides warm up at the wonderful sensation. Oh god, how much he has missed this…

“How’re you?” Sabo asks and he hangs his jacket at the almost empty hallstand.

“I’m good! How’re you?” Luffy asks excitedly and leads him into the living room.

“I’m alright, thanks.”

“Would you like something to drink?”

“Tea, please.”

Luffy grins at him. “I also got beer and stuff.”

“Ah – tempting, but maybe some other time,” Sabo smiles and Luffy blinks. Doesn’t Sabo look a little pale? Or is he just imagining things, because he hasn’t seen him for so long?

“Ok, Green tea again?” Luffy asks and Sabo nods thankfully.

After he’s returned from the kitchen, he goes to sit down next to Sabo again. The man is currently studying one of his monthly video game magazines he tends to buy at the start of every month.

“Here’s your tea! Oh, yeah, sorry, I was reading that before you got here,” Luffy says.

“If you want, I could arrange that you could go visit them in their office,” Sabo says with a wink as he closes the magazine.

Luffy gaps at him. “Really? You could do that?!”
“Yeah, I went to college with one of the editors. I could give him a call. I’m sure he’d say yes,” Sabo explains.

“Oh my god, that would be totally amazing!” Luffy yells and throws himself into Sabo’s arms and hugs him so tightly he’s probably never hugged anyone before.

Sabo laughs warmly into his neck and pats his back. “Haha, I can’t promise anything, but I’ll ask him.”

Luffy leans back a little to look into Sabo’s handsome face. No, he’s sure he just imagined things earlier. Sabo looks as nicely tanned and handsome and perfect and self-confident as ever.

“But I don’t want you to think that I’m just taking advantage of you,” Luffy pouts and Sabo laughs even more and then gently kisses his lips again.

“Don’t worry about that and I offered you, anyways.”

“Oh, and I wanted to apologise. You know, for ignoring you in class.”

“It’s ok. I know the reason, and it’s probably for the best, hm?” Sabo says and Luffy still sits comfortably with his arms slung around the man’s shoulder.

“Hm, maybe. Oh, by the way, I wanted to ask you something?”

Sabo’s arm is still sitting comfortably around his waist and the man looks at him expectantly.

“Yeah?”

“Because, you know, I’ve been thinking that I don’t actually know anything about you yet,” Luffy says.

“So what would you like to know?”

“Ah… What’s your favourite animal?”

Luffy blushes as he sees how Sabo bites his lip to stifle his laughter.

“Hey, I’m being serious!” Luffy protests and lightly punches Sabo’s chest.

“Fufu, sorry… It’s just that no one has asked me in ages…” Sabo says delightedly.

“So? Do you have a favourite animal?”

“I got to say that I like tigers very much. Majestic and proud and dangerous. I always thought they are fascinating,” Sabo says and from the tone of his voice, Luffy is sure he is telling the truth.

“And what’s yours?” Sabo asks and Luffy grins.

“Hehe, it’s lions, of course!”

“I should’ve guessed, right? Have you ever seen one in real life?”

Luffy shakes his head. “No, they don’t have them here in Water Seven zoo…”

“Our zoo is pretty small, and lions are big, hm…? Maybe they have them in Dressrosa?”
“Yeah, maybe. But I’ll definitely see one one day! Oh, and I have another question!”

“So many questions…”

“Yeah, because we talk and everything, but I don’t feel like I know the important stuff yet,” Luffy explains.

“What do you mean with important stuff?” Sabo asks him amused.

“Like what your favourite food is, what your favourite movies are, if you have a favourite video game, what music you like, if you’ve ever had a pet, where you’re from, where your last holiday was, your favourite colour…”

Sabo, again, shakes with suppressed laughter.

“You’re really cute, do you know that?”

“I’m being serious, Sabo!” Luffy pouts. Is Sabo making fun of him? He frowns and looks at Sabo, who’s still smiling at him, amused and… affectionate?

“So am I.”

Luffy blushes at least two shades darker. No one calls him cute. They call him reckless and idiotic and happy-go-lucky and stupid and silly, but definitely not cute.

“I find it really endearing that you want to know,” Sabo says and gives him a peck on the cheek.

“No, you’re laughing.”

“Because this is so cute.”

“Don’t call me cute!”

“But you are. Ok, to answer your questions: My favourite food is anything with meat in it, my favourite movies are those with a good plot and unpredictable ending, my favourite video game is Thief, I like music depending on my mood but in general I’m alright with what’s on the radio, I haven’t had a pet but I’d love to have a dog one day, I’m from the East Blue, my last holiday was a two-week stay in Dressrosa and my favourite colour is blue. And now it’s your turn,” Sabo says and never once do his blue eyes leave Luffy’s face.

Luffy blinks. So many revelations…

“Hm?”

“It’s your turn. What’s your favourite food and everything,” Sabo says and gently strokes his cheek.

“Ah…I like chocolate and everything with meat. I like movies with a happy ending, my favourite video game is, hm, probably Kingdom Hearts and Super Mario Galaxy, I can’t decide… and I like radio music, too, but only happy music, I want a dog, too! Or maybe a lion, if I can! And I’m from East Blue, too! And my last holiday was with all my nakama, we went to Loguetown and I like the colour red.”

“Well…I’d say us two fit pretty well together, huh?” Sabo smiles and leans forward to kiss his nose.

“Hehe… oh, by the way, Franky gave me the next two parts of Star Wars! Shall we watch them?”
“Yeah, sure!”

And happily, Luffy jumps up to put the DVDs into the DVD-player.

This time, Luffy just naturally sits close to Sabo, who casually puts his arm around Luffy’s shoulders. Luffy feels really comfortable right now. He’s learned so many new things about Sabo just now! He looks at the man, from the corner of his eyes, and marvels at the handsome face and content smile that still plays around his lips. Not even the scar that covers the left side of his face (the side Luffy’s is looking at right now) takes away any of his looks. If anything, it only makes him look hotter, like an adventurer.

Luffy bites his lower lip in excitement. Maybe he can’t be nice to him in class, but he’s the only one from all his classmates that can chill with Sabo like this, and he’s the only one who can just hug Sabo and kiss him…

Wait.

Is he actually the only one?

Luffy blinks and looks back at the TV. Does he actually know…? He just assumed, but…

No, he doesn’t actually know. He looks back at Sabo. And this time, the man turns his gaze. “You ok?”

“Ah… I was just thinking”

“About what?” And Sabo grabs the remote to pause the film.

Luffy blushes again and looks at his feet.

“.I… am I the only one you do this with?”

“Do what? Watching movies?”

“No, I mean, yes, but you know, hanging out like this… and kissing and the stuff,” Luffy asks with a frown, still not daring to look at Sabo’s face.

Suddenly he feels a warm hand on his back rubbing soothingly.

“Are you actually getting jealous without me giving you a single reason to be jealous?” Sabo asks amused.

That makes Luffy’s head snap upward and he looks angrily at Sabo’s amused face. “I’m not jealous! I’m just asking if I’m the only one.”

“You are,” Sabo replies simply and grins at him.

Luffy stares at him for a moment, before he shrugs and then leans back against Sabo’s warm body. “Ok.”

“Haha, I could ask the same. Am I the only one?”

“Obviously,” Luffy mumbles. Like he’d just kiss anyone… Before meeting Sabo, he hasn’t kissed anyone in years.

He feels Sabo kissing the top of his head, before he grabs the remote again. And although Luffy
focuses on the movie again, he feels strangely relieved, he doesn’t really know why, but… the thought that he’s the only one, like the special one or whatever, makes him so happy he could start singing any moment. His heart is beating excitedly as he leans even closer to Sabo. Like – Sabo could have anyone. But for whatever reason, he wants to spend his time with Luffy…

Just, how lucky is he?

After the movie, Luffy jumps up and yawns. It’s not late yet, just about half 9, but he’s hungry now.

“Shall we get take-away?” he asks Sabo as he brings their empty mugs into the kitchen.

“Yeah sure, if you want to,” Sabo says and follows him.

Luffy is standing in front of the sink, as he suddenly feels two warm hands come around his waist from behind and he’s pulled toward Sabo’s chest.

“I wanted to do this the entire movie. But you were so focused and I didn’t want to spoil it,” Sabo whispers into Luffy’s ear and Luffy almost drops the mug. He places it carefully in the sink, before he turns around in his arms.

“I missed doing this the entire week.” Sabo mutters hotly and his arms tighten around Luffy’s waist and Luffy feels a wave of heat washing over him, narrowing his vison in and he claws his fingers into Sabo’s sleeves, he feels his heart beating so fast it hurts again, his skin is burning and his lips are craving Sabo’s touch…

Luffy looks up at Sabo’s face and immediately, like he’s only waited for the sign, Sabo leans down to capture his lips, and although he’s as gentle as usual, there’s something more urgent and wild in his kiss, just like last time, when they said goodbye in front of Luffy’s door, a week ago.

Luffy sighs and he feels Sabo’s hands wander aimlessly over his back, before moving lower…and lower… The hover just above the waistband of his jeans and Luffy feels his blood boiling; the dizziness is taking over again.

“Is that ok?” Sabo mumbles, the want colouring his voice darker and Luffy starts to shake.

“I-I guess…”

And Sabo’s lips are on his again, it makes thinking so difficult and Luffy can’t even think, he just feels Sabo’s hands on his ass and why does that feel so good, and why does all the heat start to pool in his stomach and his thighs are prickling and trembling and suddenly, Sabo’s hands move even lower and grab the back of his thighs and he’s lifted up, and Sabo’s lips never leave his, and the man makes him circle his waist with his legs.

Luffy thinks he will go crazy with heat and the lack of oxygen, and the feeling of being so close to someone, closer than he’s ever been before, and Sabo carries him back into the living room and then they’re in Luffy’s bedroom and Sabo gently puts him down on his mattress and Luffy dizzily, his thoughts swimming around, his head a mess, he looks up at the man, who smiles at him, but there’s something that is changed about Sabo, Luffy feels that something is different…

And he doesn’t know if he should be afraid or not.

Sabo comes to kneel between Luffy’s spread legs. “Are you ok?” the elder whispers.

“This… is scary…” Luffy mumbles and looks away.
“What is scary, babe?”

“All this…”

And Sabo blinks and leans down to him to kiss him sweetly on the lips.

“Tell me if I should stop,” Sabo mutters and his voice has gotten so dark, so silky and Luffy closes his eyes as he feels Sabo’s lips move to his neck and yes, it feels great, no better, amazing, and so strange, and it scares him, his own reactions scare him, his body scares him, but at the same time a part of him craves it, he wants more, more, more...

He doesn’t know what that means, why he wants it and it scares him so much, but he wants it… He feels Sabo’s fingers play with the hem of his shirt and Luffy opens his eyes, quickly catching Sabo’ fingers.

“No?” Sabo asks him.

“I-if I take my shirt off, you do, too,” Luffy says, breathing hard and he looks at Sabo, but he’s only met with his beautiful smile and Sabo nods, leans back and starts opening the buttons on his shirt and then shrugs it off.

Luffy gasps and stares at the naked torso.

It’s even hotter than he’s expected. Sabo is just…perfect…

He is at least as muscled as Ace. He breathes and his toned abs move up and down, his pecs and perfect, strong arms flex when he moves to toss his shirt off the bed. Sabo notices Luffy’s gaze and his smile becomes playful.

“Like what you see?”

“Y-yeah…”

“Thanks,” Sabo laughs and then he leans back down and kisses him again, as if to distract him, and then his hands grip the end of Luffy’s shirt and he pulls it swiftly over his head and Luffy blinks when the cooler air hits his heated skin and he nervously looks up at Sabo.

Luffy is muscled, yes, but he’s lean. Whilst Sabo is a beast, he has broader shoulders and he’s taller and everything.

He hopes that the man won’t be disappointed when looking at him.

Because he has a massive, unsightly x-shaped scar on his torso.

But Sabo’s seen it before, right? When undressing him after Luffy passed out, when Law stitched him up.

Sabo looks at him, and his smile has disappeared, he stares at the scar and Luffy gulps nervously, don’t… don’t Sabo’s eyes suddenly look darker than before?

Suddenly Sabo searches for his gaze again and he leans down and kisses him on the lips, so soft Luffy’s lips burn.

“You’re beautiful, just perfect,” Sabo whispers and Luffy’s heart does a painful leap and he stares at the man with wide eyes. Did Sabo just say…?

“I mean it. So perfect, better than my dreams… Last time I could only take a brief look…,” Sabo mutters and they kiss again.
Luffy slowly leans back into his pillows and he feels Sabo’s weight on him and it’s a scary feeling, and so, so promising, it’s something he’s never felt before, he’s scared, but also feeling safe, here, in Sabo’s arms, and he closes his eyes again, he kisses back, their tongues dance around each other and Sabo’s hands are on his naked skin, oh god, how can a simple touch set his skin on fire, how is that possible, can Sabo feel what he’s doing to him, how much he’s ruining him…?

Luffy’s own hand wander over Sabo’s smooth skin, he feels the muscles underneath, god how much he wants to taste that skin, he wants to touch everywhere and memorise it…

Sabo kisses down his neck, and Luffy likes that, he wishes Sabo would keep doing that, for hours and hours, and then the man moves further down his body, and suddenly, Luffy startles when he feels soft, wet lips on his chest, licking and sucking on the tender skin. He’s so surprised he looks down and when he sees Sabo smile against his skin Luffy feels like he will pass out from the heat and that deep arousal he’s never felt in his life before, his body shudders and leans into Sabo’s touch and the man seems to know exactly where to touch him, like he knows it so well already, he knows how to set every single inch of him on fire…

Suddenly, he feels Sabo’s hand ghosting around his hipbones, and Luffy gasps and Sabo presses small kisses to his lower stomach. Luffy’s hand flies to the man’s shoulder, to halt his movements.

“You’re hard, hm?” Sabo mutters satisfied and Luffy stares at him, now dying of embarrassment. Is he the only one…?

“I…sorry….”

“Don’t apologise, babe… Here…”

And he lifts Luffy’s trembling hand from his shoulder, he kisses his palm, before he guides him toward his own jeans and Luffy’s eyes widen as Sabo gently urges him to touch the evident hard-on, still trapped behind the thick fabric of his jeans, but he can still feel it, the pulsating heat.

“If this scares you, I’ll take care of it in the bathroom,” Sabo says comfortingly.

Luffy blinks. He hardly ever jerks off himself, and touching someone else’s…

Sabo is about to stand up, but Luffy quickly grabs his hand. “No…”

“I don’t want you to force yourself, Luffy,” Sabo says calmly, although his eyes are dark and his pupils really wide.

“No, I… can you…?”

Luffy’s legs are shaking, but he wants…he wants… to feel relief, he wants to feel Sabo’s hand, he wants him to touch…there….

But never in his life could he say that.

Sabo looks at him for a moment, before he kisses him, kisses him so deeply Luffy almost forgets where he is, and then he feels a hand on his stomach, rubbing over his abs, and then the same hand lowers toward the button of his jeans.

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah…” Luffy sighs and he feels how Sabo opens the button and then slowly pulls the zipper down.
He bites his lower lip as his whole body stiffens and Sabo pauses, looking up at him.

“Luffy, are you really sure?” Sabo asks again, a frown appearing on his forehead.

“Ah…yes, it’s just… I need to get…used to this…,” Luffy mumbles.

Sabo comes back up to him again, Luffy feels Sabo’s lips on his and he’s glad to feel them back on his mouth, he almost impatiently opens his lips and lets his tongue carefully slide against Sabo’s.

His fingers find their way into the man’s soft hair again, he gently caresses Sabo’s neck, Sabo’s hands are tracing the lines of his scar and that gentle touch makes Luffy shudder, it’s so intimate, it’s so, so… personal, it’s… as if he’s giving Sabo something of himself. He’s letting him see a part of him, Luffy himself has never even known.

And it frightens him.

And arouses him.

And confuses him.

He sighs into the kiss and Sabo’s hand trails south again, casually, and then he feels the man’s hand lightly stroking over his stiff member and Luffy almost bites down on Sabo’s tongue in shock.

He restrains himself, but Sabo must feel his distress, because he breaks the kiss to look at him.

“Thanks for not biting me…” Sabo mumbles.

“Ah…sorry…”

“It’s ok. I’ll touch you, if that’s ok? Luffy? Tell me…” And Sabo’s voice is merely a dark whisper on his heated skin, hoarse and raspy.

Luffy swallows dryly.

“Yeah, you –you can touch me….,” he mumbles back.

And Sabo kisses his cheeks, his nose, his temple, every inch of his face and then he’s back on his lips, licking over them and then Luffy feels Sabo’s hands rubbing softly through the fabric of his boxers and oh god, it feels so good…. He can’t help it, he moves even closer to Sabo, he tries to get more friction; he wants Sabo to touch him more, he wants more, more, more….

He can feel Sabo smile knowingly against his lips.

And then his hand slips underneath Luffy’s boxers and Luffy gasps.

Oh my god, oh god…

His head falls back into the pillows, he exposes his throat, he arches his back to meet Sabo’s rubbing hand, oh god, he does it so well, so hot, so much better than he could, his hand is so big and perfect around his cock and Luffy grits his teeth when he feels Sabo’s thumb on the head. Luffy’s toes curl into the sheets, he grabs Sabo’s wrist, urging him on, oh please, please keep doing that...

He comes with a broken-voiced sigh, he falls apart, into million pieces, his body arches up so much, is vision zeroes in on Sabo’s smile, his thoughts drift away from the sheer power of his orgasm, he
trembles, the waves of pleasure roll through him, take him away…

At some point, he sees Sabo hovering above him again, licking his fingers and Luffy blinks, before he realises…

"Sabo!"

"You’re so hot when you come," the man only says smugly and Luffy hides his face in his hands.

"…Sorry…"

"What for?"

Luffy looks down at himself. His stomach is sticky and wet with the white mess.

"This was the hottest thing I’ve ever seen,” Sabo whispers into his ear and gently forces him to look at him.

"…But…"

"Did you like it?"

And Luffy nods. He can’t even describe it. It’s been the best… so amazing…so unbelievable…he’s at a loss of words.

"But you…?"

"It’s ok."

"But I want to,” Luffy mumbles and looks up at him hopefully. “Or don’t you want me to?"

Sabo

Sabo’s rock hard erection twitches in his jeans and it takes all self-control that’s left in him not to push the boy down and tear away the rest of his clothes…

Oh god, the way Luffy looks when he comes? So hot… Luffy doesn’t even know the effect he has on Sabo…

He smiles and gently cups Luffy’s cheek. “It’s ok, babe.”

“No! Tell me how to do it!”

Luffy’s face is still flushed, his hair dishevelled from Sabo’s hands, the boy doesn’t even realise the two prominent kiss marks he’s left on his chest, right above the x-scar.

That scar… he wonders how he got it… because it looks like it’s been a horrible, horrible injury…

“Sabo?” Luffy asks.

“You…sure?”

“Yes!”
And Sabo sighs internally and then he takes Luffy’s trembling hand. “If you don’t feel right with this, tell me, ok?” he says and Luffy nods, licking his lips.

Sabo stiffens for a brief moment, before he leads Luffy’s hand to his own painfully hard erection that’s been neglected for far too long. Luffy, with shaking hands, opens his jeans and pulls the zipper down. Sabo sighs in relief.

“Go ahead, you can touch,” he mutters encouragingly and Luffy tentatively strokes over his cock, still hidden in his boxers. Dear Lord, that light touching…it’s almost too much…

He’s waited for this for so long…

“Just do it, like hah… you’d do it with yourself,” Sabo says and he tries to calm himself, but his breathing is quickened, his heart is beating so loud in his ears, he’s still leaning over Luffy’s body and he digs his hands into the pillows and almost tears the fabric beneath his fingers that have clenched into claws from the frustration.

“Babe, look at me,” he murmurs and Luffy tears is gaze away from down there and they kiss again and he grips Luffy’s hand and leads him beneath his boxers and he hisses at the contact, he hisses into the kiss, oh god, it’s so hot, he wants this so much, touch me more… Luffy’s hand is around his dick now, rubbing up and down and oh god it feels so good, so perfect, he pushes into Luffy’s hand more, faster, make me cum… The boy still seems insecure, he’s distracted from the kissing, his rhythm is erratic, but Sabo loves it, he’s about to…

“Make me cum…,” he whispers and Luffy bites his lower lip, before he suddenly licks over Sabo’s neck – and Sabo moans in a low voice as he comes, the tremors in his body so strong he collapses onto Luffy’s body, his mind blank, black stars dancing in front of his eyes and he rides it out as wave over wave crashes through him…

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Later, as they both cleaned themselves, put their clothes back on and ate a quick dinner, they sit on Luffy’s bed. Sabo sits with his back against the headboard, and Luffy is sitting between his legs, his back against his chest. Sabo’s head casually sits on Luffy’s shoulder, as they watch YouTube videos. He feels warm and comfortable and so, so relieved. That’s been the best orgasm in a long time…

Luffy is still a little shy after what they’ve done, but Sabo is sure he’s enjoyed it. And it’s been the first step to, well…

Having sex at some point.

But he definitely thinks that this has made Luffy trust him more.

Which is a good thing, especially when he thinks back to the mess yesterday. After throwing up in the bathroom, Ace has forced him to go to the bed, promising him that the talk wasn’t over yet. Oh man. His flatmate has been pissed yesterday.

But to be honest, Sabo’s stealing habit has indeed worsened again.

Hopefully, this…this together jerking off thing has helped him. It made him feel amazing, it’s been perfect, and he feels calm and warm now, the uneasiness is gone.

No way in hell will he get help, he doesn't need help…
“Here you go; this was an assignment last semester. Character design and gameplay,” Luffy explains and shows him a video he’s posted on his private account. He’s disabled the function to leave comments, though. It shows two characters, female and male, in some sort of medieval Asian-looking armour. It looks kind of amateur, but then, he’s only been a first-year at the time – but Sabo can see that Luffy has talent.

“That’s impressive. Did you draw them yourself?”

“Hm, yeah, kinda…I’m not that good at drawing, but Usopp helped me,” Luffy says cheerfully.

Sabo proudly kisses him behind the ear. “I like it.”

“Well, I got the idea after training.”

“Training?”

“Oh, yeah, I didn’t tell you yet. I’m doing Martial Arts,” Luffy explains.

Sabo blinks. Well, it would definitely explain why the boy handled himself so well down in the tunnels. He strokes up and down Luffy’s arms. He should’ve guessed anyways, after seeing him half naked. He’s lean, but he has the body of a fighter.

“What kind of Martial Arts do you do?” Sabo asks him intrigued.

“It’s called, Muay Thai, do you know that?”

“Yeah, I’ve heard of it. Where do you do that?”

“It’s a gym close to uni, you could come with me to the training some time,” Luffy grins at him over the shoulder.

“Sounds like a plan.”

“And where did you learn how to fight, Sabo?” Luffy asks him.

_On the streets, to be honest._ But Sabo definitely won’t tell him that. “I did a few lessons when I was still in college. And I do spar against Ace and Law quite a lot, we all use the gym in the hospital” Sabo explains, which isn’t entirely untrue – he does fight against Ace, but that normally involves a heated argument prior to the action.

“We should spar someday,” Luffy laughs and gently strokes over the back of Sabo’s hand.

Sabo smiles and interlaces his fingers with the boy’s. “Yeah, we should. But don’t cry when I kick your butt.”

“I’ll kick your butt!”

“Yeah, like that will happen…”

Their banter continues for a while longer. It’s almost midnight and Sabo feels sleepiness settling in. He yawns into his sleeve and feels Luffy almost yawning at the same time, but the boy doesn’t even try to hide it, he just opens his mouth like a lion and yawns loudly.

Sabo smiles.
“You tired? Shall we go to bed?” he asks the boy and Luffy turns around to him, he tries really hard to look awake, but he doesn’t succeed. At all.

“Yeah… you gonna sleep here?” the boy asks peacefully.

“If that’s ok with you – and if you want me to,” Sabo replies and presses a kiss to Luffy’s cheek.

“Yeah, I want that…” Luffy mumbles and suppresses another deep yawn.

“Ok.”

“You can go and use the bathroom first. Tooth brush in the cabinet. But I don’t think any of my clothes fit you,” Luffy says with a frown.

“Hm, do you still have the clothes I gave you? You know, after the race?”

Luffy blinks and then jumps up, so fast he almost swings his elbow into Sabo’s face. He dodges easily.

“Yeah, I still got them! Hang on; I just washed them the other day!”

“No worries, take your time,” Sabo smiles and gets up to use the bathroom.

The bathroom is considerably smaller than his. Some of the plain white tiles are cracked, but it’s surprisingly clean. He takes a moment to look into the mirror and sighs.

He doesn’t look like someone whose inner balance is, well, out of balance. He looks as nice and well-mannered as always, aside from the rather crinkled state of his shirt. He thoughtfully touches the left side of his face, where the skin is scarred from that accident all these years ago. How very rare of him to be this… unsettled. It’s not in an entirely bad way, no, being with Luffy fills him with happiness he has never known till now. But the other things he worries about: Work and his stealing habit – it stresses him.

He violently shakes his head and opens the bathroom cabinet.

He needs sleep.

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“You can go in now,” Sabo says as he returns to Luffy’s bedroom. The boy has already changed and sits on the edge of his bed, his feet dangling. He’s only wearing shorts and a wide sweatshirt that shows way too much collarbone.

“Ah, thanks! And here are your clothes!” Luffy says cheerfully and pats the pile of clothes next to him, and Sabo can hear how tired he is, his words are slower now, from the weight of many hours being awake.

“Thanks.”

“Did you plan this?” Luffy suddenly asks him.

“Plan what?” he asks back, taking off his shirt and putting on the fresh one. Then he slips his jeans
down his legs – yes, he can see Luffy’s eyes following his every move – and he puts on his own shorts that he hasn’t seen for a month.

“This. You know, you staying at my place and me having your own clothes so you can put them on,” Luffy says and Sabo laughs quietly. Well, maybe he’s thought of the possibility. But he hasn’t actually planned it.

“No, I didn’t plan it. But it’s nice how it all fits together, hm?” he asks the boy, who grins with a shrug and then disappears in the bathroom across the living room. Sabo sighs and makes himself comfortable on the bed.

He pats Luffy’s plush lion on the head. Sunny was the name. The boy has obviously put the rest of his stuffed animals on the carpet to make space; he can see them on the other side of the bed. God, how adorable.

When he and Luffy finally lay in bed together, Sabo can’t believe his luck. Having Luffy in his arms, hearing his breathing, feeling the beating of his heart right beside him – it’s better than the best dream he’s ever had. This is basically a fantasy come alive and he loves every single second of it.

“Good night, Luffy,” he whispers into Luffy’s soft hair and Luffy only hums, half asleep.

Sabo closes his eyes and his body relaxes. It’s been a long day.

But for the moment, he feels at peace.

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When he wakes up the next morning, he’s lying on his side, his arm draped over Luffy’s back. The boy’s on his front, softly snoring into his pillow. Sabo blinks tiredly and sits up. He needs the bathroom. It’s 7am, and it’s a Saturday. It’s way too early to be up.

As he returns, he can see that Luffy has turned around and that he looks at him sleepily, his dark hair falling into his eyes. He looks so young and innocent like that.

“Morning babe,” Sabo whispers and gets back onto the bed and Luffy immediately moves closer, and Sabo happily pulls him into a warm hug.

“I’m still tired…,” he hears Luffy mumble.

“Alright, let’s sleep a bit more…,” he says quietly, the tiredness settling back into his mind…

The next time Sabo wakes up, it’s almost half nine. He yawns, feeling refreshed and ready for whatever this day may bring. How weird.
Just what kind of miracles can Luffy and his bedroom work on Sabo?

Speaking of Luffy, the boy isn’t next to him anymore and Sabo sits up, patting the space next to him. Now that’s weird.

He gets up, stretches and then peeks into the living room. Morning sunlight paints a golden pattern on the carpet and he hears nose coming from the kitchen.

Ah, there he is.

Luffy is in front of the coffee machine, barefoot and rubbing his eyes with a yawn. Sabo quietly moves closer, but Luffy must’ve heard him, the boy turns his head to look at him with a smile and
Sabo wraps his arms around the smaller man and tenderly kisses his neck.

“Good morning, baby… how did you sleep?” he asks and he enjoys Luffy chuckle, he enjoys the way his body fits so perfectly in his arms, he enjoys how he crinkles his nose when smiling and he very much enjoys how beautiful and warm and rested he looks in the morning.

“Really good. How about you?” Luffy replies and pours the steaming coffee into the mugs. The scent is delicious.

“Very well. Your bed is amazing,” Sabo says playfully and lets his arms fall from around Luffy, so he can carry the mugs back into the bedroom.

“I could’ve carried them, too,” Luffy chuckles behind him.

“Nah, you already made coffee, let me do this much,” he replies with a wink and he carefully puts one mug on the night stand and the other one on the desk and they both crawl back into bed.

Luffy moves to rest his head on his chest and Sabo wraps his right arm around his shoulders, gently stroking his back. Luffy hums quietly and Sabo likes this position, more than he’d ever admit. He likes being the one Luffy wants to hug and kiss… and god, the knowledge that he’s the first one Luffy has actually has done, well, foreplay with, is exciting on so many levels.

He’s the first one who has touched the boy like that. Seen him lose control. Seen him arch into his touch, the want to clearly written on his face, a look he’ll never forget…

Being the first to witness that, to have the honour of seeing Luffy like that – it’s the best gift he could’ve ever imagined.

“Can I ask you something?” Luffy mumbles after a while and Sabo, who’s quietly been sipping his coffee, nods.

“Sure.”

“How did you get the scar on your face?”

He puts the mug back on the desk. He’s actually been waiting for that question already. Because at some point, everyone asks.

“Don’t you like the scar?” he asks back.

“I do. I like your face. Are you mad that I asked?”

“No, of course not…Hm… let’s say I haven’t always been on, ahm… the right side of the law,” Sabo says thoughtfully and he feels Luffy shifting.

The boy sits up and looks at him with wide eyes.

“What, you’ve been in prison?!”

“…Not exactly a criminal, but something like that,” Sabo decides to say. It’s not like he’s lying – he doesn’t think it would be good to keep it a secret anymore at this stage… but he doesn’t want to get into too much detail, either. “But that’s a long time ago, more than ten years, babe. I’m a different person now,” Sabo adds as he sees Luffy sceptical gaze.

“…Have you been in prison?”
“Obviously I haven’t, otherwise I wouldn’t be your lecturer.”

“But you were a criminal?”

“A pickpocket.”

Luffy blinks. “You stole things?”

“Yeah. At the mall and everything. I was only, I don’t know, eleven or twelve at the point. I didn’t have a good childhood and I had a lot of problems during those years. I don’t want to blame bad parenting, but I was just a kid at the time and I didn’t know what else to do. You know, with the anger and sadness.”

“And now?”

“Now I’m in a better place. Both physically and mentally.”

Luffy still looks like he’s evaluating what he’s just heard. Sabo lets him take his time. He does feel slightly nervous, but Luffy doesn’t seem like he has suddenly started to hate him.

“So you’re not stealing anymore?”

Sabo blinks, before he smiles and shakes his head, and he lies without blushing: “No, not anymore.”

Luffy remains silent.

“Are you scared of me now?” Sabo asks, becoming serious now. Shit, maybe he shouldn’t have said that…

“No… you’re still Sabo…,” Luffy says with a shrug. But he doesn’t smile.

“…Do you want me to leave? I don’t want you to feel pressured after what I just told you,” Sabo says and actually grabs his jeans, when Luffy’s hand comes to rest on his shoulder.

“No, it’s ok. I don’t want you to leave.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah. Because everyone does stupid shit when they’re kids, right?”

“But they don’t usually become pickpockets.”

“Nah, but look at Zoro, he’s brought so many guys into the hospital already! And Chopper almost killed a woman after giving her self-made medication, because he wanted to try it… See! I know you’re not a bad person, Sabo!” Luffy says with a big, assuring grin and Sabo’s heart does a somersault and he pulls Luffy into a tight embrace, he actually shakes now, god, he can’t stop shaking...

“Thank you for saying that,” he mutters almost inaudibly, and he believes his voice cracks. Shit, he even feels his eyes burn…

Just how does Luffy do that? Putting so much faith in him…after so many people, his family, first of all, have given up on Sabo already… Where does he get all that good will and reliance and faith from?

“Shishishi, of course! Sabo is not a bad person,” Luffy repeats and pats his shoulder.
He actually needs a few minutes to calm himself enough to be able to look at Luffy again. The boy is still smiling.

“You don’t cease to impress me every single time we meet, Luffy,” Sabo says admiringly.

“Now stop it, it's ok!” the boy laughs and takes a big gulp from his coffee.

“Anyways, what are the plans for today?” Luffy asks him excitedly.

“I don’t know, what would you want to do?”

“Usually you’re the one with the ideas!”

“Haha, alright, how about we go to the Arcade? And hope that none of your classmates will see us?”

“Yeah, let’s do that!!”

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Almost two weeks later, Sabo is at work at the Daily Grand Line.

He’s proofreading an article a new editor has just handed in. It’s afternoon, and today, for the first time in weeks, it’s been raining. He looks outside to watch the steady stream of heavy raindrops blur the scenery of the city. Summer will end soon.

He hasn’t seen Luffy in a few days – well, aside from class – and he has to admit that he misses him. His adorable smile, his handsome face and his radiant, happy-go-lucky personality he never, really never could get tired off. It surprises himself, but he wishes he could see him right now. But Luffy has the late shift at the WindMill tonight and tomorrow he will have his Muay Thai training, so next time they’ll see each other will be… Friday again…

He sighs. They’ve made great progress in terms of getting to know each other. They’ve talked a lot; Sabo has actually revealed stories to him only Ace knows, like, he has told him stories that would scare anyone else away, but not Luffy – and he’s learned more about the boy and his heart still clenches when he thinks about how Luffy has revealed to him that he hasn’t seen his father in more than seven years.

He has just been a kid, when his dad left him. Sabo feels angry when he thinks about it again. What kind of father leaves his only son and never comes back?! Luffy has just laughed it off, but really, the sadness in his eyes wasn’t fake…

“Sabo!” someone calls his name and he reluctantly tears his eyes away from the window to look at Koala. She’s standing in front of his desk, an unnamed green file in her hands.

“Hey,” he says with a quiet smile.

“How’re you? We haven’t talked in ages. Wanna go for a drink later?”

“Yeah, sure.”

“Because you still have to tell me all about that cute little boyfriend of yours.”

“He’s not my boyfriend,” Sabo replies and leans back in his chair to look at her.
“You’ve been going out for weeks, sure he is!”

Sabo rolls his eyes.

“Just pipe down, Koala. Nothing’s official yet.”

“Anyways, back to why I’m actually here. Remember a couple weeks ago, you asked me do the research about these two guys? Well, here’s what I’ve found.”

Sabo suddenly grabs her collar and pulls her down to his level.

“What the fuck, Sabo?” she cries angrily, but he lays a finger to his lips, looking around suspiciously.

“What the fuck is going on?” Koala hisses and glares at him.

“Later,” Sabo mumbles and releases her collar, so she can stand properly again. “After work, meet me at the entrance.”

She raises her middle finger and stomps away.

He looks around, his neck prickling. Did anyone hear them…? He resumes reading the article again, but his mind is working. He can’t wait to hear what Koala has found out… god, and he prays that it’s nothing bad…

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“So what the hell is the fuss about, Sabo?” Koala asks him angrily as they stand in the pouring way, in front of the entrance of the building, beneath Koala’s huge umbrella.

“Listen, we’ll talk somewhere else. I know a place…” Sabo mumbles and offers his arm, because he is, after all, a true gentleman. And this usually makes her shut up because she can feel like a princess.

She rolls her eyes and puts her hand around his forearm.

“So where are we going?” she asks as he opens his own umbrella and they start walking down the road.

“It’s a café, rather uptown…you’ll see,” Sabo mutters.

“Have I been there before?”

“Nah, I don’t think so.”

“Sabo, you’re being unnecessarily mysterious right now. Just tell me what’s going on.”

“Alright, listen, these two guys you’ve been researching – have you had difficulties finding stuff out about them?”

“Yeah – hang on, did you actually do research yourself?!” she starts yelling again and he gestures her to keep her voice down.

“I did, and I wanted to see if you were as unsuccessful as me.”
“…That’s really rude of you, but I did have trouble finding something concrete,” she admits, looking at him suspiciously.

“Ok, before you say any more, let’s first go to the café. Let’s not talk here.”

“For goodness sake, Sabo, you’re starting to freak me out,” Koala scolds him, but from the look in her eyes, he can tell that she’s starting to become tense.
Well, it is a dodgy topic…

“Aw, this looks cute!” Koala says happily as they stand in front of the WindMill.

“Yeah. So, before you go inside: The waiter you can see, with the dark hair, it’s him,” Sabo sighs.
Koala examines Luffy through the shop window with an experienced glance, before she affirmatively turns to him. “He’s really cute. Good catch. I’m jealous; you get all the good ones!”
He rolls his eyes, but he can’t hide his proud smile. “Well, thanks. Anyways, be nice to him.”

“Anything I’m not allowed to mention?”

“Everything related to this file. I know your thoughtless babble,” Sabo grumbles and holds the door open for her.

“Welcome to the WindMill,” a waitress greets them immediately. It’s fairly loud in here, it’s busy – obviously, it’s raining outside. Like that, they won’t have people eavesdrop on them too quickly…

“Hello, yes, table for two, please,” Sabo smiles and the waitress nods and leads them to a table at the back. She quickly wipes the table and they sit down.
Sabo casually looks over his shoulder to see if Luffy has noticed him already. The boy is apparently just taking an order from a couple near the shop window. Sabo can see him smile politely and nod and writing the order down. He looks adorable with the black clothes and red apron. His hair is combed back, a look that suits him, but Sabo prefers his artful messy style.

“Yo, lover boy,” Koala laughs and snaps her fingers in front of his nose.

“You’re just jealous,” Sabo snorts.

“I am, actually, he’s cute – but don’t try to embarrass me and be too obvious, alright?” she grins and looks at the menu.

“I assume it’s my treat?” Sabo says and puts his chin in his palm.

“Of course it is. Alright, I want a cocktail. I’ll have an Appletini.”

“I’d rather you stay sober, Koala, this topic is tricky to say the least”
The look she gives him could literally make Satan pee his pants. The journalist sighs. “Alright, go ahead, whatever.”

“Better watch out what you’re saying, jerk,” the woman mumbles.

Sabo turns his head again to watch Luffy. The boy is just coming back from the kitchen, a tray balanced on his right hand.

He hopes Luffy will be the one to take their order.

“Oh, anyways, are going to do the court report of Admiral Borsalino?” Koala asks him.
“I guess, why? Did you want to do it?” he asks back.

“Nah, Kokoro asked me if I want to visit Sir Crocodile. You know, he’s still in remand.”

“Did you say yes?”

“Yeah. I’ll see what I can get out of him. Kokoro told me to be witty with him – and you know that, I can be if necessary – so she arranged the appointment next week.”

“That’s great! I’m happy for you. I’m sure you’ll do well,” Sabo smiles.

“I gotta say I’m kinda nervous, he’s a thug after all, and he’s done some really dodgy shit, have you heard what he did with the casinos-?”

“Hey there! Can I get your ord- Sabo?” a familiar boyish voice suddenly says next to them and Sabo turns his head and sees Luffy stand next to their table, looking at him with a mix of surprise, joy and confusion.

Sabo soothingly lays a hand to Luffy’s lower back.

“Ah, yes, Luffy, this is Koala, my friend and colleague from the Daily Grand Line. Koala, this is Luffy, the guy I’ve told you about,” he quickly introduces them.

“Hi Koala, nice to meet you!” Luffy says with a wide grin and shakes hands with Koala.

Koala winks at him. “Pleasure’s all mine, sweetie. Sabo doesn’t shut up about you,” she says and Sabo glares at her.

“Koala, seriously…?”

“Haha, good to know,” Luffy laughs and then looks at him, and the confusion has gotten replaced with happiness and something else that Sabo can’t define. Sabo drops his hand from the boy’s back – he doesn’t want to look like a creep, but Luffy moves a little closer to him and their legs touch in the shadow of the table.

“So what can I get you two?” he asks cheerfully.

“Appletini for me, please,” Koala says.

“Ah, I’ll have a Virgin Mai Tai, please.”

Luffy writes down the order. “Alright, anything else?”

Koala shakes her head.

“No, thanks, babe,” Sabo says without thinking.

“Awww, gosh you’re so cute,” Koala squeals and whilst Sabo’s cheeks warm up. Luffy only laughs.

“Shishishi, coming right up.”

Luffy smiles at him and gently touches his shoulder, before he disappears in the kitchen. Sabo’s eyes follow his every step.

His heart is beating fast, so fast he’s afraid every single person in the WindMill can hear it.
“God, you’re head over heels for him,” Koala says astonished.

“Shut up.”

“No, I mean it, Sabo, and I’m happy for you! I’ve never seen you like this before… you look at him as if…”

“Please, Koala, I’m not here to talk to you about me and Luffy. Let me see the file and what you’ve found out,” Sabo sighs.

Koala takes the file out of her bag and pushes it over the table.

“I actually really tried to find something, but you know… it’s weird, the more I looked, the harder it got to find something,” she says with a shrug.

Sabo opens the file. It’s disappointingly thin. There are a few papers inside. Blurred pictures. Printed online articles, links and hand written notes. Some contact details and names.

“So, apparently Monkey D. Garp used to work for the Navy, he’s been a big name! Vice Admiral even, but he’s disappeared a few years ago. But they’ve deleted everything about him that’s been online, it’s liked they’ve tried to rid the internet of his existence… I found out that he has been classified MIA from the Navy, but the file, I guess it only exists as a hard copy; it’s nowhere to be found. It’s probably somewhere in a Navy archive in Mariejois.”

Sabo nods thoughtfully. “And no information about his whereabout in the last eight years?”

“No. Well, yeah, I found one blurred picture, taken on Jaya almost six years ago, but that could’ve been any old man, really…”

“…Shit…” Sabo says and closes the file as he sees Luffy approaching with a tray.

“Here you go, Appletini for you, Koala, and Virgin Mai Tai for Sabo,” Luffy smiles at places their drinks in front of them.

“Thanks!”

“So how’s your day been?” Luffy asks them intrigued.

“It was good! It was rather quiet today, right?” Koala replies and looks at Sabo.

“Yeah, it was kinda boring. Nothing exciting happened. How was uni?”

“Boring, too… And I got a new deadline,” Luffy says with a pout.

“Ah, I’m sorry to hear that…”

“But it’s ok!”

“You, waiter, hurry up!” a dark, loud voice suddenly barks and Luffy flinches.

“Ah, sorry,” Luffy says with a frown and hurries over to the man who sits on his own close to the door to take his order. The man is fat, his clothes are worn and dirty and his chin unshaved and he has this unhealthy blush on his cheeks and nose that many alcoholics have.

Sabo watches the man barking some more at Luffy. How rude. The blond knows fully well it’s not his place to say something – he is a costumer, too, and Luffy is a waiter after all – but he doesn’t like
“Sabo, are you ok?” Koala asks him.

“No, it’s… I’m being weird.”

“It’s fine, you just want to protect your boy,” Koala smiles knowingly. Sabo ignores the remark and turns back to her.

“Anyways, what did you find out about Dragon?” he asks and takes a sip from his Mai Tai.

“Not much, either. But… from what I could find I assume that he’s wanted.”

“By who?” Sabo asks, although he knows the answer.

Koala lowers her voice. “The World Government. There’s a bounty on his head – I didn’t find out how much, but it’s a huge sum. But no one knows why they’re looking for him.”

“I know, why,” Sabo mumbles.

“What?”

“I mean, I don’t know for sure, but… I think he might be-”

“Yo, would you HURRY UP YOUR LAZY ASS!!” the same ugly loud voice barks and a lot of heads turn to see the man slamming his fist on the table and then tilting the whole table with a crash, sending his coffee mug crashing onto the floor, with the shards and hot coffee flying everywhere.

Within a second, the whole café goes still and some people even stand up, ready to leave the scene.

“Yes, I’m sorry this took so long, see, how about you come back some other time and I’ll make sure you’ll get a free meal and everything?” Luffy tries to calm the man with a smile. Sabo is impressed at how unstressed the boy acts.

“Fuck this shithole, I’m never gonna come here again!” the man yells and Sabo can see people whispering, looking both upset and scared. He and Koala stand up.

“WHAT YOU STARING AT?!!” the guy suddenly yells at two college girls at the table next to them and they screech and jump up, trying to get some distance between them and the angry guy.

“Please don’t scare the costumers, alright?” Luffy says, still polite. He’s the only waiter in the room right now; the other waitress is standing in front of a table full of middle school children, as if to protect them.

Sabo looks around and there, finally, Sanji comes running out of the kitchen, rolling his sleeves up.

“Koala, call the police, yes?” he says to his friend.

“Sir, we’re really sorry but you need to leave now,” Sanji says calmly and stands next to Luffy.

“Like fuck I’ll go, you owe me a goddamn meal; it’s what the brat just said!”

“How about some other time, when we’ve all calmed down?” Sanji says.

“You WANNA THROW ME OUT?!!”
“We just want you to calm yourself, Sir,” Sanji continues when suddenly, everything happens so quickly, Sabo can hardly move.

He sees how the man tries to hit Luffy in the face, with a clenched fist, but the Luffy is too fast, he dodges and sends his own fist smashing into the man’s face.

People start to yell, a girl cries, women shriek, and the man stands up again, roaring with fury now, and he grabs the table and throws it after Luffy, but suddenly Sanji lifts his leg and kicks it mid-air right back to the guy, hitting him hard in the face, sending him flying into the corner with a horrifying crack sound of bones and wood.

“Christ… Police are on their way…” Koala behind him breathes. “You not gonna help them?”

“He can handle himself….” Sabo says quietly. He’s ready to help, but he knows that Luffy can fight. The boy is no damsel in distress.

“FUCK YOU!!” the man screams and comes running again, but then Luffy jumps forward and grabs his collar and smashes his fist into the man’s face and the man collapses like a rotten tree and Luffy stands there, panting, with a bloody fist, but aside from that, he’s unhurt.

Sanji lightly kicks against the guy’s shoulder with his foot.

The man is unconscious.

Sabo can see the horrified and admiring faces in the café. Sanji and Luffy simultaneously turn around to the costumers.

“We’re really sorry this happened! Free drinks and meals for everyone!” Sanji says loudly, after which a lot of costumers start to clap and cheer. Some people leave, but most actually go back to their seats. Sanji and Luffy drag the unconscious asshole outside and try to tidy up the scene as fast as possible. The police sirens are becoming louder as they approach the café.

Sabo sighs and sits back down. Koala looks impressed as she saves the video she filmed during the whole fight.

“Wow, Luffy sure knows how to throw a punch,” she says admiringly.

“Yeah, he does…,” Sabo says and he sees Luffy returning from the kitchen, a piece of cloth around his bleeding hand, to talk to the police outside. Sabo wishes he could be there for him right now, but to be honest, Luffy handles it pretty well.

“So, let’s hurry up this talk. Now tell me, who is that Dragon-character?” Koala urges him to hurry up with his explanations. She takes an extra big sip from her Appletini, probably to help digest what they’ve just witnessed.

Sabo leans forward. This information is so hard to grasp, but it’s the only reasonably explanation he can come up with.

“I ah… I think he might work for the Revolutionary Army.”

Koala blinks a few times, before she frowns. “That’s nuts, Sabo, why would he? What do you even know about the Revolutionary Army?!”

“Ok, listen, see this photo? It’s the only photo that I could find – and don’t ask me where I got it from, let’s just say I sold my soul to the devil to get this photo. You can’t see his face properly, but it’s him, because see what he has in his hand? It’s a map. It’s from an island in the New World, it’s
called Baltigo – and rumours have it it’s where the Revolutionary Army has its base!”

“Sabo, this is complete rubbish, look, you can’t see anything on the photo… You just want to see something that’s not there.”

“Alright, see this description from an eye witness? He used to work for a bank, he’s retired a couple years ago, and he said this man was the one who cleared his whole bank account that month, here in Water Seven, he took out all the money he got, before…”

“Before what…?”

“Dragon disappeared.”

“What the hell do you mean?”

Sabo bites his lower lip. “It’s… complicated, Koala.”

“I’m listening, so explain,” she says.

Sabo looks around. Luffy is now standing at the entrance of the café, with a police officer. He shows her the table and the obvious traces of the fight. She nods and makes notes.

“I… the thing is… Monkey D. Dragon is Luffy’s father.”

“WHAT?”

“Shhhht! Quiet…” he says and looks around. No one pays any attention to them.

“How do you know that?” Koala asks him confused and her voice is high, higher than usual, pitched with shock.

Sabo runs a hand through his hair and lowers his voice even more.

“Long story. Short version is that Luffy hasn’t heard from neither his father nor grandfather for years. He doesn’t know where they are. And I doubt he knows who they actually are. But he told me the last time he’s seen his father was when he was 13, which is seven years ago, in July of that year, and it fits with what the old bank accountant told me.

“It’s not usual that a Water Seven resident just up and goes with all his money, deletes his account and deletes his residency from the city’s register. Koala, listen, it all fits together. Luffy’s father is with the revolutionaries, and his grandfather used to be a vice admiral and I bet they’re enemies now. And Luffy doesn’t know any of this!!”

Koala bites her lips thoughtfully as she takes another sip from her drink.

“…You’re a smart man, Sabo… but this is… isn’t it too much of a coincidence?”

“It’s not like I was looking for these sort of clues… but listen, you know I am right, there’s something fishy about all of this.”

“Alright, let’s pretend for a moment that you’re right, and Luffy is part of a really dysfunctional family. What the hell will you tell him? Are you actually going to tell him? If his father and grandfather have kept it a secret until now, maybe you of all people shouldn’t reveal it to him?”

Sabo keeps silent at that. Yeah, he’s been thinking about that. He’s obviously not 100 per cent sure yet. But still…
“What do you think will happen if you tell him?”

Sabo sees Luffy laughing at the police officer. Then he shakes her hand and she leaves and he walks up to the next table, smiling again, probably asking the costumers if they’re ok and if he can get them anything.

“…He’d probably go and look for his father,” he mumbles.

“And don’t you think that’s exactly what his father is trying to avoid by staying away from him?”

Sabo sighs and rubs the bridge over his nose. God, this is stressing him…

“Sabo, you should probably… not tell him, ok? It’s not your place to reveal that to him. You certainly won’t do him a favour, I’m sure of it.”

“But now I know. Keeping it from him would be like lying to his face.”

“You’re a journalist. You should be able to handle that,” Koala snorts.

“This is different.”

“Because you like him?”

He doesn’t reply. His friend sighs.

“If you really like him that much, then think about what would make him happiest. Knowing that his father is a wanted man and that he left his son for the revolutionary army. Or not knowing and continuing the happy life he now has.”

“If you say it like that, the choice is very obvious,” Sabo says.

“Yes, because it is obvious, Sabo. Don’t tell him.”

Sabo is about to say something, when Luffy comes up to their table.

He does look a little exhausted, but he manages a bright smile.

“Are you ok?” Sabo asks him worried before Luffy can actually say something.

“Haha, sure I am, I knocked that dude out with a single punch, did you see that?”

“Of course I did! That was really impressive,” Sabo says with a proud smile and looks down at Luffy’s right hand, which is only sloppily wrapped with a white bandage now.

“Thanks! You guys alright, though?”

“Yes, we’re good,” Koala smiles.

“When do you finish, Luffy?”

“Ah, we will close a little early today, probably around ten pm,” Luffy says.

“Are you going to walk home alone?”

“Nah, Zoro will pick me and Sanji up.”

“Alright,” Sabo smiles.
“Ok, gotta take orders again.”

Sabo nods and Luffy hurries over to the next table.

“Anyways, to finish the discussion: Don’t tell him, Sabo. You’d ruin his life,” Koala says concerned.

“…Yeah, I know…”

“So you won’t?”

He watches Luffy laughing and joking with his costumers.

The boy has a golden heart, the purest, most beautiful mind, he’s a fighter and a dreamer and so silly, so brave, so loyal and one of a kind, he’s one of those people that come into your life and change it forever.

Telling him the truth would take away all of those things Sabo has come to love about him.

No, he won’t tell him. He won’t be the one to hurt him.

He blinks.

And when did the word love come into this?

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading.
Please leave a comment.
Chapter 7

Luffy

When Luffy is finally home, he’s still agitated and somewhat restless. He walks around in his flat, as if to shake off the remaining adrenaline from his body, but it doesn’t work. He takes a shower and then he’s back in his living room again. The uneasiness hasn’t faded from his blood yet; his muscles still ache with tension and he feels exhausted and yet wide awake at the same time. He curses.

Should he play video games to calm down his nerves? Should he – should he go outside and take a walk to the fountain and back to distract himself? Should he maybe read a book? He walks up and down in his flat, for at least twenty minutes. It doesn’t help at all.

Nothing sounds appealing and he groans in frustration. What’s wrong with him? It’s not the first time he’s had trouble with a costumer and today they finished him off without problems. So why can’t he calm down…?

Luffy chews on his lower lip. Was it because Sabo has been in the café today?

Luffy has been so happy to see him and talk to him again. Like, in class he has to ignore him, so seeing him today was a really nice surprise. And he’s also liked Sabo’s friend, Koala. She’s been really pretty, but Sabo isn’t interested in her, right?

**Because he likes me, doesn’t he?**

The boy blinks and runs a hand through his hair. His body is too hot, and his legs feel weird. He decides to lay down on his bed. Maybe the cool sheets will make him calm down…

No, it doesn’t help, either. Sabo’s smile returns to his mind, the way he’s looked at him in the café, that handsome smile only for Luffy alone. With a delighted shudder he recalls the eyes that have seen so much of him already, Sabo’s hands that have touched him in places already he didn’t even know exist, let alone feel so good, the memories are so vivid in his mind, Luffy can still feel Sabo’s fingers on his skin…

Luffy freezes and then he slowly slides his hand over his stomach and down…further down…

**Shit…**

He bites his lower lip, halting his movement.

He grabs his phone from the night stand, but his thumb hovers over the display. Should he…what should he do…?

His hand starts to shake.

And then he closes his eyes and calls him.

It rings a few times before Sabo answers his phone. Luffy’s heart does a leap and he feels his temperature rising, he feels the familiar heat waves wash over him, like always when he’s near the man…
And this time, he doesn’t even see him, he only hears his voice, and still…

Is Luffy starting to lose his mind..?

“Luffy, hey, I didn’t expect you to call this late,” Sabo says and his voice sounds peaceful, maybe a little tired.

“Hi, ah, were you sleeping already?” Luffy asks insecurely.

“No, I was just reading in bed. Is everything alright? Did the Police say any more?”

“I – yes – it’s just… you know what, sorry I called, it’s stupid…” Luffy says hastily, he feels like an idiot; he shouldn’t have called him…

“No, it’s ok! Tell me what’s going on,” Sabo says friendly.

“…It’s stupid.”

“I bet it’s not.”

Luffy closes his eyes but he can’t suppress that happy smile that appears on his face. Why does Sabo always manage to say everything that he needs to hear? Is he a wizard? Can he read minds? His hand claws into the bottom of his shirt.

“It’s just… I can’t…calm down…and my whole body…and I can’t stop thinking…you know, about...you…,” Luffy mumbles in a low voice.

It stays silent for a moment and Luffy wants to die from embarrassment, but then he hears him again and he’s surprised at how much darker Sabo suddenly sounds.

“Have you… are you…?”

He grimaces in embarrassment. “…Yeah.”

Luffy hears a sharp intake of air. Then he hears the rustling of clothes and the sound as if Sabo was sitting up in his bed.

“You there?”

“Yeah,” Luffy breathes. “What…what should I do?”

He hears Sabo breathe, before he says: “Take off your trousers.”

Luffy swallows dryly and with shaking hands, he pulls his pyjama bottoms down his legs and tosses them to the end of the mattress.

“O-ok.”

“And your underwear.” Sabo’s voice is but a dark, smooth whisper, the type of voice that could tell him anything and he’d do it. He’d believe it.

Luffy swallows dryly as the excitement rises in his chest. Just what is Sabo doing to him…?

Luffy does as he is told. The fabric is already damp and wet from the inside. Now he’s sitting there, naked from the waist down, shaking in embarrassment and anticipation and frustration.

“…Yeah.”
“Lean back in the pillows. Put your phone next to your ear. And then touch yourself.”

Luffy’s cheeks are hot and his head is swimming with arousal as he sinks back into his pillows and he trails his right hand down, between his legs, and he wraps his fingers around his throbbing cock. He hisses at the feeling, and like led by an invisible hand he starts pumping, he slides his hand up and down and god it feels so good…

“Touch yourself, babe… Imagine it’s me, it’s my hand on your cock, and I’m slowly stroking it, so slowly it drives you crazy…” Sabo says quietly, hotly, right next to him, and Luffy shudders, but he does it like Sabo just told him, he wraps his hand around his twitching member, he slowly, tantalizing slowly strokes up and down and it feels amazing. Luffy’s eyes slide close and he lets his head fall back into the pillows. A low moan escapes his throat.

“Hah…”

His phone is next to his ear, he can hear Sabo talking, breathing…

Like he was next to him.

“Make yourself feel good, babe… it’s me touching you, it’s my hand around your cock, you’re so hard, so hot, I want to rile you up even more…."

Luffy grits his teeth and then he gasps, because god, it feels so good, it feels so good the way Sabo is touching him, the way he rubs it, he wants more, touch me more, he wants Sabo to kiss him, he wants him to make him cum, he imagine Sabo’s lips on his chest, the man is kissing his scar, he’s licking over his skin, tasting it, nipping at it and leaving his mark on him. His hand is moving up and down faster and faster, but he wouldn’t let him cum yet, he’s such a tease and Luffy pulls him up for a kiss and Sabo’s hand is on his chest, stroking his nipples and why does that feel so good, why does is make Luffy even harder, he wants more, he doesn’t know what he wants, but he wants to have Sabo… have everything from him…

“Sabo…please…”he whispers into the silence of his room and then his back arches up into his hand and his head falls into his neck and his toes curl into the sheets. He feels the long strings of white landing on his stomach, he breathes heavily, his eyes still closed, his hand still moving up and down to ride out the intense, tingling pleasure he feels. When he notices the feelings returning to his legs he lets out a sigh of contentment and relief.

And then he remembers that he’s still on the phone with…

“God, you sound hot when you cum….” he hears the man say and there’s a crack in his voice, like he’s still trying to calm down.

“Ah…s-sorry, I….” Luffy stutters, quickly sitting up and blindly searching for a box of tissues in the dark to wipe away the sticky mess from his stomach.

“I wish I could’ve seen you…,” Sabo says sultrily.

“Did you…did you…?”

“Obviously, babe, with the sounds you make…”

Luffy feels a blush on his cheeks. But it feels good to know that… that Sabo has been as excited as him and that he’s enjoyed it, too.

“Was – was that phone sex…just now?”
“I think it was.”

“Oh….”

“You feeling better now?”

“Yes…thank you, Sabo.”

“Anytime. And I know it’s a total mood killer but: How’s your hand?”

Luffy looks down at his right hand that’s still wrapped in a bandage. He should probably take it off since it’s full of his… well, stuff now. But he’s completely forgotten about it, the light pain only slowly comes back.

“It’s fine, no worries.”

“That’s good. Now try to sleep, ok?”

“Yeah.”

“And I’ll see you on Friday. And don’t think I’d ever think you’re stupid for calling me, Luffy. I’m happy when you do.”

“Ok,” Luffy whispers into the phone, weirdly touched at that.

“Ok. Good night, babe.”

“Night, Sabo.”

****

Zoro is doing the Muay Thai training today, and not Master Jimbei. Luffy wonders where the gigantic blue fishman is. It’s not often that he is ill. But Zoro’s training is good, too, so Luffy doesn’t mind.

He and Sanji are tying the bright red training bandages around their knuckles. Sanji, unlike most, prefers to only fight with his legs and hell, his kicks are mean, but Zoro still makes him train punches and hooks and the sort.

Luffy really likes seeing the couple spar. Without the knowledge that they’re a couple, one would probably think that they absolutely hate each other’s guts, simply taken from the way they throw punches and kicks – as if they actually tried to hurt each other with all they’ve got.

But in reality, they’re being alright with each other. Luffy also admires how well they know the other one. As soon as Sanji notices that he’s maybe hit Zoro’s solar plexus a little too harshly with his deadly kicks, he slows down a little, although he hurls the worst kind of insults at him. Same goes for Zoro. If the green-haired swordsman and blacksmith notices that Sanji is hurt he slows down immediately and gives him room to collect himself.

They do love each other, after all.

*Love indeed, huh?*

As they run in circles for warm-up, Luffy becomes thoughtful.
He’s been thinking about that weird stuff lately, far more than in the last couple years combined.

Love. This odd thing that he tries to avoid under all circumstances. For some reason, it keeps on popping back in his mind.

Well, the only explanation Luffy can come up with is Sabo… But that’s ridiculous. Like, as if he would love someone… Not that Sabo isn’t a good, ah, candidate. But Luffy doesn’t do love, no freaking way, love is for idiots like Zoro and Sanji.

Pff, love, like that crap will ever happen to him…

What he and Sabo have is something else, it’s… they’re friends, who… who know each other really well… they’re friends that like to hang out and do sleep-overs and – and kiss each other and the sort. And have phone sex with each other.

Oh god, Luffy still blushes when he thinks back to last night. He has actually jerked off to Sabo’s voice, to his vivid imagination of having the man’s hand on his dick, the man’s lips on his skin…

Alright, Luffy, focus, you’re at training for heaven’s sake, focus!

He needs to figure this out some other time.

“Alright, guys, get into pairs, everyone needs two pads. We’ll do a couple combos, a few kicks and then spar, how does that sound?” Zoro asks when they’ve all warmed up, meaning after suffering through twenty minutes running, 100 sit-ups, 100 push-ups and 100 squats to make their muscles wake up and burn and guaranteeing sore muscles the next day.

Everyone nods and mumbles approvingly. Luffy looks over at Sanji, who nods and he goes to the shelf and gets two thai pads. Luffy rolls his shoulders and wrists.

“Take it easy on your right hand, yes?” Sanji says and holds the thai pads up.

“Yeah, sure.”

Alright’

“Yo, guys, first combo is jab-cross-hook-upper cut-hook-elbow strike. Everyone got that one?”

A few people look a little lost and Zoro nods at Sanji to come forward into the circle.

“Here you go…”

He does the combo really slowly, so people can see. Then he does it again, much faster this time, but Luffy knows it’s not the fastest he can go. When he’s actually being serious one can hardly see his fists anymore, you only hear the punishing slapping noise of bare knuckles on the thick thai pads. And that’s not even the worst Zoro can do. He’s the most dangerous when he’s fighting with his swords.

Everyone nods and Sanji returns to Luffy.

“Ok, on go?”

Luffy nods, changing position into an offensive fighting stance, which means fists up to guard his face, his left foot is behind his right foot, his feet are a shoulder-length apart so he stands properly and without the danger of losing his balance too easily. He’s been doing this for years. It just comes naturally to him.
“Go!” Sanji suddenly barks and Luffy does the combo without so much as thinking, he knows the combo anyways, and Sanji nods.

“Go!”

Luffy does it again and Sanji moves through the room, backwards, sideways, forcing Luffy to watch his step and punch at the same time. Sanji speeds up the tact, but Luffy has no problem with that, until at some point, Zoro clears his throat next to them and Luffy lowers his fist.

“You don’t have the full force in your cross when you don’t turn your hip enough, Luffy, you know that. Something bothering you?” Zoro asks with a frown.

“Eh, yeah, thanks.”

“Alright, do it again.”

Luffy does it again, trying to apply Zoro’s suggestions to his movements. Now Zoro nods.

“Better. Two more minutes and you’ll switch.”

“But don’t drag combos on forever, I wanna do kicks today, Zoro,” Sanji says to his boyfriend.

“No worries. I’ll kick your ass, shitty cook, just wait for it.”

“Fuck off, asshat.”

Zoro looks at Sanji, before he moves on to the next training partners. Sanji rolls his eyes.

“You two are as funny as ever,” Luffy grins.

“Pfff, he’s an idiot. Stupid grass-head idiot marimo, no brains, no manners, he’s an idiot and a jerk and an asshole,” his friend replies quite angrily. “Go!”

After they do enough combos, Zoro tells them to get the big pads. Luffy actually wants to pair up with someone else, but Sanji grabs his collar from behind.

“Oh no, you’re gonna train with me! Everyone else is freaking scared of me already!”

“Yeah, I wonder why…”

But in all honesty, he actually doesn’t like doing kicks with Sanji, either. The guy’s kicks are super impressive, definitely, he has a perfect technique and his bones seem to be made out of iron. His kicks are super painful, even through a pad. Yes, Sanji has even broken someone’s shin with a kick once, also at training. The dude never showed up again after that.

“Alright, alright, I’ll be nice… jeez…”

Luffy lifts the pad properly and presses it to his torso. They’re doing defensive front kicks and regular front kicks.

“Guys, ten kicks per leg, then switch pad, repeat until I say otherwise,” Zoro orders.

Luffy curses softly, before he nods and yells: “Go!”

BAM!!
Sanji’s kick knocks the breath out of Luffy’s lungs and he winces as he has to step backwards to take the impact. Christ, Sanji's freaking kicks are the worst.

“Go!”

**BAM!!**

Every time Sanji’s foot collides with the black pad, Luffy has to take at least two or three steps back. And this is Sanji being nice. If Sanji would kick him now the way he does in real fights, he’d be flying backwards into the wall of the gym, probably breaking half his ribs in the process.

“Switch partner!” Zoro bellows and Luffy thankfully lets the pad sink. Damn he's glad to get away from Sanji...He really likes Sanji as a friend and person, but his kicks are fucking torture.

“Luffy!” Nami calls and waves. Luffy nods happily and ambles over to the orange-haired girl.

“How’re you?” Luffy asks.

“I’m great, how’re you? How’re things with Sabo going?” she asks intrigued.

“I’m alright. And things with Sabo are good,” Luffy replies brightly.

“That’s nice to hear. Anyways, sit-in tomorrow at mine’s. Nojiko is out of town, so I got the place to myself. Everyone’s coming, so bring Sabo, hm?”

“Yeah, sounds good!”

“You two, stop chatting,” Zoro grumbles next to them. They flinch. Zoro also has this scary ability to suddenly disappear and appear next to somenone and bark instructions - like a ghost. A very loud, grim ghost. Luffy nods at Nami and Nami kicks as hard as she can. Zoro shakes his head.

“Hm. Try taking the energy from the forward-movement of your hip and less from your knee, Nami, because at this rate your knee will be sore. Do it again,” Zoro says.

Nami does it again.

“No, see, like this…”

Zoro nods at Luffy to turn to him and then he kicks almost as painfully as Sanji, with a heavy thud that sends Luffy stepping backwards from the force of the impact.

“Did you see? Do it again.”

Luffy can see Nami grimace, but she does it anyways, and after a few more repetitions, Zoro is satisfied.

Ten minutes later, he gathers everyone in the middle of the gym.

“Ok, we gonna do sparring now. Two minutes. Everything allowed but kicks and knee strikes to the head and genitals. I’ll call out the pairs. Get your gear, you know the drill, boxing or grappling gloves, mouth guard, abdominal guards and shin guards.”

Most have their abdominal guards on during training anyways – Luffy sure does, because the danger
is far too big to actually get an accidental kick between the legs. The girls wear them, too, it’s what Nami told them, just like the guys they all wear them beneath their gym shorts.

Luffy gets his grappling gloves and pulls the shin guards over his legs. Then he grabs the mouth guard. He hates that thing, but he’d rather not lose a tooth, so whatever.

He sits down next to Nami.

“So what time tomorrow?”

“You can come over from, like, 8pm. Bring alcohol and snacks,” Nami says with a grin. “We’ll just have to make sure that we clean the flat before Nojiko comes back.”

Nojiko is Nami’s elder sister. And she hates having a messy flat. Oh god, Luffy can’t count how many times she has yelled at them all already because there had been an absolute chaos in the flat after a party. But aside from that, Nojiko is really chill and nice.

“Alright, first pair is Luffy and Cavendish!”

Nami smiles at him and Luffy stands up, pushing the mouth guard in front of his teeth. He grins. He’s been waiting for this the entire training session.

Finally he can beat someone up again.

****

Later, as he walks out of the changing room, he can see Sanji and Zoro standing at the entrance. Luffy walks over to them to chat, but then he slows down. Because Sanji looks rather upset…?

Luffy frowns and moves into the shadow. Didn’t Sanji kick the crap out of Zoro only twenty minutes ago?

“… I still don’t get why you’re so upset,” he can hear Zoro sigh.

“It’s because of what you did, asshole!” Sanji’s voice is actually shaking with suppressed fury and Luffy can see how he takes an angry puff from his cigarette and blows the smoke into Zoro’s face.

“Sanji, I’m throwing around ideas, that’s all…”

“Oh c’mon, how long you gonna pretend, fucking jerk?! Like I didn’t see? You fucking kidding me?! You’re just planning to up and leave, right?!?”

Luffy raises his brows. What the hell? Zoro is leaving? To where? When? Why?

“Well, of course I’ve thought about it, but obviously I’d talk to you first before doing anything…”

“So why did I find this fucking travel journal on your desk? And a fucking sea train ticket to San Faldo and god knows where else?!!?”

Zoro doesn’t say anything and Sanji angrily throws the cigarette to the ground and steps on it, crushing it beneath his shoe. Like it was a certain someone’s heart, probably.

“Fuck this…”
“Sanji-”

“No, leave me, fuck this shit!” and Sanji shoves Zoro out of his way and walks away.

Zoro sighs and runs a hand through his hair, before he turns his head into Luffy’s direction.

“You heard everything?”

Luffy comes out of the shadows, confused at what he’s just heard. That didn’t look like one of their usual frights. This just now…has felt entirely different. Much more serious and hurtful.

“Yeah. You guys ok?” Luffy asks and looks at Zoro’s unmoving face.

“Not really.”

“What about that travel ticket? You are leaving Water Seven?” Luffy inquires. He can't imagine his friend leaving this city, he has a steady job here, all of their friends are here, and Sanji - he bloody lives with Sanji, why would he leave?

“It’s supposed to be a surprise.”

“Eh?”

“Yeah, a two-week trip to San Faldo, to Pucci and to St Poplar. You know, for our five year anniversary. I’ve lost my ticket, god knows how, and I left Sanji’s on my desk and he found it. But obviously I can’t tell him the whole deal yet.”

Luffy laughs in relief: “Shishi, so Sanji thinks you’re actually leaving him? To travel the world?”

“Yeah, he’s such an idiot cook,” Zoro says, but there’s a small smile on his face now.

“Why are you smiling?” Luffy asks him. “Sanji is really angry with you, right?”

“Yeah. But it’s cute, because he’s angry because he thinks I’m leaving. That dude is way too proud to tell me how he feels. So he rather kicks the shit outta me. But I know what it means, anyways, it’s his way of saying I should stay.”

Luffy laughs at that. “You guys are such a weird couple.”

“Thanks, Luffy,” Zoro says amused and he picks up his bag and throws it over his shoulder. “Anyways, you coming to Nami’s party tomorrow?”

“Yeah, I guess. You, too?”

“Yeah, if Sanji doesn’t stab me in my sleep.”

Zoro waves at him and then makes his way down the street.

Luffy digs his hands thoughtfully into his pocket, his gaze travelling upwards toward the darkened sky. He can’t believe Sanji and Zoro have been together for five years already. Time sure flies… Luffy smiles to himself, thinking how Sanji’s relentless kicks to Zoro’s stomach have actually been Sanji signalling Zoro that he doesn’t want him to go.

How romantic, he’s puking rainbows. Man, love sure makes people do weird things.

But somehow, Luffy approves of that, at least a tiny little bit. Maybe, after all, it’s not all that bad.
Later, as he’s sitting on his bed, refreshed from a shower, he sees that Sabo has texted him. He grabs his phone from the night stand, cuddling Sunny into to his chest. Sabo’s message says:

-hey babe, how you doing? how was training?

He quickly writes back.

-Hi! I’m great, how’re you? training was good, and I heard zoro and sanji have a fight. they’re so stupid

-why did they fight? and I’m good, thanks

-sanji found travel tickets from zoro and now he thinks zoro is leaving him. but actually zoro is gonna invite him to a trip. it’s supposed to be a big surprise for their anniversary

-that’s really nice of zoro. and sanji has no idea?

-nope, haha! anyways, there’s a party at nami’s tomorrow, do you want to come, too?

-sure. what time?

-like 8ish? Nami lives closer to your place, actually

-just come over beforehand to drop your stuff? and your friends are ok with me coming, too?

-yeah sure, sounds good! and yes, they like you

-I’m looking forward to being your date

Luffy blinks and stares at the last message.

His date, huh… He doesn’t know what to say to that. He frowns. Is it like… a date-thing? Like… alright, actually everyone knows about him and Sabo getting on really well… but doesn’t… calling Sabo his date make it… Make it so serious?

Another message comes in.

-sorry I said date. I know it’s not what you’re into

And Luffy’s cheeks warm up at that and his heart clenches. No, it’s not what he meant with that! It’s just… it does sound serious, but not… in a bad way…?

-I’d like the idea of you being my date, sabo

-that’s good, because I like the idea of being your date very much

Luffy smiles and bites his lower lip. His heart flutters in relief, too much actually, why does he get this happy over such a small thing as to how to call this?

It’s just a date-thing. Sabo’s gonna be my date, no big deal…

Pff, who is he kidding. Sabo is the first date he’s ever had. And Luffy feels like he’s walking on
clouds. His cheeks are on fire and there are at least a thousand bees in his stomach. He can’t wait for tomorrow. He really can’t.

No, wrong. He can’t wait to see Sabo again.

-anyways, babe, gonna crash early. have a good night
-thanks, you too! see ya tomorrow
-can’t wait

Luffy happily falls back into his sheets. That sounds like a good thing, he’ll be with his friends tomorrow and Sabo will be there, too!
Tomorrow sound like it’s going to be a really good day.

****

Nami reveals to Luffy the next day that she has actually invited at least fifty people. And these people will, too, bring people. He stares at her, excited, but also a little worried. He thought it would be a normal dinner-sit-in-thing. With Sanji cooking for all of them and then they would all play games and stuff and drink and have fun.
Now it sounds like a proper college student party.

“Are you sure, Nami? You sure that’s alright with Nojiko?” he asks as they’re on the way home from uni.

They stop at an ice cream parlour and they both get two scoops. Luffy goes for chocolate and strawberry, Nami gets vanilla and stracciatella.

“Yeah, sure, she’ll be back Sunday morning, so she won’t actually notice, right?” Nami says, but she doesn’t sound entirely convinced. She thoughtfully licks her vanilla scoop.

Luffy shrugs. “Well, it’s your flat but, there’s gonna be a big crowd, huh?”

“Yeah, well, people are all bringing alcohol and I just hope they’re gonna behave.”

Luffy stifles his laughter. C’mon, they’re college students…

“Anyways, Sabo is coming, too?”

“Yeah.”

“Great. I feel like everyone’s bringing someone, like Robin and Franky are obviously together, Zoro and Sanji, ok, well, Usopp can’t bring Kaya, but Vivi will bring someone, you’ll bring someone…”

“You sound totally desperate right now,” Luffy says, which earns him a smack over his head.

“Shut up.”

“Just saying. Anyways, gotta run now. See ya later.”

“Yeah, bye!”
However, his good mood is ruined as hours later he gets to Sabo’s place. Because he runs in the middle of a heated argument between Ace and Law, the surgeon.

“Hi guys,” Luffy says cheerfully.

“Hey Luffy,” the simultaneously say, before continuing to glare at each other.

Luffy is about to ask them how they’re doing, but they start yelling at each other again.

“So, you telling me it’s my fault that Kidd showed up at your work?” Law asks Ace angrily.

Ace is annoyed. “Yeah, well, he’s your freaking boyfriend! If you’d finally fix your goddamn communication problem, you’d have a hell of a lost less problems, Law.”

“Alright, first of all you’re in no fucking place to criticise my relationship, since the longest commitment you’ve ever had was the one to your breakfast cereal. And second, it’s your own fucking fault if you tell Kidd that you could try couples therapy on him, obviously that idiot believes you, you got a degree in psychology for goodness sake, can you blame him?” Law barks angrily.

“Alright, both of you need fucking therapy, for real, I’m surrounded by fucked-up people – and I’ve had longer commitments, asshole,” Ace fires back.

“Guys, what’s going on?” Luffy chimes in happily.

The two men hardly turn their heads to look at him.

“Law’s stupid-ass boyfriend showed up at work to see me, but he ran into Law and they have a real big fight right now and that dickhead here blames me,” Ace snorts.

“Ace tells my boyfriend that he can give him therapy because we fight a lot and obviously Ace is just taking the piss, because he always does and Kidd believes his shit and that’s the reason we actually fought in the hospital, so yes, it’s Ace’s fault. If it wasn’t for his psycho-bullshit, none of it would’ve happened,” Law fumes.

“Bullshit, he came to see me in the first place because of your constant fighting!”

Oh wow. Alright, maybe Luffy will rethink that love-thing again… goodness, why does he run into all these stupid couple fights lately…?

The bathroom door opens and Sabo steps out, only clad in shorts, but topless, and he’s rubbing his damp hair with a towel.

“Christ, would you two give it a rest already?” Sabo sighs, before he sees Luffy and breaks into a wide smile that makes Luffy’s heart skip a beat. Luffy’s eyes wander down the muscled, perfect body. He’s seen it already before, but still, every time he gets the chance to see him topless, he enjoys it immensely. Seriously, he could stare at Sabo for hours like this and not grow tired…

“Hey babe,” Sabo smiles at him and Luffy walks over to kiss him on the lips, careful not to touch the warm skin because he thinks if he would, he wouldn’t be able to stop himself. Wow, Sabo’s emitting
even more heat than usual due to the hot shower he just took, his skin smells like ocean and vanilla and musk and Luffy wishes he could touch…

He swallows dryly, shyly smiling up at Sabo: “Hey.”

Sabo kisses him again, which earns them a snort coming from either Law or Ace – maybe both.

“Go get a room, you two,” Ace croaks.

“Fuck off, Ace,” Sabo says and then he opens the door to his bedroom and they close the door to Ace and Law’s banter behind them.

“How was your day?” Sabo asks him as he looks through his wardrobe, trying to find a clean shirt and jeans.

“Really, good, thanks! How was yours?” Luffy replies happily and sits down on the bed.

“Quite good, actually, until Law showed up and he and Ace started arguing. Well, you could hear them, right?” Sabo sighs and pulls fresh dark blue denim out of a drawer.

“Yeah… sounds like Law and his boyfriend have a hard time right now, huh?”

“Yeah, they do… it’s gotten real bad between them lately. Anyways, tie or no tie?”

“No tie. Most will be college kids, anyways,” Luffy says dreamily and he reaches onto Sabo’s desk to look through a new crime novel he got.

Sabo’s movement halts. Then he turns to look at him.

“College kids? You mean your classmates?”

Luffy blinks. What does Sabo mean?

And then he remembers and it’s like a bucket full of icy water is dropped in his stomach. Oh shit. Shitshitshitshit, he totally forgot…

“They – they won’t pay attention to you!” Luffy stutters.

“They’ll recognise me, Luffy.”

“Then – then ah… then we’ll just… stay away from each other, ah no…”

“That would ruin the party for you and me. I thought it was just your friends. You know, the ones who know about this already,” Sabo says calmly.

“Yeah, I thought that, too! But earlier Nami said that she’s invited like 50 people…” Luffy says sadly.

Sabo comes to sit down next to him. He scratches his neck.

“…Are Robin and Franky coming?”

“Hm? Yeah, why?”

“Well, maybe… you know, if other lecturers are gonna be there, too… maybe it won’t be so bad after all…” Sabo says thoughtfully.
Luffy blinks at him.

“But we can’t show up together. But you know, we could talk there,” the elder continues smugly and grins at him. “Shall we try it? If it doesn’t work out, I’ll leave and you can come back here, later.”

“Would that really be ok with you?”

“Of course. Maybe I do get to be your date after all,” Sabo smile and Luffy grins and then leans forward to kiss Sabo on the lips.

The man’s hands come up to pull him closer, closer to his still bare chest and Luffy shyly lifts his arms to wrap them around Sabo’s shoulders, and the skin is so soft and warm underneath his fingers, their kiss deepens and Luffy sighs and feels Sabo’s tongue ask for entrance. Ah, he’s missed this… Luffy’s tongue carefully slides around Sabo’s before he retracts to catch his breath. Sabo’s hands are on his back, sliding up and down from his shoulder blades to his hips and back. The man playfully nips at Luffy’s lips, which makes him giggle. They look at each other.

“You know what, I was really happy when you asked me to come to the party,” Sabo says and tries his best to straighten the telling wrinkles that have appeared in Luffy’s red-blue-white checked button-down from his wandering hands.

“I’m glad you said yes, hehe,” Luffy smiles and takes Sabo’s hand to play with his fingers. His hand is bigger than Luffy’s, but they fit together really well, Luffy finds.

“And I like the way you look tonight,” the blond grins and gently kisses his neck, just a little.

“Thanks,” Luffy replies softly and traces his fingers thoughtlessly over Sabo’s strong upper arm. The man smirks, as if he knew perfectly well how much Luffy likes his appearance right now.

But then, with a sigh, Sabo stands up to finally get dressed.

“I have an idea, how about we invite Law and Ace, too? So we could show up with them, so it doesn’t look too weird if I’m with you?” Sabo suggests as he closes the buttons on his light blue shirt. This time, unlike usually, he doesn’t tuck the shirt in. Luffy likes that. He looks far less reserved, and less business-like.

“Yeah, sound good.”

Sabo opens the door to stick his head out, only to almost get hit in the face by a flying shoe. Luffy breaks into laughter as Sabo dodges the next sneaker. Law and Ace are still in the living room, now properly shouting at each other, and the shoes were apparently Law’s.

“-go ahead, say it one more time, asshole, and I’m gonna fucking throw you down this goddamn building!” Law bellows furiously.

“You are a fucking twat and you know it, a sappy twat with trust and severe communication issues and you come crying every time you and Kidd have a fight because you’re not man enough to tell him your feelings, you goddamn idiot!!” Ace yells loudly and Sabo and Luffy change a glance.

Luffy frowns. Ok, this isn’t fun anymore…

“Guys, calm down, alright?” Sabo says loudly and walks between them, with his hands lifted, as if to show that he’s unarmed.
“Back off, Sabo,” Law snarls.

“Nope, this is my flat, Law, and if you continue yelling at Ace, you might want to leave,” Sabo says calmly. “Same goes for you, Ace.”


“Yeah, and you behave like a ten-year-old. Now just leave this damn topic and Law, if you want to crash here, calm the hell down. Yelling at Ace won’t solve your fight with Kidd.”

Luffy can see how Law chews on his tongue, but remains silent. He has to admit that the surgeon looks really tired. Tired and sad.

“And Ace, you fucking know that it’s not nice to use your psycho-bullshit on people. It hurts. So stop it, right?” Sabo says to Ace and his flatmate rolls his eyes and crosses his arms in front of his chest.

“Perfect. Now here’s the deal, Luffy and I are going to a party. You guys coming, too?”

“Hell yeah… Like I can take a minute longer in a room with this jerk… I need a drink” Law grumbles and grabs his bag from the sofa.

“Ace, you coming, too?” Luffy asks Ace.

The man shrugs, but still manages to smile at him a little pained. “Yeah, maybe I’ll come, later.”

“Ok, then go get dressed, Law. Will leave in like 20,” Sabo says and looks at the clock.

The surgeon nods and disappears in the bathroom.

Luffy and Sabo return to Sabo’s room.

“Man, these two...,” Sabo sighs and resumes fixing his hair.

“Does this happen often? I mean between Law and hiy boyfriend?”

“Kind of. But lately more often than not. Well, Kidd and Law have been together for a long time. And if you continue like that forever, like, all the fighting... I don’t know, I mean they’re not teens anymore, it won’t work forever,” the blond says with a shrug.

Luffy blinks, suddenly feeling uneasy. “You think they’re going to break up?”

“Hm, good question. I think neither wants to break up. But at this rate, it’ll end eventually. At least it’s my opinion as an observer.”

Luffy stays silent. He feels sorry for Law. Breaking up after a long time must be harsh. But that’s what you sign up for, right? When you fall in love and start a relationship – it’ll end eventually and everyone will be hurt.

So why do people keep doing it? Over and over again?

Luffy runs a hand through his hair. His phone buzzes.

-luffy, you here already? Sanji asks him.

-nope, be there in a bit. who’s there already?
-just saw robin and franky come through the door.
-alright.
-bring more tequila. and vodka. zoro is driving me crazy
-why, what happened?
-will tell you when you get here. I’ll get pissed tonight and no one’s gonna stop me

Luffy snorts amused and stands up. “Sanji says we should bring more alcohol, like tequila and so on,” he tells Sabo. The blond is still in front of the mirror, fixing his hair. Luffy thinks it looks very good, in every style he tries.

“Sounds like someone had a rough day,” Sabo replies amused. “I bet Law will join him.”

“Shishi, I guess so, too.”

“So, we ready?”

“Yeah!”

“Perfect. Law!”

“Yeah, I’m here,” comes the reply from the living room. Luffy goes ahead and sees Law in dark jeans and a dark grey button-down, which he only sloppily buttoned. Probably on purpose, so people see his massive black tattoos on his chest.

He looks handsome. And a little dangerous. But definitely hot.

“Ace?” Sabo calls. Ace’s bedroom door is closed.

“I’ll come later!” comes his muffled voice.

“Well, then. Got everything, cash, IDs, keys?” Law asks.

“Law, don’t you think you should leave your credit card here?” Sabo smiles innocently at Law.

The surgeon grimaces. “No fucking way. Fuck my money, I need this”

“My friend needs to get wasted, too, you’ll get along well,” Luffy says to Law.

Law snorts. “Sounds good.”

“Alright, then let’s go!” yells Luffy and finally, they make their way toward Nami’s house.

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**Sabo**

As they leave the liquor store, Law is already in a much better mood. Probably because he’s holding two tequila bottles in his hands right now. But man, all the fights between him and Kidd…

Well, Sabo is a journalist, and journalists love drama (when they’re not involved). But this is getting ridiculous.

Hopefully, it’ll never become like this between him and Luffy.
Luff his walking next to him, typing on his phone. He looks good tonight, as handsome as always.

Sabo wonders how many people usually hit on the boy when he’s on a night out.

And light jealousy takes over his heart.

Luffy notices his stares. “You ok?” he asks. Sabo nods and takes his hand in his, interlacing their fingers. Just for a bit.

“Yeah. And you?”

“I’m excited for the party!”

“Me, too.”

“But I can talk to you there, right?”

“Sure you can. But we can’t kiss,” Sabo says with a sigh and Luffy’s pout afterward makes him almost give in and take back what he’s said. But they have to be reasonable. If Luffy’s classmates – his students – are gonna be there, he can’t be too obvious about this thing they have going.

Sabo smiles and lifts Luffy’s hand to kiss his knuckles. “It’s ok, you’ll stay at my place anyways.” That cheers the boy up and then Sabo hears Law clearing his throat. He looks over at his friend.

“You guys make me puke,” he sneers.

“Shut up. You’re just jealous,” Sabo smirks.

Because it’s obvious that Law is. Well, his choice if he has a boyfriend that’s about as romantic as a brick wall.

“And anyways, you’re not into sappy stuff, anyways,” Sabo says.

“I never said that. It’s fine, once in a while,” Law replies with a frown. He keeps on looking at his phone. Probably misses Kidd.

Sabo and Luffy change a glance.

“We need to cheer him up,” Luffy whispers to him.

“He has tequila, he’ll be fine.”

“Hehe, I mean, really cheer him up.”

Sabo rubs his forehead. At the moment, no real idea springs to his mind. But he likes that Luffy wants to cheer Law up. “…We’ll think of something, yes?” he says and ruffles Luffy’s hair.

“Ok! And here, you can see it already, the house with the wooden balcony where the oranges grow, it’s where Nami lives!” Luffy suddenly yells and excitedly points straight ahead.

Nami lives in a two-storey house. It looks really nice, to be honest, it’s an old timbered house with a steep roof. It looks a bit like out of a fairytale, Sabo thinks. All windows are enlightened and there’s people standing outside, smoking, talking and laughing.

With a heavy heart, Sabo releases Luffy’s hand and moves to walk on Law’s other side. Better not raise any suspicions.
“So, your friends already there?” Law asks Luffy.

“Well?”

“Alright.”

Sabo and Law stay outside, while Luffy runs inside already, to seek his friends. Sabo notices Law staring at him.

“What?”

“You’re really into him, hm?”

“Maybe, why?”

“Just saying.”

Sabo raises an eyebrow. Law takes a pack of cigarettes out of his pocket. The surgeon doesn’t actually smoke, but sometimes, when he really feels down, he smokes one, only to curse himself after and feel even more down. Idiot.

He offers him one, but he shakes his head. Smoking has just never been his thing.

“Don’t get me wrong. I’m happy for you,” Law says and takes a long puff.

“Thanks. And man, I’m sorry about your trouble with Kidd.”

“It’s ok. I knew what I got myself into all these years ago, right?” Law sighs.

“…Can I ask you a question?”

“You’re the journalist. It’s your job, huh?” Law replies with a sneer.

“Real funny. No, it’s just – this has been going on for years. Why are you still together with him?”

“Stupid illness called love, my friend.”

“That’s rubbish”

Law rolls his eyes. “I’m serious, Sabo. I know it’s hard to believe. But it’s the answer, as stupid as it sounds.”

Sabo shakes his head. How silly that sounds. But he doesn’t dwell. It’s Law’s life, after all. And what does he know, anyway?

“Alright, shall we go inside? Check out this party?” Law asks and drop the stub to the ground.

Sabo nods and they grin at each other.

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“Ah. Sabo, good to see you!” the orange-haired girl, Nami, greets him as soon as he steps through the open door.

“Hey Nami. Luffy invited us. And you remember Law?”

Law takes Nami’s hand and kisses the back of it while looking directly into her eyes. Sabo stifles his
laughter. That’s so typically Law.

“Haha, yeah I remember you. And don’t even pretend, you’re gay, right?” she laughs and Sabo almost loses balance from laughing so hard at Law’s dumbfounded expression.

“Haha, nice one, Nami,” Sabo laughs and pulls the girl into a hug.

“Hang on, you can tell?” Law asks Nami with a frown.

“A girl always knows. But you have nice tattoos, where did you get them? I have one, too!” And Nami hooks her arm under Law’s, casually chatting with him about tattoos. Sabo smiles. Luffy’s friends are great.

He finds his way to the kitchen. The ground floor is basically a gigantic living room full of people, a surprisingly small kitchen, bathroom and guest bedroom – he hopes that Nami has locked the door to that one.

A wooden staircase leads into the second floor, where people are chilling, too, he can see them sitting in the hallway.

He wonders where Luffy is…?

He can actually recognise a few students that greet him with surprised faces. Well hello, he doesn’t look that old, he’s only 24…

“Sabo!”

He turns around and sees Law coming from the kitchen, two double shot glasses in his hands. “Christ, where were you?”

“Just walking around.”

“Anyways, here you go.”

Law hands him the shot glass; it’s filled with a deep red liquid. Sabo sniffs at it.

“What’s that?”

“Sourz.”

Sabo breaks an amused smile. “Alright, cheers.”

“Cheers,” Law nods and they both down them in one go.

Sabo feels the familiar burn in his throat and stomach, but the shot has actually tasted quite well, like cherries. They grin at each other.

“It’s been a while since we’ve been wild, don’t you think?” Law asks with a smirk.

“Yeah…”

“You got any limits tonight?”

And Sabo blinks, before he digs his hands into his pockets. His eyes gleam mischievously. “We’ll see, huh?”

Chapter End Notes
Thanks for reading.
Chapter 8

Luffy

“Cheers!” they yell and clank their glasses so hard together the mead goes everywhere, but nobody cares, of course not.

Luffy wraps his arm around Usopp’s shoulder. They’re in the living room, where the music is the loudest; the bass is actually so hard it makes his teeth tingle. They sit on the sofas, him, Usopp, Chopper, Sanji, Nami and Franky, and yell against the noise of too many people in a flat and the unbelievably loud music coming from speakers in all corners of the spacious living room.

“And today you won’t sulk, alright?! No whining about your girlfriend!” Luffy says loudly and grins at his friend.

Usopp rolls his eyes, but the alcohol shows its effect already, he has a faint blush on his cheeks and he grins widely: “Yeah, alright, I’ll try. And where’s your boyfriend, Luffy?!”

“He ain’t my boyfriend!” Luffy shouts back.

“Not yet!”

“Luffy, where’s the tequila?” Sanji yells into Luffy’s ear on his other side.

“In the kitchen!”

Sanji looks at him questioningly and he nods and Sanji leans forward to Nami, who’s joking with Franky and Chopper.

“Nami, you got salt and lemons?”

“In the kitchen! I cut them; they’re next to the toaster!” Nami says.

“Alright, who else wants?” Sanji asks and jumps up.

“Everyone except Chopper!” Franky roars good-naturedly.

“Why not me?!” Chopper squeals annoyed.

“One shot and you’re pissed, Chopper!”

They laugh at Chopper’s pout and Sanji disappears in the kitchen. Luffy turns to Usopp again, when he suddenly feels two pale arms wrap around him and a bunch of pink hair blocks his view.

“Luffy!”

“Rebecca! Good to see you!” he cries happily and hugs her.

“Since when are you here?” she yells into his ear.

“About half an hour!”

“Did you see that Sabo is here, too?”
Luffy blinks, before he shakes his head and lies: “No, I didn’t see him yet!”

“Imma go and flirt with him. I can’t believe he’s here!”

“Robin’s here, too! And Franky!” Luffy says, as if to prove that Sabo’s not the only lecturer at the party and that it’s not at all weird.

“Yes, but he’s hot! I bet he’s still single!” Rebecca grins wickedly and all of the sudden, Luffy feels annoyed. He doesn’t even know, why. Is it because… because Rebecca said Sabo is hot? Well he is. Or is it because… She wants to have him…?

But he’s with me…

Luffy’s hand around his glass tightens, but then Rebecca jumps up to hug Vivi, who is just now walking into the living room, with flying blue hair and as pretty as always.

“Vivi!” Nami squeals and slams her mead down on the table and jumps over the back of the sofa to hug her friend.

“Here you go, here’s the tequila!” Sanji roars and puts down the shot glasses in front of them, plus a bowl full of lemon slices and a salt cellar.

“Sanji, where’s Zoro?” Franky asks Sanji and Luffy can actually see Sanji wince at the question.

“I guess upstairs!” Sanji replies snappily.

Luffy licks over the back of his left head, then he scatters some salt on it and he takes the shot glass in the right hand and the lemon slice into his left.

“Everyone ready?!?” Usopp asks.

“No, wait for me!!” Nami yells and grabs the last shot glass.

“Hey guys!” Vivi greets them and sits down next to Luffy.

“Shit, Sanji, get more tequila! Just get the bottle!” Nami says and the boys groan.

“C’mon, Nami…”

“Just go!”

And again, Sanji gets up to get the stuff and Luffy laughs and looks around. The first people are in the middle of the dance floor now, and there’s more and more people coming, he recognises some faces – and then he can see Sabo again, he’s standing in the door to the kitchen. He’s leaning against the door frame, and opposite of him is the guy Luffy met a few weeks ago… Kohza, yeah! Wait, wasn’t he together with Vivi at the time…?

Luffy looks over to Vivi to ask, but then Sanji is back, with more shot glasses and the tequila.

“Alright, alright, I hope we got enough lemons…”

“I bought enough!” Nami chimes in.

“Hurry up guys, I ain’t getting any younger,” Franky laughs. “And did anyone see my wife?”
“Franky, Robin is talking to Professor Shanks,” Sanji says to the engineering lecturer who doesn’t behave like a lecturer at all.

“What, the redhead is here?!”

“Yeah, just saw him in the entrance area!”

“Holy shit…”

“Alright, is everyone ready now?” Luffy asks happily.

His friends nod.

“CHEERS!” they yell and Luffy licks the salt of is hand, downs the clear liquid and then bites into the lemon.

Argh, he hasn’t had this stuff in a while, it burns in his stomach and he feels awake now, and it’s like someone has turned up the volume of the music and he so clearly feels his heartbeat, the speed of his heart, the way his gazes just keep on returning to where Sabo stands. Sabo, on the other hand, doesn’t look at him at all, but Luffy is sure he knows he’s sitting here. Sabo probably doesn’t want to be too obvious…but still, Luffy wishes he would look at him at least once…

God, what the hell is wrong with him?

“Another one!” Sanji yells and he’s already pouring him another glass.

“Christ, Sanji, slow down a little?” Nami asks with a laugh, but holds her empty glass under his nose nevertheless.

“Pfff, not tonight.”

Luffy grins into his mead. “Sanji, we still got sourz, no need to get wasted with tequila!”

“I don’t even give a shit anymore!” Sanji yells and Luffy pours another little hill of salt on his hand.

“Everyone ready?” Nami asks loudly?

“To Nami!” Vivi laughs and they all down the shots and goodness, the burn, and Luffy feels lightheaded already as he almost eats the whole lemon slice. Then he drinks mead to wash away the stale taste from his tongue.

“Oh, and guys, have I introduced Kohza to you yet?” Vivi suddenly asks excitedly as she waves Kohza and the man walks over – and Sabo follows him, just casually, but his eyes are locked on Luffy and Luffy feels his cheeks warming up, from the way Sabo looks at him so smugly, so self-confident and…and borderline arrogant, but he does it so well, Luffy can’t even believe it, because… how does that man do it, he’s the nicest guy he’s ever met, the most gentle and kind and polite, and yet, at times like this, he pulls off that smug reporter-I-know-it-all façade so easily.

It’s fascinating.

“So, guys, this is my new boyfriend Kohza! Kohza, this is Nami, Chopper, Franky – who’s a lecturer, Usopp, Luffy – you’ve met already, right? And Sanji and Rebecca!”

“Hey guys!” Kohza shakes the hands of all of them. When he gets to Luffy, Luffy sees recognition in those eyes, behind the coloured glasses, but he doesn’t say anything, only grins at him.
“And you guys remember Sabo?” Kohza says and nods at Sabo.

Sabo grins at everyone. “Hey, yeah, I met most of you guys a few weeks ago. Good to see you again!”

“Sabo, how’re you?” Usopp asks brightly.

“I’m great, thanks!”

“Ah, Sabo, what are you actually doing at a party like this?” Rebecca asks Sabo with a smile and she pushes closer to him. Of course, Sabo is polite and everything, he smiles at her, looks her in the eyes…Luffy tries hard not to eavesdrop. In fact, he turns his gaze away. He doesn’t want to see it, he can’t help it.

He turns to Sanji.

“I want another shot,” he declares and Sanji delightedly pours their glasses full.

“You annoyed?” Sanji asks him and he just shrugs.

They clank their glass together and this time, Luffy eats the whole lemon.

“Anyways, what’s going on with you and Zoro?” he asks his friend and former flatmate.

“I found a sea train ticket to San Faldo and other islands, for the day before our anniversary. I mean, only one ticket – and obviously I got super pissed at him and when I asked him he said he was just throwing around ideas, but obviously he must’ve planned the entire thing since weeks, right? He’s just gonna fucking leave and I have not fucking idea when he’s coming back and I don’t know why he’s leaving…if I’ve done something…and he wouldn’t say shit, that asshole…” Sanji says furiously and pours them another shot.

Luffy wishes he could tell him, because Sanji really looks sad, but he doesn’t want to ruin the surprise, so he just comfortingly pats his shoulder.

“Then let’s just get pissed and then let’s throw Zoro’s shoes on the rooftop,” Luffy grins and Sanji tiredly smiles back.

“Cheers.”

The fuzziness of Luffy’s mind intensifies and soon he notices how Franky and Chopper leave to look for Robin, and Kohza sits down next to Vivi and Luffy moves to the other side of the rectangle sofa so they have more room and suddenly he finds himself sitting next to Sabo.

The man grins at him.

“What a coincidence,” he says and winks at him.

“Yo, guys, I’ve been looking for you for ages!” suddenly Law’s voice comes from behind them and they look up. Law is standing there, Zoro next to him. Looks like they’ve been bonding over a bottle of Captain Morgan’s, Zoro is holding the nearly empty bottle in his hands. Law lifts the new bottle of sourz suggestively.

“There you are!”

“Yeah, sorry.”
“Sit down, man – yes, you got the sourz…!”

Luffy stifles his laughter when he sees how Sanji punches Zoro’s leg when Zoro comes to sit down next to him, but obviously the green-haired man doesn’t even blink an eyelash at that and just throws himself onto the sofa and puts one arm around Sanji, like he always does.

Sanji looks as if he’s about to plant his foot into his boyfriend’s face.

Law comes to sit on Sabo’s other side and Nami’s next to him.

“So how come you didn’t bring your boyfriend?” she asks him loudly, she’s already quite tipsy, but it takes a lot of alcohol to make her real drunk. She’s just getting started. Nami grins at Law, a hand teasingly on his thigh.

“We had a fight!” he says and rolls his eyes.

“Wanna give him a reason to become jealous?”

Law smirks at that: “Tempting, but no thanks,”

“Aw, how boring… Then let’s just do body shots!”

Sanji facepalms, whilst Luffy leans forward. “You horny tonight, Nami?”

“Oh fuck off, Luffy. We got all the couples here!”

“Fuck you, Kaya isn’t here!” Usopp snaps.

“Just do it with Rebecca.”

“Like hell I will. No offense”

“We don’t need to tell her!”

“Wait, I wanna do it with Sabo!” Rebecca cries and Sabo stifles his laughter. Luffy looks at him and is met with a warm gaze.

“Nah, sorry, Rebecca! What if people see?” Sabo says to her.

“You’re here as a private person!”

“Yes, but still, I’m your lecturer”

“No one will say something, they all love your lectures!” she protests.

Luffy doesn’t know what to say. Sabo laughs and then leans back comfortably.

“Alright, alright, but I’ll do it with Luffy.”

“Why Luffy?” the girl asks disappointed, whilst Luffy’s heart skips a beat.

“Convenience. He’s sitting next to me,” Sabo says and winks at her.

“Fine, body shots, what type?” Law asks, probably warming up to the idea.

“Salt on the neck?” Nami asks, shaking the salt cellar.
“Salt on the boobs?” Kohza suggests and Vivi smacks him over the head for the comment, but she’s smiling.

“Salt on the neck,” Zoro agrees, completely ignoring Sanji, who looks like he’s about to leave.

“C’mon, Sanji, it’s not like you’ve never done that,” Vivi says cheekily.

“Yeah, it’s not even like Zoro’s never licked Sanji’s body in public,” Luffy says and Sanji shows him his middle finger.

“Fucking traitor, Luffy, you’re supposed to be on my side!”

“Oh c’mon, I bought you tequila!” Luffy laughs.

“Now guys, get the shots ready and the salt!”

Sabo smirks and turns to Luffy, and by the time Sabo touches his neck, Luffy already feels like his skin is burning up, where he touches melts from his heat, Luffy’s head is a mess, there’s only one thing left clear in his mind.

I want him.

Oh god, how much he wants him.

Sabo briefly licks over his neck to damp his skin. Luffy closes his eyes for a moment, trying to collect himself. Sabo’s warm breath is ghosting over his skin, his body is so, so close to his – and everyone can see it, everyone will notice how much he enjoys it, how excited he is.

And he doesn’t give a damn…

Luffy feels the soft tickle of the salt being scattered on his skin.

“Everyone ready?” Nami asks and her blush is deeper now. Luffy can see a fairly long line of salt on her neck, starting behind her ear and going all the way down to her collarbone.

“Woah, Law, easy there, I thought you’re gay!” Sabo snorts.

“Yeah, I don’t know, I don’t even care anymore,” Law replies amused, the shot glass already in his hand.

Luffy takes a sip from his mead. His fingers are shaking. He feels warm, not only warm from the alcohol, but mostly because of Sabo…

“Just get it over with,” Sanji sighs. The salt is on his neck, and Zoro, too, has scattered much more than necessary.

Vivi giggles. Kohza is winking at her; shot glass and lemon slice ready.

“Allright, cheers guys!” Nami says happily and Luffy suddenly feels Sabo’s arm around his waist and his lips on his neck, softly kissing the skin, before he greedily licks over the salt, and Luffy’s heart beats so hard it hurts, Sabo must feel it, he’s pressed his chest to Luffy’s, he’s so close, and Luffy feels him sucking on his skin, far longer than necessary and then Sabo’s lips are gone and the man downs the shot before biting into the lemon.

Luffy blinks rapidly, trying to calm his raging heart.
Sabo smirks, but Luffy can see the blush on his cheeks.

Law is finally letting go of giggling Nami to down the shot and eat the lemon. Nami, laughing, pats his shoulder approvingly. “Not bad for a gay guy, Law.”

The other couples are still in the process. Zoro and Sanji are kissing now, Zoro just threw the lemon on the table and his hand is in Sanji’s blond hair, his other really low on his waist. And Vivi and Kohza are making out, too.

Usopp and Rebecca didn’t participate in the body shots and now look at them sourly.

Luffy can see Rebecca sticking his tongue out at him in jealousy. He grins and shrugs. Well, sorry… No, he isn't sorry, this is exactly as it should be, right?

Because Sabo likes me, right?

“Ne, Law, think you’re straight now?” Sabo asks his friend with a sneer.

“Haha, two more of those and I might be”

Luffy feels so light-headed already, the room starts spinning.

“Usopp, outside?” he asks and the long-nosed man shrugs and stands up. He feels Sabo’s hand touching his.

“You ok?” Sabo mouths at him and he just nods and smiles.

He just needs fresh air and a bit of water…

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“You alright? You got any idea what’s with Sanji and Zoro?” Usopp asks him as they stand on the road again, in front of Nami’s house, practically drinking the fresh warm night air.

“Just ask Sanji. The two are so silly,” Luffy says happily and lets his head fall into his neck. What a great night. The alcohol is really getting to him now, he’s grinning for no reason, his stomach is burning, his skin feels really warm and he’s craving human touch right now…

“By the way, what’s with you and Sabo?”

“I told you, he’s not my boyfriend,” Luffy says.

“Yeah, but damn he licked you like there was no tomorrow,” Usopp cackles.

“No he didn’t, back off,” Luffy says, yet he grins satisfied. He was surprised himself at how much Sabo – and he – got into it…

“Anyways…”

“Luffy!”

Luffy turns and sees Ace approaching, dressed in black jeans and crimson button-down. The outfit suits him, he looks like a celebrity. The dangerous, hot-headed, rich and powerful type that always get what they want. Seriously, Luffy would never think that the guy is actually a psychologist and works in a hospital.
“Ace, hi!”

“You alright?”

“Yeah, just getting some fresh air. And Ace, this is Usopp. Usopp, this is Ace, Sabo’s flatmate.”

“Yeah, I remember you! Hi, how’re you?” Ace says with a grin and they shake hands.

“I’m good, thanks, how are you?” Usopp asks friendly.

“Really good, thanks. Luffy, have you seen Sabo and Law?”

“They’re inside, in the living room.”

“Alright. And is it really cool that I’m just going inside?”

“Yeah, sure.”

“Ok. See you in a bit.”

He pats both of them on the shoulder, before he makes his way inside. Usopp is typing on his phone, which reminds Luffy that he hasn’t looked at his for quite some time. His hands fly to his front pockets of his jeans. Empty. He pats the back pockets. Yeah, he finds his phone but wait… shouldn’t there be…

“Ah fuck…” Luffy lets out and within an instant, he feels sober again.

“Shit, shit!”

“What is it?” Usopp asks irritated.

“My wallet is gone!”

“What?! Seriously? Are you sure?”

“Yes, I’m fucking sure, I still had it on the way here… fuck, shit…”

Luffy is completely sober now and panic rises to his chest. All his ID cards, driver’s license, the credit cards have all been in there. And the goddamn cash, too. He bites his lip in frustration looks at his phone when he suddenly sees that he’s got a new message just about three minutes ago. He frowns.

It’s from Sabo.

-looking for something?

-my fuckin wallet is gone! you have it?

-maybe. come find me?

Luffy stares at his phone. That cheeky…idiot…

“Luffy?!” Usopp asks.

“It’s ok… looks like Sabo has it… That idiot…”

“Uhu… Cheeky bastard, huh?”
“Yeah. I’m gonna go find him…”

“Good luck. Have fun making out,” Usopp sneers and Luffy grimaces, before he returns to the house. His heart is speeding up with every step he takes. He swallows dryly. This is so like Sabo…

And Luffy admits, it works…

It works him up like he could never put into words.

The blond man is nowhere to be found downstairs, so he moves upstairs. It’s less crowded here; most are now in the living room and kitchen. He sees some classmates sitting in the hallway, casually drinking canned beer and chatting happily.

Where is he?

The bedroom doors are locked. But then he remembers that Nojiko has a small office in the loft. He looks over to the narrow staircase. The door is closed. But it’s the only possibility left…

He opens the door. It’s much brighter up here than expected. The full moon shines through the big roof-lights, enlightening the office in a bluish, mysterious light. He can see the large desk and computer standing at the far end. There are also bookshelves and lockers with file.

And of course, there he is, leaning against the mighty wooden pillar in the middle of the room. Hands in his pockets. Smiling at him. Looking as handsome and perfect as always. Luffy closes the door quietly. His heart is beating so loudly, it’s thundering against his ribcage and Sabo must definitely hear it, it drowns out his own thoughts.

“…You mad?” Sabo smirks as he approaches the man.

“No. Can you give me back my wallet, please?” Luffy asks back and stops right in front of him.

Sabo smiles down at him: “Maybe you need to search me to find it?”

“Yeah, you’d like that,” Luffy snorts, to hide his embarrassment and his burning cheeks and the arousal that clouds his mind.

“Yes, I’d like that,” Sabo whispers into his ear. The man grips his hand, gently kisses his knuckles, before he pulls him even closer to wrap his arm around his waist. Luffy, suddenly shy, hides his face in Sabo’s chest. The man’s body is so hot, so, so, so hot, and he likes it, he wants more of that heat, he wants more fuzziness in his head, he wants – he wants this, without having to apologise for it…

They look at each other. “Didn’t you say we can’t kiss?” Luffy breathes; their lips only inches apart.

Sabo keeps silent for a moment, before he shakes his head, his eyes suddenly glowing mischievously. “Screw that, no one can see…”

And Sabo leans down to capture his lips with a vigorous kiss, there’s nothing innocent about it anymore, it’s all passion now, passion and greed and Luffy feels how he’s spun around and then Sabo traps him in between the pillar and his body and Luffy’s legs almost give way at the sudden overflow of emotions, at all the heat and his agitated nerves and the fuzziness that returns to his mind and he’s lightheaded and the alcohol affects him and his rationality – but god, he likes this, he likes this, he wants Sabo to do more.

“Luffy…” the man whispers and there’s a crack in his voice and then his hand is in Luffy’s hair, angling his face upwards again and he kisses him again, so strong, so, so deep and there’s no escape,
Sabo is so greedy tonight. Luffy can feel it, the way his hands hold him and pull him even closer, the way his tongue slides around his, so – so demanding and passionate and suddenly he feels a hand fall to his hip and wander beneath his shirt, the warm fingers ghost over his naked skin and he flinches, his legs will definitely give way, this is so, so…

“Haah,” Luffy makes without thinking and Sabo leans back, looking into his eyes.

“That too much…?” Sabo mumbles, gently kissing his cheek.

“No, it’s…ah…ok…” Luffy mutters, the room is spinning again, but for a whole different reason than before.

They kiss again, a lot slower now, and Luffy smiles into the kiss, he feels so good right now, he could do this for hours…

Sabo’s hands slide beneath his shirt, exploring the warm skin underneath and Luffy feels with a shudder how the man traces his x-scar with a finger, he can feel how the man’s hands wander over his chest and abs, and then they’re on his back again, gently sliding to the waistband of his jeans…

Luffy likes that so much, he hardly concentrates on the kiss anymore. Which makes Sabo take advantage and he dips his tongue deeper, swirling it around Luffy’s and his breath is stolen from him, he tries to catch his breath but the blond won’t let him, he’ll rile him up a little longer and the room is spinning worse now and he moans softly.

Sabo finally releases his lips and smirks.

“You’re so perfect…” Sabo mumbles and kisses his temple, kisses his cheeks, kisses his forehead.

Luffy blushing even deeper if that is even possible. He wants Sabo to continue kissing him and caressing him – but this isn’t his flat and their friends probably wonder where they are…but Luffy doesn’t want to move.

He wraps his arms around Sabo’s shoulders – both for a hug and for stability– and Sabo smiles, turning them around again, so his back is against the cold pillar and Luffy can lean against his front.

All these little things that show that he cares… Luffy hides his face in Sabo’s shirt. How come… his kindness always makes him…

Feel so weak…and safe…and strong at the same time?

The hot passion slowly fades from his fingers and Luffy feels like he can think again.

“Today, when we get back to my place… can I try something new?” Sabo whispers into his hair.

“What do you mean?” Luffy asks back. He feels good now, comfortable and calm, standing like this, in a tight hug, with this man who’s so, so important to him.

“…You’ll see. But you’ll like it, I promise. But I’m only gonna do it if you’re ready.”

Luffy frowns and leans back to look at him. Sabo blinks. “Eh – I didn’t mean sex, no worries,” the blond says slyly.

“So what do you mean?”
Sabo gently strokes his cheek: “I like how innocent you are. I’m gonna show you later.”

“Pfff, alright.”

“And although I could stay like this for the rest of the night – we should head back to our friends. See if Law has killed Ace yet.”

“Oh, by the way, did you know that Vivi and Kohza are together now?”

“Kinda, he send me a message this morning – probably after she spend the night.”

“Urghs, don’t say any more, I don’t want to hear it,” Luffy laughs. Sabo ruffles his hair one last time, before he lets his arms fall from Luffy’s body. Quite reluctantly, as Luffy delightedly realises.

“You head back first, I’ll come in a bit, so it doesn’t look like we were doing – what we actually have been doing,” Sabo suggests.

“Do I look it?” Luffy asks and looks down at himself.

“Hang on-” and suddenly Sabo attacks his neck and Luffy is so surprised he almost falls backwards, and Sabo’s arm circles his waist tightly and the man is kissing and sucking on his neck, it feels nice, and then Luffy feels his teeth – and he gasps.

“Woah, Sabo!”

Sabo bites him again, not enough to hurt him, but he feels his skin tingling, and then he’s sucking on the same spot again, he laps over it, sucks the spot again and again and then, finally, he leans back, with a smug grin and he runs a hand through his hair. He looks like a damn model when he does it. And he knows it, too.

“Now you definitely look it.”

“You didn’t seriously give me a hickey?”

“Sure I did.”

Luffy’s eyes widen – he doesn’t know if he should be annoyed or happy – and he takes his phone to look at his mirror image in the black screen. Shit, it’s so evident! The reddish spot, at the base of his neck.

He frowns at Sabo.

“You mad at me now?” Sabo asks, still sounding really satisfied with himself.

“Why did you give me a hickey?”

“Take a guess, babe.”

Luffy blushes. He’s never seen Sabo be possessive. But it turns him on, more than he ever thought such a thing would.

“You ok?” Sabo asks and now he sounds a little worried, probably because of his silence.

“…You owe me one for this,” Luffy says after a moment and grins at him wickedly.

“If you say so. Here’s your wallet.” Luffy happily takes it back from him. Just how does Sabo do
that? Is he – is he actually a wizard?

He looks at him and the blond winks: “Former pickpocket, remember?”

“Pfff, I’ll see you downstairs!”

They kiss again and then Luffy makes his way back to the living room, to find his friends.

Sabo

It’s almost two in the morning and people start to leave, either because they want to go to one of the countless clubs downtown and at the port, or because they’ve been drinking since 8pm and they’re simply wasted and need to go home.

Sabo is looking for Ace. He’s tired now; it’s been a good night. Just where the hell is he…?

He looks into the kitchen and –

“Ooooh fuck, sorry….”

“Woah, Sabo!” Ace yells angrily and the boy, who’s just been on his knees in front of him, jumps up, wiping his chin and looks at Sabo with an embarrassed flush on his cheeks.

“What the hell?” Ace barks and hurries to zip up his jeans.

Sabo tries hard to forget what he’s just saw. Well, basically nothing he hasn’t seen before… But still.

“Luffy and I are leaving, how about you?”

Ace seems to fight with himself, before he turns back to the boy: “Sorry, babe, another time.”

“What?! I fucking sucked your dick just now!”

“Yeah, and you were great…sorry… I’ll call you.”

“I didn’t even give you my fucking number, asshat!”

“Then we’ll leave it at that!”

Sabo rolls his eyes. That is so like Ace…

“Have a little dignity, man; go to the bathroom next time” Sabo sighs and peeks into the living room. Most people are collecting their stuff now, saying goodbye to Nami and thanking her for the party.

It is messy in here, yes, but it’s still alright, like, nothing is broken and nobody puked on the carpet. Sabo thinks back to his own college parties. Half the flat had to be renovated afterward. He smiles to himself. Yeah, good times…

“Nami, have you seen Law?”

The orange-haired girl shakes her head, although a small blush creeps into her cheeks.

“Nah, haven’t seen him.”

“ Weird, he would’ve told me if he had gone home…”
“Sabo? We going now?” Luffy asks. He’s sitting next to Sanji on the sofa. Sabo proudly looks at the bright red hickey he’s left on Luffy’s skin. Yeah, he definitely likes that view.

“Yeah, actually, have you seen Law?”

“He’s standing outside.”

“I’ll go and see if he’s alright, thanks for the party, Nami!” Ace says.

“Alright. So, Nami, thank you again for the amazing party,” Sabo says politely and gives her a friendly hug.

She giggles: “You’re welcome. You and your friends should come hang out with us more often!”

“That’s a good idea, actually,” Luffy says and grins at him. Usopp, Chopper, Franky, Robin, Vivi and Kohza have apparently left already. Luffy is talking to Sanji, who really did get pissed tonight. He can’t even stand straight anymore.

Oh wow.

“If you need to puke, warn me, alright?” Luffy sighs at his friend.

“Luffy, you guys need help?” Sabo asks the boy.

“Nah, just waiting for Zoro to collect this idiot,” Luffy laughs.

“Fuck…you…” Sanji mutters. He sits on the sofa, a tall glass of water in front of him. He looks so sad and wasted it’s not even funny anymore.

“Fuck this…idiot…hate ‘im… Zoro…” he mumbles.

“Sanji, Zoro isn’t going to leave, you know that, right?” Luffy says to his friend.

“How…w-w-ould you…kn-know?”

“Because he loves you,” Sabo says and Luffy looks at him, his dark eyes unreadable.

“Yes, Sabo’s right,” Luffy agrees.

“Haha… funny…” Sanji says and hides his face in his hands. Sabo looks away. He feels sorry for Sanji, especially since it’s all just a big misunderstanding and Zoro will surprise him with a trip for their anniversary. But for now, he’s surely desperate to understand why his boyfriend wants to leave him.

Sabo scratches his neck. All this couples-drama… kinda puts him off the whole relationship idea.

But then again, when he looks at Luffy…

Zoro appears a few minutes later. “Sorry, got into a fight with an idiot… Sanji, you ready to go home?” Zoro says and crouches down in front of Sanji.

“Fuck off…”

“Yep, he’s ready.”

“You sure he can walk the distance?” Luffy asks.
“He’ll have to.”

“Alright. Text me when you’re home?”

“Will do. See ya, Luffy, Sabo.”

“Zoro, you still owe me 200 Berry” Nami yawns.

“Great,” the green-haired man growls. Then he helps Sanji to his feet – he ignores the insults and curses Sanji hurls at him – and the two of them leave the house.

Luffy hugs Nami goodbye and they both follow the couple outside, where Ace and Law are standing.

“Yo, Law, you still crashing at our place?” Sabo asks the surgeon. Law yawns.

“Yeah, if that’s alright with you.”

“Did you and Nami actually make out?” Luffy asks intrigued as they all start walking.

Sabo looks over to his friend to see his reaction. Law’s face is rather unmoving, but Sabo believes that there’s a small smile on his lips.

“Hehe, ask Nami.”

“Law, you do know that making out with a girl won’t actually be beneficial to your problems with Kidd?” Ace sneers and Law shows him his middle finger.

“You know what, Ace, at some point tonight you’re gonna wake up and I’ll have my fucking scalpel buried knuckle-deep in your chest,” Law growls.

“Like you’re allowed do have one with you!” Ace replies, but he does sound worried now.

Sabo rolls his eyes and takes Luffy’s smaller hand in his. The boy yawns, but he smiles happily.

“Did you have a good night?” Sabo asks him quietly.

“Yeah, it was really good! How about you, did you enjoy it?”

“Yes. But I’m looking forward to being alone with you tomorrow,” he whispers and he likes the blush that appears on Luffy’s face.

“…me, too,” Luffy mumbles and Sabo’s heart feels like it could actually tear from all the happiness he feels right now.

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The following day is really relaxed. They walk to the port and look at the sailing ships and boats. Then they spend some time just wandering around a bit, talking, joking and enjoying each other’s presence. And now they’re back at Sabo’s place, tired of a beautiful day out in the gentle sunlight of mid-October. The summer is over, and Sabo can’t deny it any longer. It’s getting windier and colder outside, but they try to enjoy the last remaining summer warmth before it’ll all be gone after the first autumn storm.

They’ve known each other for two months know. Yet it feels much, much longer.

He’s already so used to having the boy around him. Luffy being a part of his life – it all feels so
natural, so easy, so light, sometimes it scares him.

He doesn’t know if that is love.

Probably.

All he knows is that the more time they spend together, the harder it gets for him to stay away.

Luffy sits cross-legged on the carpet in his bedroom, cheerfully looking through his collection of comic books…well, ok, some are Ace’s, but that doesn’t matter, he’ll give them back eventually… probably.

Sabo still has to proofread an article from Koala and she also sent him her interview with Sir Crocodile to proofread.

“Sabo?”

“Hm?” he makes, thoughtfully making a few notes on the Word Document he has opened on his laptop and typing some suggestions as to how he would change some phrasing.

Suddenly, he feels two arms come around his shoulders from behind and Luffy rests his head on his shoulder.

Sabo smiles and lifts a hand to ruffle his hair. It’s rare for Luffy to show this much initiative, but he likes it. And goodness, the boy is so cute when he does that…

“When is your birthday?”

“Not so soon, March 22, why?”

“Ok…”

He turns around in his chair and wraps an arm around Luffy’s waist.

“And you? I never asked you, right?” he asks and rubs over Luffy’s lower back.

Luffy smiles and rubs his nose. “It’s May 5.”

“I’ll remember it,” Sabo says softly and the boy blushes a little at that.

“And I wanted to ask something else.”

“Sure.”

“At the party, you said you wanted to try something new, right?”

Sabo blinks, before he turns back to his laptop. He saves the changes and closes it.

“Yeah, I said that,” he replies and pulls Luffy even closer to him, circling the slim waist with his arms.

“So what were you talking about?” and looks like Luffy is truly oblivious. His innocence is so cute… Sabo almost doesn’t want to ruin it and take that away from him.

Almost.

“I’ll show you.”
“Ok”

“But first, I’d like a kiss.”

Luffy grins at him. “Then why don’t you just kiss me?”

“I’m sitting here, I can’t possibly reach up to you,” Sabo jokes and softly tickles Luffy’s sides.

The boy laughs and wriggles and then he leans down to him.

“Alright, fine… so much trouble…” Luffy mutters, the playfulness still gleaming in his dark eyes and Sabo smiles and angles his head to the side and their lips meet in the sweetest kiss, the most tender form of showing affection…

Sabo slowly stands up and deepens the kiss, it’s the same, every time, it only gets worse – whenever he touches Luffy’s lips, the desire starts pooling in his stomach, his heart starts beating like crazy and he wants more, more, more, he wants to explore his body, trace all curves and lines and scars with his lips, he wants to leave his marks and for the boy to leave his; Sabo’s tongue playfully licks over Luffy’s lips and Luffy opens up so wilfully, letting him inside.

Sabo gently pushes Luffy backwards to the bed and the boy sits down, and Sabo notices his flushed face, the soft tremors in his limbs and his half-lidded eyes that stare up at him and his mouth pulls into a radiant smile, so full of trust and happiness it makes Sabo’s heart clench with fondness.

Sabo smiles and Luffy moves backwards, to the head of the bed and Sabo follows him, comfortably lying down on top of him and he continues kissing Luffy and he feels how the boy lifts his arms and lets his fingers wander through his hair and Sabo closes his eyes, it feels so good, the tenderness and gentleness with which he touches him… It arouses him much more than any rough handling or dirty talk ever could.

Sabo has had many lovers. But from all of them, Luffy is the one who can make him lose his mind in this perfect bliss he feels, he’s the one who can make his heart beat so fast it hurts and turn his thoughts into colours and lyrics and heat and music, he’s the one who can make him…make him feel something he’s never known before.

He knows passion.

Lust.

Greed.

Seduction.

Desire.

Hunger.

Possessiveness.

And this…this is all of that, all of the above, but so much different…like underlined with a much purer, deeper and strong yet fragile feeling, underlined with the knowledge that…

That he loves… that this…might be love after all…

Sabo’s hand slides beneath Luffy’s shirt and this time, Luffy doesn’t even break the kiss, he feels him startle a little, but then he leans into his touch and Sabo smiles into their kiss, before he slowly
breaks the contact to latch upon Luffy’s neck, working on another mark right under his jaw. He can feel Luffy’s thundering heartbeat beneath his chest; he traces the lines of his scar. Is he starting to get obsessed with his scar? And then he gently rubs over his nipples, only playfully, and Luffy gasps.

“You feeling good?” Sabo coos.

“Haah…yes…”

And now it’s Sabo’s turn to get startled when Luffy suddenly grips the end of his shirt in a greedy attempt to expose his skin. Sabo can’t help but laugh and follow the silent request. He leans back to pull his shirt over his head and throw it somewhere close to the door.

With admiring dark eyes following his movements, he urges the boy to take his clothes off. And Luffy does, showing him his delicious tanned skin, the beautifully shaped torso of a fighter.

“You are perfect,” Sabo breathes and Luffy chuckles.

“You shouldn’t tell me all the time.”

“Why not, babe?” Sabo asks and leans back down to him.

“It’ll get to my head.”

“Would that be bad?”

“I’d be like you.”

That makes Sabo crack up. “Hahaha, am I that bad? C’mon, I’m not that arrogant,” he laughs and strokes Luffy’s face.

The boy winks: “You think. You have no idea how often you fix your hair.”

“Hey, my hair is an important part of my overall looks.”

“Shishishi, I think you always look good, but whatever!”

Sabo smiles widely and kisses Luffy’s soft lips: “Thanks for saying that.”

Their kiss deepens again and Sabo likes the wandering hands on his back, the fingernails that occasionally scrape over his skin, but not enough to hurt him yet. After thoroughly working Luffy’s lips until the boy is a panting mess, he moves downward, he carefully licks over his right nipple and smiles as it stiffens at the contact and Luffy lets out a little yelp. He licks it again and then sucks it into his mouth, so long until he feels Luffy’s fingers in his hair, pushing him back.

He looks up at the flushed face.

“Don’t…” Luffy says and his voice has gotten thick with arousal.

Arousal that is so obvious in his jeans. The sight alone makes Sabo’s dick twitch and swell even more.

Sabo watches Luffy’s reaction as he slides his hand slowly downward….he passes his zipper and gently strokes over the evident bulge in his trousers. Luffy grits his teeth to bite back a moan and Sabo licks his lip.
“May I…?” he whispers hotly and Luffy lets himself fall back deep into the pillows.

“Yeah…” the boy sighs almost inaudibly.

Sabo kisses his lips again; making sure the boy is ok, and then he kisses a wet trail from his jaw over his chest and abs toward the waistband of his jeans. He opens the belt and pulls the zipper down. And then, eyes locked with Luffy who is silently watching him, he pulls the jeans down, further down and Luffy lifts his legs so he can slides them down his slim legs and throw them to the ground.

“You’re so hard…” Sabo mutters and strokes the cock that is still hidden in black boxers.

“Stop teasing!” Luffy hisses and grabs his shoulder and the man smirks, satisfied with the heated reaction.

“Fufufu…”

But the blond won’t be too mean to Luffy tonight; he wants them both to feel good…

So he swiftly yanks Luffy’s boxers down his legs and looks at the delicious cock in front of him, already wet with precum and softly throbbing against the boy’s stomach. He’s leaning down, licking across Luffy’s pelvic bone, and he loves the tremors he can feel in the body underneath him, he loves the way Luffy arches into his touch.

“I’m going to use my mouth,” he says quietly and looks to see Luffy’s reaction.

The boy stares at him, his eyes so dark as if the hunger had swallowed all remaining light, his cheeks are flushed and his chest is moving up and down rapidly, breathing erratically.

“…Ok…”

And that is enough of an answer for the blond. Sabo kisses Luffy’s x-scar again, before he moves entirely downward, running hs hands over his stomach, his pelvic, his thighs – and then he finally gives in and leans down.

He gently strokes the hard swollen member with his right hand – his left is placed on Luffy’s strong abs, effectively pinning him – and then, with a last smile, he tentatively licks over the pink head, he laps up the pearly drops of precum and he hears Luffy moan softly into the pillow, he sees him clenching his fists into the sheets.

Sabo licks his lips. There’s way more to come…

He starts sucking at the base of Luffy’s cock, he kisses the tender skin and then slowly draws his tongue upwards, so slowly he can feel Luffy’s hand digging into his shoulder and his nails biting into his flesh, and he goes back down, rubbing the erect member a few times, before he sucks at the head again, swivelling his tongue slowly over the head and lapping at the leaking slit.

Luffy trembles under his hands, his skin is so hot Sabo believes it’s going to burn him. Oh god, how hot, how sinfully perfect he is laying there…completely at his mercy…

And god, the sounds the boy makes… it’s music to his ears and he can’t help but reaching down to his own erection, freeing it from the constriction of his jeans and stroking himself a few times.

“Don’t… stop…hah…please…” Luffy breathes.

Sabo smiles and nips at his skin again and then he decides to be a little more daring.

He lets his hand wander from his own cock back to Luffy’s body, he strokes his swollen balls,
before he slides his fingers deeper…deeper…

“S-Sabo!”

“Shhh, it’s ok…” he whispers and then, without a warning, he swallows Luffy’s cock down, making Luffy tense up, arching is back and he takes his throbbing, leaking cock all the way down to the base and sucks on it with all the skill he has, he lets it slide out of his mouth only to take it back in again and Luffy is thrashing beneath him, lost in all the pleasure that Sabo inflicts on him, Sabo can hear the tearing of his sheets and a soft cry and his name, as a breathless whisper.

He strokes Luffy’s entrance again, only lightly, and he feels him twitch at the contact. Sabo slowly lets Luffy’s cock slide out of his mouth and Luffy breathes heavily, gulping air and he stares at him, sweating and panting and probably so, so, so close…

Ah, but Sabo is a tease, after all…

“W-why…?” Luffy asks, his voice tinged with arousal – and annoyance.

“Feeling good, babe?” Sabo mutters satisfied and presses a kiss to Luffy’s chest.

“Yeah…like you…don’t know,” Luffy gasps as he slides his hands up and down the inside of his trembling thighs. He presses an apologetic kiss to the soft, tanned skin.

“Just a minute, I’ll make you feel even better…”

He kisses Luffy and after a moment, the boy opens and Sabo slides his tongue around Luffy’s, sucking on it, drawing more cute little moans from him. Luffy’s hand grabs strands of his hair, he feels his arm circle around his neck and he’s letting the boy pull him closer and urging him to deepen the kiss. He smiles when he feels Luffy’s hip arch up into his, he feels his wet cock sliding along his thigh and Sabo almost feels sorry for letting him wait.

Sabo himself is painfully hard, but first…

Still sucking greedily on Luffy’s swollen lips, he reaches for the night stand and grabs a bottle of lube from the top drawer and pours a generous amount into his hand.


“It won’t hurt, I promise… relax, ok?” Sabo whispers. He leans back to look at Luffy’s face. And what he sees almost makes him forget all resolve…
Chapter 9

Luffy

Luffy tries to get his erratic breathing back under control as he looks up into Sabo’s flushed face. God, how hot he looks, how breath-takingly gorgeous and confident and aroused and… Luffy’s eyes wander to his smiling mouth. Those lips, god… what he does with those lips, it had almost made him cry…

Sabo has made him feel more than he’s ever thought possible. Made him feel like he was breaking into a thousand pieces and he put him back together again, over and over and over again. Sabo’s hands, lips, his touch – it made him lose control in the most raw, animalistic way and Luffy he… he has adored every single second of it.

He watches how Sabo coats his fingers with the clear lube. Luffy has a vague idea what is coming next and weirdly – he is nervous, but his almost painfully hard erection has him forget about his worries and his fear.

He just wants it. Whatever the man gives him – he wants it.

Now.

As long as there is still boldness in him…

Sabo leans back down to him.

“You ok?” Sabo asks him in a low voice and Luffy nods.

“Yeah…but I want…”

“Just a bit longer, babe, I promise.”

The elder kisses him promisingly on the lips and Luffy hungrily deepens the kiss and he feels one arm circle his waist and the other – the hand that feels wet against his skin from the lube – he feels it travel past his navel… past his pelvic bone…

Luffy flinches when he feels the wet finger down there… at his entrance… The room is spinning, despite him having his eyes closed tightly, the dizziness is overwhelming.

This… is so intimate… Luffy being like this, naked, is legs spread, his cock dripping and this man can see it all – he is the cause of it all – and something starts aching so strongly in Luffy’s chest.

He grips Sabo’s arm, the one that’s around his waist and he bring Sabo’s warm hand to his chest, putting his hand right over his heart – where it aches the most.

Sabo looks at him, his dark eyes so agonizingly unreadable. Luffy swallows thickly, before he mutters: “Please don’t hurt me… yes?”

And Sabo blinks, so many emotions suddenly washing over his face, and his eyes become so gentle, it makes Luffy want to cry, cry out in frustration at his own childishness and fear and insecurity and weakness.

And the man hugs him, no, embraces him, skin on skin, he’s so close, he must feel it all, must feel
how fast Luffy’s heart is beating, how much he is shaking, how the tremors run through his body. He must feel how weak he feels right now. How vulnerable and small.

Luffy hides his face in Sabo’s shoulder.

“Never, Luffy. I will never hurt you.”

And Luffy sighs in relief; he needed to hear that… He needed to make sure…

Sabo kisses him again; he practically worships every millimetre of his lips, so long until Luffy’s body loses its almost violent tension. Luffy reluctantly relaxes his arms that have been holding onto Sabo so tightly; as if he’d been afraid he would just up and leave from one second to the other. How silly of him.

This is Sabo. And Sabo just told him that he would never hurt Luffy. And Luffy believes him. He trusts him. This is Sabo. He would never hurt him.

“Are you ok?” Sabo asks him again, his hand gently stroking Luffy’s cheek. Luffy nods.

“Ok… Then let me make you feel good, babe…”

And Sabo presses butterfly kisses from his jaw all the way down to his stomach and each time his lips briefly brush over Luffy’s heated, sensitive skin, the tender touches make more and more of his fear melt away.

Luffy lets his head fall back down into the pillows and he closes his eyes once more.

And then Sabo is kissing the base of his cock again, so softly it almost hurts, and then he slides his tongue along the vein on the underside and Luffy moans softly, his hands clawing into the sheets he has ripped already… and Sabo, that man, how does he know how to do it to make him feel like he’s going to heaven? How does he know his body so well, how is he able to make Luffy like this…?

And then he feels Sabo swallowing him down again and Luffy lets out a soft cry and he arches off the bed as his cock is buried in the man’s hot, wet mouth, he feels that sinfully talented tongue swirling around him and god Luffy is so close, so, so close, just a bit more –

“Gyaa!” Luffy lets out as he feels Sabo’s lube-wet finger probe his entrance, circling it. He – he knew it was going to happen, but…

Luffy bites his lower lip at the foreign sensation. His attention is divided between his cock that is still caressed and licked so skilfully it draws tears to his eyes and then there’s that finger that…that moves to come inside him…

And then Sabo pushes in, gentle only, and Luffy’s body starts tensing up again, fighting against the foreign intrusion.

“Shhh, it’s ok, relax,” Sabo mumbles against his skin, he rubs over Luffy’s stomach and hips and thighs soothingly.

Luffy sighs shakily and forces his internal muscles to slowly unclench around Sabo’s finger.

“Good boy…”

“Haaah…” Luffy moves his feet over the sheets; his hips start to ache from the unfamiliar long time of keeping his legs apart. Sabo, as if sensing his discomfort, kisses the insides of his trembling thighs,
his finger now deeply buried within Luffy's hole.

It doesn’t necessarily hurt. It’s just…strange. Luffy is still figuring out whether he likes it or not – he doesn’t really understand how that would make him feel good, though.
And then, suddenly, Sabo draws his finger back, halfway out, only to push in again and the boy gasps.

That’s….now it’s different. It feels…strangely…ah…good… His ass clenches around that finger, he wants Sabo to keep doing that, faster…it feels good…

“Ready for a second one?” Sabo mumbles and Luffy just moans into the pillow.

And then, he suddenly feels a second finger at his entrance, gently sliding in alongside the first one – and now it hurts! His eyes fly open and he half sits up, grabbing Sabo’s wrist.

“Ow, Sabo…” Luffy wheezes and his internal muscles clench so much around the two digits inside of him.

“Ok, I’ll slow down, it’s ok,” Sabo says gently and kisses his temple.

“What..?”

“It’ll feel really good in a bit, I promise,”

“No, I don’t want to…I want to cum…” Luffy mumbles and looks at the blond both impatiently and pleadingly.

“Just a bit longer, please,” Sabo says smiling and kisses him apologetically and Luffy whishes he would leave it, just let him cum, but no…

Sabo’s fingers slide even deeper inside him and Luffy grimaces in discomfort. He feels the fingers move so deep, move around, like they’re looking for someth –

“Ahh!” Luffy suddenly gasps as Sabo touches something inside him and suddenly, it’s as if a powerful wave of pleasure rolls through him, it makes his skin tingle and his muscles clench, but this time to keep the fingers there…so they can do it again…

“What…what?”

“That’s your spot, babe..” the man says darkly and then he pushes Luffy back down into the pillows and then the man, his eyes locked with Luffy’s, frees his own cock from the constricting jeans and boxers and then Sabo rubs his hard swollen dick against Luffy’s and Luffy gasps again.

Sabo’s is so… big…

“Haaaa…"

“Let’s both feel good, yes?” Sabo says sultrily and then he captures his lips again, sucking hungrily at his tongue and Luffy digs one hand into Sabo’s blond mane and he wraps the other around their dicks, rubbing them together, faster and faster, and so does Sabo, and the man now slides his fingers in and out of him, touching that weird, magic spot inside him every time and Luffy sees stars in front of his inner eyes, his toes curl into the sheets, he is so close…

“Ah, I’m.. I’m… oh god….”

His orgasm comes rushing up his shaft and he feels hot liquid coat his fingers, splashing onto his
stomach, white hot stars dance in front of his eyes, his whole body tenses up, the incredible wave of pleasure overwhelms him, drowns him, he can’t stop, wave after wave of semen come out of his cock and he hears Sabo’s breath hitching and suddenly Luffy is thrown on his front, with strength he has never really seen in Sabo, and still dizzy and light-headed from the best orgasm he has ever had, he feels Sabo push his dick between his ass cheeks, rubbing almost forcefully against him and then he feels thick hot drops of liquid coat his back and he hears Sabo sigh in relief.

Luffy stays like that, spend, tired and still coming down from his incredible high. His dick has gone limp and empty underneath him. The sheets are damp and sticky and it smells thickly in the room. He should move, but he can’t. It’s like all strength has been drained from him.

He can hear Sabo sigh again and then move to lay down on top of him.

“You ok?” Sabo asks and gently ruffles his hair.

“Mmmh… yeah…” Luffy says tiredly.

“Wanna take a bath?”

“Yeah…”

Sabo disappears for a short while. And then, when he returns, Luffy is only halfway about to turn around, his limbs still feel like rubber, and he feels slightly disoriented.

“Bath’s ready.”

And with that, Sabo simply lifts him up and carries him into the bathroom and Luffy doesn’t even care, he feels warm and tired and clings to the man for dear life. He needs to process what just happened. He needs to clean up.

He needs to…to rest…

****

Later that night, Luffy wakes up in Sabo’s bed. While he was in the bathtub, Sabo has changed the sticky and ripped sheets, so they are now atop fresh smelling beddings.

Luffy smiles when he thinks how Sabo joined him in the tub after. He’d sat behind him, and they’d been playfully splashing and joking around, carefully re-bonding after their first time doing that...that heavy sexual stuff.

The boy has been so happy to see that literally nothing has changed between them. And that they’re still the same. Sabo has been the same sweet, kind Sabo that he always is to him. Despite the darker sides of him Luffy has now seen in bed.

Seeing him being normal and nice again was good. Reassuring, definitely.

Because… Luffy feels something else in his chest now…

The man is resting right next to him now, sound asleep, with his arm gently wrapped around Luffy’s waist. Luffy smiles quietly and sits up to grab his phone. It’ only quarter past 4. He should go back to sleep…

He has recovered from the intense orgasm from earlier. It’s easily the most intense feeling he has ever had, more intense than anything else, be it his very first Muay Thai tournament or the feeling of
hanging of the cliff off the north coast of Water Seven, the stormy ocean right beneath him, death only mere seconds away, be it the feeling of his first time playing his favourite video game or the feeling of watching his favourite movie for the first time.

He’d always thought those had been strong emotions, strong feelings that imprinted themselves deeply in his memories. Excitement and tension, deathly fear and agony, marvel and pure happiness and joy – those were feelings he understood, which he could handle.

But what he felt last night was so powerful, so deep, so amazing… it was almost frightening and he’d been at a loss of what to do with himself afterward.

Thank god Sabo had been there, because… he thinks he would’ve just started crying and ran home when Sabo hadn’t been there with him.

The tsunami-like feelings that have nearly drowned him with their sheer force and intensity have ebbed away eventually. It’s almost been too much to process – but he’s ok now. His head is cleared, although his body still remembers dearly the touch of the man.

Luffy thoughtfully leans back into the pillows again and studies Sabo’s relaxed face. He thoughtfully lifts his hand to thread it through the soft blond hair. Just a bit, not to wake him up.

Yeah, there’s definitely something changed in Luffy’s chest. He doesn’t really understand… but it’s got everything to do with the handsome journalist that is sleeping so soundly next to him right now.

He should probably talk to someone who understands and who can tell him what is going on with him. But he knows that he likes the feeling in his chest. It’s foreign, it’s a little scary – but it’s also pleasant and warm.

Luffy smiles for no reason and presses a soft kiss to Sabo’s forehead.

“I’m glad that you’re here,” he whispers and then he closes his eyes again, already looking forward to waking up again.

Sabo

“I don’t want to leave…” Luffy pouts and wraps his arms around his middle so tightly Sabo thinks he might actually crack a rib. He loves the power in that slender body – but not even the passionate hug can soften him in this case.

“I don’t want you to leave, either, but you have work to do, babe.”

“My shift starts at 4pm, we got plenty of time!”

“I’m talking about homework. I’m still your lecturer, and I don’t want your grades to suffer because you spend so much time with me,” he sighs and soothingly rubs over the boy’s back.

“I can do homework tomorrow.”

“Stop kidding, you have class until late afternoon. We both know you’ll spend your evening with video games.”

Luffy pouts even more and hides his face in his chest. Sabo smiles and ruffles his hair. How cute he is…
But his cuteness won’t help him get a degree, so Sabo gently grabs him by the shoulders to push him away.

“I’ll walk you home, but promise me you’ll do some work?”

“Meeeh…”

“C’mon babe, we’ll see each other tomorrow, right?”

“Yeah, but I can’t talk to you.”

“But you can see my handsome face, that not enough?” Sabo smirks and that makes Luffy roll his eyes and smile at him.

“You really like your face, hm?”

“And you like it, too, so no reason to complain?” Sabo replies and gives the boy a soft peck to the lips.

“Alright, alright… I’ll grab my stuff.”

“Ok.”

Sabo watches Luffy walk back into his bedroom to gather his stuff. He leans against the back of the sofa. He smiles to himself, recalling the glorious moments from yesterday. Argh, he shouldn’t get into it too much, otherwise he’ll get hard again…

But goodness, Luffy had been so incredibly hot, so sinfully gorgeous, with his skin damp and flushed from Sabo’s lips, his legs parted wide and his cock leaking from the intense pleasure Sabo gave him, his virgin hole twitching and reddened from his fingers, so ready to take him…

He’d almost lost control, when he had flipped Luffy on his front, he’d been so close to pushing in, but that would’ve been so cruel, it would’ve made Luffy never trust him again, so he came after rubbing his cock between his firm, perfect ass cheeks and he’d sprayed it all on Luffy’s tanned back, marking him like no one else has ever done. *Oh god, stop thinking about it, Sabo…*

He runs a hand through his hair. So next time they meet and he’ll stay over at Luffy’s place…will they actually have sex?

The thought alone makes his heart swell with affection and excitement. He’d make it the very best experience, he’d take hours preparing him and making him feel good, so Luffy wouldn’t be afraid, he would make sure the boy was feeling safe and secure and that it wouldn’t hurt when he’d finally push inside him.

Yeah, he would make it the way he wishes his own first time had been…

His gaze moves to the right, toward Ace’s bedroom. Their first times together were anything but pleasurable. They were painful, rushed, dirty and frustrating.

He loves Ace like family – and maybe a bit more, since they have had a lot of history together – but the first time having sex with him was horrible, totally terrible. The man’s technique has improved, obviously. But the memories are still foul to him, and he much rather forgets it actually happened.

As if he’d sensed he was thinking about him, Ace comes out of his bedroom, upper body naked,
nodding at him with a knowing smirk. Sabo follows him to the kitchen.

“Did you guys finally do it?” Ace asks and pours himself a cup of coffee.

“No…not really…”

“That means?”

“No anal…yet.”

“Oh man. You must crave it by now, hm?” Ace asks and leans against the worktop. As usual, the psychologist reads him so well. He takes a sip from his coffee, eyeing him up and down.

“I can wait. Just a bit longer.”

“You sure? And by the way, I expect my pair of sneakers to return to my room this afternoon, Sabo.”

“I have gotten better, though, you must’ve noticed.”

“You mean you stick to only stealing my stuff? Yeah, I noticed that.”

Sabo rolls his eyes and Ace goes to pat him on his shoulder. “Sorry, just taking the piss.”

“When I’m back, I’ll give you back your stuff.”

“We both know you won’t.”

Sabo sighs frustrated, but as he is about to walk back to the living room, Ace grabs his arm. His hand is shockingly hot on his skin, nearly scorching. He looks at him and Ace’s dark eyes bore into his.

His best friend moves his mouth to his ear and the warm breath tickles his neck.

“But if you do return my stuff, I might have a reward for you,” Ace breathes and Sabo blinks, turning his neck so fast it might almost snap. Ace grins.

“…Asshole.”

“And you love it.”

Sabo curses softly, shrugs off his hand and walks up to Luffy, who comes out of his bedroom, his bag over his shoulder.

“We going how?” Luffy asks with a grin.

“Yeah.”

He opens the front door for the boy and with a last heated glance back to Ace, he slams the door shut, a little more forceful than necessary.

That damned bastard.

When they stand in front of the door of Luffy’s building, he doesn’t want Luffy to leave. He doesn’t want to let go off that innocent hand, he doesn’t want to miss his radiant presence. He sighs and pulls Luffy into a hug.

“Ne, Sabo?” Luffy asks him, his arms wrapped as tightly around his frame.
“Hm?”

“When can I see you again?”

“Is you schedule the same as last week?”

“Yeah.”

“Then I guess Friday. Your place, this time.”

Luffy looks up at him, a deep frown on his forehead, an unhappy shadow passing over his features.

“I don’t like that! It’s five whole days!”

“I don’t like it either, babe,” he says reassuringly and lays a hand in Luffy’s slender neck, because he knows how much the boy likes that.

“…But I’ll read your articles.”

That makes Sabo blink in surprise. “Really, you gonna subscribe to the Daily Grand Line?”

Luffy nods against his chest. “Yeah. You tell me all the time to read more news, anyways.”

And that actually makes Sabo smile brightly and his heart flutters excitedly. He kisses the top of Luffy’s head. Luffy actually wanting to read his articles – because they can’t see each other – it’s so innocent and pure and adorable and perfect, all at once. Never has someone said that to him, he wonders if Luffy actually knows how happy it makes him.

“I’m glad to hear that, Luffy. Really glad,” he whispers and kisses Luffy’s lips.

Luffy returns the kiss with a grin: “Shishishi, so please don’t write anything boring.”

He laughs softly: “I’ll try.”

They kiss sweetly, Sabo’s arms pulling Luffy even closer, and he feels Luffy’s tongue ask for entrance, but he sadly has to break the contact. More of this, and he won’t be able to leave the boy – not after what they did last night.

“I’ll call you, babe,” he says and kisses his forehead.

“Hm, ok…”

“Do some work, get some rest and then have a relaxed shift, alright?”

“Ok... And next time tell me when you’re coming to the WindMill, so I can be your waiter again…”

“Hm, you’re so cute.”

“I’m not.”

Sabo smiles and sighs, dropping his arms from around the boy.

“I lo-“ he stops himself before he says any more and instead he strokes the boy’s oblivious face. “I’ll see you in class tomorrow.”

Luffy smiles brightly “Yeah. Bye, Sabo.”
“Bye, babe.”

And with a final kiss, Luffy disappears in the building and Sabo stands there, his heart beating like crazy.

Was I actually about to tell him “I love you”? 

****

He avoids his flatmate for the rest of the day. He enjoys his own company, he spends an hour reading a book and he listens to music and just keeps to himself, in the safety in his room.

Love, hm.

Is he in love with Luffy? Well, probably… after everything they’ve done, all those feelings that start heating up his blood whenever he’s near the boy… it’s the only logical explanation.

But he doesn’t know if he likes it. Love is… First of all, Luffy himself told him that he doesn’t do love.

And love, it sounds like such a big…commitment…a commitment Sabo doesn’t know if he’s ready for.

Calling it love would make it…final.

And he’s not ready yet for that.

Later, as he’s sitting on his bed, his laptop balancing on his thighs, there is a rather harsh knock on the door.

“It’s open,” he says, hardly looking up from the YouTube video he’s watching. His flatmate comes through the door, loud as always, and throws an angry pillow at him. Sabo dodges easily and then he feels the mattress sink in, where Ace has sat down, at the end of the bed.

“What is it?” Sabo asks, still not looking up from his computer. But weirdly…Ace keeps silent. Sabo finally looks at his best friend, studying the handsome face he knows so well.

Ace is chewing on his bottom lip, before he says: “Law and Kidd broke up.”

“What?!”

Sabo’s eyes widen in surprise and he stares at Ace. The man has a deep frown on his forehead, and he looks angry, angry and frustrated. Sabo carefully puts his laptop away and grabs his phone.

Oh shit, yes, he just got the message from Law… he quickly reads the painfully short message that says:

-broke up with kidd.

“Seems like Kidd has packed his stuff and now he’s nowhere to be found,” Ace sighs. “I bet he’s already on the sea train, halfway to Pucci.”

“And Law?”

“I tried to call him, but he doesn’t reply. He’s probably in a bar downtown, getting shitfaced.”
“I can’t blame him…shall we go and look for him?”

“Yeah, I guess that’s for the best… make sure he doesn’t do anything stupid…”

Sabo quickly gets up to change his shirt and grabs some shoes. Ace is already waiting for him in the hallway, his eyes glued to his phone.

“Alright, where should we go first?”

“What’s the first bar you come across from Law’s place?” Ace asks.

“Hm…isn’t it the Flying Dutchman?”

“Yeah! I forgot! Let’s go and see if he’s there…”

Ace opens the door and walks out first, Sabo, who quickly puts on a jacket, follows him. He feels deeply uneasy; his heart is filled with pity and compassion for both Law and Kidd. So, after all, they broke up… Sabo clenches his fists as he thinks how unbearably sad the two men must feel now.

They’ve been together since college. They build a home together, a life. And now, it’s all over.

Sabo hurries after Ace down the stairs. He can't believe it.

Just what the fuck is love? And why is it the reason so many people suffer so much…?!

They find the surgeon, eventually, in a bar at the port. The bar is filled with stinky, reeking sailors and dock workers, eyeing him and Ace like predators as soon as they walk through the door. They ignore the stares and immediately find their friend across the crowd.

Law sits at the bar, alone, his head hanging low above his glass. There’s a half empty bottle of rum next to him.

His eyes are reddish, from crying, Sabo suspects. His face is hard and unmoving, although his whole body is screaming despair and loneliness, his agony so evident, everyone in the bar seems to want to stay away from him.

He’s never seen his friend like that. So lost. So devastated.

“Law?” he says friendly, putting a hand on the man’s shoulder.

Law doesn’t even move.

“Law, buddy, Ace and I are here to take you home,” he says and Ace nods at the barkeeper, pulling out his wallet to pay for their friend.

“I don’t want to go home,” Law says, his voice a hoarse, broken whisper. He still sounds surprisingly clear, however his eyes are lightless holes, pitchblack and empty.

“Then how about you stay at our place?”

“I want to be alone, Sabo.”

“You can have my room, if you want to.”

Law doesn’t reply, he just downs the rest of his rum, before he hides his face in his shaking hands.
“I fucked up, Sabo,” he says raspily between gritted teeth and Sabo changes a glance with Ace. He feels helpless.

“No, you didn’t.”

“I did. And now he’s gone.”

“Law, shut up. You’re coming home with us,” Ace says briskly and pulls Law to his feet.

Law staggers, the alcohol clearly affecting his balance. Sabo sighs and puts one of Law’s arms around his shoulders to stabilise him. Ace does the same with his other arm.

And like that, they walk home, Law hissing and cursing and sobbing, whilst he and Ace try their best to calm him down.

But of course, it doesn’t work. As if anything they said would help his heart only a little. His heart that’s been in love for so many years, now broken and shattered. How could they possibly say anything to cheer him up?

How could they possibly understand his pain?

****

Later that night, Sabo knocks softly on Ace’s door. It’s long past midnight; Law is asleep in his room, finally asleep he should say, after raiding their liquor cabinet and getting even more shitfaced, so much he actually had to throw up in the bathroom and Sabo and Ace practically had to hurl them into bed.

Sabo is tired and he hates that it’s Sunday and that he has to go to work tomorrow. So much happened this weekend, he needs time to process it all.

And he can’t sleep.

His thoughts keep circling around Law’s misery, his heart writhes in pity with his friends. Yes, his and Kidd’s relationship hadn’t been perfect, but it had lasted long past any expectations.

And despite the constant fighting, they had made each other happy, in a way that had been weirdly inspiring and touching.

And now it is all over, and, although he has partially expected it to happen, Sabo feels so sorry and disgusted with himself that he hasn’t shown more faith in his friends in the first place.

He knocks again.

“Hmm?” comes the sleepy reply and he quietly opens the door and peeks into the dark room.

“Sorry, did I wake you?” he asks in a low voice, still hesitating to come in.

“Nah…it’s ok…” Ace yawns and turns the lamp on his night stand on.

Sabo closes the door behind him and walks through the mess on the ground over to Ace’s king-sized bed. He sits down on the mattress.

“I can’t sleep. I can’t stop thinking about Law and Kidd,” he admits, the late hour losening his usually so cautious tongue.

“I know, I don’t like it, either.”
“I feel sorry for them. Do you think there’s a way we could help? Can’t you think of something…?”

“Sabo, I’m a psychologist, not fucking Cupid.”

Sabo runs a hand through his hair. “Yeah, I know, sorry.”

He blinks when he feels Ace’s hand comfortingly on his back, rubbing softly. “Are you ok?”

“Yeah… just tired.”

“Wanna sleep here?”

That makes him turn his head, to look his best friend in the eyes. “You sure?”

“Of course. And don’t look at me like that, I won’t tell Luffy.”

“Pfff, we won’t do anything, Ace. If you try something funny, I’ll punch your face.”

“I know that. Now come lay down, my shift starts in six hours.” Ace reaches over to his night stand and switches off the light. The room, again, falls into complete darkness and

Sabo relaxes in the soothing black.

He gives in – his fatigue clouding his judgement and rational thought – and he slips under the duvet next to Ace, feeling the familiar hand caressing his shoulder blades.

“Sabo?”

“Hm?”

“Do you love Luffy?”

Sabo blinks into the darkness. “I don’t know. Probably.”

“…Once you figure it out, will you tell me?”

“Yeah.”

“But…nothing will change between us?”

Now Sabo turns around to face the man who’s been part of his life for so long. He can’t see him, but he feels his hot breath on his skin and he blindly reaches up, tracing the strong jaw with his fingertips, the lines of his cheekbones, his nose, his temples…

“Nothing will change.”

He hears Ace sigh in relief. “I’m glad.”

“You’re still my best friend, Ace”

And he doesn’t see the smile, he can feel it beneath his fingertips, he can feel the soft lips turn upward and Ace softly kisses his fingers with a rare tenderness.

“Ok. Then let’s sleep?”

And Sabo closes his eyes and he falls asleep with a soft smile, when he feels Ace kissing the top of his head, before the man pulls him closer in an innocent hug.
And then Sabo falls into deep, dreamless slumber, only to be woken up hours later from Ace, who’s stroking his face, already fully clad, ready to go to work.

“Shh, you still got an hour,” Ace says quietly and rests his hand comfortably on the top of his head. His room is dark; the only light comes from the living room. Sabo blinks sleepily.

“Time..?”

“Only half seven.”

“Hm…ok.”

“See you tonight.”

And then, the warm hand is gone and the door closes.

Luffy

“Robin?” he asks and sticks his head through the door to his tutor’s office.

“Luffy, did we have an appointment?” she asks surprised, lowering her cup of coffee.

“Ah, no, but do you have time?”

“Sure.”

He happily closes the door behind him and walks up to her desk. It’s Wednesday afternoon, he has to be at work in two hours. It’s cloudy and terribly windy outside, it’ll probably be stormy by tonight.

“So how can I help you? Everything alright with you studies?” the woman asks with a quiet smile as he sits down.

“Eh, yes, my studies are going fine! I’m actually here because I didn’t know who to talk to, because Sanji is still fighting with Zoro, and Usopp is missing Kaya, and Nami is single, and yeah…”

“I see… and, what is it that you can only talk to me about?” Robin asks him a little confused.

“The thing with me and Sabo.”

And she blinks, before he says: “Ah.”

“So, the thing is, I don’t know what’s wrong with me.”

“What do you mean?”

“Like, we spend a lot of time together and I’m happy, and I don’t like when I have to go home from his place. But it’s so weird, like, I got annoyed when Rebecca talked to him on Friday at Nami’s party, and he gave me a hickey, and on Saturday we did a lot of stuff in bed – and then my chest started hurting really bad, but he wasn’t mean to me or anything, and I don’t really get my body, because I get like a thousand bees in my stomach when I see him and I get nervous, and I never get nervous when I’m around you guys, and neither do I get annoyed when Rebecca talks to you guys,” Luffy babbles, trying to put into word all these feelings and thoughts he’s had, he tries to convey his confusion to Robin, and he really, really hopes she understands, because he doesn’t it understand at all.

“And now I don’t know what’s wrong with me, because my head stops working when he kisses me
and I get dizzy and I don’t want him to stop, I get so weird… Just what is wrong with me, Robin? It’s not…not love, right? Because I don’t do love!”

And he looks at her, actually a little out of breath, and he waits for her reaction, his arms tense. If she can’t help him, then who can?

The dark-haired woman chuckles lightly, before she smiles at him.

“Well, Luffy… I know your resentments toward the idea, but have you ever considered that you might have fallen in love with Sabo?”

And his eyes widen as he jumps to his feet. “No freaking way! Like hell I’m in love with someone, I HATE love!” he shouts angrily.

The woman isn’t surprised at all at his outburst, she just continues to chuckle.

“Luffy, what you described to me is exactly what it means to feel this certain kind of strong affection for another human being. Trust me; I’m a married woman after all.”

“That’s bullshit; I’m never going to fall in love with someone!”

“But didn’t you tell me that you like Sabo?”

“Yeah, but that’s different!”

“Explain it to me?” Robin asks and Luffy is fuming now, he’s angry that Robin won’t understand.

He’s not in love, no way in hell.

“We’re… we’re just different,” he says after a moment.

“Different how?”

“I don’t know! I don’t freaking understand, it’s why I’m asking you what’s wrong with me!”

“I told you, from what you’ve told me, I reason that you are in love with him. Do you think he feels the same about you?”

“I don’t know! I didn’t ask him, and he doesn’t ask me, either… And I don’t… I don’t…” Luffy grumbles, still way too agitated to sit down again.

“Do yu want him to be in love with you?”

“No! No! I don’t want that!”

“Why not? Because I’m pretty sure that he likes you a lot, Luffy.”

“Because then he’ll leave me eventually, right?” Luffy barks, his blood heating up with fury.

Robin looks even more confused now. “Why do you say that?”

“It’s what dad told me, after mum left. Don’t fall in love Luffy, they’ll only hurt you. It’s what he said! And my dad is always right!” he yells.

“… Luffy, your dad has been gone for a long time,” she says carefully, but he doesn’t want to hear it, he doesn’t want to hear her talking about his father, that advice was the last thing he’s heard of him,
and he listens to his dad…

“…Luffy, how about you go home for a bit and we’ll talk tomorrow?” she says friendly.

He glares at her, even though he knows that she hasn’t done anything to deserve his anger.

He’s angry with himself, too.

With his foolish heart.

With Sabo.

With everything.

“Are you listening? How about you come to my office at 3pm?”

He nods silently, grabbing his bag.

“Have a good day, Luffy.”

“You, too,” he mumbles and runs down the hallway, without bothering to close the door, tears blurring his vision and his heart aching so bad like he’s never experienced before.

****

Later, as he’s at work at the WindMill, Sanji asks him what’s wrong with him. He just shrugs, forcing a smile to his face.

“I’m fine, Sanji,” he replies and pats his friend on the shoulder. “Anyways, you look so happy today?”

“Yeah, well, Zoro invited me to dinner tomorrow – it’s gonna be nice, having someone else cook for me. I think he’ll finally apologise to me,” the blond says smugly.

Luffy smirks, despite his own pain. “Good for you!”

“Yeah, I’m actually tired of being mad at him…”

“I guess so.”

Luffy turns his head as he hears the doorbell announce the arrival of another costumer. It’s fairly empty today, the storm outside makes most people stay home. Only a handful of people are in the WindMill today, so Luffy and Sanji have plenty of time to chat. Sanji looks over his shoulder to see who came in and Luffy sees how he raises his eyebrows in awe.

“Well, hello, handsome!”

Luffy chuckles and turns around to walk up to the new costumer. It’s a quite tall man, with flaming red hair and pale skin, so pale it reminds Luffy of a vampire. But he sure is attractive, dangerously attractive in that thug-badass-criminal way.

“Hello, welcome to the WindMill!” Luffy smiles. “Table for one?”

The man nods, rain dripping from his hair and nose. The way he towers over him, it feels a little intimidating… but as usual, it takes more to scare Luffy.
“Alright, follow me, over there…”

He shows the man to a table close to the electric chimney. It’s one of the warmest spots in the café. Luffy thinks the man looks like he could use a bit of extra warmth.

“Thanks,” the man grunts and grabs the menu. Only to toss it away and grab the list with beverages.

Luffy shrugs and returns to where Sanji is leaning against the doorframe to the kitchen, currently taskless. He is still eyeing the new costumer.

“Damn, if Zoro wasn’t my boyfriend…” he drawls dreamily.

“Oh c’mon, he doesn’t look like a friendly person,” Luffy says.

“Maybe it’s just what he wants people to believe. I bet he’s actually a nice, romantic guy on the inside.”

Luffy cracks up and Sanji lightly punches his shoulder: “I’m being serious.”

“Yeah, no, I don’t believe that,” he laughs and watches the customers to walk up to whoever needs him to take their order.

Yeah, Luffy is glad he’s at work, so he can distract himself from the talk with Robin. And from Sabo. The man has texted him earlier, but he hasn’t replied. He doesn’t… he doesn’t even know what he’s doing anymore. He’s not fucking in love, no way…

“Can I take your order?” he asks the redhead friendly, his small notepad and pen ready in his hands.

“Yeah, get me a pint of mead, yes? And straight vodka, if you got?”

“Yes, sure, what kind…?”

“Whatever. I’ll have the whole bottle.”

Luffy nods and writes down his order.

“Anything else I can get you?”

“No, thanks.”

“Ok.”

He hurries behind the bar, preparing the already rather pricey order. Sounds like the man has had a really rough day… He eyes him. The man looks like he’s about to jump up and demolish the whole café, the way his body is practically shaking with tension, and his fists are on the table, clenched so hard his knuckles are even whiter than the rest of him. Luffy wonders what the hell the man has gone through, to be so obviously anxious. He doesn’t look like a guy who gets worked up easily…

“Here you go, a pint of mead and your vodka.”

“Thanks,” the man barks, sounding not at all thankful.

“Had a rough day?” Luffy asks him friendly, actually rather interested in the man’s story.

“Rough fucking week. Do me a favour, kiddo, don’t ever lose your fucking heart to someone, it’s not worth it” the man growls in a low voice and he takes a big gulp from the mead.
Luffy blinks. “So…you broke up with someone?”

The man’s left hand clenches around the pint so hard Luffy is afraid he might break it.

“Yeah, after almost seven fucking years…can’t believe it…,” he mutters darkly and grabs the bottle.

“Ah…I’m sorry…”

“Yeah… my own fucking fault, falling in love… fuck that shit…,” he snarls and pours the clear liquid into the empty glass that’s only filled with ice cubes which Luffy brought additionally for the vodka.

He downs it without even flinching and Luffy actually gasps. Wow, well… he definitely can’t down a glass of straight vodka…

“I’m sure it’ll work out,” he says with a forced smile, before he walks back to the kitchen.

“What did he say?” Sanji asks intrigued.

“He said he broke up with someone after seven years,” Luffy says, deeply in thought.

“Oh, shit…must be tough…,” Sanji mumbles, scratching the back of his neck, probably thinking of his own relationship right now.

Luffy feels bad for the guy – and his words are still ringing in his ears. Falling in love… and now, the agony the man is in…isn’t it exactly what Luffy tries to avoid so keenly?

Now… he can still walk away, right? Because once he…once he actually commits to someone…

That pain, it’s the only possible way to end, right?

And Luffy isn’t ready for that pain. He can’t handle that sort of pain. Not again. His father and grandfather have left him, his mother has left him. He can’t handle another person leaving him like that.

He sighs deeply, the aching returning to his heart. He needs to talk to Sabo.

****

Hours later, he has taken a shower and ate dinner; he sits down on the edge of his bed. Tonight is windy, the clouds move across the sky so hurried, like they were escaping from something. The moon is hidden behind them, and the stars are nowhere to be seen.

He chews on his bottom lip, before he texts Sabo:

-are you still awake?

The reply comes a few moments later.

-yes, what’s up? how was your day?

-can I call you?

-sure.

Luffy breathes nervously, before he slides his thumb down the contact list and he taps on Sabo’s number and then he holds his phone to his ear, hearing his own quickening heartbeat so loud against the cold gadget.
He – he needs to make sure… He needs to make sure that Sabo doesn’t… doesn’t love him, so Luffy can finally relax. So Luffy can be sure that Sabo won’t just leave him. Because the thought has him terrified. Because if Sabo loves him… he’d eventually stop loving him, right? And leave him? And that thought makes his skin crawl with fear.

He couldn’t handle Sabo walking out of his life, please, don’t…

Sabo answers the call a few heartbeats later, his voice sounding cheerful.

“Hey babe,” he says and Luffy closes his eyes as a happy, yet distressed smile appears on his lips.

“Hi Sabo.”

“How’re you? How was work?”

“I’m-I’m good, I think… how’re you?”

“I’m alright, thanks. So tell me, what’s up?”

“Uhm… there… there was a costumer at the café today.”

“Was he mean to you?”

“No! No, he was… sad, he got wasted; he told me that he’d broken up with someone. And he… he told me that I should never fall in love with someone.”

Sabo remains silent and Luffy leans forward.

“Sabo?”

“Yes, I’m listening, keep going,” Sabo says and his voice sounds encouragingly.

“Uhm, yeah, and… I also went to see Robin today. Because I feel like I’m becoming weird when I’m around you. And she said… that I… might’ve fallen in love… with you, haha…”

He hears Sabo inhale sharply, before the man says, and this time his voice a lot darker than before: “And what did you say?”

“I told her that I’m not in love with you. Because I don’t do love, remember? And what the sad dude told me, it just reinforced my decision,” Luffy says, his cheeks burning with embarrassment. He can hear Sabo clear his voice.

“… Luffy, I wish we wouldn’t have this talk now, because I can’t see your face.” And is Luffy imagining things, or does Sabo’s voice suddenly sound hoarse?

“But – but you understand, right?”

“No, I don’t, Luffy.”

“Why not? Like, I told you before, right? You know that I hate love! I don’t do love!” he says furiously, he doesn’t even know why he is getting angry now. Why is Sabo being so complicated about this?

“No, Luffy, I don’t fucking understand the whole deal. Listen, we will talk about this, but not like this. I want to see your face when you tell me that you’re not in love with me!” and this time, Sabo’s voice is loud, he sounds exasperated, he sounds angry and hurt.
Luffy blinks and he grimaces as the sudden overwhelming pain in his chest makes him want to cry. “Why are you yelling at me now? Why are you getting angry?!” he fires back.

“I’m not angry, I’m just taken aback that you don’t have the courage to say this shit to my face!” Sabo says, his voice still so loud it makes Luffy flinch as if he’d received a slap in the face.

“Well, I’m telling you right now, isn’t that enough?!”

“No, it isn’t! Do you think I don’t care? Do you think I’ll just agree with you? It’s not only your heart on the line, Luffy!”

“But I thought you were fine with just being friends!”

“Do you actually think we’re still only friends? Are you serious? How naïve are you, Luffy?!” Sabo shouts and Luffy feels like a knife has been cut right into his chest, so deep he almost feels the blood seeping out of his back.

“I never wanted that. Love, I hate it and I never wanted it!” he yells, his voice cracking at the end, whilst the pain shakes his whole body, his insides are crumbling by the second.

“Well, it’s not like I planned to fucking fall in love with you!” and Sabo’s voice is shaking now, almost as shaken as Luffy is from that painful revelation. It’s what he wanted to avoid so much, so, so much…

And he blinks away the tears and says: “Bye, Sabo.”

“No, Luffy, wait-“

And he ends the call, throwing his phone to the end of the bed and then he cuddles Sunny to his chest, silent tears raining down on the lion.

It’s better this. Seem like he got away before…before him and Sabo had become… something that would hurt so much worse when it would end.

Ouch. Why did no one…ever bother to tell him that it would hurt so much… It hurts so much he grits his teeth and he claws his hands into his chest, scratching his skin above his heart. No physical pain has ever been so bad, so consuming, so…so destructive…

And he’s not even in love… If he was, would he simply die of the pain…?

He doesn’t know how many hours he lies awake, staring at the ceiling, whilst his tears continue to stream down his face, the agony inside his chest so great he can hardly breathe. The pillows are damp underneath him and his throat is hurting from hours of violent sobbing and howling.

Now he’s just laying there. Empty. Parched.

Lost.

And alone.
Chapter 10

Sabo

Sabo wanders through the following day like a ghost.
Silenced.
Transparent.
Dead.

Desperately trying to…to do anything, *everything* to distract him from the excruciating, diabolical pain inside his chest, this all-consuming agony he hasn’t known till now.
Oh god, it hurts so much tears itch in the corners of his eyes, the entire day, remnants of a sleepless night, but he dares not shedding a single tear, because he doesn’t want anyone to see…to *witness*…his suffering.

He’d never want anyone else to experience this kind of pain.

He stays last in the office. He hears his colleagues say goodbye to him – hurried, confused, he can only imagine how he looks in their eyes, probably as bad as he thinks, or worse, with reddish demon eyes that have been awake all night and a face that has forgotten how to smile.

He stares out the window, he watches the sky above Water Seven darken with clouds and soon, he hears the faint pattern of the first raindrops on the street outside the building.

Like heaven itself was crying.

And although his heart is bleeding, *screaming*, his thoughts darken in the most disgusting way, with fury, with anger, with betrayal, but most of all, with self-loathing.

He’s such a fucking idiot. He is. He should’ve known better. He should’ve been smarter about it. He shouldn’t have pushed the boy. He should’ve listened. He should’ve said what Luffy wanted to hear… He should’ve…he…Sabo should’ve…

He doesn’t even notice the tears. Only when he blinks and his vision blurs he comes back to himself, he snuffles and grabs a tissue.

He’s a fucking moron. It was supposed to be his game.

And he’s the one who lost.

****

“You look like shit,” Ace says the following evening, as he knocks on his flatmate’s door, a bottle full of tequila in his hand. He’s cut the lemons already – cutting himself twice during the process. Not that he cared.

He needs to get wasted, asap.

“You got time?” he asks in a low voice.

“Sure.”
They sit down in the living room. Sabo feels already dizzy, even though he hasn’t drunk anything yet. He feels Ace’s hand on his shoulder.

“Have you eaten today?”

He shakes his head.

“Alright, then it won’t take too long till you’re puking.”

“Sounds good,” he says roughly. He needs to drown his fucking sorrow, he needs to numb that intangible pain inside him, he needs to forget….

They down their first shots silently. Sabo shudders as the liquid burns in his stomach. Oh god, he loathes himself… He grimaces as a new wave of pain rolls through him, making him flinch at the sheer intensity.

So that’s what unrequited love feels like?

Hell, he’d rather break both his legs than feel like this again… He’d rather skin himself; he’d rather have someone take away his fucking organs than feel this tremendous pain again.

“So… I assume the thing between you and Luffy is over?” Ace says in a neutral voice.

Sabo winces, but nods: “Yeah. He isn’t in love with me, he told me.”

Ace sighs.

“I’m sorry, Sabo.”

“It’s ok. I should’ve known. Should’ve…should’ve expected that.”

Ace rubs his shoulders and Sabo closes his eyes and downs the next shot, and then biting bitterly into the sour lemon. Oh god, he didn’t know his heart was able to hurt so bad…

Or maybe it’s Heaven’s revenge on him, for breaking so many hearts in the past.

Maybe he deserves to feel this, for all the pain he has caused other people already. That thought weirdly makes him laugh without humour, although the corners of his eyes start to burn yet again, as if mocking him.

“You couldn’t know. Usually, your silly game works out in your favour, huh?” Ace mumbles neutrally, reaching for the bowl with lemons.

“I should’ve stayed away from him…” he replies hoarsely.

“Maybe.”

“I’m never gonna do this again, Ace. If I ever like someone again, punch me in the fucking face and drag me away… I never want to feel like this again,” he mutters, hiding his face in his hands, whilst the alcohol spreads through his body, slowing down his thoughts and raising his body temperature.

Ace nudges his arm and hands him the next shot.

“Alright, will do…”

“Fucking love…relationships…I’ll return to fucking and breaking hearts, it’s what I’m good at…” he
mumbles, pouring himself the next shot, and downing it without waiting for Ace.

“Give it time. In a few weeks, you’ll be the same old Sabo again,” Ace says with a shrug.

“I fucking hope so…”

“Well, looks like we’re all available again. Me, you, Law. It’s been a while.”

“I’ll stick to fucking people in bathroom stalls,” Sabo mutters. Ace pours him another shot and he downs it, feeling his body numbing. The lack of food today and the tequila, it’s the most excellent mix to get wasted as soon as possible.

He doesn’t care anymore; he’s long, long past the point of caring anymore. All he knows is that he wants to numb that goddamn pain in his chest, and he doesn’t care how.

He grins slyly at Ace, placing his hand meaningfully on his thigh.

“Wanna fuck?” he asks, his words already slurred, but still clear enough.

“You’re drunk, Sabo,” Ace replies, but Sabo can see the heat rising to his cheeks and the stiffening of his body.

“I’m still clear enough. C’mon, we haven’t done it in a while,” he says sultrily, running his hand up and down the firm thigh, before he slides his hand between the man’s legs, stroking the growing bulge in his jeans.

Ace stops his fingers, and his hand is already so hot, like it was on fire, and Sabo knows that hand so well, he knows Ace’s body almost as well as his own, he still remembers how to rile the man up…

“Don’t, Sabo. You’ll regret this.”

“Not as much as I’m regretting fucking falling in love,” Sabo smirks, dowing another shot. Then he leans closer to Ace, gently placing tender kisses on his neck and collarbone. He feels Ace’s hand on his waist, and his quickened pulse right underneath his hands.

“So? Let’s fuck?” he asks again, smiling at Ace, licking over his neck seductively.

And he hears Ace curse, before the man jumps up, grabbing his hand and pulling him to his feet. Sabo almost falls over as the world suddenly starts spinning.

“You fucking moron…but don’t yell at me tomorrow!” Ace bellows and pulls him toward his room. And Sabo only smiles triumphantly as Ace pushes him onto his bed and closes the door behind them.

****

He has tried calling the boy, messaging him, even walked to his house and rang the doorbell for a good ten minutes. But Luffy hasn’t responded, hasn’t texted back, and hasn’t opened the door. Purposely and effectively pushing his existence out of his life, like he has never been there in the first place.

He has also tried his working place, his Muay Thai gym and he even waited in front of his lecture halls, only to learn that Luffy has skipped classes since Wednesday and has called in sick at the WindMill.

Goddamnit.
Sabo pulls at his own hair, so hard it hurts, as he sits on his bed, Sunday evening, dreading the next day when he would stand in front of Luffy’s class. He doesn’t know if he’s strong enough to face him. But he doesn’t know if he’ll be able to handle the rejection if Luffy would choose to skip his class, as well, in order to avoid him.

Both possibilities have his head throbbing and his fingers shaking with anxiety.

God, just how did it turn out like this…?

That phone call… shit, he should’ve controlled himself, he should’ve told Luffy to hush and sleep over it, he should’ve told him that they would talk the next time they would see each other, he should’ve told him…anything to distract him, he should’ve made him laugh to distract him from his confusion.

He should’ve been the rational, reasonable adult he always claims to be, but instead he has acted like a goddamn teenager, offended and hurt that his crush didn’t like him back.

Sabo had lost his freaking calm and yelled at the boy, his own pain and feeling of betrayal so overbearing, they had chased any rational thought out of his enraged mind, and all he had been able to think about was his wasted affection and broken heart.

He has yelled at the boy, although Luffy had done nothing, literally nothing wrong, he’d just been honest with him, brutally honest, but honest nevertheless...

It’s been him all along, he’s been the one who thought he could, somehow…get him to fall for him, get Luffy to give Sabo his heart they way Sabo has been so unbelievably ready to hand his own heart over to him, although Luffy had made it so very clear that he despises the concept of love.

Sabo should’ve listened to him.

And now he’s sitting here, regretting his actions so much he wants to cry, he wants to apologise, he wants Luffy to forgive him and he will never, ever talk about his own stupid feelings again, he will be the friend Luffy wants him to be, he will be whatever the boy wants him to be…

He just wants to be allowed back in Luffy’s life.

However, his worries are ungrounded, as he stands in front of the Global Politics class the next morning, but he sees that the seat next to Rebecca remains empty. Same goes for the seminar on Tuesday, he forces a smile on his face and talks about the World Nobles and their disgusting slave-trading policies.

His students listen eagerly, they participate in the class discussion, and although Sabo likes that they are so intrigued, his stomach feels like filled with acid and his temples are throbbing. A part of his has hoped that Luffy would come to his class, and he’d be able to apologise to him.

But no.

And his absence hurts even more than a kick in the guts or a punch in the face. His absence, his rejection hurts so deeply... He wishes he could close his eyes to it, but he can’t, and the entire seminar, the entire hour he has to teach, is like a never-ending torture.

****

“You look like a corpse. Seriously,” Koala says to him as he is in the office on Wednesday, desperately trying to concentrate on his work. His head is throbbing painfully, although he took painkillers earlier.
The thing is that the headache is nothing chemical medication can cure.

“Thanks, Koala,” he grumbles.

“Ace told me what happened.”

“Of course he did.”

“And I’m sorry.”

He rolls his eyes and looks up at the woman. Koala looks at him, a mix of pity and sympathy written across her face.

“Well, it’s my own fault, but thanks,” he says with a sigh.

“I mean, I admit I had my doubts in the beginning, but I would’ve loved for you two to work out, you know? Luffy made you happy,” she says, her voice a little melody, as if that could soothe his pain.

He blinks, subconsciously clawing his fingers into his shirt; he wishes he could just rip his damned pulsating organ out of his chest…

“Thanks for saying that, Koala,” he says with a closed-lip smile.

“Anything I can do?”

“I don’t think so. Have you heard from Law and Kidd, by the way?”

“Of course I have, who hasn’t? I believe half of Water Seven knows by now.”

“Any idea how we could help them?”

“Jesus, Sabo, your own heart is broken and you still think of how to help your friends…so noble and gallant…,” she chuckles.

“I’m being serious,” he says, but her unstrained laughter amuses him. This whole situation is so absurd; it actually is, to an extent, laughable.

“Well, I’ll go over to Law’s place tomorrow. Wanna come with me? We could invite Ace and Kohza as well; we could have a little party.”

“And accidentally invite Kidd, too, is what you’re implying?” Sabo asks, already seeing through her not so subtle plan.

“Yeah, and then lock the two of them in the bedroom. They will either fight or have sex, either way, at least they’ll talk to each other,” Koala says smugly.

“Koala, that sort of thing only works in movies and TV series, not in real life.”

“The thing is, I feel bad when we try to cheer up Law, but not Kidd. Both are our friends.”

“What can we do, if Kidd prefers to ignore all messages and disappear from the face of the earth?”

“Well, he’s still here in the city. I called his workplace yesterday; they said he only took last week off, apparently he came back to work like usual on Monday.”

“So you wanna wait for him in front of his lab?”
Eustass Kidd, although he doesn’t seem like it, works as mechanic, architect and engineer for the Galley-La company and as far as Sabo knows, he’s already climbed quite high in the hierarchy off the whole business, despite him only starting to work there barely three years ago.

“No, I’m just saying that he’s still around, you know.”

Oh, and his salary is ridiculous, it’s as good as Law’s, and Law is a freaking surgeon. The two were a mad couple, but a mad couple with a nice flat, Sabo has to admit.

Law still lives in said flat they used to share. Where Kidd has lived the past two weeks, Sabo doesn’t know.

Probably somewhere in a cheap hotel, drowning his heartache with alcohol.

“Anyways, for tomorrow, just text me if you want to come along?”

“Yeah, will do.”

“Alright, gotta get back to work. And Sabo…”

“Hm?”

“Don’t make yourself sick over Luffy, ok? It’ll work out somehow,” she smiles and Sabo sighs, before returning her smile half-heartedly.

“I wish I could share your optimism. But thanks, anyways, Koala.”

****

A few hours later, he’s in bed, naked, Ace next to him, both calming down from the incredibly satisfying sex. Sabo’s breath is still coming in hard pants and he swipes his sweaty bangs away from his forehead. At least this time, it’s not his ass that is burning.

He looks over at Ace, who is still flat on his back, staring dazedly at the ceiling, his pupils really wide and dark, his chest moving up and down almost as quickly as Sabo’s.

Sabo chuckles, rather satisfied with his work. He disposes of the condom and tries to get comfortable on the sticky sheets.

“Shit, I forgot how good you are,” Ace wheezes, his voice grown raspy from Sabo’s relentless teasing and tantalizing and thorough foreplay.

“Thanks,” Sabo mumbles and gently strokes his best friend’s face. Ace catches his fingers and presses a kiss to his fingertips.

He should actually be the one to thank Ace. Ace has been painfully understanding, he’s been the one who prevented him from going completely crazy this past week. He’s let Sabo get wasted, he has looked out for him, he has listened to him, hours and hours, he has offered his consolation and company, he has also fucked Sabo into blissful oblivion.

Yeah, Sabo has been at his worst these past couple of days. But Ace hasn’t scolded him once; he hasn’t gotten annoyed with him, although Sabo has given him more than enough reasons to. He only got a little pissed last Thursday, when Sabo practically begged him to fuck him.

But aside from that, Ace has been the best fucking friend. He should receive an award or so, because Sabo doesn’t know if he would’ve been as patient with him, if their roles had been reversed.

Sabo gently presses a kiss to Ace’s lips. The kiss deepens, but they are both drained, and they both
have to be at work tomorrow, so they break the contact soon, before things get steamy again.

The journalist rests a few minutes more, before he slowly sits up. “You go take a shower first. I need to change these sheets,” he says, pointing at his bed.

“Yeah, sure.”

And the tenderness between them fades as they both stand up from the damp mess they’ve made, each lost in thought. Sabo pulls his underwear and jeans and shirt back on and Ace pats his shoulder and presses a kiss to his cheek, before he picks up his clothes and walks, still stark naked, to the bathroom and a few minutes later, Sabo can hear the shower running.

Next week will be half-term, which means that there won’t be any lectures and seminars for a week. His mood darkens as he remembers. So that means he won’t have a chance of seeing Luffy in class.

He’s starting to get worried. It’s one thing to ignore him, but it’s not like Luffy to purposely miss classes. Definitely not for such a long period of time. Sabo’s stomach burns when he thinks that he’s the only fucking reason for the boy to neglect his studies.

He has to talk to someone. He has to make sure that Luffy is ok. He should…he should ask Robin, yeah, the woman surely knows how he’s doing.

Sabo throws the dirty beddings into the laundry basket and is about to stuff the naked duvet into a fresh cover, as his phone starts buzzing.

He flinches and his eyes dart around, until he sees the buzzing and vibrating thing on his desk. He almost hits his elbow as he grabs it from the surface, seeing that an unknown number is calling him.

Fear drops into his stomach, like a bucket of ice water. *Oh shit…*

“Yeah?” he answers the call and god, he hopes his voice doesn’t shake as much as his body.

“Uhm, Sabo? This is Usopp,” he hears and Sabo remembers the long-nosed friend of Luffy’s.

“Uh, good evening Usopp,” he says confused.

“Yeah, yeah. Listen, do you have any idea what’s wrong with Luffy? Is he at your place? He has to do his 1-hour presentation tomorrow, and it’ll be marked, but he didn’t show up to his classes the entire week. At least it’s what Professor Lucci said, and he told Robin, and Robin told Franky, and Franky told me, because he’s my tutor. I’ve tried texting and calling, we all did, but Luffy doesn’t reply! It’s super weird, it’s so not like him!”

Sabo rubs his forehead, the headaches returning and he tries hard to keep up with Usopp quiet confusing explanations. “Uhm, no, I haven’t spoken to him recently, and he isn’t at my place, either. Say, have you tried his flat?”

“Yeah, I’m standing in front of his damn building! His windows are dark, though, I think he isn’t home, but he isn’t at Zoro and Sanji’s place either, I already asked them!”

“Shit… Ok, do you think he might’ve…like, left the city? For half-term or whatever?”

“No, he would’ve told us! He’s just gone, from one day to the other, he disappeared, I haven’t seen him since last week!” Usopp yells.

“He’s been missing for the entire week? Is that what you’re saying!?” Sabo shouts, panic wrapping
tightly around his chest, making it almost unable to breathe.

“Yeah, well, no one has seen him for a week at least…,” he hears Usopp say worried and Sabo facepalms.

“Have you contacted the police?”

“No, should I?”

“Yes!”

“Oh, ok.”

“Yeah, ok, so all of you guys have tried contacting him and he hasn’t replied to any of you?” Sabo tries to make clear.

“Yes! It’s like he’s been swallowed by the goddamn earth!”

“Argh, shit…alright, go and talk to the police and then go home and rest.”

“And?”

“We’ll look for him tomorrow. It’s already dark, but we’ll look for him tomorrow, I promise.”

“Alright – oh no, wait! I can see him, he’s – **HOLY SHIT WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?!!**” and suddenly, the connection is cut off and Sabo blinks, his hand clenched so hard around his phone his knuckles crack.

And within the blink of an eye, he throws a sweater over his shoulder and he slips into his sneakers and then rushes out the front door, cold fear gripping his heart and pressing the air from his lungs.

Oh god, if something has happened to Luffy…

He grits his teeth and runs down the street.

*Luffy!*
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Luffy

Drip.

Drip.

Drip.

The blood trickling down his legs and hands colours the cobblestone crimson red and shiny, reflecting the street lantern brilliantly, like a sea of liquid ruby. He leans forward slightly, his shoulders tense, his back bent, like a goblin, like a walking nightmare. He stares passed Usopp into space, his vision tinged with a layer or red. Or maybe his tears have turned to blood already. He doesn't know.

And he doesn't care.

His gaze wanders upward, so unbelievingly slowly, and it takes heartbeats until he recognises where he is.

Yeah, he’s almost…home. He needs to open that door.

Slow, so terribly slow, he lifts his hand and searches in his pocket for the keys. They rattle promisingly in his front pocket and he pulls them out, only to drop them into the small puddle of blood. He bends down, his muscles screaming in pain, to pick them up. They slip out of his fingers again.

He stares to the ground. His body shuddering with the strain.

“For Christ’s sake, the fuck happened to you? You look like you went through hell!” Usopp yells at him, and his friend bends down to pick the keys up, softly cursing under his breath.

He wordlessly watches Usopp open the door, and he lets him go ahead, Luffy can hear how the door slams close behind him. He looks at the stairs. Might as well be a fucking mountain he has to climb up.

Usopp, walking right behind him, is still going on and on about something, Luffy doesn’t really listen, his head is hurting like a motherfucker and his thoughts are cloudy and strange and his body hardly responds to him anymore, simply everything in him hurts, the pain is so consuming, so vast it takes his breath away and he welcomes it.

He stumbles through the door to his flat and into the mess that is his living room, he pushes the books and rubbish and video game cases off the sofa and onto the carpet and just lies down, exhausted and miserable and hurting and bleeding.

“Luffy, I called Chopper, he’ll be here in a bit,” he hears Usopp say.

Luffy nods, his gaze somewhere lost in space.

“H-here, drink some water, buddy… just what the hell happened?” his friend says and he feels how
Usopp gently forces him to grip a glass of water and then Usopp crouches down next to the sofa, patting his arm.

“Nothing happened,” Luffy says tiredly and he pours the water down his parched throat, coughing afterwards and spitting blood in his palm.

“Yeah, because nothing makes you look like you walked through hell and back!”

“I’m fine, Usopp,” he mumbles. He isn’t in the mood for explaining himself.

“Stop shitting me. Who the hell beat you up? I hope the other guy looks worse, because if not, I’ll fucking –”

“Usopp, seriously, I’m fine…”

Usopp looks at him, and Luffy knows that his friend is upset that he won’t tell him the truth. Luffy closes his eyes to the reproachful and hurt look in his friend’s face. He’s too tired to care. Too hurt to care.

“Anyways, everyone is worried about you. You haven’t been texting for a week!”

“Yeah. Sorry,” Luffy mumbles. He isn’t sorry at all.

“Whatever, I’ll tell everyone that you’re….uh, safe and shit.”

Luffy almost drifts off into sleep, as he hears someone ring the doorbell.

“Ah, must be Chopper,” Usopp says and scrambles to his feet to push the door opener for downstairs.

“You really didn’t have to call him this late,” Luffy mumbles.

“Like you got any say when you look like a zombie. Oh, and Robin says she will come see you tomorrow, but she’s glad you’re home now and Sanji replied, too, he says I should kick you in the ass for making him worry so much.”

“Text him: thanks, asshole,” Luffy says and grimaces as he lifts a hand to reach to his backpocket. With a pained groan he takes his phone out. Ah shit. The screen is smashed after all.

“Holy crap, how did that happen? Today?”

“Yeah.”

“Christ…”

Usopp curses again and Luffy hears how he opens the door.

“Hey Chopper, sorry I called you so late…”

“It’s fine, where is he?” Luffy can hear the reindeer say worried and he rolls his eyes. If everyone would just fucking stop worrying about him… He doesn’t need their goddamn pity and their goddamn friendliness, it just - it just…hurts more...

“On the sofa.”
The reindeer comes to kneel down next to the sofa, his gigantic medical bag right next to him. Luffy tries a tired smile to smoothen the deep frown on Chopper’s forehead, but of course, it doesn’t work.

“Luffy! What the hell happened?” Chopper squeals appalled, immediately rummaging in his bag for bandages, disinfectant and patches.

“...Got into a fight,” he finally admits. Well, he thinks it has been obvious, anyways.

“With who?!”

“Some guys…”

“Anyways, do you feel dizzy? Let me look at your eyes…”

Luffy lets the reindeer hold a flashlight in his eyes, before Chopper tells him to sit up carefully and take off his blood-soaked shirt.

At least it’s not just his blood…

“Luffy, I’ll just give you a quick injection, it’s a sedative… this cut on your arm looks mean, I think I need to stitch that up,” Chopper says, his voice completely neutral. He’s a doctor after all; it takes a lot more to shock him.

“Yeah, whatever you want, Doc,” Luffy says with a dead voice.

“Usopp, could you do me a favour, please, and move the living room table so I got a bit more space?” Chopper asks as he sinks the thin needle with the sedative into Luffy’s vein.

“Yeah sure… crap, Luffy, your living room looks like a wasteyard, what the hell?” Usopp sighs and Luffy watches him move the living room table and hurriedly gather his stuff and throw it into the corner next to the TV.

The pounding in his head ebbs away as the sedative kicks in surprisingly quickly and he watches Chopper work on his wounds with half-lidded eyes, his mind gradually detaching from his body.

Usopp is somewhere in the kitchen, probably looking for food, he believes…and wasn’t that the doorbell just now…? Luffy’s thought slow down more and more, he feels like falling asleep now...and never wake up again...

“Usopp, the door!” Chopper says loudly, eyes fixed on Luffy’s left upper arm he stitches up right now.

“Who that?” Luffy mumbles.

“Maybe Sanji? To kick you personally?” Usopp sneers as he walks to the door.

“Funny, Usopp,” Luffy hears himself reply. Thinking becomes harder and harder and god, he welcomes the numbness of his body, he welcomes the cloudy sense of not caring at all anymore, he welcomes the distraction.

That’s exactly what he has wanted. To paint over the unbearable pain inside him with an even worse on the outside.

And it’s working, right?

It's what the whole fucking purpose of the charade is. To numb the inside pain with an outside one.
And good god, finally, it’s working, after days and days, and hours and hours of crying and cursing and hoping that something would happen, anything, and he has hated himself, because after all this time he still believes a miracle will happen and someone will save his world, but no, that shit only happens in movies and once again the fucking universe had to teach him this fuckin lesson, again the gods had to punch him in the guts and force him to his knees and he wonders what the point of standing up again is.

Yeah that’s right. There’s not point.

He closes his eyes, the sedative swirling through him like a soothing current.

He can breathe again.

“What – Sabo?!” Usopp says loudly and Luffy snaps, his eyes widening, his head sobering up at once, his fingers suddenly clenching into his torn trousers –

“Please, Usopp, tell me he’s alright!” he hears Sabo’s voice saying, and the sound alone drives tears to Luffy’s eyes and why is he here, why does he have to make this even harder than it already is, why are you here, Sabo, just what do you want, I thought it’s over…!

“Y-yeah, he-he is sitting on the sofa, Chopper is stitching him up…” Usopp says, and of course he lets him into Luffy’s flat, Luffy hasn’t told anyone about the phone call last week, he hasn’t told anyone, none of his nakama –

He stubbornly keeps his eyes focused on Chopper, and suddenly, he wishes the reindeer wouldn’t have given him the sedative, he wishes he had the physical, the outside-pain now, to distract himself from that awful, terrible cut inside his chest, the cut not even Chopper can mend.

He can almost feel him approaching, he recognises the way he walks, he recognises the sound of his feet on the carpet, and he angrily blinks away the tears in his eyes.

“Luffy?”

He shakes his head, as if Sabo was just a bad dream he could wake up from.

“Luffy, please, look at me.”

And Sabo crouches down, next to Chopper, but with enough space in between them so he wouldn’t disturb the med student’s work. He doesn’t touch Luffy, but he has his hands rested on the seat cushion, on either side of Luffy’s legs.

Luffy looks to the side, chewing on his split bottom lip.

“Luffy. I’m sorry, I know you don’t want to see me, but please tell me that you will be alright.”

“...I’m fine,” he croaks after a moment that feels like a year.

“Well, he isn’t exactly fine, if you want to hear my opinion, Sabo. His bruises are pretty bad. And Luffy, you need to get an x-ray tomorrow. Your ribs could be cracked,” Chopper chimes in.

Luffy still feels Sabo’s unmoving gaze on him.

“Stop staring at me!” he barks unnecessarily loudly and Chopper flinches, before rolling his eyes.

“Luffy, calm down, it was me who called him,” Usopp says.
“Why?!”

“Because you didn’t contact us for a fucking week, you idiot! Obviously we would worry about you!”

“Well, I’m fine, thanks!” Luffy shouts back.

“You’re clearly not, if Chopper is here to fix you, you dumbass!”

“I didn’t ask Chopper to come here, jerk! I didn’t ask you to come here, either!”

“Jesus Christ, we’re just trying to help you!”

“I don’t need your fucking help! I don’t need anybody!” Luffy yells, and his voice cracks, tears blurring his vision and the silence that follows afterwards is almost as painful as the throbbing inside his chest.

He feels the first tears falling down and he hides his face in his right hand, trying so pathetically to stifle his sobs.

“Guys, give us a minute, please?” Sabo suddenly says, in his usual friendly way, his tone like acid in Luffy’s ears.

“…Ok…” he hears Usopp say, and from his tone Luffy can tell that his friend is pissed off.

“You, too, Chopper? I promise, it’ll just be a minute.”

“Ok. Make sure he doesn’t move too much,” Chopper says and Luffy can hear how his friends walk into the kitchen, closing the door behind them.

And now he’s alone with the one man whose fault it is that he’s like this. It’s all Sabo’s fault, if it wasn’t for him, Luffy wouldn’t have to go through this again... if it wasn’t for Sabo, he wouldn’t need to feel this agony again...

*It’s all your fault...*

He snuffles.

“Luffy. Please look at me?” Sabo asks and Luffy bites his lower lip, he doesn’t want to give in, he doesn’t want to look at him, he doesn’t want to hear his voice, he doesn’t want to be reminded of…

“Just – just hear me out, yes?”

Luffy snuffles again. Even if he wanted to, he can’t even see Sabo through his tears anymore, let alone the rest of his living room. It’s all a hot, watery blurr.

“I want to apologise. I – I’m sorry that I said…what I said. And I’m sorry I yelled at you. And I’m sorry that I gave you the feeling that you needed to skip classes, and that you needed to avoid me and stay away from your friends and do…this, whatever it is that caused you to get beat up like this. Listen, I can’t take back what I said, but I want you to know that I’m feeling so, so sorry, and I’ll take full responsibility.”

Luffy closes his eyes, he wishes he could cover his ears, he doesn’t want to hear this, he doesn’t…

“I don’t…” he starts and his voice is so raspy, he clears his throat and starts again, still not daring to
look in the man’s direction.

“T don’t want your love, Sabo.”

“I know.”

“And I hate that you yelled at me.”

“It won’t happen again”

And new tears stream down his face; he grimaces as he chokes out: “And I don’t – I don’t want you being mean to me, Sabo.”

“I won’t ever be mean to you, again, Luffy. I promise.”

“Because I can’t take when you’re mean to me. Because I want Sabo to stay in my life!!” he sobs, his own voice so ugly, so broken in his ears.

And suddenly, he feels two warm arms wrap around him, and he feels so weak, he hasn’t felt this weak in such a long time, and he claws his free hand into Sabo’s sweater, he practically howls, this is too much, too much for his simple little heart, he sobs and cries, he pours it all out, his pain, his sadness, his anger, his confusion, his helplessness and most of all, his loneliness, this terrible, terrible loneliness, he pours it all out, he shows it all to Sabo and Sabo keeps still, holding him gently, his kindness making Luffy cry more, because he can’t…why…

“Shhhh, it’s ok…” he hears him say, again and again, like a broken record and at some point, when Luffy’s sobs have quieted down, his throat is hurting from his violent crying and he has ripped the stitches and his eyes burn and he just feels empty and…and done.

Luffy snuffles, before he wipes the last traces of his tears from his cheeks – only to smear half-dried blood across his face.

Great.

“Shh, don’t move too much. Chopper has to tend these cuts now, ok?” Sabo says quietly, and even though Luffy still doesn’t look at him, he can hear the smile in his voice.

“…Sorry…” he mumbles.

“You have nothing to apologise for. Usopp, Chopper, come back, please?” he says loudly and the door to the kitchen flies open.

“Jesus Christ, is Luffy alright? Sounded like someone died!” Usopp yells, pulling at his hair.

“Nah, I’m fine,” Luffy mutters as his friends walk back to them.

“Guys, it’s almost one in the morning, and I got class tomo… today,” Chopper yawns and moves back to kneel in front of Luffy to finish his tending the countless bruises and wounds.

Luffy smiles tiredly at Usopp: “Sorry. Sorry for earlier, too.”

“It’s ok.”

Luffy leans against Sabo’s chest as he waits for Chopper to finish. Sabo’s arms are still around him and he feels sleepy, from the sedative, from the relentless beating he got earlier – and which he’d asked for, anyways – and most of all from his emotional outbreak he’s too tired to be embarrassed
about.

Now he’s just empty, as if void of any feelings, like he gave them all to Sabo, all the negativity, all the feelings that have been eating him up this past week.

Maybe it’s the case, he doesn’t know. But he knows that he’s so, so glad that Sabo is here. And that he has apologised.

And that Luffy has him back.

“Allright, all done,” Chopper says roughly ten minutes later.

Luffy yawns. “Thanks, Chopper.”

“But you still owe us an explanation,” Usopp reminds him and Luffy grins: “Will tell you tomorrow.”

“Luffy, first thing tomorrow, you’ll go to the doctor and get and x-ray,” Chopper says, throwing his bag over his shoulder.

“Shishi, alright.”

“I’ll make sure he goes to the doctor,” Sabo says over Luffy’s head.

“Allright, then.”

“Ah, Luffy, and the presentation tomorrow!” Usopp suddenly says and Luffy stares at his friend. What presentation…?

And then he remembers and he gaps at him, his heart racing, his eyes almost jumping out of his sockets.

“Fuuuuuck! The presentation! It’s not ready yet!”

“You idiot, you had six weeks!!”

“Yeah, shit….”

“Don’t worry, I’ll talk to Professor Lucci and we’ll get you a medical certificate tomorrow,” Sabo offers.

“No, shit, it won’t work, he’s super strict when it comes to that,” Luffy says and he feels like crying again, but this time, at his own stupidity.

“Nah, don’t worry, I’ll dig some shit out about him and blackmail him into giving you another date to present,” Sabo says with a shrug and all their heads turn to stare at the blond journalist.

Luffy is the first to break into laughter: “That would be super helpful! You sure you can do that?”

“Sure I can. Wouldn’t be the first time. One of the reasons Ace got his bachelor’s degree.”

“Well, I trust you, then. So, Luffy, Sabo, I need to sleep,” Usopp yawns.

“Yeah, same,” Chopper agrees.

“Ok, guys, get home safely. And thanks again for the help today,” Luffy thanks his friends. The two
just grin cheekily at him and disappear through the door, leaving him and Sabo sitting on the sofa, the smell of disinfectant still prominent in the air.

“I’m tired, too,” he declares and he’s starting to shiver. It’s almost November, after all, and the adrenaline has long left his blood already.

“Can you walk?”

“I guess.”

“Ok, you go to the bathroom and brush your teeth. I’ll wait,” Sabo says and Luffy looks at him, and he’s only met with the kind, gentle gaze he knows so well.

He nods and stands up on slightly insecure legs. But he manages to get to the bathroom. When he walks to his room, Sabo isn’t sitting in the living room anymore, but the light is switched on in Luffy’s bedroom.

He yawns. He feels like he could sleep for a hundred years in a row…

Sabo is sitting on his bed, patting Sunny absent-mindedly. But as Luffy comes through the door, he smiles and stands up.

“You alright?” he asks.

“Yeah. Just tired…”

“Ok. I’ll wait till you’re asleep, then.”

Luffy blinks rapidly, he changes from the torn pair of jeans into pyjama bottoms, he doesn’t even care if Sabo watches or not, and he pulls a sweatshirt over his head. Then, with a relieved sigh, he sinks down onto the mattress, with a feeling that his whole aching body sighs, too, and he looks up at the man, he doesn’t know what to say, he’s just…he’s…

“Do you need anything else?” Sabo asks as he sits down on the mattress again, placing Sunny right next to Luffy’s shoulder.

“No…a-and Sabo, because of the phone call – ”

“Shhhh, it’s ok, we will talk about that some other time,” Sabo says softly.

Luffy frowns. He wants to talk about it…he wants…he wants it all to be normal again, he wants Sabo to understand him and…

He feels a warm hand in his hair, as if to calm down the storm of confused thoughts inside, and then warm fingers stroke his cheek.

“I’ll tell your lecturers that you won’t come in tomorrow.”

“Thanks. And Sabo…?”

“Yes?”

“C-can you stay?”

Sabo shifts a little, but not much. “Are you sure?”

“Y-yes!”
“Ok, hang on.”

And Sabo disappears in the bathroom for a bit, before he comes back. He simply strips off his jeans and sweater and then comes to lie down next to him, only clad in boxers and a shirt.

Luffy smiles, because the familiar, treasured warmth is back.

“Is this really alright?”

“Yeah, I want this.”

“Ok.”

“A-and tomorrow..?”

“I’ll call work that I got an emergency. They’ll understand.”

And Luffy sighs happily and he wonders if he’s allowed to move closer to Sabo or if that would be weird. But the man decides for him and simply throws his arm across his waist and pulls him closer, until he’s rested right against his chest.

“This alright?” Sabo asks with a low hum, stroking his back.

“Hmmmm....”

“Ok, then try to sleep now, yes? And I’ll be here when you wake up.”

Sabo

Hours later, still in the deep of the night, Sabo sits up in the pitch black room. It’s so dark he can’t see his fingers in front of his eyes, but he can feel – he feels Luffy’s warm breath ghosting over his skin and the steady, slow beating of his heart right next to him.

Sabo smiles into the darkness, before he carefully stands up to walk into the living room, his hand around his phone. The living room is the same as they left it, messy and blood everywhere and the living room table standing in the wrong spot. There’s still traces of dried blood on the sofa and Sabo’s smile fades as he thinks back how badly Luffy has looked, how haunted and wounded... both inside and out. His face greyish, with dark shadows under his eyes, his eyes wide and terribly, frighteningly empty.

He looked like a corpse.

Sabo makes his way to the kitchen and lifts his phone to his hear. It rings at least twenty times, before he finally picks up.

“Sabo, you got any fucking idea what time it is!?” Law snarls with a voice that could be directly out of hell itself, and Sabo bites back a laugh.

“Sorry, Law. But I need to know if there were guy in the ER today. Badly beaten up.”

“The fuck!?”

“Just tell me, please.”

Law growls in the back of his throat, ebfore he says: “Yeah, five dudes. Assholes. Bad bruises and one had a cracked rib. Why?”
“Got their names?”

“Why, Sabo?”

“Luffy was the one who beat them up. Well, they beat him up, too. Badly.”

It’s silent for a moment and then Sabo can hear how Law sits up in his bed.

“…That would explain a few things.”

“Yeah, see, and I’d really like to meet these guys. So care telling me their names?” Sabo says sweetly.

Law sighs: “I’m a doctor, Sabo. And even if I was allowed to tell you – I think it’s not a good idea.”

“It is, you should’ve seen Luffy…” and white hot anger starts pooling in Sabo’s stomach again and he subconsciously clenches his fists.

“I’m not convinced.”

“Alright, fine, what the hell would you do if it was you in my place? And Kidd got beaten to a bloody pulp?” Sabo bellows angrily.

It stays silent for a moment. Then:

“I fucking hate you.”

“So?”

“We’ll talk tomorrow. Now let me sleep, fucking jerk.”

“Thanks.”

Sabo grins in satisfaction, the anger still itching underneath his fingertips. These fuckers will pay for what they did to Luffy…

He’ll teach them a lesson or two…

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading.
Chapter 12

Luffy

About a week later, Luffy is back at the WindMill. He has half-term and with several of his deadlines pushed back – thanks to Sabo blackmailing his professor – he has pleasingly much free time to do whatever he wants.

His life has basically returned to normal again. His friends have quickly forgiven him for being a selfish idiot, and he and Sabo have seen each other as often as possible. Luffy smiles when he thinks about it, his hands are busy washing dishes, so his thoughts are free to float around.

Although they haven’t talked about the phone call and his getting into a brawl yet, they have been talking a lot, actually, and together with his bruises, his heart has been healing well.

Oh, and the day before yesterday, Sabo has invited him to that great steak place uptown and Luffy’s mouth still waters when he thinks back to the delicate meat and perfect potatoes…almost as good as Sanji’s…

Speaking of Sanji, he and Zoro are finally on holiday together, to celebrate their five-year-anniversary. Half an hour ago, Sanji has sent him a selfie of them together on a tall building, with the beautiful city of San Faldo far beneath them. Luffy smiles. His friends have looked so happy on the photo.

It’s Thursday evening, and later, Sabo will come over again, together with Franky, Robin and Nami. They will have dinner together and then play a few card games and chat and everything and have a goo time. Franky and Robin, as they’re both working for the university, as well, enjoy the free week just as much as Luffy does. And Nami, their ever-single, has nothing else to do, anyways, since she has half-term, too.

Usopp is gone to visit his girlfriend Kaya, and Chopper is home on Drum island, to see Doctor Kuleha.

As he’s on his way back from work, he dreamily pulls the scar around his neck over his nose. It’s gotten cold outside and the sunset isn’t too far away anymore, in winter, the sun always sets so early, you can barely call it a day. But that’s just the thing when you live here.

He likes that his body barely hurts anymore. Next week, he can surely go to the Muay Thai training again. And maybe, Sabo will come with him, he mentioned something the other day, and both he and Ace want to try it. Luffy is really looking forward to that!

His phone buzzes in his backpocket. He got it over the weekend, because his old one has been completely irreparable, at least it’s what Franky and Usopp said, and they both are engineers. So Luffy got a new one, and he likes it a lot. It makes better pictures and the speakers are better – and the best thing is, he has been able to keep the old SIM card, so he didn’t neet to run around and ask everyone for their numbers again.

He looks at the display and sees that Sabo has texted him.

-hey, how was work?
And Luffy smiles happily and texts back:

-work was good, really chill. how was your day?

-busy, half of the colleagues are sick! btw, anything else I can bring later? besides myself?

-don’t think so, won’t be me who’s cooking, anyways. maybe bring chocolate or so?

-ok! and so that you know, I will be about an hour late, I’m sorry! just work’s crazy when only half the staff is here

-that’s ok! no worries!

Luffy shrugs and sighs, feeling really content, and he walks the rest of the way home, his steps so light like he was walking on snow. At least Sabo is still coming over tonight, although it’s so busy at the office. Luffy laughs lightheartedly. He’s sooo looking forward to seeing Sabo!

Sabo

Sabo leans against the back of the sofa, is thumb swiping across the display of his phone. Then he chooses one of the contacts and lifts his phone to his ear. He doesn’t have to wait long.

“Where are you now?” Sabo asks.

“About to leave the house. You?” Law replies.

“Almost ready. Be there in ten.”

“See ya in a bit.”

Sabo then walks through their living room and knocks on Ace’s door.

“You ready?” Sabo asks his best friend.

Ace is about to pull a shirt over his head. Just like Sabo, he’s clad completely in black, his posture and face already screaming criminal offence, and Sabo’s heart flutters in joyful wickedness. It’s been such a long time since they’ve been properly bad. The type of bad that makes your stomach clench because you get so excited and aroused you don’t know what to do with the storm of energy except for planting your fist in someone’s mouth or sinking your foot in someone’s guts.

Ace turns his head and the same malicious smile is mirrored in his features. Sabo throws him a pair of black bandages to wrap around his knuckles and wrist.

Not that they’ve never fought bare-knuckle before, but they all have to go to work tomorrow, so they’d rather not risk bursting their knuckles. People don’t need to see the traces of what they’re about to do tonight.

Sabo glances at the time. He still has about two hours. He grins darkly. More than enough time to get down to the docks, come back and have a shower and then walk to Luffy’s.

“Fuck, it’s been so long,” Ace sighs and lets his neck roll and crack.

“Yeah, I know.”

“You sure they’re going to be there?”
“Pretty sure. If not we’ll do it another time.”

“Gotcha.” Ace crouches down to tie his shoe laces.

“But Ace?”

“Hm?”

“Not a word to Luffy.”

Ace looks at him, his eyes unreadable. “…I knew you would say that”

“Things between us are getting better; I don’t want him to know.”

“Fine, your decision. But Sabo, just remember that you were the one who hurt him in the first place. Not them.”

Sabo glares at him, but of course, Ace, ever the psychologist, won’t shut up.

“I’m just saying, You’ve already proven plenty that you can’t be rational when it comes to Luffy. And seriously? What would he say if he knew that you go beserk on the dudes he already beat up? Remember Kidd beat up that dude that harassed Law at work, when Law was still on probationary period? In the end, Law had to stitch the same guy up, hell that was drama, remember how Kidd completely lost it then? Hope shit like that's not gonna happen to you and Luffy, man.”

“Just pipe down, Ace, I know what I’m doing.”

“Well, lately it’s not really been going according to your stupid plans, huh?”

Sabo rolls his eyes, but retreats back to the living room. He doesn’t plan on telling Luffy. At least not in the near future.

And to be honest – he doesn’t think Luffy would be all that mad at him. It’s not like he’s an angel, either… Well yeah, most of the time he is and Sabo adores it, but sometimes…

Luffy’s completely harmless most of the time, too cute and hungry for his own good, but Sabo has seen what Luffy can do in a fight, when faced with a potential physical conflict.

And good Lord, if he’s ever had a halo, it’s long broken already.

Just like Sabo’s.

****

Ace and him leave their flat to meet Law not far from their place at a small bridge across a canal that is a natural boundary between midtown and downtown. It’s bitterly cold tonight – it’s November after all, and a thick fog is travelling up from the sea, blurring their surroundings with a milky layer of mist, heavy with the smell of salt and fish.

Law is sitting on the railing of the bridge, just like them he’s only wearing black, and he looks at them calmly, although his grey eyes gleam in the darkness.

Sabo nods at him: “Thanks for coming.”

“No worries. Anyone else coming?”

“Actually no, I thought us three is enough to deal with five.”
“Yeah, I though so, too,” Ace says.

“Alright, let’s get going.”

They make their way down to the port, the fog becoming thicker with every step. The smell becomes worse the closer they get to the sea, and Sabo sees how Law pulls his scarf over his nose, a disapproving frown forming between his brows. He mimics his movement and then digs his hands deep into his pockets. The fog is wet and cold, and the clamminess seems to creep into his clothes, into his bones, slowing him down like an icy grip around his body.

He doesn’t like it.

“Yo, Sabo where do we need to go?”

“Apparently, these dudes hang out at the old warehouse F, the one that was supposed to be knocked down last spring? Plans got cancelled and it’s still there, supposedly standing vacant” Sabo replies.

“How do you know they’re there, by the way?” Law asks him.

“…I asked around,” Sabo says vaguely. He doesn’t need to get into detail, right?

“…Alright, when we get there, what’s the plan? Just marching in?” Ace asks, letting his knuckles crack in dangerous anticipation.

“…I guess?” Sabo asks, looking at Law.

The surgeon shrugs. “I don’t care, do whatever you want.”

“C’mon, show a little initiative?” Ace grins.

“Fffff, yeah, like you brats ever listen to what I have to say,” Law replies dryly.

“Christ, Law, stop pretending! We all know you need to blow off steam,” Ace sneers and wraps his arm around Law’s neck and grins at him.

“Back off, Ace.”

“I’m just saying, your frown is deeper than usual. I bet you’ll be the first to run inside, huh?”

Law grimaces at him and frees himself from his arm. “I’ll let you kids play first, I’ll be back-up.”

“Stop being such a killjoy, for heaven’s sake,” Sabo says and friendly punches his shoulder. “It’s not like you’ve never enjoyed this.”

“Yeah, but usually–,” and Law stops talking, the frown deepening even more and the light vanishes from his eyes.

Sabo and Ace look at each other, questioningly, before it hits Sabo like a kick in the guts, oh goodness, how could he be so stupid, so goddamn self-absorbed… Self-absorbed in his own drama that he totally pushed Law’s and Kidd’s break-up out of his head – and now the realisation comes back full force.

On a normal occasion, Kidd would be with them now, eager to kick some ass, and he’d grin at Law, the way he always does, and Law would return the smirk, with that quiet affection in his eyes.

Yeah, none of that is left. There’s just Law, looking shockingly slim in his clothes, and with an air of
silent sadness and anger around him.
Sabo winces. He’s such a fucking idiot.

“Sorry, Law, I didn’t want to remind you…,” Sabo says worried.

“…It’s fine,” Law growls.

It obviously isn’t.

Ace looks at Ace Do something! But Ace just shrugs helplessly.

Jesus, why are you even a psychologist…?

Sabo looks at his phone. Should he…? He glances at Law, unsure. It could either be a good idea…or someone’s gonna die tonight, with a scalpel in his chest…

He bites his lower lip. And then starts typing, behind his back, so Law won’t notice…

“Alright, try to be unsuspicious,” Sabo mumbles.

“I always am,” Ace mutters back and he quickly, perfectly quietly climbs up the empty barrels and wooden chests, all abandoned, up to look through one of the fogged up windows. They can see light flickering inside.

“What can you see?” Law asks, looking back over his shoulder.

This part of the port is as good as deserted. Even during daytime, not many people are here, because most of these ware houses are abandoned. So this place is like a breeding ground for all sorts of human scum you usually don’t meet in the rest of the cultivated part of Water Seven.

The crashing of the ocean against the pier is loud; the relentless breathing of the waves is disturbingly restless, announcing a worsening of the weather soon. They should get started.

“Ace?” Sabo asks.

“There are more than five in there, Sabo. More like a dozen, sitting around a table, looks like they’re gambling. They all look like assholes.” Ace says grimly.

“Really, a dozen?” Sabo asks, frowning. That’s not what he was told… “Ok, great. Shall we still do it?”

Law just shrugs, his face borderline indifferent. They all know how to handle themselves – but still, it’s going to get messy.

“See any weapons?”

“Couple wooden sticks.”

Ace jumps down. “So?”

“Whatever,” Law grumbles.

“We can do it,” Sabo says.

“I think so, too. Ok, any preamble? Let’s just barge in?”

“Always worked for us, huh?”
“Ok. Law, you know how the guys looked like?” Sabo asks.

“Yeah. I’ll tell you.”

“Alright,” Sabo grins, his heart speeding up, beating rapidly against his chest, pumping the blood through his body. Oh god how he loves this, the excitement, the rush when you know that what you’re about to do is dangerous and bad and so much fucking fun. He looks at his friends, pulling his scarf from his mouth. Not even Law can hide the growing anticipation in his face, Sabo can see it.

He nods, letting his knuckles crack.

“Let’s have fun, guys.”

CRAAASH!!!!

With synchronised kick that he and Ace have perfected over the years, they kick the door open, wooden splinters flying everywhere, and the guys inside jump up in shock, staring at them with wide eyes.

“Sabo. The one with green hair and piercings. The dude with the long pony-tail. Guy with the face-mask. The one with the iron jaw. The fat dude that resembles an owl,” Law mutters to him as they walk up to the group.

“Gotcha. They’e mine,” Sabo says. He eyes them. He can even see the bruises on their faces from here, although they’re halfway healed. Well, it’s been a week.

“Sure,” Ace replies darkly, and he has the crazy eyes already.

They stop a good van’s length in front of them.

Sabo can see how the shock fades from their faces, and gets replaced with both anger and humour, the two strong emotions drawing sharp wrinkles into their ugly faces and making them look both animalistic and crass. Yeah, Sabo understands why they would laugh, must look completely stupid, only them three against a group of them.

But they don’ know him and Ace and Law.

He grins, his heart is thundering against his ribs, his fingers are itching for some blood.

They’re about to find just how **bad** them three can be…

****

“The fuck you want?” the one with green hair snarls, stepping closer, his hands coming out of his front pockets, his shoulders roll forward aggressively.

“Ever seen this guy?” Sabo asks and holds up a printed foto. It’s from Luffy’s Facebook profile.

He closely reads his face, and he might as well have screamed it, the sudden disgust and fury washing across his face is telling Sabo everything he needs to know.

“That fucking bastard,” the green-head presses and Sabo lowers the foto.

“Wrong answer.”

And then he slams his fist into his face, his bandaged knuckles crashing into his jaw and it sends him
flying backwards, against his mate.

Ace let’s his knuckles crack and even Law takes his tattooed hands out of his pockets, ready to fight.

Sabo’s grin widens and he knows he has the crazy eyes, he knows he looks like insanity breaking free.

“What the fuck, asshole?” the next starts to bellow angrily, lifting one of the wooden sticks.

And hell breaks loose.

“You. Will. Never. Touch. Him. Again,” Sabo growls and he slams his fists into the Owl-guy’s fat, doughy stomach for every word. The guy spits blood and starts howling when he grabs his neck and slams his knee right into his ribs.

“Sabo, behind you!” Ace bellows and Sabo spins around, just in time to dodge the hook to his head, and he counfers with a kick into the long-haired’s groin. He falls to his knees immediately, covering his crotch with shivering hands.

“Fucking weakling,” Sabo mumbles mischievously and lifts his fist again, when –

“Argh!” he can suddenly hear Law groan and Sabo whips around, seeing how Law is holding his stomach, two guys in front of them – and the fuck they have a taser? That crap is illegal in this city!!!

“Ace!” Sabo bellows, ramming his fists into owl-man’s face so he stays down, and Sabo runs over to Law, when suddenly a man tackles him from the right, and they both hit the ground hard and the breath is knocked out of Sabo’s lungs, but he immediately lifts his arms to block the mass of blows the guy hails down on his face and torso.

Sabo grits his teeth before he grabs the guy’s arm and sinks his teeth deep into his wrist before he can hear something snap and the guy howls so loud and suddenly he is slammed from on top of him and the blood spurts everywhere and Ace pants, a wooden stick in his hand, and helps him up.

“What about Law?” Sabo shouts at his friend, but Ace only points over his shoulder.

And the view is something to keep forever in his memory. Law and Kidd, with their backs toward each other, fending off the assholes with a new sense of beastiality and truly, it is a feast to the eyes and a cure for the soul.

When Kidd is here now, they’ve won.

Sabo looks around. There aren’t many guys standing anymore, most are on the ground, holding their stomachs, one is puking, another one has severe nose bleedings, probably due to a broken nose, another is still weeping and holding his balls, and Law is about to finish off the last one with a frighteningly precise kick to the guy’s head that sends him to the ground like a broken puppet.

Sabo lets out a long breath, turning to his friends.

Ace looks uninjured, so does Kidd. Law is rubbing his stomach with a sour expression – or maybe his sour expression is due to Kidd’s presence, Sabo can’t tell. Sabo looks down at himself. He’s alright, a little sore, but no blood and only bruises he can cover up.

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Kidd glares at him, as well, but doesn’t say a word.

“Thanks for coming, Kidd,” Sabo says to his red-haired friend he hasn’t seen in a while. He’s as pale as ever, but just like Law, he looks like he has lost weight and sleep.

A lot of sleep.

“Yeah, whatever,” Kidd brushes his gratitude off, his eyes focusing on Law again. The surgeon ignores him.

“Sabo, we might want to get going now?” Ace asks, dropping the wooden stick to the ground.

“Yeah, hang on…”

Sabo goes to the green-haired guy and grabs his hair to lift his bleeding face from the puddle of drool he’s made on the floor. The man is still sobbing from the pain and looks at him both hateful and frightened.

Sabo doesn’t feel an ounce of guilt.

“So you remember this guy, right?” he asks again, holding the photo in front of the dude’s face.

This time, he shakes his head.

“That’s right, you don’t know him and you don’t want to, you hear me? If you ever hurt him again or even touch an inch of his body or only look at him the wrong way or just talk to him, I’ll fucking crush your skull, you got me?”

The man stares at him, his eyes wide with terror.

Sabo slaps him. Hard.

“Are we clear?” he asks with a closed-lip smile and the green-head nods so quickly Sabo is sure his neck is gonna snap. Not that he would care.

“Good. Same goes for your friends. Understood?”

More nodding.

And Sabo drops him back to the ground and walks back to his friends.

They leave the warehouse and walk down the pier, until they stand at a safe distance. The whole thing hasn’t taken that long, to be honest. Maybe like ten, fifteen minutes of beating the shit out of these thugs? But it feels much longer, because the physical exhaustion is immense.

Law and Kidd don’t even look at each other and Sabo wonders if it’s the first time they’ve met since the break-up. The tension between them is almost as thick as the fog around them.

“So, thanks again for the help, guys,” Sabo says and he means it.

“No worries,” Ace laughs and pats his shoulder – he usually is in a brilliant mood when he gets to kick someone’s ass.

“Don’t sweat it. Imma leave now,” Kidd says.

“Ok. See you next week or so?”
Kidd glances at Law, who stubbornly looks away.

“…Maybe. See ya, Sabo, Ace…Law.”

Law flinches like he has screamed at him. But Kidd already starts walking and soon, he’s completely disappeared in the fog.
Sabo looks at Law. His friend’s face is like out of stone, completely unreadable, void of any emotion.

“I’m sorry, Law,” he says calmly.

“It’s ok.”

Suddenly, Law sighs. “But, Sabo… you can’t fix this. It’s nice that you’re trying. But not even you can fix this mess,” Law says raspily, his eyes still locked where Kidd has disappeared in the mist.

“…Look, I’m sorry…”

“Don’t be. At least we taught these assholes a lesson, hm?” Law interrupts him and grins at him, but Sabo can tell that it’s fake. Hell, the whole world would be able to tell.

“Anyways, I need to get going. See ya.”

“Ok. Get home safely. And thanks again.”

“Always.”

Law pats his and Ace’s shoulder and then, just like his ex-boyfriend, disappears in the fog.

“We should get going now, too, huh?” Ace asks him and Sabo glances at the time.

“Yeah.”

“Alright. And Sabo?”

“Hm?”

“Next time warn me when you pull crap like that. I almost knocked the light out of Kidd when he appeared behind me.”

Sabo snorts a laugh. “Sorry. But we need to hurry now. I need a shower and clothes that aren’t soaked with the blood of a bunch of thugs.”

Luffy

As he’s standing in his bathroom, he looks into the mirror, checking his face one last time.

He’s only dressed casually, with a pair of jeans and a dark blue Galley-La company hoodie. The bruises on his face have faded, the cut in his lower lip has healed, and also the knuckles on his hands, which all had burst from throwing punches, have developed a tender, rosy skin, so he doesn’t need to wear bandages anymore.

Yeah, he doesn’t look at all anymore like a guy who’s been beaten up badly only a week ago. And, to be honest, Luffy knows that the others guys all looked a hell of a lot worse than him.

The doorbell rings and he straightens his back, sighing a last time at his mirror image, before he
leaves the bathroom to open the door.

Of course it’s Franky and Robin, as married as a couple can be. The broad man holds the door open for her and helps her taking off the coat. Luffy hugs her and then he hugs Franky, a wide smile on his face.

It’s good to be with his nakama again. Not all of them, because not everyone is in Water Seven right now, but still.

“So, Luffy, got everything from the shopping list?” Franky asks motivated, and he rubs his hands together.

He may not be as good a chef as Sanji is, but he’s still a fairly good cook.

“Yes, I got everything, it’s all in the kitchen!”

Alright. Honey, want some tea while waiting?” Franky coos as Robin sits down at the dining table. It’s one of those you can just fold and push up against the wall, because Luffy normally either eats in the kitchen, the living room or at his desk.

But he has prepared the dining table, he put the plates and cutlery out, folded the napkins (not very prettily, but its enough) and he has even lit a candle.

Robin nods at him approvingly, before she turns back to Franky.

“Yes, some tea would be wonderful, thanks, darling,” Robin replies and her husband scuttles away into Luffy’s kitchen.

Luffy follows Franky. “Need any help?” he asks friendly.

“Haha, no, you go sit down and relax, I can handle this,” Franky laughs and practically pushes him out of the kitchen. “Oi, but here, don’t spill the tea! Bring this to Robin?”

Luffy shrugs and goes back to his tutor and friend, carefully balancing her tea.

“Here you go, Robin. No sugar, eh?”

“That’s right, just like that.”

“Alright, Sabo told me he will be an hour late – and Nami is always late, anyways…”

“Oh, by the way, Luffy, you and Sabo get along well again?” Robin asks him with a silent smile and Luffy nods.

“Yeah, we’re great again!”

And her smile widens: “I’m glad to hear that.”

“Really?”

“Yes. You were really sad when you were fighting, right? So I’m glad you two are friendly again.”

Luffy grins happily and sits down to show the woman the work he has done on his presentation and he’s heart swells with pride when he sees how her dark eyes light up with approval and he runs to the kitchen to show Franky. Ah, it’s so good to hear people praise him, after all the hard work!

About an hour later, the doorbell rings again and Luffy hurries to open the door, biting his lower lip
in excitement. It must be him, finally, he’s been waiting…

And there he is, and despite all that’s happened, Luffy’s heart still skips a beat when seeing him. He looks so handsome… he’s clad in beige trousers – yes, beige! – and a white button-down and a dark blue jacket. He doesn’t wear a tie though, but a red woollen scarf that dangles down his front and back.

Sabo smiles at him and Luffy just goes in for a bone-breaking hug.

“Hey, there,” Sabo chuckles into his hair and Luffy lets go off his neck, a bit embarrassed. Sabo slips off his shoes, a little slower than usual. Well, maybe he just has cramps from working out? Luffy shrugs it away.

“Hi, uhm, Robin and Franky are here already.”

“I guess so. I’m sorry again, but the office was practically empty today. Oh, but I bought chocolate, just as you suggested, and wine.”

Luffy happily takes the basket from him and takes it to the kitchen, where Franky, now clad in Luffy’s five sizes too small apron, is cutting vegetables. The meat is already ready to be eaten and the potatoes smell so good Luffy’s stomach almost does a tango inside him with appetite.

“Franky, Sabo is here! And look at this!” he says cheerfully and Franky turns around to inspect the basket.

“Hey Sabo!” he yells afterwards, toward the living room where Sabo is, “Got a good wine there!”

“You’re welcome!” comes the reply.

“Sabo, what would you like to drink?” Luffy asks loudly, not bothering to walk to the living room to ask.

“Tea, please,” Sabo suddenly says right behind him and Luffy jumps, almost dropping the wine bottle and Franky lets out a little startled cry.

“Jesus Christ, Sabo!” Luffy snaps and he starts laughing.

“Sorry,” Sabo snickers and then he shakes hands with Franky.

“Good to see you again, Sabo,” Franky says good-naturedly.

“Likewise. How have you been doing, lately?”

Luffy leaves the two so Robin doesn’t have to sit in the living room by herself. But well, she’s on her phone, anyways. As he sits down across from her, though, he puts it away.

“Ah, Robin, did Sanji also send you the pictures from him and Zoro in San Faldo?” Luffy asks her.

She chuckles: “Yes, I think everyone has seen them.”

“I’m so glad the surprise worked out! Like, I seriously thought Sanji would break up with him!” Luffy laughs.

“It did look worrying, I admit. I’m glad these two worked it out, it would’ve been really sad to see them break up over a misunderstanding,” the woman hums.
“So you knew about the surprise, too?”

“Yes, actually. Because Zoro is planning to –”

She gets interrupted by a loud voice outside the door of Luffy’s flat.

“MY ARMS ARE FULL SOMEONE OPEN THE DOOR PLEASE!” and it’s unmistakably Nami.

Luffy laughs and jumps up to open the door and instead of his friend, he faces an almost ceiling-high parcel.

“Woah, Nami, you alright?” he laughs and he can see the glimpse of orange hair.

“Can you, like, put that somewhere?”

“What is that?” Luffy asks intrigued, helping her to get the parcel through the door.

“It’s an easel, it’s for Nojiko. She asked me to pick it up, but she didn’t tell me how big it is!” Nami wheezes. “And I hate that your stupid building doesn’t have a lift!”

“Sorry. But good to see you,” Luffy grins and Nami squeezes past the parcel that now easily blocks the entire hallway and they hug each other.

“Everyone else here already?” the girl asks, taking off her coat and boots.

“Yeah, go ahead to the living room. Want something to drink?”

“Got beer?”

“Sure!”

Luffy follows Nami, who first greets Robin with a tight hug and a kiss on the cheek, before she walks into the kitchen, to hug both Franky and Sabo.

Luffy smiles to himself, as he hears his friends laugh and joke around. It’s not all of them, but somehow, he can feel that all his nakama, both here in the city and across the Grand Line, are happy tonight.

It’s all as it should be.

Sabo comes from the kitchen and sits down next to him. They look at each other silently and Luffy’s smile turns into a radiant grin.

Yes, it’s all exactly as it should be.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading.
Sabo

He should write a book. Something like ‘An entire lifetime’s worth of heartache and headache packed in two-and-a-half months of drama’. It would possibly be a great movie, too. One of those that leave you with a smile and a wet eye and a running nose, yeah, the sort.

He can’t complain, though, at all. He and Luffy have been doing really well, and although they still haven’t talked about what happened, he’s allowed in Luffy’s flat again, in his arms, even in his bed. But his heart… that one is an entirely different mystery he has yet to solve.

He’s on his way to Luffy’s flat. It’s Saturday evening and it’s raining like there was no tomorrow. The heavy raindrops patter heavily down onto the streets and alleys of their city and he wades through ankle-deep, icy cold water, his right hand clenched around his umbrella. The sky is dark and the clouds match perfectly the stormy grey ocean that surrounds Water Seven. Sabo bets it’s going to rain the entire night, and tomorrow he can practically swim home.

He doesn’t mind, though. His mood can’t possibly be affected by that, he’s way too happy, too light-hearted right now; his head is in the clouds, no above them, right beneath the sun. He feels good, no, even better. He’s about to see the person who is so, so important to him. And that’s all that matters to him.

Even a surprise Aqua Laguna wouldn’t be able to rain on his parade.

When he jumps up the stairs to Luffy’s flat, he can see how the boy is already waiting at the door, leaning against the frame and he grins at him mischievously. Sabo grins back and hurries up the last few stairs, before he slows down and elegantly walks up to him, wet umbrella still in one hand.

“Hey,” Luffy greets him and immediately takes the umbrella from him and lets him enter.

“Hey, how’re you?” Sabo asks and pulls his soaked shoes and socks off. He watches how Luffy opens the umbrella again and then disappears in the bathroom, probably to place it in the bathtub, so the thing can dry.

“I’m fine, and you?” the boy answers and comes back.

“Freezing. Come warm me up?” An the last part sort of just slips from his mouth before he can stop himself and Luffy looks at him for a moment, before he grins and slings his arms around Sabo’s neck.

“…I don’t want half-term to end,” Luffy says and Sabo can practically hear the pout in his voice. His grin widens and he holds him a little tighter, bathing in the comforting warmth the slender body radiates.

“Me neither…”

“Anyways, want something to drink?”

“You got tea?”

“Sure.”
Luffy disappears in the kitchen and Sabo walks into the living room and makes himself comfortable on the sofa. He’s been here so many times already; it’s almost becoming a second living room to him. It’s considerably tidier than last week, when the place was basically disappearing in junk. It’s funny how the flat resembles he mind state of Luffy. He likes that.

His eyes wander to the living room table and he sees that the boy got a new video game for his PS4, called Ratchet&Clank. It looks like fun and the exact type of video game he would associate with the boy. But what makes his heart flutter in joy is today’s Daily Grand Line issue, sitting beneath the remote. So Luffy, after all, kept his brand new Daily Grand Line subscription.

“Here you go, Green Tea!” Luffy says and places a steaming mug in front of him.

“Thanks,” he smiles and Luffy sits down next to him. He’s having hot chocolate.

“Ah, yes, I got it today. I haven’t tried it yet, though,” Luffy says as he sees the game case in Sabo’s hands.

“It looks like fun. Wanna try it together?”

“Yeah!”

“But first, before we start: What kind of presentation is it that you have to do for Professor Lucci? You haven’t told me yet,” Sabo says intrigued ad he likes how Luffy’s eyes light up excitedly.

“Oh, see, it’s this assignment, so basically we should invent our own video game idea, and think about storyline, characters, gameplay, setting, soundtrack and so on. The assignment is actually due at the end of January, so I actually got like half a year to do it, but the presentation is to show him what we’ve been doing so far and it gets marked. So yeah, and thanks to you I got enough time to finish it,” Luffy grins.

Sabo is impressed. That sounds like a lot of work, especially for one person…but Luffy is one of a kind, so if anyone can do it, it’s him.

“And…what is your idea? If I may ask?”

“Shishishi it’s a surprise.”

Sabo smiles and takes a sip from his tea. Suddenly, he feels two excited hands on his shoulders. “And you still have to tell me how you blackmailed Professor Lucci!”

“That’s no story for kids,” Sabo snorts; just to tease him a bit. As expected, Luffy starts pouting.

“I’m not a kid anymore! Do tell!”

“I’m not sure you’re ready to hear the truth!”

“Sure I am!”

Sabo laughs in a low voice, leaning back in the sofa. Luffy’s serious expression is just too funny.

“Alright, so I did a little digging and I found out that he isn’t actually a scholar. He used to work for the Cipher Pol 9 in Enies Lobby and faked his PhD, so he got the job at the university.”

Luffy gaps at him. Like, his jaw almost hits the ground. His eyes are so big Sabo believes they may develop a life of their own, with all the surprise.
“What?!! Seriously? He isn’t a real professor?”

“Nope. No one knows, apparently, besides me obviously, and now you. I showed him my evidence and after that, he was more than ready to push your deadline back.”

“B-but how does he know what he’s teaching, then?”

“He isn’t dumb, Luffy. He knows about computers and software,” Sabo laughs.

“Wow, can’t believe it… My professor isn’t even a professor and yet he’s super strict about everything…” Luffy pouts and shuffles closer.

Sabo soothingly rubs his back, but not much; he doesn’t want it to become awkward. He reaches for his tea again.

“So, as we’re here now, revealing things… wanna tell me why you got into a brawl Wednesday, a week ago?” Sabo asks curiously and he has a hard time hiding how impressed he is with how Luffy beat up the assholes he’s met two days ago himself. He can’t even imagine…like, he knows Luffy is a Muay Thai practitioner, but still, one against five…that’s beyond impressive.

More like downright seriously sick. In both a good and bad way.

“…Hm, there really wasn’t a reason?” Luffy mumbles and nips at his hot chocolate. He’s a bad liar.

“I don’t believe you. You got your Muay Thai training where you can beat up people. So why bother doing it in the streets? Besides, you got hurt rather badly”

“Oh, by the way, are you and Ace coming to training next week?” Luffy asks in a not so subtle attempt to change the topic.

Sabo smirks. “Nice try, Luffy.”

The boy rolls his eyes. “It’s stupid.”

“It isn’t.”

“Alright, fine. It was to…distract me. And kind of make me feel better.”

“Explain more, please?”

Luffy pulls his legs onto the sofa and hugs his knees. How young he looks right now… his loose joggers and wide hoodie make him look so small, like he’s almost disappearing in his clothes. It looks cute, but Sabo doesn’t like how Luffy seems to want to make himself look smaller, like he wants to hide. He doesn’t need that. And he sure as hell doesn’t have a reason to hide any part of himself.

“Well…wh-when we had the fight, I was feeling really ill…and, like, I was angry and sad and mad and everything. So I tried to distract myself with stuff, video games and so on, but it didn’t work, like my head wouldn’t shut up and I couldn’t sleep.

“I skipped classes and I didn’t want the others to know because I didn’t want to argue with them, so I just went back to the port, you know, and I found these guys and provoked them. I was really rude to them, like insulted them and everything, so they would throw the first punch, so I had an excuse to fight back. And yeah, when I got home, Usopp saw me.”

Luffy rests his chin on his knees. How lost he looks.
Sabo blinks and scratches the back of his neck. Wow. Alright. That’s a lot of information…

He gently touches Luffy’s shoulder.

“Well, I don’t blame you. We all do stupid stuff to distract us from heartache,” he then says after a moment and he smiles at Luffy.

“Yeah? Did you do something stupid, too?”

He clears his throat. Well, he and Ace had fucked every day and then he paid the dudes who hurt Luffy a visit, too…

“Drank way too much alcohol. Got shitfaced, threw up. The kind.”

“Shishi, like those dudes on TV.”

Sabo grins and ruffles his hair. “I’m glad, though, that I don’t have to do that anymore.”

Luffy smiles back, a faint blush dusting his cheeks. “Yeah, me too.”

They both stay silent for a few moments. Sabo observes the boy. Should he ask him now…? He gave Luffy more than a week to think about everything. But at the same time… people are different. One only needs a few hours to sort out their feelings. Other need days and weeks and months to understand what is inside their hearts.

And from what he knows about Luffy, he can tell that the younger much rather runs from his feelings than confronts them.

Sabo takes a deep breath and decides to take the risk. He sets his mug back on the living room table.

“…So…do you think you’re ready to talk about the phone call?”

He can see how Luffy’s face becomes sort of closed off, and the light vanishes for a heartbeat from his eyes – but then Luffy gets his mimic back under control and he smiles at him half-heartedly.

“…I guess.”

Sabo leans forward, hands clasped together.

“So, please tell me…why you got so upset with me? I was at fault, too, I admit that. But… your reaction surprised me, to say the least.”

Luffy starts fumbling with the hem of his shirt again. He rakes his nails over the fabric, like he wants it to tear. Sabo can see the tension in his arms, even in his shoulders, the way he curls into a ball.

He almost feels bad that he’s asked him. But these things won’t solve themselves when everyone keeps silent about them…

One of the bitter truths of adulthood.

“I…I t-told you that I don’t do love, right?” Luffy eventually says, his eyes staring into space.

“Yes, I remember.”

“And…wh-when you told me that you don’t understand… I got scared.”
“Why?”

“Because I don’t… like… argh, this is too much to… I don’t…” he just shrugs helplessly and starts pulling at his hair. His eyes become watery and Sabo quickly ruffles his hair to calm him down.

“Shh, it’s ok, just try to explain, it’s ok. I’ll understand,” he mutters soothingly and smiles at the boy.

“I… for once, I thought, when you like me that… that way, I don’t want to hurt you because for me it’s not the same, you know what I mean? And because it would mean that we couldn’t be friends anymore and I hate that, you know?” Luffy suddenly says really quickly, without even pausing to breathe.

Sabo swallows dryly, the pain returning to his heart is worse than he’s expected, but he decides not to show any of that, even if it would mean his death.

“Yes, I know what you mean,” he smiles instead.

“And… the other thing is… because my dad told me once that when they love you, they’ll eventually leave you… like my mom left us and then dad and gramps left me, but all of them told me they love me, right? So I got scared and – and angry that you would leave, too… even though I did nothing wrong! And I would just have to watch you leave and I got so, so mad…” Luffy trails off, snuffling a bit, but he doesn’t cry.

Yet.

“Haha, I know, you think now that I’m so stupid, right?” he tries so desperately to smile and Sabo feels his jaw tightening and without warning, he pulls the boy into a tight embrace.

“S-Sabo…?” Luffy asks weakly.

Sabo closes his eyes and he feels the thundering heartbeat right beneath his hands.

“I’m sorry… I’m sorry that your family makes you believe that love means being left behind,” Sabo whispers with his throat tightening and a crying heart inside his chest.

He wants to hate Luffy’s family so much… he hates them for what they have done to Luffy’s perception of love, he hates them for leaving Luffy, and he hates them because they are the reason that Luffy, after all these years, is still so afraid of being left, of being alone – so afraid he rather shuts out everyone who could possibly be more than a friend, who could come close to being family again, only to not have to feel that pain again…

No one deserves this. No one deserves to know that kind of devastating feeling.

Loneliness, after all, leaves such deep scars, such deep, deep wounds…

No wonder Luffy wanted Sabo out of his life, if it meant avoiding that pain…

Sabo blinks away the tears in his eyes and he hears Luffy snuffle again and hot tears dampen the front of his sweater.

“I’m so sorry, Luffy… I’m so, so sorry,” Sabo repeats over and over again, until his voice gets hoarse. The rain outside only becomes stronger, matching the silent stream of silver tears running down Luffy’s cheeks.

After what feels like an hour… or maybe a year… Luffy leans back, wiping his nose with the back of
his hand.

“Sorry I made your shirt all wet again,” he tries to laugh, but his laughter sounds like a broken bark.

“That’s ok, don’t worry about it,” Sabo smiles and hands him a tissue.

Luffy audibly cleans his nose, before he looks at him again, with red eyes and the last traces of his tears still on his chin. The boy blinks, before looking away again, a frown forming between his brows.

“I’m sorry I’m being…like that,” he says in a low voice.

“Don’t be. I’m thankful that you told me,” Sabo says and rubs his back comfortingly.

“…But you’re disappointed?”

“No, I’m not. I’m happy you told me, and I wish I could do something…”

“No, I mean – I mean because you told me…you know…?”

Sabo bites his lower lip.

“I… won’t lie to you… yes, it hurts, but I’ll get over it. I want us to be good, and I want you to stay in my life…”

“B-but… I don’t want you to be sad!”

Sabo smiles. That reaction is just too adorable. And no good for his already aching heart.

“It’s ok, Luffy, I can handle it.”

“…But we’re still friends, right?”

“If that’s what you want?”

“What…what if…?” Luffy suddenly starts and then he stops, chewing on his bottom lip.

The journalist blinks in confusion. What?

“But Sabo…is different from…everyone else…,” Luffy suddenly says in a low voice.

And that makes Sabo’s heart do a somersault backwards. *No, keep it together, old boy, no need to get excited… It's just going to hurt again…*

“How am I different?” he manages to ask.

And Luffy grins at him, not as bright as usually, but the playfulness returns to his lips.

“I mean, Sabo sleeps in my bed!”

“Uhm…”

“And…and I miss what…what we did before…” Luffy says with an almost angry shrug, and he resumes tearing at the hem of his shirt again.

Sabo blinks and then he leans forward, gently cupping Luffy’s cheek with his hand.
“You mean you miss the kissing?” he asks, his heart pacing up so much he doesn’t think it’s healthy anymore.

“Yes, but I thought –”

“I know, I’m being weird, right?!”

“No, it’s just… if we would do these things again, I…I don’t think I would be able to…to fall out of love with you, Luffy,” Sabo says with a mournful smile.

“But! But…would that be bad?”

“Unrequited love? Yeah, it sucks.”


“I would always, in the back of my head, know that you’re not in love with me. And that hurts more than you saying, at some point in the future: I don’t love you anymore. I can’t live in an illusion, Luffy.”

“…I don’t get it,” Luffy mumbles.

“…It’s ok, forget it,” Sabo says after a moment. He can’t explain something he hardly understands himself.

“But… this is so complicated!”

“It’s not, actually…?”

“No, see, I want Sabo and I to be like we were before! But you say that it doesn’t work because you love me!”

“Yes…”

“What – what can I do to make it work?” Luffy pouts.

“…Nothing.”

“I don’t believe you!”

Sabo tries hard not to roll his eyes at Luffy’s stubbornness. This all makes him hurt only more…

“Alright, if there was…a possibility for you to fall for me…then yes, but aside from that…”

He should’ve expected the angry frown and the pout. He immediately regrets saying it. He sighs internally. He wishes he could just merge with the raindrops on the outside of the window and just wash away into the void…

“Luffy, I don’t know what else to say…”

“…But I don’t know how to do it,” Luffy mumbles.

“Do what?”

“Fall in love.”
Sabo blinks and then he rubs his forehead. Goodness, he’s one of the last people who can give advice on that. He doesn’t understand it himself, how the hell is he supposed to explain that? He’s good with words, but how do you explain this one feeling people have tried to explain for hundreds and hundreds of years and no one has succeeded. Just how do you put in words a feeling as vast as love?

“…I think you just feel it…,” Sabo says lamely.

“But how would I tell?”

“Luffy, I don’t really know myself.”

“But I thought you’d done that already so many times!”

That takes Sabo by surprise. He stares at Luffy, who, in turn, looks at him with wide eyes.

“What makes you think that?”

“Because you’re so experienced!”

…Alright, how the hell does he manoeuvre himself out of this mess…?! He is tempted to pull at his own hair in frustration. Jesus Christ, where is the psychologist when you need him…?

“…You’re the first, Luffy,” he says.

“But…?”

“Sex is different. You can have sex without having feelings. But with you… it’s entirely different and I still have to figure it out, ok?”

“So… you’ve never been in love before? Like, before me?”

Sabo shakes his head. Luffy rests his chin in his hand. He wonders what the boy is thinking about. Is he surprised? Or upset? He can’t tell.

 “…That’s… ok…”

“So, are we clear now, anyways?” Sabo asks.

“No wait… so, you’ve never left someone, right? You’ve never been in love and you’ve never left someone?”

And finally Sabo gets what Luffy is trying to say. He finally gets it, oh goodness, it’s taken him so long, but finally, finally he understands.

“No, I haven’t.”

“So… does that mean you wouldn’t leave me? If… if I was to fall in love with you and you’re in love with me… you wouldn’t leave me?”

**Luffy**

Luffy looks at Sabo and he’s getting impatient, as Sabo doesn’t reply, he wants Sabo to tell him – to tell him what he wants to hear! Luffy blinks rapidly, before he starts fumbling with his shirt again. This whole conversation has made him so aggravated… why is it so difficult for Sabo to understand?
In Luffy’s head, it all makes so much sense, it’s totally reasonable, why does Sabo not get that!?

Because...because if Sabo tells him that he won’t leave, ever, Luffy might, maybe, give it a shot and try to fall in love... Like, he would at least think about it, right?

If Sabo tells him they won’t ever become like Sanji and Zoro, he’d be happy to try it after all.

“Sabo, say something!” Luffy says impatiently and taps on the blond man’s knees.

Sabo rubs his chin. Is Luffy only imagining things or is Sabo... flustered...?

“I don’t know... see, Luffy, I can’t promise anything...”

“Why not?”

“I can’t see the future, right?”

Luffy pouts and then he feels the tears welling up again. So does that mean goodbye, after all...?

Suddenly, Sabo grabs his shoulders and leans forward, suddenly they are so close and Luffy can hear his heartbeat so loudly in ears, like a thunderstorm, his blood is biling in his veins, just because Sabo is so close...

“But! But I know what I want right now, Luffy. I want you to be with me, in any way you choose, for as long as you want me, but I am also selfish, and if I could make a wish... I’d wish for you to fall in love with me, Luffy.”

Luffy stares at Sabo, still trying to comprehend what he just said.

“...So it’s up to me?” Luffy asks confused.

“Yes. If you want me to leave, I will. But if you don’t want me to leave, I’ll stick around. You won’t get rid of me so fast.”

And Sabo grins again, but his grin looks a little insecure – something that’s really rare for the journalist.

Luffy’s head is working. Does it mean... does it mean it’s ok then? If it’s up to him... it will be him to decide to end things...?

And he wouldn’t be the one to be left behind, without power, without being able to change things...?

So... it’s ok...?

And Luffy smiles.

“Alright. Then I’ll hurry and fall in love with you!”

And suddenly Sabo practically leaps at him and hugs him so tightly Luffy feels like a pancake and they both roll of the sofa, onto his fluffy carpet and Sabo only hugs him tighter, as if Luffy was about to disappear.

“Ufff!” all air is pressed from Luffy’s lungs and he snorts in amusement. “Shishi, Sabo, you’re squashing me,” he laughs and pats Sabo’s back.

“You-you...” And Sabo’s voice is shaking! No, his whole body is shaking, wow... Luffy continues
to pat the man’s back, and Sabo has his face pressed against Luffy’s shoulder, Luffy can feel the hot breathing against his skin, and the thundering heartbeat.

“How can…how can you put so much faith in me?” Sabo asks in a low voice and Luffy blinks when he hears Sabo snuffle.

And here he’s thought he is the crybaby of the two of them!

“Because you’re Sabo,” Luffy simply replies with a smile and he runs a hand through the soft blond mane he likes so much.

Sabo snuffles again, before he leans back a little to give him a peck on the forehead.

“Thanks for believing in me, Luffy,” he says, his eyes really bright and shiny and his smile is so wide, so genuine, Luffy’s heart flutters.

“Shishi, no need to thank me.”

And Sabo reaches out one hand to stroke Luffy’s cheek. His hand is warm and so welcome – Luffy can’t believe he has missed his touch so much, he has missed it in a way he never would’ve thought he’d miss something – or someone.

And now it’s back. He’s back. And he said he won’t leave.

Luffy can hardly understand just how lucky he suddenly is, the happiness inside him is so, so…

“Can I – can I kiss you?” Sabo asks and Luffy grins happily, wrapping his arms around Sabo’s neck.

“Shishishi, of course!”
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

So this is the last chapter of We Are.

Thank you to everyone who has spend the time to read this story :)

I know I left a lot of unanswered questions - Luffy's family, Law and Kidd's break-up, Zoro and Sanji's relationship as well as a closer look at Sabo and Luffy's history before they met each other.
By now you must have noticed that both Sabo and Luffy like to be violent (they do it a lot) and we will explore this more in the sequel, as well.
And of course we will see the development of their relationship.

For now, I hope you enjoy the last chapter (it's smut and fluff).
Best wishes,

eharyn

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Luffy

It’s the mid-December. Water Seven is battling stormy weather on an almost daily basis and more often than not, classes are cancelled because it’s simply too dangerous for the students and lecturers to be outside. It sounds like a joke, but it happens quite often that someone randomly gets hit in the face by a flying piece of driftwood. Last week, Usopp got a black eye from a seagull that smashed into him because of the super intense winds.

However, Luffy doesn’t complain. His life is perfect right now, he’s at home, tidying up his room or rather he just throws his stuff under the bed and his eyes keep moving back to the clock on his night stand. Sabo will be here in about an hour.

And he can’t wait.

Him and Sabo have been golden these past few weeks. Like, even better than before. Luffy has spend so much time with him, he has read his articles, they went out with their friends, Sabo and Ace both came with him to his Muay Thai training and holy shit, these two are animals, Luffy has even visited Sabo’s workplace – and wow, these folks at the Daily Grand Line are a funny bunch of people!

Oh yes, and they’ve been kissing like crazy and cuddling like crazy and Luffy has enjoyed every single second of it.

Sabo, again, is back in his life, and Luffy doesn’t intend on letting him go. Ever.

Sabo is his nakama now. And even more.
And today…today they will do this thing for the first time. They have talked about it so many times now, and Luffy is sure that he is ready, and the excitement makes his heart flutter like a young bird and he can’t sit still, he can’t wait for Sabo to finally be here…

Luffy runs through his living room im excitement and howls like a wolf as he knocks is shin against his living room table.

“OOOOOWWWW!!!!” he yowls with tears of pain in his eyes as he hops around, his hands clamped around his left shin that hurts like the entire bone is broken! He hops onto the sofa and pulls the trouser leg up to examine the damage. Ouch, his shin is already bruising and getting that great dark purple colour. Christ, the bruise is as big as his fist!

“Owww…,” he whines again.

He grabs the video game case next to him and throws it in front of his TV. His leg is throbbing and he eyes his living room table angrily. “Damn thing… why the hell you got sharp edges?!”

Luffy sighs and pulls the trouser leg down again. He looks around. Weeeell, he could hover the floor… but he’ll leave it as it is, it’s fine…

The rhythmic patting of the heavy rain against the windows reminds him how cold it is. In a few days, it’ll surely snow! He can’t wait, he loves snow in Water Seven, because the waterways and canals freeze and they can go ice skating and play hockey and everything.

But right now, the alleys and streets are just slowly disappearing underwater and getting to class is more like swimming to class, but Luffy doesn’t mind, it’s fun. Or sometimes, he just books a yagara bull, which is chill, too, especially if he has someone to share it with.

He walks or rather limps back to his room to change from his hoodie with spilled hot chocolate spots at the front to his crimson red Galley-La company sweatshirt. He runs a hand through his still-damp hair and then the happy smile returns to his face. He’ll see Sabo in no time! A cheerfully laugh escapes his throat and he grins at his phone to see that in about ten minutes, Sabo should be here.

He can’t wait!!

He decides to play Candy Crush on his phone while waiting, and he’s so absorbed in the game that he hardly hears the ringing of the doorbell.

“Waah!” he jumps from his bed and runs to the hallway, to push the button that opens the door downstairs and then he opens the door to his flat. He can already hear the familiar light-footed steps on the stairs and Luffy’s smile becomes wider and wider.

Finally, he’s here!

“Hi Sabo!” he cries happily and jumps right into the blond man’s arms, not caring about the soaking coat and wet umbrella in his hand.

“Hey babe,” Sabo says and hugs him back, but just briefly, and then Sabo pushes him away from his chest.

Luffy pouts and looks up into the beautiful face with the most handsome smile he could ever imagine.

“Wait, let me get out of this wet stuff and then we’ll hug,” Sabo says with a wink.
“Meeeh, ok, c’mon in!”

Luffy lets Sabo go inside first and he pulls the door close behind him. Sabo lets out a relieved sigh.

“I swear I saw a shark swim past me on the way here. The rain’s gotten even stronger,” he jokes and Luffy grabs his dripping coat to hang it up above the bathtub, just like his umbrella.

“I’m glad you didn’t get eaten,” Luffy grins.

“Pfff, the shark can be glad I didn’t eat him,” Sabo replies and then he pulls Luffy closer, to his warm and thankfully dry chest.

“Good to see you again,” Sabo says quietly and Luffy smiles brightly and closes his eyes and breathes in the familiar scent of vanilla, musk and ocean. Sabo’s hug is just perfect, it’s so warm and comfortable and he could stand here forever…

“I missed you,” Luffy mumbles and presses his face so tightly against Sabo, he believes his nose might flatten for good. He can hear Sabo laugh and his hands are on Luffy’s back, rubbing slowly.

“I missed you, too.”

“And your article today was boring,” Luffy says and Sabo’s laughs even harder.

“I thought that, too! But Kokoro wanted me to write this really boring piece about the “Winter Urban Gardening Competition”, and I can hardly say no to my boss,” the journalist says with a wink.

Luffy steps back to look up into his delighted face.

“Next time, you should write about something cool!” Luffy suggests and takes his hand to drag him to the kitchen. “Hungry? Or want something to drink?”

“I’m not hungry yet, are you? But tea, please.”

“I just ate my second lunch, so I’m fine,” Luffy smiles and pour them two cups of steaming cinnamon apple tea. It’s perfect for the upcoming long December nights, when the sun sets around 3pm and doesn’t appear again until the late morning.

Sabo takes the two mugs and carries them carefully to the living room.

“Beware of the table; I got a super big bruise earlier!” Luffy says and jumps onto the sofa next to Sabo.

“Really? Did your living room table decide to give you attitude and hit you?” Sabo takes the piss and Luffy sticks his tongue out.

“No, I ran against the edge! It hurt like a motherfucker!”

“Let me see?”

Luffy swings his right leg across Sabo’s lap and pulls his trouser leg up to expose the deep purple bruise in the middle of his shin.

Luffy can see how Sabo’s eyes widen.

“See! I told you!”
“You’re an idiot,” Sabo comments with a smirk and runs his fingers lightly around the bruise, before he suddenly grabs Luffy around his knee to pull him closer.

“I didn’t do anything!” Luffy protests.

“Oh, so the table ran into you?” Sabo asks sheepishly and starts tickling him. Luffy tries to flee to the end of the sofa, but Sabo won’t let him go. So unfair, he practically holds his leg hostage!

“Argh, you’re so mean!” Luffy laughs and tries desperately to stop Sabo’s fingers, but of course the former pickpocket is too fast and pushes him backwards into the sofa pillows, and Luffy giggles and wiggles, but there’s no escape from the tickling…

“Please stop! Pleeeaaase!” he wheezes at some point, his stomach already hurting from laughing and Sabo stops his hands mercifully, only to start caressing his calf in such a tender way, Luffy feels goosebumps form on his skin. But it feels nice.

“I’ll die from your tickling, I’m sure of it!” Luffy sighs and grins up at Sabo.

“Not the worst way to leave the world, hm? But I prefer if you wait with that another eighty years or so, yes?” Sabo asks and presses a kiss to Luffy’s nose.

Luffy smile and traces Sabo’s defined cheekbones and the scar around his eye, where the burned skin is a little rougher and darker.

“Ok, I’ll wait,” Luffy says and pulls the man closer for an innocent kiss on the lips.

Sabo kisses him back, but he keeps it casual and doesn’t try to deepen the kiss. Luffy is almost disappointed when he pulls back.

“Babe, we got all weekend, hm?” he smiles, as if he can hear Luffy’s thoughts. And the way he smiles, it’s almost cocky and Luffy can feels his own cheeks warm up in embarrassment.

“Am I that obvious?” he asks with a pout that Sabo really quickly kisses away.

“Maybe a bit,” Sabo says and kisses him again and again, until Luffy feels like melting and why the hell doesn’t Sabo use his tongue that is so mean, why does he keep him waiting…?

Sabo lets him sit up again and Luffy rolls his eyes and takes a sip from his tea.

“So, what’s the plan tonight?”

“I want to see this movie!” And Luffy holds the bluray case under Sabo’s nose.

“Ok ‘Avengers’ it is, then. Looks like a fun movie.”

“Sabo, can we make popcorn?”

“You mean Can I make popcorn? hm?” Sabo asks back, as usual seeing right through him.

“Shishishi, I already bought the corn!” Luffy says happily and wraps his arms around Sabo’s neck. “Pleeeaaase?”

“Like I can say no to that…” the blond says with a sigh and stands up.
“Can I help?” Luffy asks and follows Sabo to the kitchen.

“Hmm…give me a kiss?” Sabo replies and Luffy grins, craning his neck to give Sabo a peck on the lips.

“…I think that wasn’t enough,” the journalist says serenely and Luffy chuckles, before he goes and jumps onto the worktop.

Sabo comes to stand between his knees and then Luffy kisses him again, and this time, he takes the lead, he licks playfully over Sabo’s lips and Sabo’s tongue comes to welcome him and Luffy’s eyes slide close ad the familiar heat crashes through his system again and he claws his fingers into Sabo’s sleeves. Luffy can feel Sabo’s hand in his neck, gently guiding him and taking over, and his other hand is circling Luffy’s waist and pulls him even closer, until their pelvics meet and Luffy shudders in delight.

But way too soon, the kiss is over and Sabo grins and steps away to give him room. Luffy runs a hand through his hair and watches how Sabo takes a large pan out of one of the bottom cabinets. Then he turns the stove on and heats up the pan.

He pours oil in it and then the sugar and then the corn and he hurries to place the lit on the thing. It’s actually an easy recipe, but Luffy manages to screw it up anyways. And Sabo’s popcorn is the best.

Luffy thinks his popcorn is even better than the stuff in the cinema!

It starts popping inside the pan and as usual, Luffy is fascinated at how the corn just explodes and forms these funny flocks that always taste so good.

“You know what; it’s not actually difficult to make it yourself, hm?” Sabo says to him and Luffy draws his attention back to Sabo, who still stands in front of the stove and watches the corn critically.

“Yeah, but I’m no good with kitchen stuff.”

“Then how do you actually survive?” Sabo grins and Luffy shrugs happily.

“Dunno, I’m lucky, I guess, cereal and cookies and meat. And my friends are good at cooking. And we got the cafeteria at uni! Anyways, who’s better at cooking, you or Ace?”

“Ace will say that he is. But I think I am,” the blond replies with a wink. The popping is getting louder and louder and fiercer and Luffy leans forward to look inside the pan. It’s full with popcorn already!

“Hm, you think that’s enough?” Sabo asks.

“No, I want more!”

“Alright. Give me a bowl please? And we can let these cool off already and make a bit more.”

Luffy nods and jumps off the worktop to get a bowl. Sabo takes the pan from the stove and carefully lifts the lit. The smell of caramel and sugar is so strong Luffy’s mouth waters.

“Here you go.”

Luffy helps shoving the popcorn into the bowl and then the whole game starts again. He shoves the hot flakes into his mouth and lets out a sigh of pure bliss. This is sooooo good…
Later, as they sit in front of the TV, the bowl is already half empty and they are barely ten minutes into the film. Luffy’s hand wanders from the popcorn to his mouth and back, like he is in a trance, and each time, he tries to get even more popcorn into his dumb mouth.

“I feel you’re more interested in the popcorn than the story. Or me,” Sabo says at one point, with his arm around Luffy’s shoulders.

“Thaff not true!” Luffy replies with his mouth full.

Sabo smiles at him. “You’re cute, you know that, right?”

“I’m not!”

The journalist only smiles wider and gives him a kiss on the lips. Luffy likes how sweet Sabo’s lips taste, even though he maybe ate half of what Luffy had. Luffy feels Sabo’s tongue lick over his lips and he opens willingly and Sabo’s warm, sweet tongue comes to slide against his, eagerly, and Luffy feels Sabo’s hand in his neck and the other on his thigh.

It feels so good, Luffy forgets about the film altogether, he much rather focuses on Sabo and their kissing…

To be honest, Luffy isn’t nearly as frightened of the idea of sex as he was in the beginning. They haven’t done it yet, but they have done a bit more, uh, heavy stuff, and Luffy likes it sooooo much, because it feels so good it’s probably illegal and the best is, he doesn’t really need to do anything, Sabo does it all and Sabo really knows how to make them both feel good.

Luffy, obviously, has tried stuff, too, and Sabo said he’s doing perfectly fine.

Luffy slings his arms around Sabo’s neck to pull him closer and Sabo grins knowingly and wraps both his arms around Luffy’s waist, his fingers playing with the hem of his shirt and his fingers are so warm and welcome on his skin, Luffy lets out a small sigh.

“Do you…do you want to…watch the film…or not..?” Sabo asks in between kissing his neck and Luffy has his eyes closed, his heartbeat is loud and fast he’s afraid it might drown out all other noises in the room, giving away how affected he is from just a bit of kissing.

“Naah…later…” Luffy replies.

“…Shall we…move to the bed then…?” Sabo asks and Luffy nods and they look at each other for a moment. Sabo has a light blush on his cheeks, and his eyes look at him like…like Luffy is the biggest treasure in the world…

And that makes Luffy’s heart clench with affection and flutter with excitement and pulse with arousal, all at once, his whole body feels like he’s on clouds, just because Sabo looks at him like that.

Sabo stands up first and reaches out one hand. Luffy giggles and lets the taller man pull him up on his feet. They intertwine their fingers, for the short distance from the sofa to Luffy’s bedroom, and this is so cheesy Luffy can’t stop laughing, and Sabo, who’s walking ahead of him, grins at him over his shoulder, and his warm hand fits so perfectly with Luffy’s, and suddenly Luffy wishes his flat was a bit bigger, maybe as big as a football stadium, so he would get to walk like this, holding hands with Sabo, just a bit longer.

But then they stand in front of Luffy’s bed, and although he’s still laughing, a certain kind of nervousness starts to settle in his chest. The kind of nervousness when you know that you are about
to do something you’ve never done before, it’s the kind of tension when you have but a vague idea what’s going to happen, and there are all the possibilities, and it’s like gambling, it’s like, like…

The feeling when you hand your body and heart over to this one person.

Sabo gestures him to sit down and then Sabo goes to kneel in front of him, his hands on either side of Luffy’s knees.

Luffy blinks and tries to guess what Sabo is about to do. Their gazes meet and Sabo smiles at him so brilliantly and reassuringly, Luffy can’t help but smile back. He is still nervous, his heart is beating faster with every passing second, but he’s not afraid.

Not anymore.

“Are you really sure you want to do this?” Sabo asks him, his voice is friendly as always, but he has a serious ring to it and he looks at him intently, the blue of his eyes so bright it’s like looking at the sky.

And Luffy hesitates only for a heartbeat, before he smiles: “Yes, I’m sure!”

Sabo nods, but he still looks at him questioningly. Luffy rolls his eyes and grabs Sabo’s hand.

“Sabo, I’m fine, I promise,” Luffy chuckles.

“Ok. But if you want me to stop or if you don’t want it or don’t like it, you tell me, ok?”

“Yeees, I know! Now get on the bed,” Luffy laughs and Sabo grins at him, the blush returning to his cheeks, but he nods and climbs onto the mattress.

Luffy has thrown his stuffed animals down onto the carpet earlier, so they’re not in the way. Luffy moves back wards to sit cross-legged in front of the headboard, looking at Sabo full of anticipation.

Sabo sits down at the end of the bed, weirdly far away from him.

“So how do we do this?” Luffy asks with a big grin.

Sabo snorts a laugh. “Oh Christ… alright, do you…do you have anything here?”

“Anything what?” Luffy asks back, oblivious, but then he remembers. “Ohhh! You mean lube, right?”

“Yeah, do you have any?”

Luffy nods and reaches over to his night stand and pulls at the bottom drawer. He got a small tube from the pharmacy. He places the tube nect to his bedside lamp.

“Good. Ok, I’m repeating myself, I know, but please tell me when something hurts or you don’t feel right, yes?” Sabo says and Luffy rubs his nose, trying hard to hide his amusement. It’s funny how Sabo seems to be far more concerned than he is.

“Yes, I’ll tell you.”

“Oh boy…I feel the whole mood just went out the window…,” Sabo sighs, but before Luffy can answer, Sabo locks eyes with him and he makes a suggestive gesture with his hand, almost lazy.

“Come here?”
“Why don’t you come here, where the pillows are?” Luffy asks back; he wants to play a bit more.

Sabo grins: “Really?” And they stare at each other, the seconds ticking down, and Luffy feels the sudden draw, this overwhelming longing to just crawl all the way to the end of the bed, where Sabo is sitting, and wrap his arms around him. He’s been waiting far too long and he wants to be back in a tight hug.

“I’m getting lonely over here, babe,” Sabo says.

Luffy sticks his tongue out: “Me, too!”

“Oh wait, I actually got good company…looks like your lion has switched sides!”

And suddenly, Sabo has Sunny in his arms, and pats its brown mane. Luffy’s eyes widen. Where the hell did he get him from? He put Sunny on the carpet next to his night stand!

He frowns and then looks at Sabo’s smug face. One day, he’ll find out how Sabo does it…

“Well, I’m really comfortable right now…,” Sabo drawls and Luffy’s frown deepens and he jumps up onto his feet – the whole mattress starts shaking like a boat on a stormy ocean, and he marches the few steps over to Sabo, who grins at him so smugly he could be...he could be out of one of these movies, seriously...

“This is not fair!” Luffy declares and stands in front of him, his arms crossed, glaring down at Sabo.

“What’s not fair, babe?” Sabo replies and his hands trail up Luffy’s legs, stroking over the smooth fabric of Luffy’s loose trousers.

“You! What you always do!” Luffy says, but he can’t continue glaring at the man, not when Sabo smiles at him like that.

“Sorry, I don’t know what you’re talking about,” the elder grins and places the stuffed lion back on the carpet, before his hands are back on Luffy’s legs, stroking the backside now, and Luffy starts shaking, it feels so nice, and suddenly Sabo’s hands wander to the back of his knees, forcing him gently to bend his knees and sit down on Sabo’s lap, straddling his thighs.

Luffy is beet red.

“I like that you blush just because you’re sitting on my lap,” Sabo says wickedly and gives Luffy a peck on the cheek, his arms circling his waist again.

Luffy blushes even deeper. These little gestures that Sabo makes, they drive him crazy...he can’t even tell, why, but it’s just that they get under his skin, and rile him up, and part of him goes crazy and part of him wants more than that, so much more…

He looks at Sabo.

“You alright?” the blond asks him, and he sounds so tender again and Luffy sighs.

“Yeah…so are we kissing or not?”

“Fufu, of course…”

And Sabo leans forward again, pressing his lips against Luffy’s, and the heat in that feather light touch, it’s like touching fire, and Luffy yearns for it in a way he has never yearned for anything.

Their tongues move together, in that wet and heated dance that leaves Luffy breathless, gasping for
air, and his head is spinning so much, his fingers find their way into Sabo’s hair, he rakes his nails
down the soft skin of the man’s neck and god he likes how he feels the goosebumps, how he can feel
Sabo shudder under his touch, just as affected as he is by the man’s touch.

Sabo leans forward, more and more, and his arms pull Luffy even closer, until their chests meet and
Luffy can feel the thundering heartbeat of the blond, the soft tremors in his body and his lips are
captured again, his mouth is owned, is raided, and he loves it, god, it feels so good, the heat,
*everything, give me everything*…

He hardly notices how Sabo pushes him backwards onto the mattress, only when his back hits the
sheets he notices and he opens his eyes, breaking away from the heavy, dizzying kiss to look into
Sabo’s half-lidded eyes, dark with arousal.
Luffy gulps, tearing his eyes away and he moves backwards, to give them a bit more space. Sabo
follows him, smiling despite the dark want in his eyes, and he comes to lie back down between
Luffy’s thighs. Luffy feels the familiar weight on him, and it doesn’t scare him at all anymore, no, he
actually likes it, because he feels so safe.

And at home.

Luffy angles his face upward again and they kiss again, slower this time, and Luffy’s hands start
wandering over Sabo’s firm chest, and stomach, before he returns to thread his fingers through the
soft hair.

As he breaks the contact to breathe, Sabo latches upon his neck, nipping at his skin and Luffy
chuckles in a low voice, he feels teeth lightly scraping over his skin, by far not enough to hurt him,
and Sabo’s kisses get harder, he sucks eagerly on his skin and Luffy lets out a little moan, he feels
the warm hands roam his chest, his abs, before slipping underneath his shirt and he arches into the
contact, warm skin on warm skin, and his legs start to tremble and heat rushes downward, between
his legs, and then he feels Sabo bite, at the junction from neck and shoulder, and then he licks over
the stimulated skin, he kisses and sucks and then he bites again and the thought of Sabo giving him a
hickey makes Luffy moan again, the heat is almost unbearable.

Suddenly, Sabo leans back on his heels, looking at him proudly.

“You look so perfect,” he says and his voice is like honey, the sort of voice that makes you want to
listen and…and obey happily.

“Th-thanks,” Luffy whispers, not trusting his own voice. The room is spinning again and he feels his
own erection, straining against the fabric of his trousers, and Luffy thinks he can’t blush even darker;
he’s erect only from a bit of kissing…

Sabo’s eyes trail hungrily down Luffy’s body and he must know, of course he knows…

And with one swift motion, Sabo takes his shirt off and throws it over the edge of the bed, and then
he leans back down again, hovering over him.

Luffy’s hands immediately come to travel aimlessly over the heated skin, god how much he loves
Sabo’s body, the hard muscles, the soft skin, the broad shoulders and slim waist… Luffy looks up at
him and he blinks – Sabo must’ve caught him watching, and the look Sabo gives him, oh god, Luffy
doesn’t even notice how he spreads his legs a bit more…

And this time it’s Luffy, Luffy has his hand in Sabo’s neck and he pulls the man down for a long,
depth kiss, so deep Luffy forgets his name, so perfect, the way Sabo’s tongue dances around his, the
way he plunders his mouth in the most perfect way, and Luffy arches up, he tries to get more friction
between them, he rubs his cock shamelessly against Sabo’s thigh, *oh please, do something, please…*

Sabo’s hands push his sweater higher and higher, exposing his stomach and Luffy shudders as the cooler air hits his sensitive skin, only to again arch up into the hot touch of Sabo.

“Take it off…?” Sabo mutters against his lips and Luffy nods and his hands are shaking so much as he tries to get the suddenly too-hot sweater over his head. Sabo helps him and then Luffy, subconsciously, draws his shoulders up, and the embarrassment is back, but Sabo kisses his insecurity away, and the hands are everywhere on him, on his chest, his sides, his waist, his shoulders, the talented fingers trace his scar and Luffy shudders.

“You’re so, so beautiful, Luffy,” Sabo mutters and looks at him with a smile.

And suddenly, Luffy feels so weak so…touched he doesn’t know what to say, he just stares at the man, the man who is the only one who has ever seen him like this, the only one who can make him feel this way…

They kiss again, before Sabo moves down his body, he licks over the hickey at the bottom of Luffy’s neck, before his lips leave wet, hard kisses across his chest and then he gets to the scar, and he takes his time tracing the rough skin with his tongue and Luffy lets his head fall back in the pillows, his hands are lost somewhere on Sabo’s back, all he can think about is Sabo’s tongue licking his scar his lips sucking on the calloused skin and it’s almost enough to send him over the edge… But then Sabo’s lips wander to his nipples, and Luffy almost says *no, go back,* and then the lips close over the right nipple and he gasps, arching his back.

“Oh g-god…Sabo…” he sighs and his nails dig deep into Sabo’s back. He can feel him smile against the skin, before Sabo gives the pert nipple one last hard suck, before he moves to the other, giving it the same sort of tantalising attention that leaves Luffy moaning and thrashing ob the sheets.

Before Sabo can do any more, Luffy stops him with a hand on his shoulder, and he looks at him, trying to catch his breath.

“Sabo…,” he wheezes, his heart thundering against his ribcage, his blood rushing in his ears.

Sabo smiles at him, so gorgeously it takes his breath away once again, and then Sabo kisses him, before his fingers start caressing his hipbones, visible over the waistband of his trousers. The unsaid question so obvious.

“Ok…?” Sabo asks quietly and Luffy nods. Despite the heat of his hands, he is so gentle in slipping Luffy’s trousers and underwear down his legs. Every single time. Always so gentle.

And now Luffy is lying there, naked, vulnerable, and again Sabo looks at him like he’s the greatest treasure he has ever seen. Luffy bites his lower lip and grabs Sabo’s hand and Sabo understands and leans back down to pull him into a tight embrace.

“You’re perfect, just so perfect, babe,” Sabo whispers into his ear and Luffy closes his eyes firmly, and he smiles so happily, like an idiot, he’s embarrassed, yes, but the way Sabo says it…

They kiss again, deeply, Sabo’s tongue comes deep inside his mouth, and Luffy’s arms are locked around his neck, his trembling legs on either side of Sabo’s waist. He can feel the warm hands wander down his body again, stroking over his calves, his thighs, his hips, and then his hand is so close, so close to Luffy’s throbbing erection, just a bit more…

Luffy exposes his throat as he throws his head back into the pillows, moaning as the talented hand closes around his cock, stroking with a steady pace, and hebucks his hips up, urging Sabo to go
faster.

He can hear him laugh, his voice so dark and smooth he hardly recognises it, and then Sabo’s lips are on his again, sucking greedily on his bottom lip and he opens his mouth, he lets his tongue slide against Sabo’s, he could spend hours kissing him, but he needs Sabo to go faster, it doesn’t take much anymore…

“…Babe, I’ll use my mouth, yes? And prepare you?” Sabo asks in a low voice and Luffy’s eyes fly open again.

He breathes heavily, before he nods, the nervousness returning to his blood, returning to his rapidly pounding heart.

“Y-yeah…”

And Sabo smiles at him and pulls him in for a kiss that is so hot and filthy Luffy feels the last of his sanity melt away, and way too soon Sabo breaks the contact, to kiss his way down his throat, chest and abdomen, right before he stops at the base of Luffy’s leaking cock. He looks at him again, and all light is gone from Sabo and Luffy feels himself jerk with a new wave of arousal.

God…they way he looks at him…

And then Sabo descends upon his cock and Luffy’s eyes slide close and he arches his spine, his head falling deep into the damp pillows, and his hands claw at the sheets, his grip so hard his knuckles crack, and Sabo places wet kisses to the underside of his cock, before he gives it a few strong strokes, before his hot tongue darts out and licks slowly from the base all the way up to the tip and Luffy loses control over the violent jerking of his body, his hips push up against Sabo’s hands, he wants more, more, more, lick it more, Sabo, please, I want more, I need –

Sabo kisses the tip of his cock, it’s wet with precum and Luffy bites back a moan as he laps at the dripping slit, before he suddenly, without warning, closes his lips around the head and Luffy moans, his fingers helplessly wandering over the sheets, looking for something to grab, before he just pulls at his own hair, lose in the pleasure, lost in the intense feeling and the velvet heat that is Sabo’s mouth.

“Oh god, oh please, Sabo….” he lets out as Sabo takes him even deeper, his tongue, his sinfully talented tongue does things, it draws tears to Luffy’s eyes and he wants to cry, this is too much, he can’t take this, he wants to come, please, let me come...

And just before he starts crying Sabo lets him slide out of his mouth, and Luffy’s body is shaking, trembling with the intense pleasure, he is so close, so so close, why did Sabo stop…

“Babe, look at me?” Sabo whispers and Luffy blinks the tears away and looks up at him.

“You ok?” the man asks and gently kisses his forehead and temple.

Luffy swallows dryly, before he says, his voice shaking just as much as his body does: “Y-yes, I-I’m good.”

He sees how Sabo leans over, to grab the lube from the night stand. Then he leans back on his heels again, and Luffy watches how he pours a generous amount into his palm.

“Make it warm,” Luffy requests. Last time, it was so cold…

“Sure,” Sabo replies softly and they kiss again, Luffy tries to concentrate on the kiss, but still, he flinches as he feels the fingers, covered with lube, circle his entrance in slow, almost lazy
Luffy gasps and Sabo kisses him again, before he moves down, and before Luffy can say anything, he kisses the head of his cock, before swallowing him down again, and his mouth falls open in a silent moan, overwhelmed by the intensity that returns to him in one brutal wave through his system.

Sabo

Sabo watches how Luffy arches off the bed, in one perfect bow, his damp skin is shining and the way he throws his head back and the way he moans, oh god… Sabo’s rock hard erection swells even more at the sheer sight of pure sex in font of him. And he hasn’t even touched himself yet. God he hopes Luffy knows how divine he looks, how perfect, how unbelievably and utterly gorgeous…

He swivels his tongue around the leaking cock inside his mouth and he works his finger deeper into Luffy’s tight heat, he pushes in and out, at a steady pace, to make the boy get used to him.

Luffy bucks into him and his other hand returns to Luffy’s hip, pushing him down into the mattress.

“Haaah, Sabo…please…” Luffy gasps, his voice is so sultry and raspy it makes him shudder and hearing him plead, oh god…

He wants to give Luffy everything he wants, but he can’t have him cum yet, not yet, the fun is far from over, it’s just going to be better, a million times better…

“A bit more, babe,” he whispers, releasing the swollen member from his mouth and it falls stiff against the boy’s abdomen.

“Sabo, please!”

And his resolve almost breaks, he pushes his finger knuckle-deep into the hot, tight hole and he moves up to Luffy’s face, he brushes the sweaty bangs from his eyes and gently strokes his heated cheek.

“Just a bit more, I promise,” he whispers and Luffy cranes his neck for a kiss and Sabo is more than happy to oblige, he sucks hungrily on his tongue, whilst working a second finger into Luffy.

Like the last time, Luffy squirms and flinches and tenses up, so much Sabo’s cock twitches in angry anticipation, everything in him screams to finally make Luffy his, to finally, finally claim him…

His free hand grabs the pillow next to Luffy’s head, his grip so strong he can hear the fabric tear.

“Ah, shit, you’re so hot,” he pants, straining to keep the control over the ferocious beast inside him, the animal instincts that want to take over. But no, he can’t, he has to wait just a bit longer… just a bit longer, and he’s mine…

Luffy relaxes after a few moments, and Sabo feels the tremors in the body beneath him, their heartbeats are both so erratic, so rushed he doesn’t know which belongs to who. Their breathing is so loud in the room; the air is thick with arousal and greed.

“I want you so much,” he breathes hotly into Luffy’s ear and he pushes a third finger in and suddenly Luffy turns his head and bites into his wrist and Sabo moans, he isn’t prepared for that, and his eyes roll back in his head, oh god, he won’t last, no…

His cock is dripping, he can tell, he is two seconds from coming completely untouched, simply by this boy, Luffy, turning his head, his world upside down, lying there, open, willing and biting him,
with three of Sabo’s fingers buried in his ass. He grit his teeth at the sudden pain and moves his fingers around, he knows where it is.

“Haaah!” Luffy gasps and he bites again, harder this time.

Sabo bites his lower lip and he meets Luffy’s gaze, his eyes so dark, all light is gone from them, and he sees the hunger, the same hunger he feels, the same impossible longing, the same overwhelming, mind-blowing desire. Luffy’s channel clenches around him, every time he brushes over his spot and Luffy’s eyes slide close.

“You…you ok?” Sabo asks and his voice cracks at the end and Luffy nods, slowly letting go of his wrist. The teeth marks are deep, but they don’t bleed, they just hurt and Luffy laps over them, once, probably to apologise, and the sight almost makes him cum in his jeans.

He slowly pulls his fingers out – Luffy whines at the loss – and then, with shaking hands he reaches for his belt, when suddenly Luffy sits up and grabs his hand.

The boy pulls him in for a kiss, and Sabo lets his hard swollen cock, still confined in his jeans, rub against Luffy’s and they both hiss at the contact.

“You…,” Luffy starts.

“Yeah….You don’t know…what you’re doing to me…” Sabo replies darkly and he takes Luffy’s hand, kissing every single fingertip, and he guides it between his legs and Sabo bites back a moan as Luffy strokes the hard bulge in his jeans, and now he can’t hold his voice back anymore, he lets out a low moan, before he kisses him again. Luffy strokes him more, and then taps against the belt buckle.

“Go ahead, babe,” Sabo murmurs and then licks over Luffy’s neck, only to bite down, harder this time, a little revenge, and Luffy flinches but lets him, and his smaller hands free his erection and Sabo sighs in relief.

He pauses for a second to get rid of his jeans and underwear and then he comes to lie back down between the slender thighs, and he looks at Luffy.

Now they’re naked, naked to each other in every way possible.

This is…the most intimate he has ever been with someone.

His mind, his thoughts, his heart, so completely bared before the young man before him.

It is frightening, yes, but also reassuring in a way he can’t explain. Despite the animal inside him that claws its fangs into the last bit of control he has – he feels at peace with himself.

His heart is safe, for the first time in his life.

He smiles at Luffy and the boy smiles back, and Luffy slings his arms around his neck and Sabo happily leans down for a kiss, rubbing their erections together and it leaves them both breathless, eager for more.

“You ready?” he asks and Luffy nods after a moment, the smile on his face never wavering.

“Yeah.”

And that’s all Sabo could’ve ever wished for.

He strokes his rock hard cock, wet with his own precum, and he pours more lube into his hands to
slick himself up. Luffy watches him, his hands wandering over the ruined sheets, his expression is anticipating, maybe there is a shadow of fear still beneath his eyes, but the way he smiles at him, so heated and innocent at once, so dishevelled and yet unchanged.

Then he looks at Luffy again, as he positions himself against his entrance. His hole is still red from the fingering, and wet with lube, and so ready, finally, after all this time…

“You ok?” Sabo asks again, he needs to make sure, one last time…

And Luffy lets out a laugh, a light-hearted laugh, and his hands trace over his arms and he grins up at him, with that brilliant grin and he replies: “Yeah, I am!”

And that’s all Sabo needs, and he kisses him again, presses a loving kiss to his lips and then he grips his cock and slowly pushes inside, slowly, so slowly, not to hurt Luffy, and his head falls into his neck as he passes the tight ring of muscles and his tunnel clenches around him, so tightly, and he moans, oh god it feels so good, better than in all my fucking dreams, this is perfect, this is so good, this is amazing, you are amazing…

Luffy moans underneath him, his eyes are closed, his brows are drawn together in an uneasy frown, but there isn’t only discomfort in his expression, the way his head falls back, exposing his throat so lewdly, the way he arches his back, there is far more in him, Sabo can feel the tremors in the body beneath him, the thundering heartbeat and the clenching, the pulsing so deep inside him, it’s almost too much.

He’s completely buried in Luffy’s tight heat and he pants, before he leans forward, placing his hand next to Luffy’s head and he kisses his lips, gently licks over them.

“You ok?” he asks again and Luffy’s tunnel clenches even more around him. “Babe?”

“Yeah…I’m… you can…move…” Luffy wheezes, his eyes shut tightly, and Sabo, despite the want burning through him, he decides to wait a few more moments.

He gently strokes over Luffy’s heated skin, he traces every line and curve of his torso, he leaves butterfly kisses on his skin until he can feel how Luffy relaxes around him. He remains still and then he feels Luffy’s half-hearted attempt to lift his lips higher, to get more friction, and it’s when Sabo knows that he is ready.

He presses a last lingering kiss to Luffy’s lips, before he places his hands on his hips and he withdraws a bit, only to push back in, and Luffy gasps, his tunnel clenching around him tightly, like he never wants to let him go again, and Sabo’s mouth falls open, oh god, this is better than a fantasy, better than a thousand fantasies, this Luffy…

And he’s mine.

Luffy

Oh god, oh my god…

The pressure inside him is so…so… it’s so much and it’s…he doesn’t know how to describe, he has no words for what he feels, he just feels, and god what he feels…

Sabo is thrusting inside him, and with every thrust Luffy feels like he’s reaching deeper, the strength and pure, raw intensity burns his insides, it feels so good, he doesn’t know why, but he loves it, he wants more, he wants Sabo to go faster, deeper…

And Luffy cries out, with a broken moan, as Sabo hits that spot inside him and white stars light up
his vision, his body arches up and his hips move on their own, they meet the hard thrusts, he needs more, do it again, Sabo, again, again…!

“God, oh g-god…..,” Luffy pants and his cock drips on his stomach and Sabo pushes him further, he thrusts deeper, he takes him apart and puts him back together, with every thrust inside him, and Luffy feels like melting, like burning, all that is left in his cloudy mind is the spinning of the room and Sabo’s name on his tongue, like a prayer, the only thing he wants, he needs, he loves…

“Haaah…”

His body clenches around the hard cock inside him, like he never wants him to leave again, and he doesn’t, this is bliss, this is pure pleasure, this is…this is…

Is this love…?

He circles Sabo’s neck, in a desperate attempt to hold onto something, anything, and he scratches down the damp skin, he hears Sabo hiss and only speed up his movements, and Luffy pleads for a kiss, kiss me, I need you…

The kiss is messy, wet and dirty and Luffy can’t get enough, he needs more, he is so close, please…

“Please, Sabo…no more…,” he cries and Sabo’s hand is around his cock, and his own rock hard member spears inside Luffy, brushing his spot every. Single. Time. He. Comes. Inside. and Luffy can’t take, it’s too much, and with one last stroke he sees an explosion of white stars in front of his eyes, his whole body tenses up as the waves of intense, all-consuming pleasure crash over him, roll through him like a storm, take him away and he moans before his voice fails him and his body starts trembling in the aftershocks, his muscles clench, all muscles in his body tense up.

He hears Sabo curse under his breath and Luffy feels the hot liquid coating both their stomachs and his vision is still blurred and he’s left boneless, empty, his mind high on a cloud and the only thing that keeps him sane is the relentless thrusting of Sabo, so deep inside him Luffy forgets where he is, who he is, Sabo has no mercy, he can’t take it, it’s too much, and yet Luffy’s body seems to beg for more, it clenches even tighter around him and suddenly…

Sabo grips his thighs to lift him even higher and the new angle is almost a torture, the sweetest, most pleasurable torture he can imagine, as the man thrusts inside him at an almost punishing pace, but his hands are so gentle and suddenly his thrusts become erratic and urgent and desperate.

“Fuck…oh fuck, Luffy…..,” Sabo moans and his voice is…almost broken…

And then Sabo drives back in, with so much force Luffy gasps and then the man halts, freezes in the movement and Luffy feels something hot and wet flood his insides, filling him to brim till it overflows and he closes his eyes as a new wave of intense heat rushes through his body and finally, he hears his own heartbeat again, still thundering heavily against his ribs.

Luffy lets out a sigh and a smile finds its way on his swollen lips, as a new feeling arises in his chest, and now he is sure, he knows…

He’s alive.

And he’s in love.

****

“Luffy, look at me?” he hears Sabo say and he tiredly opens his eyes, his body feels so heavy, heavy
in a good way, he feels exhausted but satisfied to the core, in the most amazing way.

“Hey…” Luffy manages to reply, his head is still fuzzy and his thoughts are weightless, he’s still floating on clouds.

“Are you ok?” the man asks and he looks at him with so much concern, so much love – yes, love, Luffy finally recognises it – and Luffy’s smile widens.

“I feel good…”

“You did so well, I’m proud of you,” Sabo whispers and a warm, bubbly feeling settles in Luffy’s stomach.

“Hmmh…thanks…”

He feels Sabo’s hand on his forehead, brushing his bangs away.

“Ok. I’ll draw us a bath, yes?”

“Mhm.”

“Ok, wait a bit.” And Sabo’s lips brush over his forehead and then his heat is gone and Luffy turns to his side, closing his eyes again.

This feels like a dream. But it’s real.

Sabo

Luffy leans against his chest and he’s glad that Luffy slowly comes back to himself. Luffy splashes around in the hot, steaming water and Sabo has his hands around his lithe frame.

God, this was the best sex he has ever had. Probably ever will have.

Luffy is just…perfect. Amazing. Like he’s made just for him.

“So, h-how’s your body?” Sabo asks a little shy and he feels a blush creeping into his cheeks. He just shamelessly came inside the boy…

“I feel good, how about you?” Luffy asks cheerfully and plays with his hand. Luffy likes to compare the lengths of their fingers. Sabo doesn’t mind, he actually finds it totally adorable.

“Perfect. And uhm…did you…uh, like it?” Sabo asks and clears his throat, suddenly embarrassed.

And Luffy nods eagerly, before he turns around and wraps his arms around his neck.

“I liked it, it was great!” Luffy grins.

And the beast inside Sabo howls in triumph. He lets out the breath he was holding and wraps his arms around Luffy’s waist.

“So…we can do it again some time?”

“Hell yeah!”

He chuckles and presses a kiss to Luffy’s puffy lips, swollen from all the intense making out.

“I’m glad.”
“Oh, and you know what, Sabo?” Luffy asks excited.

“No, what?”

“I love you!”

And Sabo stares at him, his heart skipping possibly ten beats, and he gaps at him, speechless.

Luffy starts laughing at his expression. “Shishi, you look so funny…”

“Wait – say that again?” Sabo says, his heart is beating so fast he is sure, if this continues, he will die within the next ten years…

Or maybe next ten seconds…

“I love you!”

And Sabo starts laughing along with Luffy; he pulls him closer and presses a kiss to his cheek.

“Oh my g… I love you, too, luffy, I love you, oh my god, and I can't believe this…” And he hides his face at Luffy’s wet shoulder, his face is burning, and he smiles like an idiot, his whole body tingling with bliss.

“Shishi, I know, sorry, I realised in bed, it took me a while, right? But now I know! And now you know, too!”

And Sabo snorts and then he pulls him into a tight hug, he feels the warm skin, the tender heartbeat under his hands and he feels like tearing up, this is… really, all he could’ve ever dreamed off. All his dreams coming true, just because of this person, Luffy, the boy he had saved from the rooftop all these months ago.

And he kisses him again and he can’t get enough of his brilliant smile, of his beautiful face and gorgeous, golden heart.

“I love you, Luffy.” he repeats and Luffy smiles, and to his surprise, he leans forward to give him a peck on the forehead.

“I love you, too, Sabo.”

They grin at each other, and then Sabo leans back against the tub, sighing in content.

“Oh, and are we still watching the rest of the movie?” Luffy asks intrigued.

And he nods and looks at the boy, the boy who has foam on his head and nose and chin, the boy he loves like he has never loved anyone before, and Sabo smiles.

“Sure we are.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading.

I hope you enjoyed it :)
And I hope you come back for the sequel!

If you'd like to chat with me about fics or anything else really, feel free to talk to me through tumblr: http://echaryn.tumblr.com/

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